

Pope John Paul II - Theology of the Body



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Introduction

The Theology of the Body: An Education in Being Human By Christopher West

Following the words of Genesis that establish marriage as a union of the two "in one flesh" (Gn 2:24), we read that the first man and woman were both naked yet "felt no shame" (Gn 2:25).

Suppose I were to suggest that these evocative words hold the key to understanding God's plan for human life. Furthermore, suppose I were to suggest that the only way to "see" the invisible mystery of God is through the vision of the human body in its masculinity and femininity? Even more, suppose I were to suggest that the inner "logic" of the Christian mystery itself is simply unintelligible unless we understand the meaning of sexual difference and our call to nuptial communion?

At this point, you might think I am a bit preoccupied with the human body. You might even think I've been overly influenced by our culture's obsession with all things sexual. Understandable. But what if Pope John Paul II were suggesting these things?

Indeed, these - among other things - are proposals John Paul makes in the first major catechetical project of his pontificate known as the "theology of the body." In this collection of 129 audience addresses delivered between September 1979 and November 1984, John Paul developed what promises to be one of his most enduring and important contributions to the Church and the world.

The theology of the body is a scriptural reflection on the human experience of embodiment connected as it is with erotic desire and our longing for union. It's divided into two main parts. First, the Pope develops an "adequate anthropology" based on the words of Christ. In order to have a "total vision of man," we must look to our experience of embodiment "in the beginning" (Mt 19:8), in our history (Mt 5:27-28), and in our destiny (Mt 22:30). In the second part of his catechesis, John Paul applies his distinctive Christian humanism to the vocations of celibacy and marriage, and also to the moral issue raised by Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

Of course, in a brief article such as this, we can only provide a thumbnail sketch of the actual content of the Pope's revolutionary catechesis. We'll begin with his main idea.

The Pope's Thesis

The Pope's thesis, if we let it sink in, is sure to revolutionize the way we understand the human body and sexuality. "The body, and it alone," John Paul says, "is capable of making visible what is invisible, the spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the invisible mystery hidden in God from time immemorial, and thus to be a sign of it" (Feb 20, 1980).

A mouthful of scholarly verbiage, I know. What does it mean? As physical, bodily creatures we simply cannot see God. He's pure Spirit. But God wanted to make his mystery visible to us so he stamped a sign of it into our bodies by creating us as male and female in his own image (Gn 1:27).

The function of this image is to reflect the Trinity, "an inscrutable divine communion of [three] Persons" (Nov 14, 1979). Thus, in a dramatic development of Catholic thought, John Paul concludes that "man became the 'image and likeness' of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning." And, the Pope adds, "On all of this, right from 'the beginning,' there descended the blessing of fertility linked with human procreation" (ibid).

The body has a "nuptial meaning" because it reveals man and woman's call to become a gift for one another, a gift fully realized in their "one flesh" union. The body also has a "generative meaning" that (God willing) brings a "third" into the world through their communion. In this way, marriage constitutes a "primordial sacrament" understood as a sign that truly communicates the mystery of God's Trinitarian life

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and love to husband and wife - and through them to their children, and through the family to the whole world.

Of course, as the Catechism points out, this does not mean that God is "sexual." God "is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes. But the respective 'perfections' of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God" (CCC, n. 370). This is why the Pope speaks of sexuality precisely as a sign of God's mystery. Following the Scriptures, he uses the man and woman's union as an analogy by which to understand something of the divine mystery. God's "mystery remains transcendent in regard to this analogy as in regard to any other analogy, whereby we seek to express it in human language. At the same time, however, this analogy offers the possibility of a certain ... 'penetration' into the very essence of the mystery" (Sep 29, 1982).

Original Man

In the beginning, Adam and Eve experienced their communion as a real participation in God's own mystery of love. The very sentiment of sexual desire as God created it to be was to love as God loves in the sincere gift of self. Since this call to love is the summary of the Gospel, John Paul can say that if we live according to the nuptial meaning of our bodies, we "fulfill the very meaning of [our] being and existence" (Jan 16, 1980). It is for this reason that a man clings to his wife and they become "one flesh" (see Gn 2:24).

In his exegesis of the creation accounts, the Holy Father speaks of this original unity of the sexes as flowing out of the human being's experience of original solitude. Man realized in naming the animals that he alone was aware of himself and free to determine his own actions; he alone was a person called to love. It's on the basis of this solitude - an experience common to male and female - that man experiences erotic desire and his longing for union.

While among the animals there was no "helper fit for him," upon awaking from his "deep sleep" the man immediately declares: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gn 2:23). That is to say, "Finally, a person I can love." How did he know that she too was a person called to love? Her naked body revealed the mystery!

Prior to the rupture of body and soul caused by sin, the body enabled them to see and know each other "with all the peace of the interior gaze, which creates... the fullness of the intimacy of persons" (Jan 2, 1980). Living in complete accord with the nuptial meaning of their bodies, the experience of original nakedness was untainted by shame (Gn 2:25).

Historical Man

The entrance of shame indicates a radical change in their experience of embodiment. It indicates the loss of grace and holiness. "Original man" gives way to "historical man" who must now contend with lust in his heart.

Lust is erotic desire void of God's love. Hence, if we even look lustfully at others, we've already committed adultery in our hearts (see Mt 5:28). Christ's words are severe in this regard. John Paul poses the question: "Are we to fear the severity of these words, or rather have confidence in their salvific content, in their power?" (Oct 8, 1980).

Their power lies in the fact that the man who utters them is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). Christ didn't die and rise from the dead merely to give us coping mechanisms for sin. His death and resurrection are efficacious. They effectively "liberate our liberty from the domination of concupiscence," as John Paul expresses it.

On this side of heaven, we will always be able to recognize a battle in our hearts between love and lust. Even so, John Paul insists that "the redemption of the body" (see Ro 8:23) is already at work in men and women of history. This means if we open our bodies once again to the "breath" of the Holy Spirit, we can

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experience a "real and deep victory" over lust. We can progressively rediscover in what is erotic that original nuptial meaning of the body and live it. This liberation from lust and the freedom it affords is, in fact, "the condition of all life together in truth" (Oct 8, 1980).

Eschatological Man

What about the experience of embodiment and our longing for union in the eschaton? Didn't Christ say we'll no longer be given in marriage at the resurrection (see Mt 22:30)? Yes, but this doesn't mean our longing for union will be done away with. It means it will be fulfilled. Sacraments are merely earthly signs of heavenly realities. We no longer need signs to point us to heaven, when we're in heaven.

Heaven is the eternal consummation of the marriage between Christ and the Church. "For man, this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation. ...Those who are united with Christ will form the community of the redeemed, 'the holy city' of God, 'the Bride, the wife of the Lamb'" (CCC, n. 1045). This is the union for which we're ultimately created. And this is what the "one flesh" union points us to from the beginning (see Eph 5:31-32).

Hence, in the resurrection of the body we rediscover - in an eschatological dimension - the same nuptial meaning of the body in the meeting with the mystery of the living God face to face (see Dec 9, 1981). "This will be a completely new experience," the Pope says, but "it will not be alienated in any way from what man took part in from 'the beginning,' nor from ...the procreative meaning of the body and of sex" (Jan 13, 1982).

The Christian Vocations

Only by understanding who man is originally, historically, and eschatologically can we understand how man is to live. In other words, having outlined an "adequate anthropology," the door is now opened to a proper understanding of the Christian vocations of celibacy and marriage.

Those who are celibate "for the sake of the kingdom" (Mt 19:12) are choosing to live in the heavenly marriage on earth. In a way, they're "skipping" the sacrament in anticipation of the real thing. By doing so, they step beyond the dimension of history - within the dimension of history - and declare to the world that the kingdom of God is here (Mt 12:28). Authentic Christian celibacy, then, is not a rejection of sexuality or a devaluation of marriage. It's the expression on earth of its ultimate purpose and meaning!

As a vocation to holiness, marriage is meant to prepare men and women for heaven. But in order for it to be adequate heaven preparation, the model must accurately image the divine prototype. The sacramentality of marriage, then, consists in the manifesting of the eternal mystery of God in a "sign" that serves not only to proclaim that mystery, but also to accomplish it in the spouses (see Sep 8, 1982).

All of married life constitutes this sign. But nowhere is this sign more dramatically manifested than when husband and wife become "one flesh." Just as the body expresses the soul of a person, the "one body" that spouses become in conjugal intercourse expresses the "soul" of their married life. "Indeed the very words 'I take you to be my wife - my husband,'" the Pope says, "can be fulfilled only by means of conjugal intercourse" (Jan 5, 1983).

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New Context For Sexual Morality

John Paul's original insights provide a whole new context for understanding the Church's teaching on sexuality, particularly her teaching against contraception. This is, in fact, the linchpin of all sexual morality. For as soon as sexual union is divorced from its inherent link with procreation, any means to sexual climax can be justified (the sexual revolution of the 20th century has certainly demonstrated this in practice).

Based on the logic of the theology of the body, one can speak of morality in the sexual relationship according to "whether or not it has the character of the truthful sign" (Aug 27, 1980). All sexual morality, then, comes down to this simple question: Does this behavior incarnate God's love or does it not?

For those who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit to understand the "great mystery" of nuptial union, contraception is simply unthinkable. Nuptial union is meant to proclaim the mystery of the Trinity - that "God is life-giving love." In this sense the Pope says the "language of the body" is prophetic. However, an intentionally sterilized act of intercourse proclaims the opposite. It changes the "language of the body" into a specific denial of God's creative love, making the spouses "false prophets."

Nuptial union is also meant to be a sacramental sign of Christ's union with the Church. But for sacraments to convey spiritual realities, the physical must accurately symbolize the spiritual. Insert contraception into this picture and (knowingly or unknowingly) a couple engages in a counter-sign of Christ's union with the Church. This is why an intentionally sterilized act of intercourse can never consummate a marriage - it is a contradiction of the very essence of the "great mystery" of the sacrament.

Battle For The Meaning Of Life

If, as John Paul teaches, the body and it alone is capable of communicating the mystery of God's love to us; and if there is an enemy of God who wants to keep us from God's love - where, then, would he go to do it? The Church Father Tertullian says that Satan attempts to counter God's plan of salvation by plagiarizing the sacraments. And where better to begin than with the "primordial sacrament"?

Satan's goal is to scramble the language of our bodies. And look how successful he's been. How many people, for example, think that the body and the gift of sexuality are the last places to look for the presence of God?

Much is at stake in our failure to understand the language of our bodies. As John Paul II says, this is obviously "important in regard to marriage." However, it "is equally essential and valid for the understanding of man in general" (Dec 15, 1982). The theology of the body is, in fact, according to John Paul, the basis of the most suitable education in what it means to be a human being (see Apr 8, 1981). Yes, the battle raging in our Church and our world regarding sexual morality is nothing short of a battle for the very meaning of human existence.

Hence, the theology of the body should not be considered merely a minor discipline among many in the overall scope of Catholic teaching. Again, according to the Holy Father, what we learn by reflecting on Christ's words about the body in its creation and redemption "is, in fact, the perspective of the whole Gospel, of the whole teaching, in fact, of the whole mission of Christ" (Dec 3, 1980).

In Conclusion

The theology of the body is a clarion call for the Church not to become more "spiritual," but to become more incarnational. It is a call to allow the Word of the Gospel to penetrate our flesh and bones. When this incarnation of the Gospel takes place in us, we see the Church's teaching on sexual morality not as an oppressive set of rules, but as the foundation of a liberating ethos, a call to experience the redemption of our bodies, a call to rediscover in what is erotic the original meaning of sexuality which is the very meaning of life. And this is the first step to take in renewing the world.

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As John Paul asserts, man and woman's call to form a communion of persons "is the deepest substratum of human ethics and culture" (Oct 22, 1980). Thus, the dignity and balance of human life "depend at every moment of history and at every point of geographical longitude and latitude on 'who' she will be for him and he for her" (Oct 8, 1980). In short, a culture that does not respect the truth about sexuality is doomed to be a culture that does not respect the truth about life; it's doomed to be a culture of death.

This is why John Paul made the theology of the body the first catechetical project of his pontificate. At the heart of the new evangelization, at the heart of building a civilization of love and a culture of life, is marriage and the family. And at the heart of marriage and the family is the truth about the body and sexuality.

Let us live it and proclaim it. If we do, we will not fall short of renewing the face of the earth!

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General Audiences

The Unity and Indissolubility of Marriage 9/5/79

For some time now preparations have been going on for the next ordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will take place in Rome in autumn of next year. The theme of the Synod, "The role of the Christian family," concentrates our attention on this community of human and Christian life, which has been fundamental from the beginning. The Lord Jesus used precisely this expression "from the beginning" in the talk about marriage, reported in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark. We wish to raise the question what this word "beginning" means. We also wish to clarify why Christ referred to the "beginning" on that occasion and, therefore, we propose a more precise analysis of the relative text of Holy Scripture.

During the talk with the Pharisees, who asked him the question about the indissolubility of marriage, Jesus Christ referred twice to the "beginning." The talk took place in the following way:

"And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' He answered, 'Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.' They said to him, 'Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so'" (Mt 19:3ff., cf. also Mk 10:2ff.).

Christ did not accept the discussion at the level at which his interlocutors tried to introduce it. In a certain sense he did not approve of the dimension that they tried to give the problem. He avoided getting caught up in juridico-casuistical controversies. On the contrary, he referred twice to "the beginning." Acting in this way, he made a clear reference to the relative words in Genesis, which his interlocutors too knew by heart. From those words of the ancient revelation, Christ drew the conclusion and the talk ended.

Therefore, "the beginning" means that which Genesis speaks about. Christ quoted Genesis 1:27 in summary form: "In the beginning the Creator made them male and female." The original passage reads textually as follows: "God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Subsequently, the Master referred to Genesis 2:24: "Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." Quoting these words almost in full, Christ gave them an even more explicit normative meaning (since it could be supported that in Genesis they express de facto statements: "leaves...cleaves...they become one flesh"). The normative meaning is plausible since Christ did not confine himself only to the quotation itself, but added: "So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." That "let not man put asunder" is decisive. In the light of these words of Christ, Genesis 2:24 sets forth the principle of the unity and indissolubility of marriage as the very content of the Word of God, expressed in the most ancient revelation.

It could be maintained at this point that the problem is exhausted, that Jesus Christ's words confirm the eternal law formulated and set up by God from "the beginning" as the creation of man. It might also seem that the Master, confirming this original law of the Creator, did nothing but establish exclusively his own normative meaning, referring to the authority itself of the first Legislator. However, that significant expression "from the beginning," repeated twice, clearly induced his interlocutors to reflect on the way in which man was formed in the mystery of creation, precisely as "male and female," in order to understand correctly the normative sense of the words of Genesis. This is no less valid for the people of today than for those of that time. Therefore, in the present study, considering all this, we must put ourselves precisely in the position of Christ's interlocutors today.

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During the following Wednesday reflections at the general audiences, we will try, as Christ's interlocutors today, to dwell at greater length on St. Matthew's words (19:3ff.). To respond to the indication, inserted in them by Christ, we will try to penetrate toward that "beginning," to which he referred in such a significant way. Thus we will follow from a distance the great work which participants in the forthcoming Synod of Bishops are undertaking on this subject just now. Together with them, numerous groups of pastors and laymen are taking part in it, feeling especially responsible with regard to the role which Christ assigned to marriage and the Christian family, the role that he has always given, and still gives in our age, in the modern world.

The cycle of reflections we are beginning today, with the intention of continuing it during the following Wednesday meetings, also has the purpose, among other things, of accompanying from afar the work of preparation for the Synod. However, it will not touch its subject directly, but will turn our attention to the deep roots from which this subject springs.

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Analysis of the Biblical Account of Creation 9/12/79

Last Wednesday we began this series of reflections on the reply Christ gave to his questioners on the subject of the unity and indissolubility of marriage. As we recall, the Pharisees who questioned him appealed to the Mosaic Law. However, Christ went back to the "beginning," quoting the words of Genesis.

The "beginning" in this case concerns what one of the first pages of Genesis treats. If we wish to analyze this reality, we must undoubtedly direct our attention first of all to the text. The words which Christ spoke in his talk with the Pharisees, found in Matthew 19 and Mark 10, constitute a passage which in its turn is set in a well-defined context, without reference to which they can neither be understood nor correctly interpreted.

This context is provided by the words, "Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female...?" (Mt 19:4). It referred to the so-called first account of the creation of man inserted in the seven day cycle of the creation of the world (cf. Gn 1:1-2, 4). However, the context nearest to the other words of Christ, taken from Genesis 2:24, is the so-called second account of the creation of man (Gn 2:5-25). But indirectly it is the entire third chapter of Genesis.

The second account of the creation of man forms a conceptual and stylistic unity with the description of original innocence, man's happiness, and also his first fall. Granted the specific content of Christ's words taken from Genesis 2:24, one could also include in the context at least the first phrase of the fourth chapter of Genesis, which treats of the conception and birth of man from earthly parents. That is what we intend to do in the present analysis.

From the point of view of biblical criticism, it is necessary to mention immediately that the first account of man's creation is chronologically later than the second, whose origin is much more remote. This more ancient text is defined as "Yahwist" because the term "Yahweh" is used to name God. It is difficult not to be struck by the fact that the image of God presented there has quite considerable anthropomorphic traits. Among others, we read that "...the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gn 2:7).

