

The “Inseparable Connection” between Procreation and Unitive Love (*Humanae Vitae*, §12) and Thomistic Hylemorphic Anthropology¹

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Humans are amphibians—half spirit and half animal. As spirits they belong to the eternal world, but as animals they inhabit time [and are thus ordered to temporal goods]. This means that while their spirit can be directed to an eternal object, their bodies, passions, and imaginations are in continual change [since they are directed to temporal objects].

—C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

IF AN ENGAGED couple is asked why they are getting married, they will say, usually, because they love each other. No surprise there. They very well might add, and should add, that they are getting married because they want to have children (however many that may be and whenever they may come). And thus we have the celebrated “inseparable connection,” as *Humanae Vitae* (§12) calls it, between the unitive and procreative dimensions of human sexuality.² Often, appeals are made to

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to the Centre for Philosophical Psychology of the Institute for the Psychological Sciences (Arlington, VA) at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford, England, which made possible the writing of a substantial part of this essay.

² The 1983 Code of Canon Law follows suit: “[marriage] is by its nature ordered to the good of the spouses (*ad bonum coniugum*) and the procreation and education of offspring” (canon 1055; trans. Canon Law Society of America, *Code of Canon Law. Latin-English Edition* [Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1984], 387).

the body-soul unity in the human being as the foundation for this inseparable connection. But such appeals can at times be vague or at least lacking in metaphysical depth and clarity.³ Here is where an anthropology that brings the full weight of Aristotelian hylemorphism (matter-form causality) to bear on this issue, such as we find in St. Thomas Aquinas, can offer a marked contribution. With this essay, then, I would like to invite consideration of the indivisible union of the procreative and unitive dimensions of our sexuality as a reflection of the body-soul unity, such as we can understand in light of Aquinas's robust hylemorphic (or integrated) account of the human being.

The Union of Matter and Form

In a hylemorphic account of reality, all things (save God and the angels) are composed of matter and form, that is, of material "stuff" arranged or determined (read: informed) in some specific way (hylemorphism comes from the Greek *hylē* for "matter," and *morphē* meaning "form"). Indeed, matter exists only insofar as it is informed—one never finds matter without a form—since the form is what organizes or determines matter to be the particular *kind* of material thing it is.⁴ Matter possesses the possibility of becoming, via the form, a specific kind of thing: wood has the potentiality of becoming either a desk, or a table, or a chair, or a piece of paper, or a floor, or a statue, or a piece of kindling, and it is the form which determines the specific kind of wooden thing it becomes. Without its form, matter remains in pure potency.

This makes form the actualizing principle, or that which gives "act" or actual existence to matter: "matter has actual existence by the substantial

³ *Humanae Vitae*, in fact, simply makes a general appeal to the natural law as the basis for this inseparable connection, but follows with little by way of exposition on this. For its part, Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est*, §5, begins its attempt at arguing for the union of eros and agape on the simple fact that "it is man, the person, a unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves," but follows with virtually no elaboration on this.

⁴ Richard J. Connell (*Nature's Causes* [New York: Peter Lang, 1995], 73 and 104) defines matter in the sense of material cause as "that from which something comes to be and which remains within," and as "that out of which something is made and which remains within." When it comes to form or formal cause, which he observes stand out as "some of the more confusing [words] in the vocabulary of Aristotle," he offers various meanings: form signifies the "principle within the substance" and which give it its nature; form means that which constitutes the species as such or signifies "what the individual things are."

form,” Thomas writes, “which makes it exist absolutely.”⁵ Because of matter’s dependence upon form, we can say matter is for the sake of form.⁶

There is, then, a kind of duality in all things on account of their matter-form composition. By no means, however, does this equate with dualism. There is no inherent opposition between matter and form, even if form, the actualizing principle, is superior to matter, the passive or potential principle. Instead, there is substantial inseparable unity between the two, precisely since matter’s actual existence is provided by its *union* with form. Form is the principle of unity of all material things.⁷

Modern Science and Aristotelian Hylemorphism

Today it is often assumed that this older hylemorphic view of the natural world (inspired by Aristotle) does not square with, and indeed has been eclipsed by, what modern science has uncovered. However, recent scholarship has begun to show that the Aristotelian doctrine of hylemorphism (matter-form composition) *can* be reconciled with the modern scientific account.⁸ To say, as I think one can and must, that modern science has focused almost exclusively on what the Aristotelian would call material causality (in addition to efficient causality) and has largely ignored the notion of form (as well as of final causality)—or at least that

⁵ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 76, a. 6. Also, in III, q. 3, a. 7 ad 1, Thomas explains: “A created nature is completed in its essentials by its form.”

⁶ “Since the form is not for the matter, but rather the matter for the form, we must gather from the form the reason why the matter is such as it is, and not conversely.” *ST* I, q. 76, a. 5.

⁷ “[T]he form, through itself, makes a thing to be actual since it is itself essentially an act. . . . Wherefore the unity of a thing composed of matter and form is by virtue of the form itself, which by reason of its very nature is united to matter as its act.” *ST* I, q. 76, a. 7.

⁸ Scholars who argue this include: Connell, *Nature’s Causes*, esp. 57–122; idem, *Substance and Modern Science* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); idem, *From Observables to Unobservables in Science and Philosophy* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 2000); Nicanor Austriaco, “Immediate Hominization from the Systems Perspective,” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 4 (2004): 497–516; idem, “How to Navigate Species Boundaries: A Reply to *The American Journal of Bioethics*,” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 6 (2006): 61–71; and John Goyette, “Substantial Form and the Recovery of Aristotelian Science,” *The Thomist* 66 (2002): 519–33. Goyette has also argued against a plurality of substantial forms being found in one substance in “St. Thomas on the Unity of Substantial Form,” in *Restoring Nature: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Michael M. Waddell (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2008). Cf. Benedict M. Ashley, “The River Forest School and the Philosophy of Nature Today,” in *Philosophy and the God of Abraham*, ed. R. James Long (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991), 1–16.

modern science dismisses form (and finality) as *causes*—is not to say the experimental method of modern science has *disproved* formal (or final) causality as such. While formal (and final) causality may have fallen on hard times, one could argue that in many ways modern science implies or even begs for the equivalent of what Aristotle calls form.

To give just once piece of evidence for this, one can look at the relatively new field of systems biology that has arisen in the wake of post-genomic science.⁹ Whereas scientists overall used to think the measure of the complexity of a species was to be found at the genomic level, they have had to revise this view. Advances in genomic science have shown that the chromosomal differences among species are relatively insignificant. For instance, many species, such as apes, have more chromosomes than human beings, while many species of animals have fewer. And at the level of genes, whereas one would expect the most complex animal species, the human being, to own more genes than any other organism (there are 22,000 total genes in humans, compared to, say, 6,000 in yeast), one would be surprised to learn that an organism like rice (with 38,000) has significantly more genes than humans.¹⁰

As a result, systems biologists have come to recognize that an organism's material components, looked at on their own or simply as a net sum, do not help us identify what is distinctive of a species as a structural unity; they do not tell the whole story of an organism. Instead, systems biologists have come to see that an organism, considered as a unified whole, is greater than the sum of its parts. And they prefer the term "state cycles" to signify the distinctiveness and structural unity of an organism.¹¹ Put more technically, state cycles is the term employed by systems biologists to designate the organism as a specific type of organization, that is, "as a single, unified network of interacting molecules [namely, of DNA, RNA, lipids, metabo-

⁹ The following overview of systems biology and its relation to Aristotelian-Thomistic biology is taken from Austriaco, "Immediate Hominization from the Systems Perspective," 500–502. In this essay Austriaco explicitly targets the suggestion of Jean Porter ("Is the Embryo a Person?: Arguing with the Catholic Traditions," *Commonweal* 129 [Feb. 8, 2002], 8–10) that it is difficult to reconcile modern science, at least on the issue of embryogenesis, with Aristotelian-Thomistic hylemorphism. For an overview of and introduction to systems biology (provided by Austriaco), cf. Hiroaki Kitano, "Systems Biology: A Brief Overview," *Science* 295 (March 1, 2002): 1662–64.

¹⁰ Cf. Matt Ridley, *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), 4. The gene count is provided by Austriaco in an oral presentation to an interdisciplinary faculty seminar on being human at Providence College, Providence, RI, on January 25, 2007.

¹¹ For more on state cycles in systems biology, see Stuart Kauffman, *At Home in the Universe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

lites, and proteins] which is organized in a species-specific manner.”¹² Among other things, state cycles account for the enduring stability of organisms while they undergo dramatic changes—such as when the species-specific pattern of molecular interactions in a human being remains constant throughout one’s entire lifespan, despite the fact that, as biologists have shown, nearly ninety-eight percent of the atoms in the mature human body are replaced over a two-year period.

Because the term state cycles signifies that which accounts for the structural (or organizational) and species-specific unity of a living thing in a way that the mere material (i.e., molecular) components, even as a net sum, cannot, one can say that “state cycles” stands out as a more or less equivalent term to what Aristotle and Aquinas mean by “form” (or formal cause). Form signifies nothing other than that which confers structural and species-specific unity upon a thing’s material components (upon organic matter in the case of living things), since form is present to the entire body and to all of its parts. Form completes the story of an organism and ensures the enduring stability of a thing in the midst of its numerous biological changes. Hence the lasting value for modern science of matter-form causality: “[Aristotelian hylemorphism] remains a potent explanation for biological species” is what the biologist and bioethicist Nicanor Austriaco concludes.¹³ The field of systems biology provides strong counter-evidence to the Scottish philosopher David Hume’s famous denial of formal causality, as he asserts nothing holds a thing together, nothing makes a thing stable over time.¹⁴

Reconciling modern science with Aristotelian hylemorphism does present its terminological hurdles, however. Étienne Gilson noted in his correspondence with Jacques Maritain that simple disagreement over the meaning of the word “nature” separates Thomist philosophers from modern scientists.¹⁵ To be sure, terms such as matter and form carry a

¹² Austriaco, “Immediate Hominization from the Systems Perspective,” 504.

¹³ Austriaco, “How to Navigate Species Boundaries,” 68.

¹⁴ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888), Bk. I, Pt. III, section 14 (“Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion”), 155–72; and Bk. I, Pt. IV, section 6 (“Of Personal Identity”), 251–63; cited in Stephen L. Brock, “The Rational Primacy of the Common Good and the Natural Presuppositions of the *ratio boni*,” paper delivered at a conference on “Providence, Practical Reason, and the Common Good,” Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, April 26, 2008.

¹⁵ Étienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, *Correspondance*, 1923–1971, ed. Géry Prouvost (Paris: J. Vrin, 1991), 250 (letter of Gilson, Sept. 8, 1971); cited in Lawrence Dewan, O.P., “St. Thomas and the Divinity of the Common Good,” paper delivered at the conference “Providence, Practical Reason, and the Common Good.”

much wider or more metaphysically precise sense in the writings of such a proponent of Aristotelian hylemorphism as Aquinas than they do in modern science. Whereas, for instance, modern science denotes matter almost exclusively to mean a quantifiable, measurable thing, for Aquinas (and Aristotle) it also and especially means a principle of potentiality, or, again, that which possesses the possibility of becoming, via the form, a specific kind of thing.

The Human Being as a Matter-Form (Body-Soul) Composite

Like all bodily beings, the human being, too, is composed of matter and form. The human being is unique, however, in that he is composed of organic matter (which he shares with all other animals) and a *rational* form. The human being is constituted by an animal body joined to an immaterial or spiritual soul.¹⁶ If the human soul, owning its various intellectual and sensate powers, is immaterial, it is because those acts unique to the human species, namely, abstract thought and free choice, cannot be reduced to the material.¹⁷ Accordingly, we can say animality represents

In their correspondence, Maritain expressed optimism on the possibility of dialogue with evolutionary scientists, and of convincing them of the need for a God to supply the substantial forms of new species. But Gilson was dubious, given that Descartes's elimination of substantial form from reality had resulted in the inability of modern science to recognize form and finality as intrinsic to nature.