In comparison with this description, the first account, that is, the one held to be chronologically later, is much more mature both as regards the image of God, and as regards the formulation of the essential truths about man. This account derives from the priestly and "Elohist" tradition, from "Elohim," the term used in that account for God.

In this narration man's creation as male and female - to which Jesus referred in his reply according to Matthew 19 - is inserted into the seven day cycle of the creation of the world. A cosmological character could especially be attributed to it. Man is created on earth together with the visible world. But at the same time the Creator orders him to subdue and have dominion over the earth (cf. Gn 1:28); therefore he is placed over the world. Even though man is strictly bound to the visible world, the biblical narrative does not speak of his likeness to the rest of creatures, but only to God. "God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him..." (Gn 1:27). In the seven day cycle of creation a precise graduated procedure is evident. However, man is not created according to a natural succession. The Creator seems to halt before calling him into existence, as if he were pondering within himself to make a decision: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Gn 1:26).

The level of that first account of man's creation, even though chronologically later, is especially of a theological character. An indication of that is especially the definition of man on the basis of his relationship with God. "In the image of God he created him." At the same time it affirms the absolute impossibility of reducing man to the world. Already in the light of the first phrases of the Bible, man cannot be either understood or explained completely in terms of categories taken from the "world," that is, from the visible complex of bodies. Notwithstanding this, man also is corporeal. Genesis 1:27 observes that this essential truth about man referred both to the male and the female: "God created man in his

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image...male and female he created them." It must be recognized that the first account is concise, and free from any trace whatsoever of subjectivism. It contains only the objective facts and defines the objective reality, both when it speaks of man's creation, male and female, in the image of God, and when it adds a little later the words of the first blessing: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth; subdue it and have dominion over it" (Gn 1:28).

The first account of man's creation, which, as we observed, is of a theological nature, conceals within itself a powerful metaphysical content. Let it not be forgotten that this text of Genesis has become the source of the most profound inspirations for thinkers who have sought to understand "being" and "existence." (Perhaps only the third chapter of Exodus can bear comparison with this text.) Notwithstanding certain detailed and plastic expressions of the passage, man is defined there, first of all, in the dimensions of being and of existence ("esse"). He is defined in a way that is more metaphysical than physical.

To this mystery of his creation, ("In the image of God he created him"), corresponds the perspective of procreation, ("Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth"), of that becoming in the world and in time, of that fieri which is necessarily bound up with the metaphysical situation of creation: of contingent being (contingens). Precisely in this metaphysical context of the description of Genesis 1, it is necessary to understand the entity of the good, namely, the aspect of value. Indeed, this aspect appears in the cycle of nearly all the days of creation and reaches its culmination after the creation of man: "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gn 1:31). For this reason it can be said with certainty that the first chapter of Genesis has established an unassailable point of reference and a solid basis for a metaphysic and also for an anthropology and an ethic, according to which *ens et bonum convertuntur* (being and the good are convertible). Undoubtedly, all this also has a significance for theology, and especially for the theology of the body.

At this point let us interrupt our considerations. In a week's time we shall deal with the second account of creation. According to biblical scholars, it is chronologically more ancient. The expression "theology of the body" just now used deserves a more exact explanation, but we shall leave that for another occasion. First, we must seek to examine more closely that passage of Genesis which Christ had recourse to.

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The Second Account of Creation: The Subjective Definition of Man 9/19/79

With reference to Christ's words on the subject of marriage, in which he appealed to the "beginning," we directed our attention last week to the first account of man's creation in the first chapter of Genesis. Today we shall pass to the second account, which is frequently described as the "Yahwist," since it uses the name "Yahweh" for God.

The second account of man's creation (linked to the presentation both of original innocence and happiness and of the first fall) has by its nature a different character. While not wishing to anticipate the particulars of this narrative - because it will be better for us to recall them in later analyses - we should note that the entire text, in formulating the truth about man, amazes us with its typical profundity, different from that of the first chapter of Genesis.

This profundity has a especially subjective nature and is therefore, in a certain sense, psychological. The second chapter of Genesis constitutes, in a certain manner, the most ancient description and record of man's self-knowledge. Together with the third chapter it is the first testimony of human conscience. A reflection in depth on this text - through the whole archaic form of the narrative, which manifests its primitive mythical character - provides us in nucleo with nearly all the elements of the analysis of man, to which modern, and especially contemporary philosophical anthropology is sensitive. It could be said that Genesis 2 presents the creation of man especially in its subjective aspect. Comparing both accounts, we conclude that this subjectivity corresponds to the objective reality of man created "in the image of God." This fact also is - in another way - important for the theology of the body, as we shall see in subsequent analyses.

It is significant that in his reply to the Pharisees, in which he appealed to the "beginning," Christ indicated first of all the creation of man by referring to Genesis 1:27: "The Creator from the beginning created them male and female." Only afterward did he quote the text of Genesis 2:24. The words which directly describe the unity and indissolubility of marriage are found in the immediate context of the second account of creation. Its characteristic feature is the separate creation of woman (cf. Gn 2:18-23), while the account of the creation of the first man is found in Genesis 2:5-7.

The Bible calls the first human being "man" ('adam), but from the moment of the creation of the first woman, it begins to call him "man" (ish), in relation to ishshah ("woman," because she was taken from the man - ish). It is also significant that in referring to Genesis 2:24, Christ not only linked the "beginning" with the mystery of creation, but also led us, one might say, to the limit of man's primitive innocence and of original sin. Genesis places the second description of man's creation precisely in this context. There we read first of all: "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man; then the man said: 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man'" (Gn 2:22-23). "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gn 2:24). "And the man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed" (Gn 2:25).

Immediately after these verses, chapter 3 begins with its account of the first fall of the man and the woman, linked with the mysterious tree already called the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gn 2:17). Thus an entirely new situation emerges, essentially different from the preceding. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is the line of demarcation between the two original situations which Genesis speaks of.

The first situation was that of original innocence, in which man (male and female) was, as it were, outside the sphere of the knowledge of good and evil, until the moment when he transgressed the Creator's prohibition and ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The second situation, however, was that in which man, after having disobeyed the Creator's command at the prompting of the evil spirit, symbolized by the serpent, found himself, in a certain way, within the sphere of the knowledge of good and evil. This second situation determined the state of human sinfulness, in contrast to the state of primitive innocence.

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Even though the "Yahwist" text is very concise, it suffices with clarity to differentiate and to set against each other those two original situations. We speak here of situations, having before our eyes the account which is a description of events. Nonetheless, by means of this description and all its particulars, the essential difference emerges between the state of man's sinfulness and that of his original innocence.

Systematic theology will discern in these two antithetical situations two different states of human nature: the state of integral nature and the state of fallen nature. All this emerges from that "Yahwist" text of Genesis 2-3, which contains in itself the most ancient word of revelation. Evidently it has a fundamental significance for the theology of man and for the theology of the body.

When Christ, referring to the "beginning," directed his questioners to the words written in Genesis 2:24, he ordered them, in a certain sense, to go beyond the boundary which, in the Yahwist text of Genesis, runs between the first and second situation of man. He did not approve what Moses had permitted "for their hardness of heart." He appealed to the words of the first divine regulation, which in this text is expressly linked to man's state of original innocence. This means that this regulation has not lost its force, even though man has lost his primitive innocence.

Christ's reply is decisive and unequivocal. Therefore, we must draw from it the normative conclusions which have an essential significance not only for ethics, but especially for the theology of man and for the theology of the body. As a particular element of theological anthropology, it is constituted on the basis of the Word of God which is revealed. During the next meeting we shall seek to draw these conclusions.

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The Boundary between Original Innocence and Redemption 9/26/79

Answering the question on the unity and indissolubility of marriage, Christ referred to what was written about marriage in Genesis. In our two preceding reflections we analyzed both the so-called Elohistic text (Gn 1) and the Yahwistic one (Gn 2). Today we wish to draw some conclusions from these analyses.

When Christ referred to the "beginning," he asked his questioners to go beyond, in a certain sense, the boundary which in Genesis passes between the state of original innocence and that of sinfulness, which started with the original fall.

Symbolically this boundary can be linked with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which in the Yahwistic text delimits two diametrically opposed situations: the situation of original innocence and that of original sin. These situations have a specific dimension in man, in his inner self, in his knowledge, conscience, choice and decision. All this is in relation to God the Creator who, in the Yahwistic text (Gn 2 and 3), is at the same time the God of the covenant, of the most ancient covenant of the Creator with his creature-man.

As an expression and symbol of the covenant with God broken in man's heart, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil delimits and contrasts two diametrically opposed situations and states: that of original innocence and that of original sin, and at the same time man's hereditary sinfulness which derives from it. However, Christ's words, which refer to the "beginning," enable us to find in man an essential continuity and a link between these two different states or dimensions of the human being.

The state of sin is part of "historical man," both the one whom we read about in Matthew 19, that is, Christ's questioner at that time, and also of any other potential or actual questioner of all times of history, and therefore, naturally, also of modern man. That state, however - the "historical" state - plunges its roots, in every man without exception, in his own theological "prehistory," which is the state of original innocence.

It is not a question here of mere dialectic. The laws of knowing correspond to those of being. It is impossible to understand the state of historical sinfulness without referring or appealing (and Christ appealed to it) to the state of original (in a certain sense, "prehistoric") and fundamental

innocence. Therefore, right from the beginning, the arising of sinfulness as a state, a dimension of human existence, is in relation to this real innocence of man as his original and fundamental state, as a dimension of his being created in the image of God.

It happens in this way not only for the first man, male and female, as *dramatis personae* and leading characters of the events described in the Yahwistic text of chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis, but also for the whole historical course of human existence. Historical man is, so to speak, rooted in his revealed theological prehistory. So every point of his historical sinfulness is explained (both for the soul and for the body) with, reference to original innocence. It can be said that this reference is a "co-inheritance" of sin, and precisely of original sin. If this sin signifies, in every historical man, a state of lost grace, then it also contains a reference to that grace, which was precisely the grace of original innocence.

According to chapter 19 of Matthew, when Christ referred to the "beginning," by this expression he did not indicate merely the state of original innocence as the lost horizon of human existence in history. To the words which he uttered with his own lips, we have the right to attribute at the same time the whole eloquence of the mystery of redemption. Already in the Yahwistic texts of Genesis 2 and 3, we are witnesses of when man, male and female, after breaking the original covenant with the Creator, received the first promise of redemption in the words of the so-called Proto-gospel in Genesis 3:15 and began to live in the theological perspective of the redemption.

In the same way, therefore, historical man - both Christ's questioner at that time, of whom Matthew 19 speaks, and modern man participates in this perspective. He participates not only in the history of human sinfulness, as a hereditary and at the same time personal and unique subject of this history; he also

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participates in the history of salvation, here, too, as its subject and co-creator. Therefore, he is not only closed, because of his sinfulness, with regard to original innocence, but is at the same time open to the mystery of redemption, which was accomplished in Christ and through Christ.

Paul, the author of the Letter to the Romans, expresses this perspective of redemption in which historical man lives, when he writes: "We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for...the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23). We cannot lose sight of this perspective as we follow the words of Christ who, in his talk on the indissolubility of marriage, appealed to the "beginning."

If that beginning indicated only the creation of man as male and female, if - as we have already mentioned - it brought the questioners only over the boundary of man's state of sin to original innocence, and did not open at the same time the perspective of a "redemption of the body," Christ's answer would not at all be adequately understood. Precisely this perspective of the redemption of the body guarantees the continuity and unity between the hereditary state of man's sin and his original innocence, although this innocence was, historically, lost by him irremediably. It is clear, too, that Christ had every right to answer the question posed by the doctors of the law and of the covenant (as we read in Matthew 19 and in Mark 10), in the perspective of the redemption on which the covenant itself rests.

In the context of the theology of corporeal man, substantially outlined in this way, we can think of the method of further analyses about the revelation of the "beginning," in which it is essential to refer to the first chapters of Genesis. We must at once turn our attention to a factor which is especially important for theological interpretation, because it consists in the relationship between revelation and experience.

In the interpretation of the revelation about man, and especially about the body, we must, for understandable reasons, refer to experience, since corporeal man is perceived by us mainly by experience. In the light of the above mentioned fundamental considerations, we have every right to the conviction that this "historical" experience of ours must, in a certain way, stop at the threshold of man's original innocence, since it is inadequate in relation to it. However, in the light of the same introductory considerations, we must arrive at the conviction that our human experience is, in this case, to some extent a legitimate means for the theological interpretation. In a certain sense, it is an indispensable point of reference, which we must keep in mind for interpreting the beginning. A more detailed analysis of the text will enable us to have a clearer view of it.

It seems that the words of Romans 8:23, just quoted, render in the best way the direction of our researches centered on the revelation of that "beginning" which Christ referred to in his talk on the indissolubility of marriage (cf. Mt 19 and Mk 10). All the subsequent analyses that will be made on the basis of the first chapters of Genesis will almost necessarily reflect the truth of Paul's words: "We who have the first fruit of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait for...the redemption of our bodies." If we put ourselves in this position-so deeply in agreement with experience - the "beginning" must speak to us with the great richness of light that comes from revelation, to which above all theology wishes to be accountable. The continuation of the analyses will explain to us why and in what sense this must be a theology of the body.

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The Meaning of Man's Original Solitude 10/10/79

In the last reflection of the present cycle we reached an introductory conclusion, taken from the words of Genesis on the creation of man as male and female. We reached these words, that is, the "beginning," to which the Lord Jesus referred in his talk on the indissolubility of marriage (cf. *Mt* 19:3-9; *Mk* 10:1-12). But the conclusion at which we arrived does not yet end the series of our analyses. We must reread the narrations of the first and second chapters of Genesis in a wider context, which will allow us to establish a series of meanings of the ancient text to which Christ referred. Therefore, today we will reflect on the meaning of man's original solitude.

The starting point of this reflection is provided for us directly by the following words of Genesis: "It is not good that man [male] should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (*Gn* 2:18). God-Yahweh speaks these words. They belong to the second account of the creation of man, and so they come from the Yahwist tradition. As we have already recalled, it is significant that, as regards the Yahwist text, the account of the creation of the man is a separate passage (*Gn* 2:7). It precedes the account of the creation of the first woman (*Gn* 2:21-22). It is also significant that the first man ('*adam*'), created from "dust from the ground," is defined as a "male" ('*is*') only after the creation of the first woman. So when GodYahweh speaks the words about solitude, it is in reference to the solitude of "man" as such, and not just to that of the male.

However, it is difficult to go very far in drawing conclusions merely on the basis of this fact. Nevertheless, the complete context of that solitude of which Genesis 2:18 speaks can convince us that it is a question here of the solitude of "man" (male and female) and not just of the solitude of man the male, caused by the lack of woman. Therefore, on the basis of the whole context, it seems that this solitude has two meanings: one derived from man's very nature, that is, from his humanity, and the other derived from the male-female relationship. The first meaning is evident in the account of Genesis 2, and the second is evident, in a certain way, on the basis of the first meaning. A detailed analysis of the description seems to confirm this.

The problem of solitude is manifested only in the context of the second account of the creation of man. The first account ignores this problem. There man is created in one act as male and female. "God created man in his own image...male and female he created them" (*Gn* 1:27). As we have already mentioned, the second account speaks first of the creation of the man and only afterward of the creation of the woman from the "rib" of the male. This account concentrates our attention on the fact that "man is alone." This appears as a fundamental anthropological problem, prior, in a certain sense, to the one raised by the fact that this man is male and female. This problem is prior not so much in the chronological sense, as in the existential sense. It is prior "by its very nature." The problem of man's solitude from the point of view of the theology of the body will also be revealed as such, if we succeed in making a thorough analysis of the second account of creation in Genesis 2.

The affirmadon of God-Yahweh, "It is not good that man should be alone," appears not only in the immediate context of the decision to create woman, "I will make him a helper fit for him," but also in the wider context of reasons and circumstances. These explain more deeply the meaning of man's original solitude. The Yahwist text connects the creation of man first and foremost with the need to "till the ground" (*Gn* 2:5). That would correspond, in the first account, with the vocation to subdue and have dominion over the earth (cf. *Gn* 1:28). Then, the second

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account of creation speaks of man being put in the "garden in Eden," and in this way introduces us to the state of his original happiness. Up to this moment man is the object of the creative action of God-Yahweh, who at the same time, as legislator, establishes the conditions of the first covenant with man.

Man's subjectivity is already emphasized through this. It finds a further expression when the Lord God "formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to man to see what he would call them" (*Gn 2:19*). In this way, therefore, the first meaning of man's original solitude is defined on the basis of a specific test or examination which man undergoes before God (and in a certain way also before himself). By means of this test, man becomes aware of his own superiority, that is, that he cannot be considered on the same footing as any other species of living beings on the earth.

As the text says, "Whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name" (*Gn 2:19*). "The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man [male] there was not found a helper fit for him" (*Gn 2:20*).