¹⁶ Cf. *ST I*, q. 76, aa. 1 and 4, and a. 6, ad 1, where Thomas writes: "the same essential form makes man an actual being, a body, a living being, an animal, and a man."

¹⁷ As for human thought implying its being grounded in an immaterial mind (soul), a biologist friend once employed the following useful argument to convince a materialist why this is so. If human thought is reducible entirely to the material (namely, to neurological chemicals), then every human thought or idea must be reducible to what is finite, that is, no thought can exceed the limits of the particular, since the material is of its very nature composed of the particular ("particles"), and thus of the limited or finite. The problem, however, arises from the fact that we can conceive of things that go beyond the finite or the particular; we can have thoughts that extend to the infinite or the indefinite, such as when we conceive of an infinite (indefinite) set of numbers. Here a metaphor of a box filled with marbles can be employed, where to every thought would correspond a marble, at least if human thought is reducible entirely to the material. Put in other terms, every time we have a thought a marble must be placed in the box. However, when we conceive of an infinite (indefinite) set of numbers, we could never have enough marbles in the box. A finite, limited set of marbles is not proportioned to an infinite set of numbers, that is, is not proportioned to a thought that goes beyond the finite. The mind therefore cannot be limited to the finite, the limited, the material. For more on the immateriality of the human soul,

what is bodily in the human being, the matter, while rationality represents what is formal in man, the soul.

What is more, the human being is *on account of* his (material) body and his (immaterial) soul.¹⁸ In the hylemorphic view, matter (material cause) cannot tell the whole story of man (or of any created thing). Such a story reduces the human being to nothing more than a mechanized aggregate of material components (molecules, genes, etc.). Form supplies what is specific as such to a being in a way the material components on their own cannot. As the form of the human being, the soul completes the story of man, just as form completes the story of any being. Put in other terms, the body is the necessary condition for the existence of the soul, even while the soul, for whose sake the body exists, is necessary for the realization of the body.

Wishing to stress the profundity of the hylemorphic bond between body and soul in the human being, and aware that the soul, as form, marks the principle of unity in human nature, Aquinas does not hesitate to write: “the intellectual soul is *united by its very being (per suum esse)* to the body as a form.”¹⁹ Here all the powers of the soul, whether sensitive (and thus affective) or intellectual (or rational), share an intimate unity and synergy both with each other and with the body, of which the soul, with all its powers, is the form. The soul is the source, the principle, of all the body’s vital motions and actions. Far from a loose, accidental juxtaposition, then,

see Brian J. Shanley, O.P., *The Thomist Tradition* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 153–66; for Aquinas’s argument, see *ST* I, q. 75, a. 5.

¹⁸ In coming to adopt this integrated anthropology, Aquinas would draw especially upon Aristotle, but also upon St. Augustine, for whom, as Joseph Torchia, O.P. (chapter entitled “St. Thomas Aquinas: A Subsistent Individual,” in his *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature* [Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007]) points out, the human being is a “harmonious union” of body and soul; cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Bk. XIX, ch. 3 (for Aquinas’s citation of this passage, cf. *ST* I, q. 75, a. 4). At the same time, Torchia notes a “certain uneasiness on Augustine’s part regarding the possibility of a true psychosomatic unity [in the human being]” in his “The Significance of the *Communicatio Idiomatum* in St. Augustine’s Christology, with Special Reference to His Rebuttal of Later Arianism,” in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 38, *Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1999. St. Augustine and His Opponents. Other Latin Writers*, eds. M. F. Wiles and E. J. Yarnold (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 306–23, at 321.

¹⁹ *ST* I, q. 76, a. 6 ad 3; emphasis added. Previously in I, q. 29, a. 1 ad 5, Thomas maintains: “the soul ever retains its nature of unibility (*unibilitatis*) [with the body].” For a more profound look at the metaphysical hylemorphic conception of the human being in Aquinas, cf. Anton Pegis, *St. Thomas and the Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 1978).

the union of the immaterial (the rational soul) with the material (the organic body) in the human being constitutes a profound, if paradoxical, *unity*. The human being is one.

This view of the human being as a substantial composite of matter and form, of body and soul, provides us with the metaphysical key to a truly integrated sexual anthropology. Defining the human being as a fundamental unity of body and soul marks the most crucial step, in my opinion, at rendering a proper account of the meaning and purpose of human sexuality, and more particularly of the inseparable connection between procreation and unitive love of which *Humanae Vitae* §12, speaks. Let us sketch this out.

Sexuality Follows Primarily upon the Bodily Animal Dimension of Human Nature

Aquinas explains how certain essential attributes accrue to our nature that, while not entering into the definition of the human being as a rational animal *per se*, nonetheless proceed immediately, and thus essentially, upon that which does enter into this definition. Put simply, there are certain essential human attributes, call them “proto-essential” properties, that follow immediately upon our animality (expressive of the body or of our matter) and upon our rationality (expressive of the soul or of our form).²⁰

While risibility is an example of an attribute following upon human rationality, sexuality, on Aquinas’s account, is an attribute that proceeds upon our animality or upon our bodies.²¹ The very basis of the sexual

²⁰ Thomas calls these attributes “proper accidents,” but this should not be taken to mean they are “accidental” (in the Aristotelian sense of the term). The following remarks on human sexuality as an attribute or proper accident of our nature are pulled from Aquinas’s *De ente et essentia*, chs. 5–6. I wish to express my gratitude to Stephen A. Hipp for providing me with his (unpublished) “Succinct Presentation of the *De ente et essentia* and the *De principiis naturae* of St. Thomas Aquinas.”