All this part of the text is unquestionably a preparation for the account of the creation of woman. However, it possesses a deep meaning even apart from this creation. Right from the first moment of his existence, created man finds himself before God as if in search of his own entity. It could be said he is in search of the definition of himself. A contemporary person would say he is in search of his own "identity." The fact that man "is alone" in the midst of the visible world and, in particular, among living beings, has a negative significance in this search, since it expresses what he "is not."

Nevertheless, the fact of not being able to identify himself essentially with the visible world of other living beings (*animalia*) has, at the same time, a positive aspect for this primary search. Even if this fact is not yet a complete definition, it constitutes one of its elements. If we accept the Aristotelian tradition in logic and in anthropology, it would be necessary to define this element as the "proximate genus" (*genus proximum*).

However, the Yahwist text enables us to discover also further elements in that admirable passage. Man finds himself alone before God mainly to express, through a first self-definition, his own self-knowledge, as the original and fundamental manifestation of mankind. Self-knowledge develops at the same rate as knowledge of the world, of all the visible creatures, of all the living beings to which man has given a name to affirm his own dissimilarity with regard to them. In this way, consciousness reveals man as the one who possesses a cognitive faculty as regards the visible world. With this knowledge which, in a certain way, brings him out of his own being, man at the same time reveals himself to himself in all the peculiarity of his being. He is not only essentially and subjectively alone. Solitude also signifies man's subjectivity, which is constituted through self-knowledge. Man is alone because he is "different" from the visible world, from the world of living beings. Analyzing the text of Genesis we are, in a way, witnesses of how man "distinguishes himself" before God-Yahweh from the whole world of living beings (*animalia*) with his first act of self-consciousness, and of how he reveals himself to himself. At the same time he asserts himself as a "person" in the visible world. Sketched so incisively in Genesis 2:19-20, that process is a search for a definition of himself. Linking up with the Aristotelian tradition, it leads to indicating the *proximate genus*. Chapter 2 of Genesis expresses this with the words: "The man gave names...." There corresponds to this the specific differentia

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which is, according to Aristotle's definition, *nôus, zoón noetikón*. This process also leads to the first delineation of the human being as a human person with the specific subjectivity that characterizes him.

Man's Awareness of Being a Person 10/24/79

In the preceding talk we began to analyze the meaning of man's original solitude. The Yahwist text gave us the starting point, in particular by the following words: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (*Gn 2:18*). The analysis of the relative passages in the second chapter of Genesis has already brought us to surprising conclusions which concern the anthropology, that is, the fundamental science about man, contained in this book. In relatively few sentences, the ancient text portrays man as a person with the subjectivity that characterizes him.

God-Yahweh gave this first man; so formed, the order that concerned all the trees that grew in the garden of Eden, especially the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This adds to the features of the man, described above, the moment of choice and self-determination, that is, of free will. In this way, the image of man, as a person endowed with a subjectivity of his own, appears before us, completed in his first outline.

The concept of original solitude includes both self-consciousness and self-determination. The fact that man is "alone" conceals within it this ontological structure and at the same time indicates true comprehension. Without that, we cannot understand correctly the subsequent words, which constitute the prelude to the creation of the first woman: "I will make a helper." But above all, without that deep significance of man's original solitude, it is not possible to understand and interpret correctly the whole situation of man, created in the image of God, which is the situation of the first, or rather original, covenant with God.

The narrative in the first chapter says that this man was created in the image of God. In the second narrative he is manifested as a subject of the covenant, that is, a subject constituted as a person, constituted in the dimension of "partner of the Absolute." He must consciously discern and choose between good and evil, between life and death. The words of the first order of God-Yahweh (*Gn 2:16-17*) speak directly of the submission and dependence of man the creature on his Creator. They indirectly reveal precisely this level of humanity as subject of the covenant and "partner of the Absolute." Man is "alone." That means that he, through his own humanity, through what he is, is constituted at the same time in a unique, exclusive and unrepeatable relationship with God himself. On its part, the anthropological definition contained in the Yahwist text approaches what is expressed in the theological definition of man, which we find in the first narrative of creation: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (*Gn 1:26*).

Thus formed, man belongs to the visible world; he is a body among bodies. Taking up again and, in a way, reconstructing the meaning of original solitude, we apply it to man in his totality. His body, through which he participates in the visible created world, makes him at the same time conscious of being "alone." Otherwise, he would not have been able

to arrive at that conviction which he reached (cf. *Gn 2:20*), if his body had not helped him to understand it, making the matter evident. Consciousness of solitude might have been shattered precisely because of his body itself. The man, '*adam*', might have reached the conclusion, on the

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basis of the experience of his own body, that he was substantially similar to other living beings (*animalia*). On the contrary, as we read, he did not arrive at this conclusion; he reached the conviction that he was "alone." The Yahwist text never speaks directly of the body. Even when it says that "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground," it speaks of man and not of his body. Nevertheless, the narrative taken as a whole offers us a sufficient basis to perceive this man, created in the visible world, precisely as a body among bodies.

The analysis of the Yahwist text also enables us to link man's original solitude with consciousness of the body. Through it, man is distinguished from all the *animalia* and is separated from them, and also through it he is a person. It can be affirmed with certainty that man, thus formed, has at the same time consciousness and awareness of the meaning of his own body, on the basis of the experience of original solitude. All this can be considered as an implication of the second narrative of the creation of man, and the analysis of the text enables us to develop it amply.

At the beginning of the Yahwist text, even before it speaks of the creation of man from the "dust of the ground," we read that "there was no one to till the land or to make channels of water spring out of the earth to irrigate the whole land" (*Gn* 2:5-6). We rightly associate this passage with the one in the first narrative, in which God's command is expressed: "Fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion..." (*Gn* 1:28). The second narrative alludes specifically to the work that man carries out to till the earth. The first fundamental means to dominate the earth lies in man himself. Man can dominate the earth because he alone - and no other of the living beings - is capable of "tilling it" and transforming it according to his own needs. ("He made channels of water spring out of the earth to irrigate the whole land.") This first outline of a specifically human activity seems to belong to the definition of man, as it emerges from the analysis of the Yahwist text. Consequently, it can be affirmed that this outline is intrinsic to the meaning of the original solitude and belongs to that dimension of solitude through which man, from the beginning, is in the visible world as a body among bodies and discovers the meaning of his own corporality.

The Alternative between Death and Immortality Enters the Definition of Man 10/31/79

Today it is opportune to return to the meaning of man's original solitude, which emerges above all from the analysis of the so-called Yahwist text of Genesis 2. As we have seen in the preceding reflections, the biblical text enables us to stress not only consciousness of the human body (man is created in the visible world as a "body among bodies"), but also that of its meaning.

In view of the great conciseness of the biblical text, it is admittedly not possible to amplify this implication too much. It is certain, however, that here we touch upon the central problem of anthropology. Consciousness of the body seems to be identified in this case with the discovery of the complexity of one's own structure. On the basis of philosophical anthropology, this discovery consists, in short, in the relationship between soul and body. The Yahwist narrative with its own language (that is, with its own terminology), expresses it by saying: "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (*Gn* 2:7). Precisely this man, "a living being," distinguishes himself continually from all other living beings in the visible world.

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The premise of man's distinguishing himself in this way is precisely the fact that only he is capable of "tilling the earth" (cf. *Gn* 2:5) and "subduing it" (cf. *Gn* 1:28). It can be said that the consciousness of "superiority" contained in the definition of humanity is born right from the beginning on the basis of a typically human praxis or behavior. This consciousness brings with it a particular perception of the meaning of one's own body, emerging precisely from the fact that it falls to man to "till the earth" and "subdue it." All that would be impossible without a typically human intuition of the meaning of one's own body.

It seems necessary, then, to speak in the first place of this aspect, rather than of the problem of anthropological complexity in the metaphysical sense. The original description of human consciousness, given by the Yahwist text, comprises also the body in the narrative as a whole. It contains the first testimony of the discovery of one's corporeality and even, as has been said, the perception of the meaning of one's own body. All this is revealed not on the basis of any primordial metaphysical analysis, but on the basis of a concrete subjectivity of man that is quite clear.

Man is a subject not only because of his self-awareness and self-determination, but also on the basis of his own body. The structure of this body permits him to be the author of a truly human activity. In this activity the body expresses the person. Therefore, in all its materiality ("God formed man of dust from the ground"), it is almost penetrable and transparent, in such a way as to make it clear who man is (and who he should be), thanks to the structure of his consciousness and of his self-determination. On this rests the fundamental perception of the meaning of one's own body, which can be discovered when analyzing man's original solitude.

Here, with this fundamental understanding of the meaning of his own body, man, as subject of the ancient covenant with the Creator, is placed before the mystery of the tree of knowledge. "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (*Gn* 2:16-17). The original meaning of man's solitude is based on experience of the existence obtained from the Creator. This human existence is characterized precisely by subjectivity, which includes also the meaning of the body.

But could man - who in his original consciousness, knew exclusively the experience of existing and therefore of life - have understood the meaning of the words, "You shall die"? Would he have been able to arrive at understanding the meaning of these words through the complex structure of life, given to him when "the Lord God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life"? It must be admitted that the word "die," a completely new one, appeared on the horizon of man's consciousness without his having ever experienced its reality. At the same time this word appeared before him as a radical antithesis of all that man had been endowed with.

For the first time, man heard the words "You shall die," without having any familiarity with them in his experience up to then. On the other hand, he could not but associate the meaning of death with that dimension of life which he had enjoyed up to then. The words of God-Yahweh addressed to man confirmed a dependence in existing, such as to make man a limited being and, by his very nature, liable to nonexistence.

These words raised the problem of death in a conditional way: "In the day that you eat of it you shall die." Man, who had heard these words, had to find their truth in the interior structure of his

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own solitude. In short, it depended on him, on his decision and free choice, if, with solitude, he was to enter also the circle of the antithesis revealed to him by the Creator, together with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thereby to make his own the experience of dying and death.

Listening to the words of God-Yahweh, man should have understood that the tree of knowledge had roots not only in the garden of Eden, but also in his humanity. Furthermore, he should have understood that that mysterious tree concealed within it a dimension of loneliness, hitherto

unknown, with which the Creator had endowed him in the midst of the world of living beings. In the presence of the Creator himself, man had given names to them, in order to understand that none of them was similar to him.

The fundamental meaning of his body had already been established through its distinction from all other creatures. It had thereby become clear that the "invisible" determines man more than the "visible." Then, there was presented to him the alternative closely and directly connected by God with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The alternative between death and immortality, which emerges from Genesis 2:17, goes beyond the essential meaning of man's body. It grasps the eschatological meaning not only of the body, but of humanity itself, distinguished from all living beings, from "bodies." However, this alternative concerns in a quite particular way, the body created from "dust from the ground."

Not to prolong this analysis, we will merely note that right from the outset the alternative between death and immortality enters the definition of man. It belongs "from the beginning" to the meaning of his solitude before God himself. This original meaning of solitude, permeated by the alternative between death and immortality, also has a fundamental meaning for the whole theology of the body.

With this observation we conclude for the present our reflections on the meaning of man's original solitude. This observation, which emerges in a clear and penetrating way from the texts of Genesis, induces reflection both on the texts and on man. Perhaps he is too little conscious of the truth that concerns him, which is already contained in the first chapters of the Bible.

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The Original Unity of Man and Woman 11/7/79

The words of Genesis, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (2:18) are a prelude to the narrative of the creation of woman. Together with this narrative, the sense of original solitude becomes part of the meaning of original unity, the key point of which seems to be precisely the words of Genesis 2:24. Christ referred to them in his talk with the Pharisees: "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (*Mt* 19:5). If Christ quoted these words referring to the "beginning," it is opportune for us to clarify the meaning of that original unity, which has its roots in the fact of the creation of man as male and female.

The narrative of the first chapter of Genesis does not know the problem of man's original solitude. Man is "male and female" right from the beginning. On the contrary, the Yahwist text of the second chapter authorizes us, in a way, to think first only of the man since, by means of the body, he belongs to the visible world but goes beyond it. Then, it makes us think of the same man, but through the dualism of sex.

Corporality and sexuality are not completely identified. In its normal constitution, the human body bears within it the signs of sex and is male or female by its nature. However, the fact that man is a "body" belongs to the structure of the personal subject more deeply than the fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female. Therefore, the meaning of "original solitude," which can be referred simply to "man," is substantially prior to the meaning of original unity. The latter is based on masculinity and femininity, as if on two different "incarnations," that is, on two ways of "being a body" of the same human being created "in the image of God" (*Gn* 1:27).

Following the Yahwist text, in which the creation of woman was described separately (*Gn* 2:21-22), we must have before our eyes, at the same time, that "image of God" of the first narrative of creation. In language and in style, the second narrative keeps all the characteristics of the Yahwist text. The way of narrating agrees with the way of thinking and expressing oneself of the period to which the text belongs.

Following the contemporary philosophy of religion and that of language, it can be said that the language in question is a mythical one. In this case, the term "myth" does not designate a fabulous content, but merely an archaic way of expressing a deeper content. Without any difficulty we discover that content, under the layer of the ancient narrative. It is really marvellous as regards the qualities and the condensation of the truths contained in it.

Let us add that up to a certain point, the second narrative of the creation of man keeps the form of a dialogue between man and God-Creator. That is manifested above all in that stage in which man (*adam*) is definitively created as male and female (*'is-'issah*). The creation takes place almost simultaneously in two dimensions: the action of God-Yahweh who creates occurs in correlation with the process of human consciousness.

So, God-Yahweh says: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (*Gn* 2:18). At the same time the man confirms his own solitude (cf. *Gn* 2:20). Next we read: "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman" (*Gn* 2:21-22). Considering the specific language, first it must be

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recognized that in the Genesis account, that sleep in which the man is immersed - thanks to God-Yahweh - in preparation for the new creative act, gives us food for thought.

Against the background of contemporary mentality, accustomed - through analysis of the subconscious - to connecting sexual contents with the world of dreams, that sleep may bring forth a particular association. However, the Bible narrative seems to go beyond the dimension of man's subconscious. If we admit, moreover, a significant difference of vocabulary, we can conclude that the man (*'adam*) falls into that "sleep" in order to wake up "male" and "female." In Genesis 2:23, we come across the distinction *'is-'issah* for the first time. Perhaps, therefore, the analogy of sleep indicates here not so much a passing from consciousness to subconsciousness, as a specific return to non-being (sleep contains an element of annihilation of man's conscious existence). That is, it indicates a return to the moment preceding the creation, that through God's creative initiative, solitary "man" may emerge from it again in his double unity as male and female.

In any case, in the light of the context of Genesis 2:18-20, there is no doubt that man falls into that "sleep" with the desire of finding a being like himself. If, by analogy with sleep, we can speak here also of a dream, we must say that the biblical archetype allows us to admit as the content of that dream a "second self." It is also personal and equally referred to the situation of original solitude, that is, to the whole process of the stabilization of human identity in relation to living beings (*animalia*) as a whole, since it is the process of man's "differentiation" from this environment. In this way, the circle of the solitude of the man-person is broken, because the first "man" awakens from his sleep as "male and female."

The woman is made "with the rib" that God-Yahweh had taken from the man. Considering the archaic, metaphorical and figurative way of expressing the thought, we can establish that it is a question here of homogeneity of the whole being of both. This homogeneity concerns above all the body, the somatic structure. It is also confirmed by the man's first words to the woman who has been created: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (*Gn 2:23*). Yet the words quoted refer also to the humanity of the male. They must be read in the context of the affirmations made before the creation of the woman, in which, although the "incarnation" of the man does not yet exist, she is defined as "a helper fit for him" (cf. *Gn 2:18* and *2:20*). In this way, therefore, the woman is created, in a sense, on the basis of the same humanity.

Somatic homogeneity, in spite of the difference in constitution bound up with the sexual difference, is so evident that the man, on waking up from the genetic sleep, expresses it at once, when he says: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh - she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man" (*Gn 2:23*). In this way the man manifests for the first time joy and even exaltation, for which he had no reason before, owing to the lack of a being like himself. Joy in the other human being, in the second "self," dominates the words spoken by the man on seeing the woman. All this helps to establish the full meaning of original unity. The words here are few, but each one is of great weight. We must take into account - and we will do so also later - the fact that the first woman, "made with the rib...taken from the man," is at once accepted as a fit helper for him.

We shall return to this same subject, that is, the meaning of the original unity of man and of woman in humanity, in the next meditation.

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By the Communion of Persons Man Becomes the Image of God 11/14/79

Following the narrative of Genesis, we have seen that the "definitive" creation of man consists in the creation of the unity of two beings. Their unity denotes above all the identity of human nature; their duality, on the other hand, manifests what, on the basis of this identity, constitutes the masculinity and femininity of created man. This ontological dimension of unity and duality has, at the same time, an axiological meaning. From the text of Genesis 2:23 and from the whole context, it is clearly seen that man was created as a particular value before God. "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (*Gn* 1:31). But man was also created as a particular value for himself - first, because he is man; second, because the woman is for the man, and vice versa, the man is for the woman.

In this way the meaning of man's original unity, through masculinity and femininity, is expressed as an overcoming of the frontier of solitude. At the same time it is an affirmation - with regard to both human beings - of everything that constitutes man in solitude. In the Bible narrative, solitude is the way that leads to that unity which, following Vatican II, we can define as *communio personarum*.

As we have already seen, in his original solitude man acquires a personal consciousness in the process of distinction from all living beings (*animalia*). At the same time, in this solitude, he opens up to a being akin to himself, defined in Genesis (2:18, 20) as "a helper fit for him." This opening is no less decisive for the person of man; in fact, it is perhaps even more decisive than the distinction itself. In the Yahwist narrative, man's solitude is presented to us not only as the first discovery of the characteristic transcendence peculiar to the person. It is also presented as the discovery of an adequate relationship "to" the person, and therefore as an opening and expectation of a "communion of persons."

The term "community" could also be used here, if it were not generic and did not have so many meanings. *Communio* expresses more, with greater precision, since it indicates precisely that "help" which is derived, in a sense, from the very fact of existing as a person "beside" a person. In the Bible narrative this fact becomes *eo ipso* - in itself - the existence of the person "for" the person, since man in his original solitude was, in a way, already in this relationship. That is confirmed, in a negative sense, precisely by this solitude.

Furthermore, the communion of persons could be formed only on the basis of a "double solitude" of man and of woman, that is, as their meeting in their distinction from the world of living beings (*animalia*), which gave them both the possibility of being and existing in a special reciprocity. The concept of "help" also expresses this reciprocity in existence, which no other living being could have ensured. All that constituted the foundation of the solitude of each of them was indispensable for this reciprocity. Self-knowledge and self-determination, that is, subjectivity and consciousness of the meaning of one's own body, was also indispensable.

In the first chapter, the narrative of the creation of man affirms directly, right from the beginning, that man was created in the image of God as male and female. The narrative of the second chapter, on the other hand, does not speak of the "image of God." But in its own way it reveals that the complete and definitive creation of "man" (subjected first to the experience of original solitude) is expressed in giving life to that *communio personarum* that man and woman form. In this way, the Yahwist narrative agrees with the content of the first narrative.

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If, vice versa, we wish to draw also from the narrative of the Yahwist text the concept of "image of God," we can then deduce that man became the "image and likeness" of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning. The function of the image is to reflect the one who is the model, to reproduce its own prototype. Man becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. Right "from the beginning," he is not only an image in which the solitude of a person who rules the world is reflected, but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons.

In this way, the second narrative could also be a preparation for understanding the Trinitarian concept of the "image of God," even if the latter appears only in the first narrative. Obviously, that is not without significance for the theology of the body. Perhaps it even constitutes the deepest theological aspect of all that can be said about man. In the mystery of creation - on the basis of the original and constituent "solitude" of his being - man was endowed with a deep unity between what is, humanly and through the body, male in him and what is, equally humanly and through the body, female in him. On all this, right from the beginning, the blessing of fertility descended, linked with human procreation (cf. *Gn* 1:28).

In this way, we find ourselves almost at the heart of the anthropological reality that has the name "body." The words of Genesis 2:23 speak of it directly and for the first time in the following terms: "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." The man uttered these words, as if it were only at the sight of the woman that he was able to identify and call by name what makes them visibly similar to each other, and at the same time what manifests humanity.

In the light of the preceding analysis of all the "bodies" which man has come into contact with and which he has defined, conceptually giving them their name (*animalia*), the expression "flesh of my flesh" takes on precisely this meaning: the body reveals man. This concise formula already contains everything that human science could ever say about the structure of the body as organism, about its vitality, and its particular sexual physiology, etc. This first expression of the man, "flesh of my flesh," also contains a reference to what makes that body truly human. Therefore it referred to what determines man as a person, that is, as a being who, even in all his corporality, is similar to God.

We find ourselves, therefore, almost at the very core of the anthropological reality, the name of which is "body," the human body. However, as can easily be seen, this core is not only anthropological, but also essentially theological. Right from the beginning, the theology of the body is bound up with the creation of man in the image of God. It becomes, in a way, also the theology of sex, or rather the theology of masculinity and femininity, which has its starting point here in Genesis.

The words of Genesis 2:24 bear witness to the original meaning of unity, which will have in the revelation of God an ample and distant perspective. This unity through the body - "and the two will be one flesh" possesses a multiform dimension. It possesses an ethical dimension, as is confirmed by Christ's answer to the Pharisees in Matthew 19 (cf. *Mk* 10). It also has a sacramental dimension, a strictly theological one, as is proved by St. Paul's words to the Ephesians" which refer also to the tradition of the prophets (Hosea, Isaiah, Ezekiel). This is so because, right from the beginning, that unity which is realized through the body indicates not

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only the "body," but also the "incarnate" communion of persons - *communio personarum* - and calls for this communion.

Masculinity and femininity express the dual aspect of man's somatic constitution. "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Furthermore, through the same words of Genesis 2:23, they indicate the new consciousness of the sense of one's own body. It can be said that this sense consists in a mutual enrichment. Precisely this consciousness, through which humanity is formed again as the communion of persons, seems to be the layer which in the narrative of the creation of man (and in the revelation of the body contained in it) is deeper than his somatic structure as male and female. In any case, this structure is presented right from the beginning with a deep consciousness of human corporality and sexuality, and that establishes an inalienable norm for the understanding of man on the theological plane.

In the First Chapters of Genesis, Marriage Is One and Indissoluble 11/21/79

Let us recall that when questioned about the unity and indissolubility of marriage, Christ referred to what was "in the beginning." He quoted the words written in the first chapters of Genesis. In the course of these reflections, we are trying to penetrate the specific meaning of these words and these chapters.

The meaning of the original unity of man, whom God created "male and female," is obtained (especially in the light of Genesis 2:23) by knowing man in the entire endowment of his being, that is, in all the riches of that mystery of creation, on which theological anthropology is based. This knowledge, that is, the study of the human identity of the one who, at the beginning, is "alone," must always pass through duality, "communion."

Let us recall the passage of Genesis 2:23: "Then the man said, `This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. '" In the light of this text, we understand that knowledge of man passes through masculinity and femininity. These are, as it were, two "incarnations" of the same metaphysical solitude before God and the world. They are two ways of "being a body" and at the same time a man, which complete each other. They are two complementary dimensions of self-consciousness and self-determination and, at the same time, two complementary ways of being conscious of the meaning of the body.

As Genesis 2:23 already shows, femininity finds itself, in a sense, in the presence of masculinity, while masculinity is confirmed through femininity. Precisely the function of sex, which is in a sense, "a constituent part of the person" (not just "an attribute of the person"), proves how deeply man, with all his spiritual solitude, with the never to be repeated uniqueness of his person, is constituted by the body as "he" or "she." The presence of the feminine element, alongside the male element and together with it, signifies an enrichment for man in the whole perspective of his history, including the history of salvation. All this teaching on unity has already been expressed originally in Genesis 2:23.

The unity of which Genesis 2:24 speaks - "they become one flesh" - is undoubtedly expressed and realized in the conjugal act. The biblical formulation, extremely concise and simple, indicates sex, femininity and masculinity, as that characteristic of man - male and female - which permits them, when they become "one flesh," to submit their whole humanity to the blessing of

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fertility. However, the whole context of the lapidary formulation does not permit us to stop at the surface of human sexuality. It does not allow us to deal with the body and sex outside the full dimension of man and of the "communion of persons." Right from the beginning it obliges us to see the fullness and depth which are characteristic of this unity, which man and woman must constitute in the light of the revelation of the body.

The perspective expression which says, "a man cleaves to his wife" so intimately that "they become one flesh," always induces us to refer to what the biblical text expresses previously with regard to the union in humanity, which binds the woman and the man in the very mystery of creation. The words of Genesis 2:23, just analyzed, explain this concept in a particular way. Uniting with each other (in the conjugal act) so closely as to become "one flesh," man and woman, rediscover, so to speak, every time and in a special way, the mystery of creation. They return in this way to that union in humanity ("bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh") which allows them to recognize each other and, like the first time, to call each other by name.

This means reliving, in a sense, the original virginal value of man, which emerges from the mystery of his solitude before God and in the midst of the world. The fact that they become one flesh is a powerful bond established by the Creator. Through it they discover their own humanity, both in its original unity, and in the duality of a mysterious mutual attraction.

However, sex is something more than the mysterious power of human corporality, which acts almost by virtue of instinct. At the level of man and in the mutual relationship of persons, sex expresses an ever new surpassing of the limit of man's solitude that is inherent in the constitution of his body, and determines its original meaning. This surpassing always contains within it a certain assumption of the solitude of the body of the second "self " as one's own.

Therefore, it is bound up with choice. The formulation of Genesis 2:24 indicates that human beings, created as man and woman, were created for unity. It also indicates that precisely this unity, through which they become one flesh, has right from the beginning a character of union derived from a choice. We read: "A man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife." If the man belongs "by nature" to his father and mother, by virtue of procreation, on the other hand, he cleaves by choice to his wife (or she to her husband).

The text of Genesis 2:24 defines this character of the conjugal bond with reference to the first man and the first woman. At the same time, it does so in the perspective of the whole earthly future of man. Therefore, in his time, Christ will appeal to that text, as equally relevant in his age. Formed in the image of God, also inasmuch as they form a true communion of persons, the first man and the first woman must constitute the beginning and the model of that communion for all men and women, who, in any period, are united so intimately as to be one flesh.

The body, which through its own masculinity or femininity right from the beginning helps both to find themselves in communion of persons, becomes, in a particular way, the constituent element of their union, when they become husband and wife. This takes place, however, through a mutual choice. This choice establishes the conjugal pact between persons, who become one flesh only on this basis.

That corresponds to the structure of man's solitude, and in actual fact to the "twofold solitude." As the expression of self-determination, choice rests on the foundation of his self-consciousness.

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Only on the basis of the structure peculiar to man is he "a body" and, through the body, also male and female. When they both unite so closely as to become one flesh, their conjugal union presupposes a mature consciousness of the body. In fact, it bears within it a particular consciousness of the meaning of that body in the mutual self-giving of the persons.

In this sense too, Genesis 2:24 is a perspective text. It proves that in every conjugal union of man and woman, the same original consciousness of the unifying significance of the body in its masculinity and femininity is discovered again. At the same time, the biblical text indicates that each of these unions renews, in a way, the mystery of creation in all its original depth and vital power. "Taken out of man" as "flesh of his flesh," woman subsequently becomes, as wife and through her motherhood, mother of the living (cf. *Gn* 3:20), since her motherhood also has its origin in him. Procreation is rooted in creation, and every time, in a sense, reproduces its mystery.

A special reflection on "knowledge and procreation" will be devoted to this subject. In it, it will be necessary to refer further to other elements of the biblical text. The analysis made hitherto of the meaning of the original unity proves in what way that unity of man and woman, inherent in the mystery of creation, is "from the beginning" also given as a commitment in the perspective of all following times.

The Meaning of Original Human Experiences 12/12/79

The analysis of the first chapters of Genesis forces us, in a way, to reconstruct the elements that constitute man's original experience. In this sense, the character of the Yahwist text makes it a special source. Speaking of original human experiences, we have in mind not so much their distance in time, as rather their basic significance. The important thing is not that these experiences belong to man's prehistory (to his "theological prehistory"), but that they are always at the root of every human experience. That is true even if in the evolution of ordinary human existence, little attention is paid to these essential experiences. They are so intermingled with the ordinary things of life that we do not generally notice their extraordinary character.

On the basis of the analyses carried out up to now, we have already realized that what we called at the beginning the "revelation of the body," helps us somehow to discover the extraordinary side of what is ordinary. That is possible because the revelation (the original one, expressed first in the Yahwist account of Genesis 2:3, then in the text of Genesis 1) takes into consideration precisely these primordial experiences. In them, there appears almost completely the absolute originality of what the male-female human being is: as a man, that is, also through his body. As we discover it in the biblical text quoted, man's experience of his body is certainly on the threshold of his whole subsequent "historical" experience. However, it also seems to rest at such an ontological depth that man does not perceive it in his own everyday life. This is so even if at the same time, and in a certain way, he presupposes it and postulates it as part of the process of formation of his own image.

Without this introductory reflection, it would be impossible to define the meaning of original nakedness and tackle the analysis of Genesis 2:25, which runs as follows: "And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed." At first sight, the introduction of this detail, apparently a secondary one in the Yahwist account of man's creation, may seem something inadequate or misplaced. One would think that the passage quoted cannot bear comparison with

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what has been dealt with in the preceding verses and that, in a way, it goes beyond the context. However, this judgment does not stand up to a deeper analysis. Genesis 2:25 presents one of the key elements of the original revelation. It is as decisive as the other texts of Genesis 2:20 and 2:23, which have already enabled us to define the meaning of man's original solitude and original unity. To these is added, as the third element, the meaning of original nakedness, clearly stressed in the context. In the first biblical draft of anthropology, it is not something accidental. On the contrary, it is precisely the key for its full and complete understanding.

This element of the ancient biblical text makes a specific contribution to the theology of the body that absolutely cannot be ignored. Further analyses will confirm this. But before undertaking them, I take the liberty of pointing out that the text of Genesis 2:25 expressly requires that the reflections on the theology of the body should be connected with the dimension of man's personal subjectivity. It is within the latter that consciousness of the meaning of the body develops. Genesis 2:25 speaks about it far more directly than other parts of that Yahwist text, which we have already defined as the first recording of human consciousness.

The sentence, according to which the first human beings, man and woman, "were naked" and yet "were not ashamed," unquestionably describes their state of consciousness, in fact, their mutual experience of the body. It describes the experience on the part of the man of the femininity that is revealed in the nakedness of the body and, reciprocally, the similar experience of masculinity on the part of the woman. By saying that "they were not ashamed," the author tries to describe this mutual experience of the body with the greatest precision possible for him. It can be said that this type of precision reflects a basic experience of man in the "common" and pre-scientific sense. But it also corresponds to the requirements of anthropology and in particular of contemporary anthropology, which likes to refer to so-called fundamental experiences, such as the "experience of shame."

Referring here to the precision of the account, such as was possible for the author of the Yahwist text, we are led to consider the degrees of experience of historical man, laden with the inheritance of sin. However, these degrees methodically start precisely from the state of original innocence. We have already seen that, referring to "the beginning" (which we have subjected here to successive contextual analyses), Christ indirectly established the idea of continuity and connection between those two states. This allows us to move back from the threshold of man's historical sinfulness to his original innocence. Genesis 2:25 makes it especially necessary to cross that threshold.

This passage, together with the meaning of original nakedness inherent in it, takes its place in the contextual setting of the Yahwist narrative. After some verses, the same author writes: "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (*Gn* 3:7). The adverb "then" indicates a new moment and a new situation following the breaking of the first covenant. This situation follows the failure of the test connected with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At the same time that test constituted the first test of "obedience," that is, listening to the Word in all its truth and accepting love, according to the fullness of the demands of the creative Will. This new moment or new situation also implies a new content and a new quality of experience of the body, so that it can no longer be said: "They were naked, but were not ashamed." Here, shame is an experience that is not only original, but a "boundary" one.

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The difference of formulations that divides Genesis 2:25 from Genesis 3:7 is significant-in the first case, "They were naked, but they were not ashamed"; in the second case, "They knew that they were naked." Does that mean that, to begin with, "They did not know that they were naked," or that they did not see the nakedness of each other's body? The significant change testified by the biblical text about the experience of shame (of which Genesis speaks again, especially in 3:10-12), takes place at a deeper level than the pure and simple use of the sense of sight.

A comparative analysis of Genesis 2:25 and Genesis 3 leads necessarily to the conclusion that it is not a question here of passing from "not knowing" to "knowing." Rather, it involves a radical change of the meaning of the original nakedness of the woman before the man and of the man before the woman. It emerges from their conscience, as a fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (*Gn* 3:11).

This change directly concerns the experience of the meaning of one's body before the Creator and creatures. Subsequently, the man's words confirm this: "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (*Gn* 3 :10). That change, which the

Yahwist text portrays so concisely and dramatically, concerns directly - perhaps in the most direct way possible - the man-woman, femininity-masculinity relationship.

We will have to return again to the analysis of this change in other parts of our further reflections. Now, having arrived at that border which crosses the sphere of the "beginning" to which Christ referred, we should ask ourselves if it is possible to reconstruct, in some way, the original meaning of nakedness. In Genesis, nakedness constitutes the immediate context of the doctrine about the unity of the human being as male and female. That seems possible, if we take as a reference point the experience of shame as it was clearly presented in the ancient biblical text as a "liminal" experience. We shall attempt this reconstruction in our following meditations.

The Fullness of Interpersonal Communication 12/19/79

What is shame and how can we explain its absence in the state of original innocence, in the depth of the mystery of the creation of man as male and female? From contemporary analyses of shame - and in particular of sexual modesty - we can deduce the complexity of this fundamental experience, in which man expresses himself as a person according to his own specific structure. In the experience of shame, the human being experiences fear with regard to his "second self," (for example, woman before man). This is substantially fear for one's own "self." With shame, the human being manifests almost instinctively the need of affirmation and acceptance of this "self," according to its rightful value. He experiences it at the same time both within himself, and externally, before the "other." Shame is a complex experience. Almost keeping one human being away from the other (woman from man), it seeks at the same time to draw them closer personally, creating a suitable basis and level to do so.