²¹ “[T]he diversity of male and female among animals derives from matter.” *De ente et essentia*, ch. 5; cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.*, Bk. X, ch. 11 (1058b21–23). Aquinas goes on to note in ch. 6 of the *De ente* that only those proper accidents that ensue upon the human form (the rational soul) will characterize the whole human species as such, such as risibility, since “laughter results from some apprehension on the part of the [rational] human soul.” In this way, we say *all* human individuals are risible. However, since, as the principle of individuation, matter accounts for what differentiates (or individuates, concretizes) particular human beings, the proper accidents that derive from the matter (the human body) pertain only to individuals. Maleness and femaleness are thus to the individual what risibility is to the human species. In this way, we say only *some* human individuals are male and some female. But since any *true* human being must share in full rationality

differentiation between male and female, obviously the distinguishing mark of sexuality as such, is animal bodiliness. This does not mean, as shall be seen immediately below, that our sexuality is *wholly* reducible to what is bodily in us. Nor does it deny the important social and psychological aspects of our sexual identity. Much modern scientific research has shed considerable light on the importance of an individual's social and psychological self-identity as a man or as a woman. But that animal bodiliness provides the primary foundation for our sexuality is supported by the simple biological fact that the sex chromosomal complement (XX for females, XY for males) determines one's sex, including all respective sexual characteristics (genitalia, bone and muscular structure, etc.).²²

In a word, sex, inclusive of our affective loves and desires, belongs to us primarily as *embodied* beings. Without our bodiliness, without our animality, we have no truly satisfactory way of explaining the male-female sexual complement. Human sexuality implies embodied alterity, embodied complementarity. While this point may seem obvious, especially as we consider it in light of the entire animal kingdom, it needs to be stressed. For, even respectable moral theologians have advanced misleading notions of what constitutes maleness and femaleness as such.²³

and full animality, every human individual must be both risible and *either* male or female. Every human individual must possess the proper accidents that follow upon the rational form (e.g., risibility) and upon the animal matter (e.g., maleness or femaleness) as from its essential principles. Therefore, although maleness and femaleness fall into the category of proper accidents, they may in no case be classified as accidental, just as denoting risibility as a proper accident does not mean it is accidental to human nature. Citations from the *De ente* are done in consultation with the translation of A. Maurer, *Aquinas on Being and Essence* (2nd ed.; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968).

²² "The X and Y chromosomes are known as the sex chromosomes for the obvious reason that they determine, with almost perfect predestination, the sex of the body" (Matt Ridley, *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters*, 108). That one can find isolated cases of hermaphroditism (the possession of ambiguous genitalia) does not change this fact, since hermaphroditism results from an aberration in nature, inasmuch as it is caused by either a genetic mutation, a chromosomal aberration, a birth defect, or a hostile exterior agent, such as a virus; cf. James A. Monteleone, "A Biological Perspective: Problems Associated with the Determination of Sex of Rearing in the Presence of Ambiguous Genitalia," in *Sex and Gender: A Theological and Scientific Inquiry* (St. Louis: Pope John Center, 1983), 65–80, at 66. And even in these cases, one sex over the other always predominates (though this may be difficult to ascertain).

²³ Thus, for instance, John Grabowski (*Sex and Virtue: An Introduction to Sexual Ethics* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003], 109–11), who appeals to the person/nature distinction as it is known in light of the Trinitarian mystery in order to argue that maleness and femaleness are constitutive of

Psychiatric Research and Human Embodiedness

Important research in the field of clinical psychiatry helps show that the sexual anthropology which holds up animal bodiliness (or human biology) as the primary basis of our sexual differentiation is not out of step with current science. To quote one leading researcher, sexual identity is less a matter of the malleability of our nature and more a reality of “our constitution by the genes we inherit and the embryogenesis we undergo.”²⁴ More

personhood rather than of human nature. Mary Shivanandan (in her Notre Dame Seminary School of Theology Aquinas Lecture, “Happiness in John Paul II and Thomas Aquinas,” given on April 20, 2007) amplifies this view, as she criticizes Aquinas’s anthropology because of “his rejection of man as a substantive relation in the manner of the Trinitarian persons.” Grabowski’s argument stands on an analogy drawn between the male–female relation on the one side and the Father–Son relation in the Trinity, which is indeed constitutive of Personhood in God but not of the divine nature, on the other. While an admirable attempt, this argument by analogy fails on many counts, not least of which because, by abstracting sexuality from human nature, Grabowski abstracts maleness and femaleness from the bodily, animal dimension of the human being. This, of course, is to jettison the very basis of the male–female distinction. Grabowski and Shivanandan’s argument also fails to take into account the fundamental difference between the way relation applies to God and the way it applies to us. As Aquinas explains in *ST I*, q. 29, a. 4, relation in God is the divine essence itself, whereas relation in creatures is an accidental property of nature. To reduce maleness and femaleness to strict relational properties constitutive of personhood is to make maleness and femaleness pure accidental properties (not to be confused with maleness and femaleness understood as proper accidents, as previously noted). This is tantamount to suggesting that being a man or a woman is no more essential to one’s identity than any other relational property of one’s person, such as being a teacher or a student. Furthermore, Grabowski and Shivanandan imply an equivocal notion of nature. For, the universal nature that a man and a woman share in common is purely abstract relative to the individuals themselves, as no man or woman is human nature. Concretely speaking they are separate beings. But the universal nature that the divine Persons share in common is concrete, as the Father is the divine nature, the Son is the divine nature, the Holy Spirit is the divine nature. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in being, they are the same being (consubstantial, or *homoousios*, to use the term of Nicaea).

²⁴ Paul McHugh, “Surgical Sex,” *First Things* 147 (November, 2004): 34–38. As chief psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, McHugh conducted extensive research into hermaphroditism (the possession of ambiguous genitalia) and confused sexual identity. Based on this research, he writes: “we in the Johns Hopkins Psychiatry Department eventually concluded that human sexual identity is mostly built into our constitution by the genes we inherit and the embryogenesis we undergo. Male hormones sexualize the brain and the mind.” Matt Ridley (*Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters*, 217–18) agrees: “nature does play a role in gender. . . . The evidence from the genome, from imprinted genes and genes for sex-linked behaviours, now points to th[is] same conclusion.” In support,

and more, researchers are challenging the nominalist view which holds that male and female sexual identity refers to nothing grounded in natural reality (human biology) but simply to cultural conditioning or social upbringing (nurture). They are coming to recognize the fixed biological grounding (nature) of our identity as males and females, as men and women (without, however, denying the role of nurture).²⁵ Further, if some therapists suspend judgment on whether persons with confused sexual identity can be said to suffer from a psychopathology, these same therapists, in the clinical setting, often endorse traditional adolescent gender roles (such as associating “rough and tumble” play with boys and the preference of playing “with dolls” with girls) in determining whether one has a gender identity disorder.²⁶

Sex and Procreation

Looking at our sexuality in light of the biological datum of our embodiedness, it is obvious that the male-female complement (sexual dimorphism), manifested primarily in the male and female genitalia, exists for the sake of procreation. With animal bodiliness providing the basis for the male-female distinction, we can therefore say that human sexuality owns an intrinsic ordering to procreation. Indeed, procreation expresses the *primary* meaning of our sexuality.²⁷ As human sexuality arises immediately,

see the work of the psychiatrist Leonard Sax, *Why Gender Matters: What Parents and Teachers Need to Know about the Emerging Science of Sex Differences* (New York: Doubleday, 2005). Sax concludes that behavioral differences between girls and boys are not just caused by cultural factors but are innate and result in large measure from the composition and development of the brain itself. One could also cite in support the work of the professor of psychology and psychiatry at Cambridge University, Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: The Truth about the Male and Female Brain* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

²⁵ In his *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004), Steven Rhoads takes issue with the view which holds that, on the one hand, male-female gender roles are a social construction (thereby opening the door to their being “deconstructed”), while, on the other, the reproductive differences between male and female are few and relatively unimportant. Rhoads argues that there exist hormonal, chemical, even neurological, as well as psychological, differences between men and women that are innate, with the result that “[m]en and women have different natures, and generally speaking, different preferences, talents and interests.”

²⁶ This is true, for instance, for the psychiatrists Kenneth J. Zucker and Susan J. Bradley and their case studies are found on 341–43, *Gender Identity Disorder and Psychosexual Problems in Children and Adolescents* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995).

²⁷ This, essentially, is what the sixteenth-century Thomist Cajetan argues in the *quaestiunculae* he inserts (“De sacramento matrimonii triplex quaesitum,” “Quaestiones de usu matrimonii” and “De delectatione morosa triplex dubium”) in his commentary on the *Supplement* of the *Summa theologiae*, all found in the Leonine edition of the *Summa* (pp. 370–75).

and thus essentially, upon the body, upon our animality, human sexuality is ordered immediately, essentially and primarily to procreation. Hardly is it possible, then, to abstract the procreative dimension from an act—the sex act—which of its very nature is first and foremost an embodied act, an act of sexual biological union. This biological ordering to procreation leads Georges Cottier, theologian of the pontifical household under Pope John Paul II, to note that sexuality allows humans to participate in a kind of “biological infinity.”²⁸

If to modern ears it sounds off-putting to ally human sexuality so closely with the animal or “biological” side of our natures, this is due in large measure to the disdain that Cartesian rationalism has implanted into our heads for what is inferior and animal-like in us. But we need to appreciate that by grounding our sexuality in the objective order of being, namely, in our organic embodiedness belonging to the animal kingdom (which is at the same time infused with the rational), Aquinas avoids the two extremes to which the human regard for sex can often lead. The one extreme outright deifies human sexuality, as in the case of the ancient fertility cults, popularized most recently in *The Da Vinci Code*’s honoring of “the sacred feminine” through orgiastic ritual worship. Also veering toward this extreme, one could say, are those current theological trends which, even if remaining faithful to the Catholic tradition, identify sexual union between husband and wife too intimately with the sacred mystery of the divine.

The other extreme banalizes sex in a Jansenist-like manner, perhaps even to the point of scorning it as inherently disdainful or sinful. Lurking never far from Aquinas’s mind in this regard is the medieval version of this extreme, Albigensianism (or Catharism). Albigensianism proposes a recycled Manichaean-like condemnation of matter and all things associated with it, including marriage and sex, as inherently evil, and it was against this heresy that St. Dominic fought in the first formative years of the Order he would found and which St. Thomas himself would later join as a youth. Perhaps it is with Albigensianism explicitly in mind that Thomas quickly dismisses the view that says sexual pleasure within marriage cannot be enjoyed without sin: “this cannot be” (*hoc non potest esse*), he insists in uncharacteristically strong language, since sexual pleasure within marriage, arising from the “sweet bond” (*suavem societatem*) of sexual union, is a “good action” (*operationis bonae*) to be enjoyed.²⁹

²⁸ Georges Cottier, O.P., *Défis éthiques* (Saint-Maurice, Switzerland: Editions Saint-Augustin, 1996), 24.

²⁹ *ST* Suppl., q. 49, a. 6 (cf. Thomas’s Commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, Bk. IV [hereafter cited as *IV Sent.*], d. 31, q. 2, a. 3; and Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Bk. X, chs. 3–4); and *Summa contra Gentiles* III, ch. 123.

Sex and the Unitive or Personalist Dimension

If we say human sexuality is ordered *exclusively* to procreation, we distinguish in no way the meaning and purpose of our sexuality from the rest of the animal kingdom. To be genuinely *human*, our sexuality must share in what is unique and noblest in us, it must be integrated into the totality of human life. Indeed, that sexual intercourse between humans is commonly referred to as “making love,” which we would never say of animals (even monogamous animals), or even that sexual intercourse between humans is performed facing each other and “at will” (whereas all other animal species mate “in heat” and never face to face in an erect manner) and lasts exceedingly longer than copulation among all other animal species indicates, even at the biological level, that there is a qualitative difference to our sexuality. It indicates that sex as owing to our animality undergoes a radical alteration in the human being.³⁰ Obviously, it is human *rationality* that accounts for this qualitative difference, for this radical alteration. To repeat, rationality—by which we mean reason and free-will taken together—is expressive of the form (the soul) in the human being and distinguishes us as humans.

The hylemorphic anthropology outlined above allows us to sketch, in the following terms, the way in which our sexuality is integrated into the totality of our persons as *rationally ensouled* embodied beings. As matter is for the sake of form, as the body is for the sake of the soul, so is human sexuality for the sake of the soul’s highest, noblest functions: intellectual knowing and loving. Sexuality implies, then, not only the offering of one’s (procreative) body, but the offering of one’s entire self in the deepest bonds of knowledge and love, in the deepest bonds of personal communion and friendship. For it is in friendship that knowledge and love unite. Thus, if sexual union between animals constitutes a mere bodily union, sexual union between humans constitutes a union of *persons*, who are composed of both animal bodies and rational souls.