For the same reason, it has a fundamental significance as regards the formation of ethos in human society, and especially in the man-woman relationship. The analysis of shame clearly indicates how deeply it is rooted precisely in mutual relations, how exactly it expresses the essential rules for the "communion of persons," and likewise how deeply it touches the

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dimension of man's original "solitude." The appearance of shame in the subsequent biblical narration of chapter 3 of Genesis has a pluri-dimensional significance. It will be opportune to resume the analysis in due time.

the meaning of original nakedness, this dimension absolutely cannot be disregarded. This participating in perception of the world - in its "exterior" aspect - is a direct and almost spontaneous fact. It is prior to any "critical" complication of knowledge and of human experience and is seen as closely connected with the experience of the meaning of the human body. The original innocence of "knowledge" could already be perceived in this way.

However, it is not possible to determine the meaning of original nakedness considering only man's participation in exterior perception of the world. It is not possible to establish it without going into the depths of man. Genesis 2:25 introduces us specifically to this level and wants us to seek there the original innocence of knowing. The dimension of human interiority is necessary to explain and measure that particular fullness of interpersonal communication, thanks to which man and woman were naked and were not ashamed.

In our conventional language, the concept of communication has been practically alienated from its deepest, original semantic matrix. It is connected mainly with the sphere of the media, that is, for the most part, products that serve for understanding, exchange, and bringing closer together. On the other hand, it can be supposed that, in its original and deeper meaning, communication was and is directly connected with subjects. They communicate precisely on the basis of the common union that exists between them, both to reach and to express a reality that is peculiar and pertinent only to the sphere of person-subjects.

In this way, the human body acquires a completely new meaning, which cannot be placed on the plane of the remaining "external" perception of the world. It expresses the person in his ontological and existential concreteness, which is something more than the individual. Therefore the body expresses the personal human "self," which derives its exterior perception from within.

The whole biblical narrative, and in particular the Yahwist text, shows that the body through its own visibility manifests man. In manifesting him, it acts as intermediary, that is, it enables man and woman, right from the beginning, to communicate with each other according to that *communio personarum* willed by the Creator precisely for them. It seems that only this dimension enables us to rightly understand the meaning of original nakedness. In this connection, any "naturalistic" criterion is bound to fail, while, on the contrary, the "personalistic" criterion can be of great help. Genesis 2:25 certainly speaks of something extraordinary, which is outside the limits of the shame known through human experience. At the same time it decides the particular fullness of interpersonal communication, rooted at the very heart of that *communio*, which is thus revealed and developed. In this connection, the words "they were not ashamed" can mean *in sensu obliquo* only an original depth in affirming what is inherent in the person, what is "visibly" female and male, through which the personal intimacy of mutual communication in all its radical simplicity and purity is constituted. To this fullness of exterior perception, expressed by means of physical nakedness, there corresponds the interior fullness of man's vision in God, that is, according to the measure of the "image of God" (cf. *Gn* 1:17). According to this measure, man "is" really naked ("They were naked" - *Gn* 2:25), even before realizing it (cf. *Gn* 3:7-10).

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We shall still have to complete the analysis of this important text during the meditations that follow.

Creation As a Fundamental and Original Gift 1/2/80

Let us return to analyzing the text of Genesis 2:25: "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (*Gn 2:25*). According to this passage, the man and the woman saw themselves, as it were, through the mystery of creation. They saw themselves in this way, before knowing that they were naked. This seeing each other is not just a participation in exterior perception of the world. It also has an interior dimension of participation in the vision of the Creator himself - that vision of which the Elohist text speaks several times: "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (*Gn 1:31*).

Nakedness signifies the original good of God's vision. It signifies all the simplicity and fullness of the vision through which the "pure" value of humanity as male and female, the "pure" value of the body and of sex, is manifested. The situation that is indicated, in such a concise and at the same time inspiring way, by the original revelation of the body as seen especially by Genesis 2:25, does not know an interior rupture and opposition between what is spiritual and what is sensible. It does not know a rupture and opposition between what constitutes the person humanly and what in man is determined by sex - what is male and female.

Seeing each other, as if through the mystery of creation, man and woman see each other even more fully and distinctly than through the sense of sight itself, that is, through the eyes of the body. They see and know each other with all the peace of the interior gaze, which creates precisely the fullness of the intimacy of persons.

Shame brings with it a specific limitation in seeing with the eyes of the body. This takes place above all because personal intimacy is disturbed and almost threatened by this sight. According to Genesis 2:25, the man and the woman were not ashamed seeing and knowing each other in all the peace and tranquillity of the interior gaze. They communicate in the fullness of humanity, which is manifested in them as reciprocal complementarity precisely because they are "male" and "female." At the same time, they communicate on the basis of that communion of persons in which, through femininity and masculinity, they become a gift for each other. In this way they reach in reciprocity a special understanding of the meaning of their own body.

The original meaning of nakedness corresponds to that simplicity and fullness of vision in which understanding the meaning of the body comes about at the very heart of their community-communion. We will call it "nuptial." The man and the woman in Genesis 2:23-25 emerge, precisely at the "beginning," with this consciousness of the meaning of their body. This deserves a careful analysis.

The two narratives of the creation of man, the Elohist and the Yahwist, enable us to establish the original meaning of solitude, unity and nakedness. They thereby enable us also to find ourselves on the ground of an adequate anthropology, which tries to understand and interpret man in what is essentially human.

The Bible texts contain the essential elements of this anthropology, which are manifested in the theological context of the "image of God." This concept conceals within it the root of the truth about man. This is revealed through that "beginning," which Christ referred to in the talk with

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the Pharisees (cf. *Mt* 19:3-9), when he treated of the creation of the human male and female. It must be recalled that all the analyses we make here are connected, at least indirectly, precisely with these words of his. Man, whom God created male and female, bears the divine image imprinted on his body "from the beginning." Man and woman constitute two different ways of the human "being a body" in the unity of that image.

Now, it is opportune to turn again to those fundamental words which Christ used, that is, the word "created" and the subject "Creator." They introduce in the considerations made so far a new dimension, a new criterion of understanding and interpretation, which we will call "hermeneutics of the gift." The dimension of the gift decides the essential truth and depth of meaning of the original solitude, unity and nakedness. It is also at the heart of the mystery of creation, which enables us to construct the theology of the body "from the beginning," but demands, at the same time, that we should construct it in this way.

On Christ's lips, the word "created" contains the same truth that we find in Genesis. The first account of creation repeats this word several times, from Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," to Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image."

God reveals himself above all as Creator. Christ referred to that fundamental revelation contained in Genesis. In it, the concept of creation has all its depth - not only metaphysical, but also fully theological.

The Creator is he who "calls to existence from nothingness," and who establishes the world in existence and man in the world, because he "is love" (*1 Jn* 4:8). Actually, we do not find this word in the narrative of creation. However, this narrative often repeats: "God saw what he had made, and behold, it was very good." Through these words we are led to glimpse in love the divine motive of creation, the source from which it springs. Only love gives a beginning to good and delights in good (cf. *1 Cor* 13). As the action of God, the creation signifies not only calling from nothingness to existence and establishing the existence of the world and of man in the world. It also signifies, according to the first narrative, *beresit bara*, giving. It is a fundamental and "radical" giving, that is, a giving in which the gift comes into being precisely from nothingness.

The first chapters of Genesis introduce us to the mystery of creation, that is, the beginning of the world by the will of God, who is omnipotence and love. Consequently, every creature bears within it the sign of the original and fundamental gift.

At the same time, however, the concept of "giving" cannot refer to a nothingness. It indicates the one who gives and the one who receives the gift, and also the relationship that is established between them. Now, this relationship emerges in the account of creation at the moment of the creation of man. This relationship is manifested above all by the expression: "God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him" (*Gn* 1:27).

In the narrative of the creation of the visible world, the giving has a meaning only with regard to man. In the whole work of creation, it can be said only of him that a gift was conferred on him; the visible world was created "for him." The biblical account of creation offers us sufficient reasons to understand and interpret in this way. Creation is a gift, because man appears in it. As the "image of God," man is capable of understanding the meaning of gift in the call from

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nothingness to existence. He is capable of answering the Creator with the language of this understanding. Interpreting the narrative of creation with this language, it can be deduced from it that creation constitutes the fundamental and original gift. Man appears in creation as the one who received the world as a gift, and it can also be said that the world received man as a gift.

At this point, we must interrupt our analysis. What we have said so far is in close relationship with all the anthropological problems of the "beginning." Man appears as created, that is, as the one who, in the midst of the "world," received the other man as a gift. Later we will have to make precisely this dimension of the gift the subject of a deep analysis in order to understand also the meaning of the human body in its rightful extent. That will be the subject of our following meditations.

The Nuptial Meaning of the Body 1/9/80

Rereading and analyzing the second narrative of creation, the Yahwist text, we must ask ourselves if the first "man" (*adam*), in his original solitude, really "lived" the world as a gift, with an attitude in conformity with the actual condition of one who has received a gift, as is seen from the narrative in the first chapter. The second narrative shows us man in the garden of Eden (cf. *Gn* 2:8). Though man was in this situation of original happiness, the Creator himself (God-Yahweh) and then also "man," pointed out that man was alone - instead of stressing the aspect of the world as a subjectively beatifying gift created for man (cf. the first narrative and in particular *Gn* 26:29).

We have already analyzed the meaning of original solitude. Now we must note that a certain lack of good clearly appears for the first time: "It is not good that man, should be alone" - God-Yahweh said - "I will make him a helper..." (*Gn* 2:18). The first man said the same thing. After having become thoroughly aware of his own solitude among all living beings on earth, waited for "a helper fit for him" (cf. *Gn* 2:20). None of these beings (*animalia*) offered man the basic conditions which make it possible to exist in a relationship of mutual giving.

In this way, these two expressions, namely, the adjective "alone" and the noun "helper," seem to be the key to understand the essence of the gift at the level of man, as existential content contained in the truth of the "image of God." The gift reveals, so to speak, a particular characteristic of personal existence, or rather, of the essence of the person. When God-Yahweh said, "It is not good that man should be alone," (*Gn* 2:18) he affirmed that "alone," man does not completely realize this essence. He realizes it only by existing "with someone" - and even more deeply and completely - by existing "for someone."

This norm of existence as a person is shown in Genesis as characteristic of creation, precisely by means of the meaning of these two words: "alone" and "helper." These words indicate as fundamental and constitutive for man both the relationship and the communion of persons. The communion of persons means existing in a mutual "for," in a relationship of mutual gift. This relationship is precisely the fulfillment of "man's" original solitude.

In its origin, this fulfillment is beatifying. It is certainly implicit in man's original happiness, and constitutes that happiness which belongs to the mystery of creation effected by love, which belongs to the essence of creative giving. When man, the male, awakening from the sleep of Genesis, saw the female, drawn from him, he said: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of

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my flesh" (*Gen 2:23*). These words express, in a way, the subjectively beatifying beginning of human existence in the world. Since it took place at the "beginning," this confirms the process of individuation of man in the world. It springs from the depths of his human solitude, which he lives as a person in the presence of all other creatures and all living beings.

This "beginning" belongs to an adequate anthropology and can always be verified on the basis of the latter. This purely anthropological verification brings us, at the same time, to the subject of the "person" and to the subject of the "body-sex." This simultaneousness is essential. If we dealt with sex without the person, the whole adequacy of the anthropology which we find in Genesis would be destroyed. For our theological study the essential light of the revelation of the body, which appears so fully in these first affirmations, would then be veiled.

There is a deep connection between the mystery of creation, as a gift springing from love, and that beatifying "beginning" of the existence of man as male and female, in the whole truth of their body and their sex, which is the pure and simple truth of communion between persons. When the first man exclaimed, at the sight of the woman: "This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (*Gn 2:23*), he merely affirmed the human identity of both. Exclaiming in this way, he seems to say that here is a body that expresses the person.

According to a preceding passage of the Yahwist text, it can also be said that this "body" reveals the "living soul," such as man became when God-Yahweh breathed life into him (cf. *Gn 2:7*). This resulted in his solitude before all other living beings. By traversing the depth of that original solitude, man now emerged in the dimension of the mutual gift. The expression of that gift - and for that reason the expression of his existence as a person - is the human body in all the original truth of its masculinity and femininity.

The body which expresses femininity manifests the reciprocity and communion of persons. It expresses it by means of the gift as the fundamental characteristic of personal existence. This is the body - a witness to creation as a fundamental gift, and so a witness to Love as the source from which this same giving springs. Masculinity and femininity - namely, sex - is the original sign of a creative donation and an awareness on the part of man, male-female, of a gift lived in an original way. Such is the meaning with which sex enters the theology of the body.

That beatifying "beginning" of man's being and existing, as male and female, is connected with the revelation and discovery of the meaning of the body, which can be called "nuptial." If we speak of revelation and at the same time of discovery, we do so in relation to the specificity of the Yahwist text. In it, the theological thread is also anthropological, appearing as a certain reality consciously lived by man.

We have already observed that the words which express the first joy of man's coming to existence as "male and female" (*Gn 2:23*) are followed by the verse which establishes their conjugal unity (cf. *Gn 2:24*). Then follows the verse which testifies to the nakedness of both, without mutual shame (*Gn 2:25*). This significant confrontation enables us to speak of the revelation and at the same time the discovery of the "nuptial" meaning of the body in the mystery of creation.

This meaning (inasmuch as it is revealed and also conscious, "lived" by man) confirms completely that the creative giving, which springs from Love, has reached the original

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consciousness of man. It becomes an experience of mutual giving, as can already be seen in the ancient text. That nakedness of both progenitors, free from shame, seems also to bear witness to that, perhaps even specifically.

Genesis 2:24 speaks of the finality of man's masculinity and femininity, in the life of the spouses-parents. Uniting with each other so closely as to become "one flesh," they will subject their humanity to the blessing of fertility, namely, "procreation," which the first narrative speaks of (cf. *Gn* 1:28). Man comes "into being" with consciousness of this finality of his own masculinity-femininity, that is, of his own sexuality. At the same time, the words of Genesis 2:25: "They were both naked, and were not ashamed," seem to add to this fundamental truth of the meaning of the human body, of its masculinity and femininity, another no less essential and fundamental truth. Aware of the procreative capacity of his body and of his sexuality, man is at the same time "free from the constraint" of his own body and sex.

That original nakedness, mutual and at the same time not weighed down by shame, expresses this interior freedom of man. Is this what freedom from the "sexual instinct" is? The concept of "instinct" already implies an interior constraint, similar to the instinct that stimulates fertility and procreation in the whole world of living beings (*animalia*). It seems, however, that both texts of Genesis, the first and the second narrative of the creation of man, connected sufficiently the perspective of procreation with the fundamental characteristic of human existence in the personal sense. Consequently the analogy of the human body and of sex in relation to the world of animals - which we can call an analogy of nature - is also raised, in a way, in both narratives (though in a different way in each), to the level of "image of God," and to the level of the person and communion between persons.

Further analyses will be dedicated to this essential problem. For the conscience of man - also for modern man - it is important to know that the revelation of the "nuptial meaning of the body" is found in those biblical texts which speak of the "beginning" of man. But it is even more important to establish what this meaning expresses precisely.

The Human Person Becomes a Gift in the Freedom of Love 1/16/80

Let us continue today with the analysis of the texts of Genesis, which we have undertaken according to Christ's line of teaching. Let us recall that in the talk about marriage he referred to the "beginning."

The revelation, and at the same time the original discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body, consists in this: it presents man, male and female, in the whole reality and truth of his body and sex ("they were naked") and at the same time in full freedom from any constraint of the body and of sex. The nakedness of our progenitors, interiorly free from shame, seems to bear witness to this. It can be said that, created by Love, endowed in their being with masculinity and femininity, they are both "naked" because they are free with the freedom of the gift.

This freedom lies at the basis of the nuptial meaning of the body. The human body, with its sex, and its masculinity and femininity seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and procreation, as in the whole natural order. It includes right from the beginning the nuptial attribute, that is, the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift and - by means of this gift - fulfills the meaning of his being and existence. Let us

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recall here the text of the last Council which declared that man is the only creature in the visible world that God willed "for its own sake." It then added that man "can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself" (*GS* 24).

The root of that original nakedness free from shame, which Genesis 2:25 speaks of, must be sought in that complete truth about man. Man or woman, in the context of their beatifying beginning, are free with the freedom of the gift. To remain in the relationship of the "sincere gift of themselves" and to become such a gift for each other, through the whole of their humanity made of femininity and masculinity (also in relation to that perspective which Genesis 2:24 speaks of), they must be free precisely in this way.

We mean here freedom especially as mastery of oneself (self control). From this aspect, it is indispensable that man may be able to "give himself," that he may become a gift, that he will be able to "fully discover his true self" in "a sincere giving of himself" (referring to the words of the Council). Thus the words, "They were naked and were not ashamed" can and must be understood as the revelation - and at the same time rediscovery - of freedom. This freedom makes possible and qualifies the nuptial sense of the body.

Genesis 2:25 says even more, however. It indicates the possibility and the characteristic of this mutual "experience of the body." It enables us also to identify that nuptial meaning of the body *in actu*. When we read: "They were naked and were not ashamed," we directly touch its fruits and indirectly touch almost the root of it. Free interiorly from the constraint of their own bodies and sex, free with the freedom of the gift, man and woman could enjoy the whole truth, the whole self-evidence of man, just as God-Yahweh had revealed these things to them in the mystery of creation.

This truth about man, which the conciliar text states precisely in the words quoted above, has two main emphases. The first affirms that man is the only creature in the world that the Creator willed "for its own sake." The second consists in saying that this same man, willed by the Creator in this way right from "the beginning," can find himself only in the disinterested giving of himself. Now, this truth about man, which seems in particular to grasp the original condition connected with the very beginning of man in the mystery of creation, can be reread in both directions, on the basis of the conciliar text. This rereading helps us to understand even more the nuptial meaning of the body. This meaning seems inscribed in the original condition of man and woman (according to Genesis 2:23-25) and in particular in the meaning of their original nakedness.

As we have noted, at the root of their nakedness is the interior freedom of the gift - the disinterested gift of oneself. This gift enables them both, man and woman, to find one another, since the Creator willed each of them "for his (her) own sake" (cf. *GS* 24). Thus man, in the first beatifying meeting, finds the woman, and she finds him. In this way he accepts her interiorly. He accepts her as she is willed "for her own sake" by the Creator, as she is constituted in the mystery of the image of God through her femininity. Reciprocally, she accepts him in the same way, as he is willed "for his own sake" by the Creator, and constituted by him by means of his masculinity. The revelation and the discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body consists in this. The Yahwist narrative, and in particular Genesis 2:25, enables us to deduce that man, as male and female, enters the world precisely with this awareness of the meaning of the body, of masculinity and femininity.

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The human body, oriented interiorly by the sincere gift of the person, reveals not only its masculinity or femininity on the physical plane, but reveals also such a value and such a beauty as to go beyond the purely physical dimension of sexuality. In this manner awareness of the nuptial meaning of the body, connected with man's masculinity-femininity, is in a way completed. On the one hand, this meaning indicates a particular capacity of expressing love, in which man becomes a gift. On the other hand, the capacity and deep availability for the affirmation of the person corresponds to it. This is, literally, the capacity of living the fact that the other - the woman for the man and the man for the woman - is, by means of the body, someone willed by the Creator for his or her own sake. The person is unique and unrepeatable, someone chosen by eternal Love.

The affirmation of the person is nothing but acceptance of the gift, which, by means of reciprocity, creates the communion of persons. This communion is constructed from within. It comprises also the whole "exteriority" of man, that is, everything that constitutes the pure and simple nakedness of the body in its masculinity and femininity. Then, as we read in Genesis 2:25, man and woman were not ashamed. The biblical expression "were not ashamed" directly indicates "the experience" as a subjective dimension.

Precisely in this subjective dimension, as two human "egos" determined by their masculinity and femininity, both of them, man - and woman, appear in the mystery of their beatifying "beginning." (We are in the state of man's original innocence and at the same time, original happiness.) This is a short appearance, comprising only a few verses in Genesis. However it is full of a surprising content, theological and anthropological at the same time. The revelation and discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body explain man's original happiness. At the same time, it opens the perspective of his earthly history, in which he will never avoid this indispensable "theme" of his own existence.

The following verses of Genesis, according to the Yahwist text of chapter 3, show actually that this historical perspective will be constructed differently from the beatifying beginning (after original sin). It is all the more necessary, however, to penetrate deeply into the mysterious structure, theological and at the same time anthropological, of this beginning. In the whole perspective of his own history, man will not fail to confer a nuptial meaning on his own body. Even if this meaning will undergo many distortions, it will always remain the deepest level. It demands to be revealed in all its simplicity and purity, and to be shown in its whole truth, as a sign of the image of God. The way that goes from the mystery of creation to the "redemption of the body" also passes here (cf. *Rom 8*).

For the present we are remaining on the threshold of this historical perspective. On the basis of Genesis 2:23-25, we clearly realize the connection that exists between the revelation and the discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body, and man's original happiness. This nuptial meaning is also beatifying. As such, it manifests in a word the whole reality of that donation which the first pages of Genesis speak to us of. Reading them, we are convinced of the fact that the awareness of the meaning of the body that is derived from them - in particular of its nuptial meaning - is the fundamental element of human existence in the world.

This nuptial meaning of the human body can be understood only in the context of the person. The body has a nuptial meaning because the human person, as the Council says, is a creature that

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God willed for his own sake. At the same time, he can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.

Christ revealed to man and woman, over and above the vocation to marriage, another vocation namely, that of renouncing marriage, in view of the kingdom of heaven. With this vocation, he highlighted the same truth about the human person. If a man or a woman is capable of making a gift of himself for the kingdom of heaven, this proves in its turn (and perhaps even more) that there is the freedom of the gift in the human body. It means that this body possesses a full nuptial meaning.

The Mystery of Man's Original Innocence 1/30/80

The reality of the gift and the act of giving, outlined in the first chapters of Genesis as the content constituting the mystery of creation, confirms that the radiation of love is an integral part of this same mystery. Only love creates the good. Love alone can, in a word, be perceived in all its dimensions and its aspects in created things and especially in man. Its presence is almost the final result of that interpretation of the gift, which we are carrying out here. Original happiness, the beatifying beginning of man whom God created "male and female" (*Gn* 1:27), the nuptial significance of the body in its original nakedness - all this expresses its radication in love.

This consistent giving goes back to the deepest roots of consciousness and subconsciousness, to the ultimate levels of the subjective existence of both, man and woman. This giving is reflected in their mutual experience of the body and bears witness to its radication in love. The first verses of the Bible speak about it so much as to remove all doubt. They speak not only of the creation of the world and of man in the world. They also speak of grace, that is, of the communication of holiness, of the radiation of the Spirit, which produced a special state of "spiritualization" in that man, who in fact was the first. In biblical language, that is, in the language of revelation, the adjective "first" means precisely "of God": "Adam, the son of God" (cf. *Lk* 3:38).

Happiness is being rooted in love. Original happiness speaks to us of the beginning of man, who emerged from love and initiated love. That happened in an irrevocable way, despite the subsequent sin and death. In his time, Christ will be a witness to this irreversible love of the Creator and Father, which had already been expressed in the mystery of creation and in the grace of original innocence. The common beginning of man and woman, that is, the original truth of their body in masculinity and femininity, to which Genesis 2:25 draws our attention, does not know shame. This beginning can also be defined as the original and beatifying immunity from shame as the result of love.

This immunity directs us toward the mystery of man's original innocence. It is a mystery of his existence, prior to the knowledge of good and evil and almost "outside" it. The fact that man existed in this way, before breaking the first covenant with his Creator, belongs to the fullness of the mystery of creation. As we have already said, creation is a gift to man. His fullness and deepest dimension is determined by grace, that is, by participation in the interior life of God himself, in his holiness. This is also, in man, the interior foundation and source of his original innocence. With this concept, and more precisely with that of "original justice," theology defines the state of man before original sin.

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In the present analysis of the beginning, which opens up for us the ways indispensable for understanding the theology of the body, we must dwell on the mystery of man's original state. That awareness of the body - rather, awareness of the meaning of the body - which we are trying to highlight through analysis of the beginning, reveals the peculiarity of original innocence.

Genesis 2:25 manifests in a direct way the mystery of this innocence which the original man and woman both bore, each in himself or herself. The body itself is, in a way, an "eyewitness" of this characteristic. Significantly, the affirmation contained in Genesis 2:25 about nakedness mutually free from shame is a statement unique in its kind in the whole Bible. It will never be repeated. On the contrary, we can quote many texts in which nakedness will be connected with shame or, in an even stronger sense, with ignominy.

In this wide context the reasons are all the more visible for discovering in Genesis 2:25 a particular trace of the mystery of original innocence and a particular factor of its radiation in the human subject. This innocence belongs to the dimension of grace contained in the mystery of creation, that is, to that mysterious gift made to the inner man, to the human heart. It enables both of them, man and woman, to exist from the beginning in the mutual relationship of the disinterested gift of oneself.

This contains the revelation and at the same time the discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity. It can be understood why we speak, in this case, of revelation and at the same time of discovery. From the point of view of our analysis, it is essential that the discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body, which we read in the testimony of Genesis, takes place through original innocence. In fact, this discovery reveals and highlights the latter.

Original innocence belongs to the mystery of man's beginning, from which historical man was then separated by committing original sin. This does not mean, however, that he is not able to approach that mystery by means of his theological knowledge.

Historical man tries to understand the mystery of original innocence almost by means of a contrast, that is, going back also to the experience of his own sin and his own sinfulness. He tries to understand original innocence as an essential characteristic for the theology of the body, starting from the experience of shame. In fact, the Bible text itself directs him in this way. Original innocence, therefore, is what "radically," that is, at its roots, excludes shame of the body in the man-woman relationship. It eliminates its necessity in man, in his heart, that is, in his conscience.

Original innocence speaks above all of the Creator's gift. It speaks of the grace that made it possible for man to experience the meaning of the primary donation of the world. In particular it concerns the meaning of the mutual donation of one to the other through masculinity and femininity in this world. However, this innocence seems to refer above all to the interior state of the human heart, of the human will. At least indirectly, it includes the revelation and discovery of human moral conscience, of the whole dimension of conscience. Obviously, this was before the knowledge of good and evil. In a certain sense, it must be understood as original righteousness.

In the prism of our historical *a posteriori*, we are trying to reconstruct, in a certain way, the characteristic of original innocence. This is understood as the content of the reciprocal

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experience of the body as experience of its nuptial meaning (according to Genesis 2:23-25). Happiness and innocence are part of the framework of the communion of persons, as if it were a question of two convergent threads of man's existence in the mystery of creation. So the beatifying awareness of the meaning of the body - that is, of the nuptial meaning of human masculinity and femininity - is conditioned by original innocence.

We can understand that original innocence as a particular "purity of heart," which preserves an interior faithfulness to the gift according to the nuptial meaning of the body. Consequently, original innocence, conceived in this way, is manifested as a tranquil testimony of conscience which (in this case) precedes any experience of good and evil. Yet this serene testimony of conscience is something all the more beatifying. It can be said that awareness of the nuptial meaning of the body, in its masculinity and femininity, becomes humanly beatifying only by means of this testimony.

We shall devote the next meditation to this subject - that is, to the link which, in the analysis of man's beginning, can be seen between his innocence (purity of heart) and his happiness.

Man and Woman: A Gift for Each Other. 2/6/80

Let us continue the examination of that beginning, which Jesus referred to in his talk with the Pharisees on the subject of marriage. This reflection requires us to go beyond the threshold of man's history and arrive at the state of original innocence. To grasp the meaning of this innocence, we take as our basis, in a way, the experience of historical man, the testimony of his heart and conscience.

Following the historical *a posteriori* line, let us try to reconstruct the peculiarity of original innocence enclosed within the mutual experience of the body and its nuptial meaning, according to Genesis 2:23-25. The situation described here reveals the beatifying experience of the meaning of the body. Within the mystery of creation, man attains this in the complementarity of what is male and female in him. However, at the root of this experience there must be the interior freedom of the gift, united above all with innocence. The human will is originally innocent. In this way, the reciprocity and the exchange of the gift of the body, according to its masculinity and femininity, as the gift of the person, is facilitated. Consequently, the innocence to which Genesis 2:25 bears witness can be defined as innocence of the mutual experience of the body.

The sentence: "The man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed," expresses this innocence in the reciprocal experience of the body. This innocence inspires the interior exchange of the gift of the person. In the mutual relationship, this actualizes concretely the nuptial meaning of masculinity and femininity. To understand the innocence of the mutual experience of the body, we must try to clarify what the interior innocence in the exchange of the gift of the person consists of. This exchange constitutes the real source of the experience of innocence.

Interior innocence (that is, righteousness of intention) in the exchange of the gift consists in reciprocal "acceptance" of the other, such as to correspond to the essence of the gift. In this way, mutual donation creates the communion of persons. It is a question of "receiving" the other human being and "accepting" him. This is because in this mutual relationship, which Genesis 2:23-25 speaks of, the man and the woman become a gift for each other, through the whole truth and evidence of their own body in its masculinity and femininity. It is a question, then, of an

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"acceptance" or "welcome" that expresses and sustains, in mutual nakedness, the meaning of the gift. Therefore, it deepens the mutual dignity of it. This dignity corresponds profoundly to the fact that the Creator willed (and continually wills) man, male and female, "for his own sake." The innocence "of the heart," and consequently, the innocence of the experience, means a moral participation in the eternal and permanent act of God's will.

The opposite of this "welcoming" or "acceptance" of the other human being as a gift would be a privation of the gift itself. Therefore, it would be a changing and even a reduction of the other to an "object for myself" (an object of lust, of misappropriation, etc.).

We will not deal in detail now with this multiform, presumable antithesis of the gift. However, in the context of Genesis 2:23-25, we can note that this extorting of the gift from the other human being (from the woman by the man and vice versa) and reducing him or her interiorly to a mere "object for me," should mark the beginning of shame. The latter corresponds to a threat inflicted on the gift in its personal intimacy and bears witness to the interior collapse of innocence in the mutual experience.

According to Genesis 2:25, "The man and his wife were not ashamed." We can conclude that the exchange of the gift, in which the whole of their humanity participated, body and soul, femininity and masculinity, was actualized by preserving the interior characteristic (that is, precisely, innocence) of the donation of oneself and of the acceptance of the other as a gift. These two functions of mutual exchange are deeply connected in the whole process of the gift of oneself. The giving and the accepting of the gift interpenetrate, so that the giving itself becomes accepting, and the acceptance is transformed into giving.

Genesis 2:23-25 enables us to deduce that woman, who in the mystery of creation "is given" to man by the Creator, is "received," thanks to original innocence. That is, she is accepted by man as a gift. The Bible text is quite clear and limpid at this point. At the same time, the acceptance of the woman by the man and the very way of accepting her, become, as it were, a first donation. In giving herself (from the very first moment in which, in the mystery of creation, she was "given" to the man by the Creator), the woman "rediscovers herself" at the same time. This is because she has been accepted and welcomed, and because of the way in which she has been received by the man.

So she finds herself again in the very fact of giving herself "through a sincere gift of herself," (cf. *GS* 24), when she is accepted in the way in which the Creator wished her to be, that is, "for her own sake," through her humanity and femininity. When the whole dignity of the gift is ensured in this acceptance, through the offer of what she is in the whole truth of her humanity and in the whole reality of her body and sex, of her femininity, she reaches the inner depth of her person and full possession of herself.

Let us add that this finding of oneself in giving oneself becomes the source of a new giving of oneself. This grows by virtue of the interior disposition to the exchange of the gift and to the extent to which it meets with the same and even deeper acceptance and welcome as the fruit of a more and more intense awareness of the gift itself.

It seems that the second narrative of creation has assigned to man "from the beginning" the function of the one who, above all, receives the gift (cf, especially *Gn* 2:23). "From the

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beginning" the woman is entrusted to his eyes, to his consciousness, to his sensitivity, to his heart. On the other hand, he must, in a way, ensure the same process of the exchange of the gift, the mutual interpenetration of giving and receiving as a gift. Precisely through its reciprocity, it creates a real communion of persons.

In the mystery of creation, the woman was "given" to the man. On his part, in receiving her as a gift in the full truth of her person and femininity, man thereby enriches her. At the same time, he too is enriched in this mutual relationship. The man is enriched not only through her, who gives him her own person and femininity, but also through the gift of himself. The man's giving of himself, in response to that of the woman, enriches himself. It manifests the specific essence of his masculinity which, through the reality of the body and of sex, reaches the deep recesses of the "possession of self." Thanks to this he is capable both of giving himself and of receiving the other's gift.

Therefore, the man not only accepts the gift. At the same time he is received as a gift by the woman, in the revelation of the interior spiritual essence of his masculinity, together with the whole truth of his body and sex. Accepted in this way, he is enriched through this acceptance and welcoming of the gift of his own masculinity. Subsequently, this acceptance, in which the man finds himself again through the sincere gift of himself, becomes in him the source of a new and deeper enrichment of the woman. The exchange is mutual. In it the reciprocal effects of the sincere gift and of the finding oneself again are revealed and grow.

In this way, following the trail of the historical *a posteriori* - and above all, following the trail of human hearts - we can reproduce and, as it were, reconstruct that mutual exchange of the gift of the person, which was described in the ancient text of Genesis, so rich and deep.

Original Innocence and Man's Historical State 2/13/80

Today's meditation presupposes what has already been established by the various analyses made up to now. They sprang from the answer Jesus gave to his interlocutors (cf. *Mt* 19:3-9; *Mk* 10:1-12). They had asked him a question about the indissolubility and unity of marriage. The Master had urged them to consider carefully that which was "from the beginning." For this reason, so far in this series of meditations we have tried to reproduce somehow the reality of the union, or rather of the communion of persons, lived "from the beginning" by the man and the woman. Subsequently, we tried to penetrate the content of Genesis 2:25, which is so concise: "And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed."

These words refer to the gift of original innocence, revealing its character synthetically, so to speak. On this basis, theology has constructed the global image of man's original innocence and justice, prior to original sin, by applying the method of objectivization, proper to metaphysics and metaphysical anthropology. In this analysis we are trying rather to consider the aspect of human subjectivity. The latter, moreover, seems to be closer to the original texts, especially the second narrative of creation, the Yahwist text.