Subsequently, we can say human sexuality owns another essential dimension: the unitive or personal (or “love-making”). Human sexuality, in its primary ordering to procreation as owing to the body, is at the same time ordered essentially to personal, unitive love as following upon the (rational) soul. By means of the unitive dimension, in other words, our sexuality participates in the rational dimension of human life, that is, in the psychical (from the Greek *psychē* for “soul”). Georges Cottier even calls human sex the “great paradox” in that it reflects the paradoxical union of

³⁰ Cf. Cottier, *Défis éthiques*, 25; and Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary T. Noble, O.P. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 438.

body and soul in human nature.³¹ This unitive dimension *derives* from the bodily (procreative) side as a result of the soul's union with the body, since, again, animal bodiliness marks the primary foundation of our sexuality.

Aquinas does not name this other dimension "unitive" or "personal," though he has nearly the equivalent, as when he affirms that "the form of marriage" (*forma matrimonii*) consists in an "indivisible union of souls" (*in quadam indivisibili coniunctione animorum*), or when he speaks of marriage as a "society of domestic fellowship" (*domesticae conversationis consortium*).³² These denominations broach closely with, and to a certain extent encapsulate, what the classical tradition, beginning with St. Augustine, calls the "secondary" (read: "personalist") goods of marriage: first, life partnership (or mutual help); second, sexual fulfillment (or remedy for concupiscence); and, third, conjugal love.³³ Aquinas follows suit, holding up procreation and the rearing of children as the "primary end" (or good) of marriage, the *principalem finem*, and conjugal friendship its subordinate "secondary end" (or good), the *secundarium finem*, as again it derives from the bodily (procreative) side of our sexuality.³⁴ Such a view of marriage finds support from Jesus' remark that in the resurrected state there is no more giving and taking in marriage (Mt 22:30), as this locution makes little sense if procreation does not mark the primary purpose of marriage (presumably the unitive dimension will remain for those married couples who attain to the beatific vision, since all the blessed will be joined in unitive love).³⁵

³¹ Cottier, *Défis éthiques*, 25.

³² The form of marriage as an indivisible union of souls comes in *ST* III, q. 29, a. 2, while *domesticae conversationis consortium* appears in *ScG* III, ch. 123. One also finds St. Thomas calling marriage a "conjugal society" (*associatio matrimonium*) in *ST* Suppl., q. 41, a. 1 (reproduced from *IV Sent.*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 1). Cf. *ST* II–II, q. 26, a. 11.

³³ These secondary goods are indeed called "personalist" by the moralists John C. Ford and Gerald Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, vol. 2, *Marriage Questions* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1963), 38–39, and 75–76. For a definitive treatment of love in Aquinas's thought, see Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005). Cf. Peter Kwasniewski, "The Ecstasy of Love in Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences*," *Angelicum* 83 (2006): 87–93; and Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), esp. 277–306.

³⁴ *ST* Suppl., q. 41, a. 1 (*IV Sent.*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 1). Cf. Guy de Broglie, "La conception thomiste des deux finalités du mariage," *Doctor Communis* 27 (1974): 3–41.

³⁵ Thomas writes in his commentary on Matthew 22:30 in *ST* I, q. 98, a. 2 ad 1: "After the resurrection man will be like an angel, spiritualized in soul and body [i.e., where 'the soul will, to a certain extent, communicate to the body what properly belongs to itself as a spirit' (I, q. 97, a. 3)]."

Much maligned for relegating conjugal friendship, that is, the unitive dimension, to secondary status, Aquinas is yet much misunderstood on this point. It would be a grave error to read “secondary end” as signifying “accidental” or “non-essential.”³⁶ The unitive remains just as essential to our sexuality as the procreative. The *consortium* of marriage is not parceled out into two types of ends, essential and non-essential, but is the *ground* of co-essential ends. The conjugal act has a *per se* ordering *both* to procreation, its *per se* primary ordering, *and* to unitive love, its *per se* secondary ordering. The ordination to unitive love, while secondary, is not merely *per accidens*. As the moralists Ford and Kelly put it: “the secondary, personalist ends, while remaining essentially subordinate, are nevertheless truly *essential* ends of marriage, just as the primary ends are.”³⁷ For an analogy of how sexual union can have a *per se* ordering to two types of ends, primary and secondary, consider the co-essential primary and secondary ends of a professional sports team, where the secondary end of winning a division title is no less essential than, even if subordinate to, the primary end of winning the entire league championship. Likewise, when a mother prepares a meal for her family, the secondary end of serving good tasting food is no less essential than, even if subordinate to, the primary end of providing wholesome nutrition to her family.

So while it is true Aquinas gives near exclusive attention to the procreative end, it is no less true that the procreative and unitive (or personalist) dimensions of human sexuality stand side by side in Thomas’s system of thought, even if one is subordinate to the other. To be sure, in a crucial passage from the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas does not hesitate to elevate the “secondary” good of conjugal love to the very summit of friendship; for St. Thomas, marital love holds the rank not only of a

³⁶ Thus the misleading observation of Marie Leblanc (“Amour et procréation dans la théologie de saint Thomas,” *Revue Thomiste* 92 [1992]: 433–59, at 434) when he writes: “The gift of life in view of human progeny stands out clearly and constantly in the works of St. Thomas as the primary and essential end [of marriage]; on this point he does not modify his thought” (translation my own). I read this as implying that, on Aquinas’s account, procreation marks the only essential end of marriage. It is no doubt on account of the confusion that the term “secondary” engenders that the 1983 Code of Canon Law simply drops out all language of primary and secondary ends when holding in canon 1055 that marriage “is by its nature ordered to the good of the spouses (*ad bonum coniugum*) and the procreation and education of offspring” (trans. Canon Law Society of America, *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition*, 387).

³⁷ Ford and Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, vol. 2, 76; emphasis theirs. While dated, Ford and Kelly’s treatment of this issue, which spans 75–126, remains excellent.

“friendship of equality” (*aequalis amicitia*), but of *maxima amicitia*, “the highest type of friendship.”³⁸

The Nuptial Grammar of Human Sexuality: Marriage Marks the One End of Sex

Only in marriage can the offering of oneself in loving personal communion which is at the same time profoundly bodily, that is, procreative, take place. Only marriage—heterosexual marriage—unites the procreative and unitive dimensions, as corresponding to the substantial union of body and soul. *We can therefore say marriage, nuptiality, marks the intrinsic teleological meaning of human sexuality. Better yet, human sexuality has but one end, marriage, with two essential, complementary dimensions: the procreative (expressive of the body) and the unitive (expressive of the soul).*³⁹ Human sexuality, and by consequence the sexual act, have a “grammar” written into them: a nuptial procreative-unitive grammar as owing to our constitution as body-soul composites, as rationally ensouled embodied beings.

Human sexuality is deeply symbolic, then of the human being as a body-soul (procreative-unitive) unity. As Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body points out, the body-soul constitution of the human being owns a “spousal” meaning.

To say human sexuality is inherently nuptial in meaning does not deny the wider social or psychological dimension of our sexuality that extends far beyond marriage. The distinction between male and female impacts the whole of our lives and applies to numerous aspects of our character and to

³⁸ ScG III, ch. 123. This qualification of marriage as *maxima amicitia* is all the more significant in light of the fact that, as Charles J. Reid (*Power over the Body, Equality in the Family: Rights and Domestic Relations in Medieval Canon Law* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004], 105) observes, canonists and lawyers since the twelfth century had stressed “the sense of obligation (*debitum*) [rather than friendship] that bound [married] parties together.” At the same time, Reid (99) does explain how “women and men were recognized [in twelfth- and thirteenth-century theology] as spiritual equals, who benefited equally from Christ’s salvific acts. Men and women alike and in equal measure have gained eternal life through Christ’s death and resurrection.” For more on male and female equality in Aquinas, cf. Michael Nolan, “The Aristotelian Background to Aquinas’s Denial that ‘Woman is a Defective Male,’” *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 21–69.

³⁹ Kenneth Schmitz has often stressed to me (in personal conversation) that we should not speak of two ends, the procreative and unitive, for the unified being that is man, but of only one. Ramón García de Haro also emphasizes the same point in *Marriage and the Family in the Documents of the Magisterium*, trans. William E. May (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 244, as pointed out by Mary Shivanandan (*Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in Light of John Paul II’s Anthropology* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999], 110).

distinctions in roles across the societal spectrum. Nor does it deny a higher derived or even allegorical application of the nuptial meaning of human sexuality, such as when we speak of celibacy or mystical union with God in nuptial terms.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it remains true that the primary meaning of our sexuality is nuptial—understood as union “in the flesh”—and that only a hylemorphic anthropology makes this fully intelligible.

We should note that the biblical witness, deeply influential on Aquinas’s view of human sexuality, confirms what the foregoing philosophical reflection otherwise demonstrates on the nuptial meaning of human sexuality being inscribed in the hylemorphic makeup of the human being.⁴¹ (Especially paramount here is Gen 1:26–27, which attests to God’s institution of the procreative dimension of human sexuality via our embodied sexual complementarity; and Gen 2:18–25, which testifies to God’s institution of the unitive or personalist dimension of our sexuality.) This does not mean the biblical testimony serves no other purpose than to “window dress” a philosophical perspective that otherwise stands well enough on its own. The Thomist view on sex and the human good is rooted *both* in what Scripture reveals and in what unassisted reason can determine.

Distinguishing In Order To Unite

Aware that in today’s mindset distinction often equates with separation or compartmentalization—whereas the Thomist seeks to distinguish always

⁴⁰ Pope John Paul II (*Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein [Boston: Pauline Books, 2006], General audiences of Jan. 16, 1980, and May 5, 1982, 185–90, and 440–43) speaks of the nuptial meaning of celibacy as a union in the spirit, whereby a man or a woman makes the disinterested gift of oneself not exclusively to another human person but to all of God’s people. Thus, the Pontifical Council for the Family (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family* [Boston: Pauline Books, 1996], 34) calls “virginity or celibacy the supreme form of that self-giving that constitutes the very meaning of human sexuality,” though in a derived, analogical sense, since marriage as a union “in the flesh” serves as the prime analog for its being assigned to celibacy. Cf. Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue*, 87–88. Aquinas, for his part, allows for this extended meaning of the term in *ST* II–II, q. 152, a. 2, ad 1. As for mystical union, when the mystics use such nuptial imagery as a “kiss on the mouth” (as in Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Sermon 7 on the Song of Songs*) or “betrothal” (as in Teresa of Avila’s *The Interior Castle*) to describe the loving union of the soul with God, these images must be understood as purely allegorical, since God has no body.

⁴¹ Evidence for the influence of the biblical witness on Aquinas’s account of human sexuality is seen in the simple fact that his commentary on the Genesis creation narrative is woven into his anthropological treatise in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa*, particularly when he treats of the distinction between man and woman (qq. 92–102).

in order to unite—we need at this point to stress the inseparable union between the procreative and unitive dimensions of human sexuality. Distinctions must be drawn but always with the aim of seeing how the unity of the larger whole is maintained. So we must avoid making too hard and fast a distinction between the two dimensions of human sexuality—just as we should avoid fixing too hard and fast a line of division between body and soul—as if to give the impression there is a purely “bodily” side of sex that can be set apart from a purely “psychical” or “rational” side. As the human being is a fundamental unity, as each human individual *is* his body *and* his soul, so is human sexuality a fundamental unity of the procreative (the bodily) and the unitive (the rational or psychical), even as the latter derives from the former: “it is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves,” writes Pope Benedict XVI in his inaugural encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est* (§5), “it is man, the person, a unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves.”

Every procreative aspect of human sexuality participates, then, via the hylemorphic union, in the unitive dimension, and every unitive act participates in the procreative. The substantial union between body and soul establishes a profound come-and-go between procreative and unitive aspects of our sexuality. While we can, and must, distinguish the procreative as expressive of the body from the unitive as expressive of the intellectual soul, it would be tantamount to a kind of dualism to suggest a separation of the procreative (bodily) side of sex from the unitive (rational/psychical) dimension.