Apart from a certain diversity of interpretation, it seems quite clear that "the experience of the body," such as it can be inferred from the ancient text of Genesis 2:23 and even more from Genesis 2:25, indicates a degree of "spiritualization" of man. This is different from that which the same text speaks of after original sin (cf. *Gn* 3) and which we know from the experience of

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historical man. It is a different measure of "spiritualization." It involves another composition of the interior forces of man himself. It involves almost another body-soul relationship, and other inner proportions between sensitivity, spirituality and affectivity, that is, another degree of interior sensitiveness to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. All these conditions man's state of original innocence and at the same time determines it, permitting us also to understand the narrative of Genesis. Theology and also the Magisterium of the Church have given these fundamental truths a specific form.

Undertaking the analysis of the beginning according to the dimension of the theology of the body, we do so on the basis of Christ's words in which he himself referred to that "beginning." When he said: "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female?" (*Mt* 19:4), he ordered us and he still orders us to return to the depths of the mystery of creation. We do so, fully aware of the gift of original innocence, characteristic of man before original sin. An insuperable barrier divides us from what man then was as male and female, by means of the gift of grace united with the mystery of creation, and from what they both were for each other, as a mutual gift. Yet we try to understand that state of original innocence in its connection with man's historical state after original sin: "*status naturae lapsae simul et redemptae.*"

Through the category of the historical *a posteriori*, we try to arrive at the original meaning of the body. We try to grasp the connection existing between it and the nature of original innocence in the "experience of the body," as it is highlighted in such a significant way in the Genesis narrative. We conclude that it is important and essential to define this connection, not only with regard to man's "theological prehistory," in which the life of the couple was almost completely permeated by the grace of original innocence. We must also define this connection in relation to its possibility of revealing to us the permanent roots of the human and especially the theological aspect of the ethos of the body.

Man enters the world and enters the most intimate pattern of his future and his history with awareness of the nuptial meaning of his own body, of his own masculinity and femininity. Original innocence says that that meaning is conditioned "ethically," and furthermore, that on its part, it constitutes the future of the human ethos. This is very important for the theology of the body. It is the reason why we must construct this theology "from the beginning," carefully following the indication of Christ's words.

In the mystery of creation, man and woman were "given" in a special way to each other by the Creator. That was not only in the dimension of that first human couple and of that first communion of persons, but in the whole perspective of the existence of the human family. The fundamental fact of human existence at every stage of its history is that God "created them male and female." He always creates them in this way and they are always such. Understanding of the fundamental meanings contained in the mystery of creation, such as the nuptial meaning of the body (and of the fundamental conditionings of this meaning), is important. It is indispensable in order to know who man is and who he should be, and therefore how he should mold his own activity. It is an essential and important thing for the future of the human ethos.

Genesis 2:24 notes that the two, man and woman, were created for marriage: "Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." In this way

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a great creative perspective is opened. It is precisely the perspective of man's existence, which is continually renewed by means of procreation, or, we could say, self-reproduction.

This perspective is deeply rooted in the consciousness of humanity (cf. *Gn 2:23*) and also in the particular consciousness of the nuptial meaning of the body (*Gn 2:25*). Before becoming husband and wife (later Genesis 4:1 speaks of this in the concrete), the man and the woman emerge from the mystery of creation in the first place as brother and sister in the same humanity.

Understanding the nuptial meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity reveals the depths of their freedom, which is freedom of giving.

From here that communion of persons begins, in which both meet and give themselves to each other in the fullness of their subjectivity. Thus both grow as persons-subjects. They grow mutually one for the other also through their body and through that nakedness free of shame. In this communion of persons the whole depth of the original solitude of man (of the first one and of all) is perfectly ensured. At the same time, this solitude becomes in a marvelous way permeated and broadened by the gift of the "other." If the man and the woman cease to be a disinterested gift for each other, as they were in the mystery of creation, then they recognize that "they are naked" (cf. *Gn 3*). Then the shame of that nakedness, which they had not felt in the state of original innocence, will spring up in their hearts.

Original innocence manifests and at the same time constitutes the perfect ethos of the gift.

Man Enters the World As a Subject of Truth and Love 2/20/80

Genesis points out that man and woman were created for marriage: "A man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (*Gn 2:24*). This opens the great creative perspective of human existence, which is always renewed by means of procreation, which is self-reproduction. This perspective is rooted in the consciousness of mankind and also in the particular understanding of the nuptial meaning of the body, with its masculinity and femininity. In the mystery of creation, man and woman are a mutual gift. Original innocence manifests and at the same time determines the perfect ethos of the gift.

We spoke about that at the preceding meeting. Through the ethos of the gift the problem of the "subjectivity" of man, who is a subject made in the image and likeness of God, is partly outlined. In the narrative of creation (especially in Genesis 2:23-25) the woman is certainly not merely an object for the man. They both remain in front of each other in all the fullness of their objectivity as creatures, as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," as male and female, both naked. Only the nakedness that makes woman an object for man, or vice versa, is a source of shame. The fact that they were not ashamed means that the woman was not an "object" for the man nor he for her.

Interior innocence as purity of heart made it impossible somehow for one to be reduced by the other to the level of a mere object. The fact that they were not ashamed means that they were united by awareness of the gift. They were mutually conscious of the nuptial meaning of their bodies, in which the freedom of the gift is expressed and all the interior riches of the person as subject are manifested.

This mutual interpenetration of the "self" of the human persons, of the man and of the woman, seems to exclude subjectively any reduction to an object. This reveals the subjective profile of

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that love. It can be said that this love "is objective" to the depths, since it is nourished by the mutual "objectivity" of the gift.

After original sin, man and woman will lose the grace of original innocence. The discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body will cease to be for them a simple reality of revelation and grace. However, this meaning will remain as a commitment given to man by the ethos of the gift, inscribed in the depths of the human heart, as a distant echo of original innocence. From that nuptial meaning human love in its interior truth and its subjective authenticity will be formed. Through the veil of shame, man will continually rediscover himself as the guardian of the mystery of the subject, that is, of the freedom of the gift. This is so as to defend it from any reduction to the position of a mere object.

For the present, however, we are before the threshold of man's earthly history. The man and the woman have not yet crossed it toward knowledge of good and evil. They are immersed in the mystery of creation. The depth of this mystery hidden in their hearts is innocence, grace, love and justice: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (*Gn 1:31*).

Man appears in the visible world as the highest expression of the divine gift, because he bears within him the interior dimension of the gift. With it he brings into the world his particular likeness to God, with which he transcends and dominates also his "visibility" in the world, his corporality, his masculinity or femininity, his nakedness. A reflection of this likeness is also the primordial awareness of the nuptial meaning of the body, pervaded by the mystery of original innocence.

Thus, in this dimension, a primordial sacrament is constituted, understood as a sign that transmits effectively in the visible world the invisible mystery hidden in God from time immemorial. This is the mystery of truth and love, the mystery of divine life, in which man really participates. In the history of man, original innocence begins this participation and it is also a source of original happiness. The sacrament, as a visible sign, is constituted with man, as a body, by means of his visible masculinity and femininity. The body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God, and thus be a sign of it.

So the very sacramentality of creation, the sacramentality of the world was revealed in a way, in man created in the image of God. By means of his corporality, his masculinity and femininity, man becomes a visible sign of the economy of truth and love, which has its source in God himself and which was revealed already in the mystery of creation. Against this vast background we understand fully the words that constitute the sacrament of marriage, present in *Genesis 2:24*: "A man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh."

Against this vast background, we further understand that the words of *Genesis 2:25*, "They were both naked, and were not ashamed," through the whole depth of their anthropological meaning, express the fact that, together with man, holiness entered the visible world, created for him. The sacrament of the world, and the sacrament of man in the world, comes from the divine source of holiness, and at the same time is instituted for holiness. Connected with the experience of the nuptial meaning of the body, original innocence is the same holiness that enables man to express himself deeply with his own body. That happens precisely by means of the sincere gift of

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himself. In this case, awareness of the gift conditions "the sacrament of the body." In his body as male or female, man feels he is a subject of holiness.

With this consciousness of the meaning of his own body, man, as male and female, enters the world as a subject of truth and love. It can be said that Genesis 2:23-25 narrates the first feast of humanity in all the original fullness of the experience of the nuptial meaning of the body. It is a feast of humanity, which draws its origin from the divine sources of truth and love in the mystery of creation. Very soon, the horizon of sin and death will be extended over that original feast (cf. *Gn 3*). Yet right from the mystery of creation we already draw a first hope, that is, that the fruit of the divine economy of truth and love, which was revealed "at the beginning," is not death, but life. It is not so much the destruction of the body of the man created "in the image of God," as rather the "call to glory" (cf. *Rom 8:30*).

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Analysis of Knowledge and of Procreation 3/5/80

To our analyses dedicated to the biblical beginning, we wish to add another short passage, taken from chapter 4 of Genesis. For this purpose, however, we must refer first of all to the words spoken by Jesus Christ in the talk with the Pharisees (cf. *Mt* 19 and *Mk* 10), in the compass of which our reflections take place. They concern the context of human existence, according to which death and the destruction of the body connected with it have become the common fate of man (according to the words, "to dust you shall return" of Genesis 3:19). Christ referred to "the beginning," to the original dimension of the mystery of creation, when this dimension had already been shattered by the *mysterium iniquitatis*, that is, by sin and, together with it, by death, *mysterium mortis*.

Sin and death entered man's history, in a way, through the very heart of that unity which, from the beginning, was formed by man and woman, created and called to become "one flesh" (*Gn* 2:24). Already at the beginning of our meditations we saw that in referring to "the beginning," Christ leads us, in a certain way, beyond the limit of man's hereditary sinfulness to his original innocence. In this way he enables us to find the continuity and the connection existing between these two situations. By means of them, the drama of the origins was produced, as well as the revelation of the mystery of man to historical man.

This authorizes us to pass, after the analyses concerning the state of original innocence, to the last of them, that is, to the analysis of "knowledge and of procreation." Thematically, it is closely bound up with the blessing of fertility, which is inserted in the first narrative of man's creation as male and female (cf. *Gn* 1:27-28). Historically, on the other hand, it is already inserted in that horizon of sin and death. As Genesis teaches (cf. *Gn* 3), this has weighed on the consciousness of the meaning of the human body, together with the breaking of the first covenant with the Creator.

In Genesis 4, and therefore still within the scope of the Yahwist text, we read: "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have begotten a man with the help of the Lord.' And again, she bore his brother Abel" (*Gn* 4:1-2). If we connect with knowledge that first fact of the birth of a man on earth, we do so on the basis of the literal translation of the text. According to it, the conjugal union is defined as knowledge. "Adam knew Eve his wife," which is a translation of the Semitic term *jadac*.

We can see in this a sign of the poverty of the archaic language, which lacked varied expressions to define differentiated facts. Nevertheless, it is significant that the situation in which husband and wife unite so closely as to become one flesh has been defined as knowledge. In this way, from the very poverty of the language a specific depth of meaning seems to emerge. It derives precisely from all the meanings hitherto analyzed.

Evidently, this is also important as regards the "archetype" of our way of conceiving corporeal man, his masculinity and his femininity, and therefore his sex. In this way, through the term knowledge used in Genesis 4:1-2 and often in the Bible, the conjugal relationship of man and woman - that they become, through the duality of sex, "one flesh" - was raised and introduced into the specific dimension of persons. Genesis 4:1-2 speaks only of knowledge of the woman by the man, as if to stress above all the activity of the latter. It is also possible, however, to speak of the reciprocity of this knowledge, in which man and woman participate by means of their body and their sex. Let us add that a series of subsequent biblical texts, as, moreover, the same chapter

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of Genesis (cf. *Gn* 4:17, 4:25), speak with the same language. This goes up to the words Mary of Nazareth spoke in the annunciation: "How shall this be, since I know not man?" (*Lk* 1:34).

That biblical "knew" appears for the first time in Genesis 4:1-2. With it, we find ourselves in the presence of both the direct expression of human intentionality (because it is characteristic of knowledge), and of the whole reality of conjugal life and union. In it, man and woman become "one flesh."

Even though due to the poverty of the language, in speaking here of knowledge, the Bible indicates the deepest essence of the reality of married life. This essence appears as an element and at the same time a result of those meanings, the trace of which we have been trying to follow from the beginning of our study. It is part of the awareness of the meaning of one's own body. In Genesis 4:1, becoming "one flesh," the man and the woman experience in a particular way the meaning of their body. In this way, together they become almost the one subject of that act and that experience, while remaining, in this unity, two really different subjects. In a way, this authorizes the statement that "the husband knows his wife" or that both "know" each other. Then they reveal themselves to each other, with that specific depth of their own human self. Precisely this self is revealed also by means of their sex, their masculinity and femininity. Then, in a unique way, the woman "is given" to the man to be known, and he to her.

To maintain continuity with regard to the analyses made up to the present (especially the last ones, which interpret man in the dimension of a gift), it should be pointed out that, according to Genesis, *datum* and *donum* are equivalent.

However, Genesis 4:1-2 stresses *datum* above all. In conjugal knowledge, the woman is given to the man and he to her, since the body and sex directly enter the structure and the content of this knowledge. In this way, the reality of the conjugal union, in which the man and the woman become one flesh, contains a new and, in a way, definitive discovery of the meaning of the human body in its masculinity and femininity. But in connection with this discovery, is it right to speak only of "sexual life together"? We must consider that each of them, man and woman, is not just a passive object, defined by his or her own body and sex, and in this way determined "by nature." On the contrary, because they are a man and a woman, each of them is "given" to the other as a unique and unrepeatable subject, as "self," as a person.

Sex decides not only the somatic individuality of man, but defines at the same time his personal identity and concreteness. Precisely in this personal identity and concreteness, as an unrepeatable female-male "self," man is "known" when the words of Genesis 2:24 come true: "A man... cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." The knowledge which Genesis 4:1-2 and all the following biblical texts speak of, arrives at the deepest roots of this identity and concreteness, which man and woman owe to their sex. This concreteness means both the uniqueness and the unrepeatability of the person.

It was worthwhile, therefore, to reflect on the eloquence of the biblical text quoted and of the word "knew." In spite of the apparent lack of terminological precision, it allows us to dwell on the depth and dimension of a concept, which our contemporary language, precise though it is, often deprives us of.

The Mystery of Woman Is Revealed in Motherhood 3/12/80

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In the preceding meditation, we analyzed the sentence of Genesis 4:1 and, in particular, the term "knew." The original text used this word to define conjugal union. We also pointed out that this biblical knowledge establishes a kind of personal archetype of corporality and human sexuality. That seems absolutely fundamental in order to understand man, who, from the beginning, searches for the meaning of his own body. This meaning is at the basis of the theology of the body itself. The term "knew" (cf. *Gn* 4:1-2) synthesizes the whole density of the biblical text analyzed so far.

According to Genesis 4:1, the man "knows" the woman, his wife, for the first time in the act of conjugal union. He is that same man who, by imposing names, that is, also by "knowing," differentiated himself from the whole world of living beings or *animalia*, affirming himself as a person and subject. The knowledge of which Genesis 4:1 speaks does not and cannot take him away from the level of that original and fundamental self-awareness. Whatever a one-sidedly "naturalistic" mentality might say about it, in Genesis 4:1 it cannot be a question of passive acceptance of one's own determination by the body and by sex, precisely because it is a question of knowledge.

On the contrary, it is a further discovery of the meaning of one's own body. It is a common and reciprocal discovery, just as the existence of man, whom "God created male and female," is common and reciprocal from the beginning. Knowledge, which was at the basis of man's original solitude, is now at the basis of this unity of the man and the woman. The Creator enclosed the clear perspective of this in the mystery of creation (cf. *Gn* 1:27; 2:23). In this knowledge, man confirms the meaning of the name "Eve," given to his wife, "because she was the mother of all the living" (*Gn* 3:20).

According to Genesis 4:1, the one who knows is the man, and the one who is known is the woman-wife. It is as if the specific determination of the woman, through her own body and sex, hid what constitutes the depth of her femininity. On the other hand, after the sin, the man was the first to feel the shame of his nakedness. He was the first to say: "I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (*Gn* 3:10). It will be necessary to return separately to the state of mind of them both after the loss of original innocence.

However, in the knowledge which Genesis 4:1 speaks of, the mystery of femininity is manifested and revealed completely by means of motherhood, as the text says: "She conceived and bore...." The woman stands before the man as a mother, the subject of the new human life that is conceived and develops in her, and from her is born into the world. Likewise, the mystery of man's masculinity, that is, the generative and fatherly meaning of his body, is also thoroughly revealed.

The theology of the body contained in Genesis is concise and sparing of words. At the same time, fundamental contents, in a certain sense primary and definitive, find expression in it. Everyone finds himself again in his own way, in that biblical knowledge. The constitution of the woman is different, as compared with the man. We know today that it is different even in the deepest bio-physiological determinants. It is manifested externally only to a certain extent, in the construction and form of her body. Maternity manifests this constitution internally, as the particular potentiality of the female organism. With creative peculiarity it serves for the conception and begetting of the human being, with the help of man. Knowledge conditions begetting.

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Begetting is a perspective, which man and woman insert in their mutual knowledge. The latter goes beyond the limits of subject-object, such as man and woman seem to be mutually. Knowledge indicates on the one side him who knows and on the other side her who is known or vice versa. The consummation of marriage, the specific *consummation*, is also enclosed in this knowledge. In this way the reaching of the "objectivity" of the body, hidden in the somatic potentialities of the man and of the woman, is obtained, and at the same time the reaching of the objectivity of the man who "is" this body. By means of the body, the human person is husband and wife. At the same time, in this particular act of knowledge, mediated by personal femininity and masculinity, the discovery of the pure subjectivity of the gift - that is, mutual self-fulfillment in the gift - seems to be reached.

Procreation brings it about that the man and the woman (his wife) know each other reciprocally in the "third," sprung from them both. Therefore, this knowledge becomes a discovery. In a way it is a revelation of the new man, in whom both of them, man and woman, again recognize themselves, their humanity, their living image. In everything that is determined by both of them through the body and sex, knowledge inscribes a living and real content. So knowledge in the biblical sense means that the biological determination of man, by his body and sex, stops being something passive. It reaches the specific level and content of self-conscious and self-determinant persons. Therefore, it involves a particular consciousness of the meaning of the human body, bound up with fatherhood and motherhood.

The whole exterior constitution of woman's body, its particular aspect, the qualities which, with the power of perennial attractiveness, are at the beginning of the knowledge, which Genesis 4:1-2 speaks of ("Adam knew Eve his wife"), are in close union with motherhood. The Bible (and subsequently the liturgy), with its characteristic simplicity, honors and praises throughout the centuries "the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked" (*Lk 11:27*). These words constitute a eulogy of motherhood, of femininity, of the female body in its typical expression of creative love. In the Gospel these words are referred to the Mother of Christ, Mary, the second Eve. The first woman, on the other hand, at the moment when the maternal maturity of her body was revealed for the first time, when she conceived and bore, said: "I have begotten a man with the help of the Lord" (*Gn 4:1*).

These words express the whole theological depth of the function of begetting-procreating. The woman's body becomes the place of the conception of the new man. In her womb, the conceived man assumes his specific human aspect before being born. The somatic homogeneousness of man and woman, which found its first expression in the words: "This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (*Gn 2:23*), is confirmed in turn by the words of the first woman-mother: "I have begotten a man!" In giving birth, the first woman is fully aware of the mystery of creation, which is renewed in human generation. She is also fully aware of the creative participation that God has in human generation, his work and that of her husband, since she says: "I have begotten a man with the help of the Lord."

There cannot be any confusion between the spheres of action of the causes. The first parents transmit to all human parents the fundamental truth about the birth of man in the image of God, according to natural laws. They transmit this even after sin, together with the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and almost at the threshold of all historical experiences. In this new man - born of the woman-parent thanks to the man-parent - there is reproduced every time the

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"image of God," of that God who constituted the humanity of the first man: "God created man in his own image; male and female he created them" (*Gn* 1:27).

There are deep differences between man's state of original innocence and his state of hereditary sinfulness. However, that "image of God" constitutes a basis of continuity and unity. The "knowledge" which Genesis 4:1 speaks of is the act which originates being. Rather, in union with the Creator, it establishes a new man in his existence. In his transcendental solitude, the first man took possession of the visible world, created for him, knowing and imposing names on living beings (*animalia*). The same "man," as male and female, knowing each other in this specific community-communion of persons, in which they are united so closely with each other as to become "one flesh," constitutes humanity. That is, they confirm and renew the existence of man as the 'image of God. This happens every time both of them, man and woman, take up again, so to speak, this image from the mystery of creation and transmit it "with the help of the Lord God."

The words of Genesis are a testimony of the first birth of man on earth. They enclose within them at the same time everything that can and must be said of the dignity of human generation.

The Knowledge-Generation Cycle and the Perspective of Death 3/26/80

We are drawing to the end of the cycle of reflections wherein we have tried to follow Christ's appeal handed down to us by Matthew 19:3-9 and by Mark 10:1-12: "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'" (*Mt* 19:4-5). In Genesis, conjugal union is defined as knowledge. "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore...saying, 'I have begotten a man with the help of the Lord'" (*Gn* 4:1). In our preceding meditations, we have tried to throw light on the content of that biblical knowledge. With it man, male-female, not only gives his own name, as he did when he gave names to the other living beings (*animalia*), thus taking possession of them, but he knows in the sense of Genesis 4:1 (and other passages of the Bible). That is, he realizes what the name "man" expresses. He realizes humanity in the new man generated. In a sense, therefore, he realizes himself, that is, the man-person.

In this way, the biblical cycle of "knowledge-generation" closes. This cycle of knowledge is constituted by the union of persons in love, which enables them to unite so closely that they become one flesh. Genesis reveals to us fully the truth of this cycle. By means of the knowledge of which the Bible speaks, man - male and female - conceives and generates a new being, like himself, to whom he can give the name of man ("I have begotten a man"). Thus man takes possession of his humanity, or rather retakes possession of it. However, that happens in a different way from the manner in which he had taken possession of all other living beings when he had given them their names. On that occasion, he had become their master. He had begun to carry out the content of the Creator's mandate: "Subdue the earth and have dominion over it" (cf. *Gn* 1:28).

However, the first part of the same command: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (*Gn* 1:28), conceals another content and indicates another element. In this knowledge, the man and the woman give rise to a being similar to them. They can say of it: "This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (*Gn* 2:24). In this knowledge they are almost "carried off " together. They are

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both taken possession of by the humanity which they, in union and in mutual knowledge, wish to express again. They wish to take possession of it again, deriving it from themselves, from their own humanity. They derive it from the marvelous male and female maturity of their bodies. Finally, through the whole sequence of human conceptions and generations right from the beginning, they derive it from the mystery of creation.

In this sense, biblical knowledge can be explained as "possession." Is it possible to see in it some biblical equivalent of *eros*? It is a question here of two conceptual spheres, of two languages, biblical and Platonic. Only with great caution can they be used to interpret each other. However, it seems that in the original revelation the idea of man's possession of the woman, or vice versa, as of an object, is not present. On the other hand, it is well known that as a result of the sinfulness contracted after original sin, man and woman must reconstruct, with great effort, the meaning of the disinterested mutual gift. This will be the subject of our further analyses.

The revelation of the body, contained in Genesis, especially in chapter 3, shows with impressive clearness the cycle of "knowledge-generation." It shows that this cycle, so deeply rooted in the potentiality of the human body, was subjected, after sin, to the law of suffering and death. God-Yahweh says to the woman: "I will greatly multiply your pain in child-bearing; in pain you shall bring forth children" (*Gn* 3:16). The horizon of death opens up before man, together with revelation of the generative meaning of the body in the spouses' act of mutual knowledge. The first man gives his wife the name Eve, "because she was the mother of all living" (*Gn* 3:20), when he had already heard the words of the sentence which determined the whole perspective of human existence "within" the knowledge of good and evil. This perspective is confirmed by the words: "You shall return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (*Gn* 3:19).

The radical character of this sentence is confirmed by the evidence of the experiences of man's whole earthly history. The horizon of death extends over the whole perspective of human life on earth, life that was inserted in that original biblical cycle of "knowledge-generation." Man has broken the covenant with his Creator by picking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He is detached by God-Yahweh from the tree of life: "Now, let him not put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (*Gn* 3:21). In this way, the life given to man in the mystery of creation has not been taken away. But it is restricted by the limit of conceptions, births and deaths, and further aggravated by the perspective of hereditary sinfulness. But it is given to him again, in a way, as a task in the same ever-recurring cycle.

The sentence: "Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore..." (*Gn* 4:1) is like a seal impressed on the original revelation of the body at the very beginning of man's history on earth. This history is always formed anew in its most fundamental dimension as if from the beginning, by means of the same "knowledge-generation" which Genesis speaks of.

Thus, each person bears within him the mystery of his beginning, closely bound up with awareness of the generative meaning of the body. Genesis 4:1-2 seems to be silent on the subject of the relationship between the generative and the nuptial meaning of the body. Perhaps it is not yet the time or the place to clarify this relationship, even though it seems indispensable in the further analysis. It will be necessary, then, to raise again the questions connected with the appearance of shame in man, shame of his masculinity and femininity, not experienced before. However, for now this is in the background.

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In the foreground there remains, however, the fact that "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore...." This is precisely the threshold of man's history. It is his beginning on the earth. On this threshold man, as male and female, stands with the awareness of the generative meaning of his own body. Masculinity conceals within it the meaning of fatherhood, and femininity that of motherhood. In the name of this meaning, Christ will one day give a categorical answer to the question that the Pharisees will ask him (cf. *Mt* 19; *Mk* 10). On the other hand, penetrating the simple content of this answer, we are trying at the same time to shed light on the context of that beginning to which Christ referred. The theology of the body has its roots in it.

Awareness of the meaning of the body and awareness of its generative meaning come into contact, in man, with awareness of death, the inevitable horizon of which they bear within them. Yet the "knowledge-generation" cycle always returns in human history. In it, life struggles ever anew with the inexorable perspective of death, and always overcomes it. It is as if the reason for this refusal of life to surrender, which is manifested in generation, were always the same knowledge. With that knowledge, man goes beyond the solitude of his own being, and decides again to affirm this being in an "other." Both of them, man and woman, affirm it in the new person generated.

In this affirmation, biblical knowledge seems to acquire an even greater dimension. It seems to take its place in that "vision" of God himself, which the first narrative of the creation of man ends with. The narrative is about the male and the female made in the image of God. "God saw everything that he had made and...it was very good" (*Gn* 1:31). In spite of all the experiences of his life, in spite of suffering, disappointment with himself, his sinfulness, and, finally, in spite of the inevitable prospect of death, man always continues to put knowledge at the beginning of generation. In this way, he seems to participate in that first "vision" of God himself: God the Creator "saw...and behold, it was very good." He confirms the truth of these words ever anew.

Marriage in the Integral Vision of Man 4/2/80

The Gospels according to Matthew and Mark report the answer Christ gave to the Pharisees when they questioned him about the indissolubility of marriage. They referred to the law of Moses, which in certain cases admitted the practice of the so-called certificate of divorce. Reminding them of the first chapters of Genesis, Christ answered: "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder." Then, referring to their question about the law of Moses, Christ added: "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (*Mt* 19:3ff.; cf. *Mk* 12:2ff.). In his answer, Christ referred twice to the "beginning." Therefore we, too, in the course of our analyses, have tried to clarify in the deepest possible way the meaning of this "beginning." It is the first inheritance of every human being in the world, man and woman. It is the first attestation of human identity according to the revealed word, the first source of the certainty of man's vocation as a person created, in the image of God himself.

Christ's reply has a historical meaning, but not only a historical one. People of all times raise the question on the same subject. Our contemporaries also do so. But in their questions they do not refer to the law of Moses, which admitted the certificate of divorce, but to other circumstances

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and other laws. These questions of theirs are charged with problems, unknown to Christ's interlocutors. We know what questions concerning marriage and the family were addressed to the last Council, to Pope Paul VI, and are continually formulated in the post-conciliar period, day after day, in the most varied circumstances. They are addressed by single persons, married couples, fiancés and young people. But they are also addressed by writers, journalists, politicians, economists and demographers, in a word, by contemporary culture and civilization.

I think that among the answers that Christ would give to the people of our time and to their questions, often so impatient, the one he gave to the Pharisees would still be fundamental. Answering those questions, Christ would refer above all to the "beginning." Perhaps he would do so all the more resolutely and essentially in that the interior and at the same time the cultural situation of modern man seems to be moving away from that beginning. It is assuming forms and dimensions which diverge from the biblical image of the beginning into points that are clearly more and more distant.

However, Christ would not be surprised by any of these situations, and I suppose that he would continue to refer mainly to the beginning. For this reason, Christ's answer called for an especially thorough analysis. In that answer, fundamental and elementary truths about the human being, as man and woman, were recalled. It is the answer through which we catch a glimpse of the structure of human identity in the dimensions of the mystery of creation and, at the same time, in the perspective of the mystery of redemption. Without that there is no way of constructing a theological anthropology and, in its context, a theology of the body. From this the fully Christian view of marriage and the family takes its origin. Paul VI pointed this out when, in his encyclical dedicated to the problems of marriage and procreation in its responsible meaning on the human and Christian planes, he referred to the "total vision of man" (*Humanae Vitae* 7). In the answer to the Pharisees, Christ also put forward to his interlocutors this "total vision of man," without which no adequate answer can be given to questions connected with marriage and procreation. This total vision of man must be constructed from the beginning.

This applies also to the modern mentality, just as it did, though in a different way, to Christ's interlocutors. We are children of an age in which, owing to the development of various disciplines, this total vision of man may easily be rejected and replaced by multiple partial conceptions. Dwelling on one or other aspect of the *compositum humanum*, these do not reach man's *integrum*, or they leave it outside their own field of vision. Various cultural trends then take their place. On the basis of these partial truths, these trends formulate their proposals and practical indications on human behavior and, even more often, on how to behave with "man." Man then becomes more an object of determined techniques than the responsible subject of his own action. The answer Christ gave to the Pharisees also wishes man, male and female, to be this subject. This subject decides his own actions in the light of the complete truth about himself, since it is the original truth, or the foundation of genuinely human experiences. This is the truth that Christ makes us seek from the beginning. Thus we turn to the first chapters of Genesis.

The study of these chapters, perhaps more than of others, makes us aware of the meaning and the necessity of the theology of the body. The beginning tells us relatively little about the human body, in the naturalistic and modern sense of the word. From this point of view, in our study we are at a completely pre-scientific level. We know hardly anything about the interior structures and the regularities that reign in the human organism. However, at the same time, perhaps precisely because of the antiquity of the text, the truth that is important for the total vision of

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man is revealed in the most simple and full way. This truth concerns the meaning of the human body in the structure of the personal subject. Subsequently, reflection on those archaic texts enables us to extend this meaning of the whole sphere of human inter-subjectivity, especially in the perennial man-woman relationship. Thanks to that, we acquire with regard to this relationship a perspective which we must necessarily place at the basis of all modern science on human sexuality, in the bio-physiological sense. That does not mean that we must renounce this science or deprive ourselves of its results. On the contrary, it can teach us something about the education of man, in his masculinity and femininity, and about the sphere of marriage and procreation. If it is to do so, it is necessary - through all the single elements of contemporary science - always to arrive at what is fundamental and essentially personal, both in every individual, man or woman, and in their mutual relations.

It is precisely at this point that reflection on the ancient text of Genesis is irreplaceable. It is the beginning of the theology of the body. The fact that theology also considers the body should not astonish or surprise anyone who is aware of the mystery and reality of the Incarnation. Theology is that science whose subject is divinity. Through the fact that the Word of God became flesh, the body entered theology through the main door. The Incarnation and the redemption that springs from it became also the definitive source of the sacramentality of marriage, which we will deal with at greater length in due time.

The questions raised by modern man are also those of Christians - those who are preparing for the sacrament of marriage or those who are already living in marriage, which is the sacrament of the Church. These are not only the questions of science, but even more, the questions of human life. So many men and so many Christians seek the accomplishment of their vocation in marriage. So many people wish to find in it the way to salvation and holiness.

The answer Christ gave to the Pharisees, zealots of the Old Testament, is especially important for them. Those who seek the accomplishment of their own human and Christian vocation in marriage are called, first of all, to make this theology of the body, whose beginning we find in the first chapters of Genesis, the content of their life and behavior. How indispensable is a thorough knowledge of the meaning of the body, in its masculinity and femininity, along the way of this vocation! A precise awareness of the nuptial meaning of the body, of its generating meaning, is necessary. This is so since all that forms the content of the life of married couples must constantly find its full and personal dimension in life together, in behavior, in feelings! This is all the more so against the background of a civilization which remains under the pressure of a materialistic and utilitarian way of thinking and evaluating. Modern bio-physiology can supply a great deal of precise information about human sexuality. However, knowledge of the personal dignity of the human body and of sex must still be drawn from other sources. A special source is the Word of God himself, which contains the revelation of the body, going back to the beginning.

How significant it is that Christ, in the answer to all these questions, orders man to return, in a way, to the threshold of his theological history! He orders him to put himself at the border between original innocence, happiness and the inheritance of the first fall. Does he not perhaps mean to tell him that the path along which he leads man, male and female, in the sacrament of marriage, the path of the redemption of the body, must consist in regaining this dignity. In it there is simultaneously accomplished the real meaning of the human body, its personal meaning and its meaning of communion.

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For the present, let us conclude the first part of our meditations dedicated to this important subject. To give an exhaustive answer to our questions, sometimes anxious ones, on marriage - or even more precisely, on the meaning of the body-we cannot dwell only on what Christ told the Pharisees, referring to the beginning (cf. *Mt* 19:3ff.; *Mk* 10:2ff.). We must also consider all his other statements. Two of them, of an especially comprehensive character, emerge especially. The first one is from the Sermon on the Mount, on the possibilities of the human heart in relation to the lust of the body (cf. *Mt* 5:8). The second one is when Jesus referred to the future resurrection (cf. *Mt* 22:24-30; *Mk* 12:18-27; *Lk* 20:27-36).

We intend to make these two statements the subject of our following reflections.