Anthropological Alternatives in a Post-Modern Culture

As should seem clear by this point, the principal thrust of this essay is to suggest that one’s stance on the morality of sexual practice is ultimately grounded in the way one views the human being, whether consciously formulated as such or as merely implied in one’s actions. And the Thomist-inspired hylemorphic conception of human nature, which Catholic tradition has appropriated for its own (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §365), leads one to conclude that our sexuality comprises the two co-essential and indivisible dimensions of the procreative (expressive of the body) and the unitive (expressive of the soul). Put in other terms, while our sexuality certainly orders us to sexual pleasure, the anthropology adopted here insists human sexuality targets not merely pleasure, but two higher co-essential goods (procreation and unitive love-making), into which sexual pleasure is subsumed.

If, then, we live in a post-modern world that by and large rejects the Catholic vision of human sexuality, it is because the Catholic view of the

human person vies with other, more dominant anthropologies to which most people, to varying degrees, adhere. In general, these other dominant views of the human being fall into one of two camps, yet both yield near identical fruits in the arena of sexual conduct.

The first, and most widespread, is the Cartesian view of the human being (the view inspired by the seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes, the so-called “Father of Modern Philosophy”). Having difficulty seeing the human individual as anything other than a thinking being who is embodied in a problematic, accidental sense, the Cartesian account pits the body in fundamental and perpetual contest with the soul. The soul, and thus the human person, is identified primarily with the ego or with the self-conscious thinking self—recall Descartes’s famous dictum, “I think, therefore I am”—and the body is relegated to the “less than human.”⁴² Citing Descartes, Pope Benedict XVI recounts in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* how Descartes was greeted humorously with “O Soul!” by a philosopher acquaintance of his.⁴³

In the sexual sphere, the Cartesian view has certainly played a significant role in the post-modern tendency to consider the body a pure instrument without value in and of itself. Not infrequently, the body today is treated as a kind of morally neutral playground, as a kind of Never-Never Land, where, like Peter Pan, we prefer perpetually to play without a proper grown-up sense of moral responsibility.⁴⁴ The body’s sole aim, at least sexually speaking, is utilitarian, namely, to provide pleasure or enjoyment for the “self” (the soul). “Consent,” provided by the “self” (the soul), is the only essential ingredient to morally acceptable sexual activity.

The Cartesian attitude thus leads to a destructive domination of the body. It incites us to live not in deferential harmony with our bodies, but to exploit and conquer our bodies, to use or manipulate our sexual organs as a mere means to satisfying sexual desire. Generally speaking, we

⁴² Evidence of how deeply the Cartesian undercurrent runs in post-modern thought comes from the philosopher Owen Flanagan, whose anthropological study *The Problem of the Soul: Two Visions of Mind and How to Reconcile Them* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) implies a Cartesian anthropology as its presupposed starting point. In the opening lines of the preface, Flanagan (ix) takes it as a given that a “humanistic image” of the human being (as “spiritual beings endowed with free will”) and a “scientific image” of man (as “evolved according to the principles of natural selection”) are in “conflict” and are simply “incompatible.” An Aristotelian-Thomist would never grant such an anthropological mindset as a presupposed starting point.

⁴³ “The Epicurean Gassendi used to offer Descartes the humorous greeting: ‘O Soul!’ And Descartes would reply: ‘O Flesh!’ [cf. René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, ed. V. Cousin (Paris 1824), vol. 12, 95ff]” (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, §5).

⁴⁴ My gratitude here to Thomas Joseph White, O.P.

are morally justified in whatever we choose to do with our bodies, provided we respect the bounds set by “consent” and by the criterion that one often hears loosely formulated as “so long as no one gets harmed.”

The other dominant anthropology which holds favor today, particularly among various philosophers and countless natural scientists, and which piggybacks, so to speak, the Cartesian view, even if quite distinct from it, is the one that advances a materialist mechanized view of the human being. This anthropology explains human life wholly in terms of molecular interaction or genomic design, and considers human thought as reducible entirely to neurological chemicals: “we are *all* animal,” is how one philosopher puts it, “[since t]he mind or soul is the brain . . . [with the result that] we are fully embodied creatures.”⁴⁵ The evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins employs even starker language, as his renowned *The Selfish Gene* refers to human beings as “survival machines” and as “robot vehicles” that are “blindly programmed” to preserve selfish interests.⁴⁶ In terms of sexual conduct, this view of the human being as a mere machine, like the Cartesian account, also encourages us to treat the body, or, more specifically, our sexual organs (with their concomitant pleasure), in utilitarian means, that is, as mechanized, manipulable objects without inherent value. The body can be treated purely recreationally, as a toy.

For evidence of how such a Cartesian/mechanist-like attitude toward the human body manifests itself in the sexual arena, one need merely point to the current social phenomenon in America known as “hooking up.” In the culture of “hooking up,” young adults engage in non-committal sex detached not only from love and commitment but from all romantic involvement. According to a telling journalistic account of this phenomenon, in the world of “hooking up” sexual encounters act as “the primary currency of social interaction.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Flanagan, *The Problem of the Soul*, xii and 6. Flanagan holds this in light of “advances in evolutionary biology, genetics, and the sciences of the mind, cognitive science and cognitive neuroscience.” Speaking for many scientists, Ridley (*Genome*, 2) asserts that the human genome—the complete set of human genes—accounts for “the question of whether and how our actions are determined” as well as for “this curious sensation called free will.”

⁴⁶ While softer in tone, Ridley (*Genome*) yet speaks of the human being in mechanized terms as well when he calls us “working machine[s]” (22), and “the most complicated biological machine on the planet” (25) which are capable of the “mechanism” known as learning (106), and so on. This language is common in the scientific community.

⁴⁷ In her book, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2007), Laura Session Stepp (4–5) notes the following in response to numerous conversations she had with “real girls and young

Such stark examples of contemporary sexual conduct as “hooking up” sets in relief Pope Benedict XVI’s rather strong assertion in *Deus Caritas Est* (§5) that the body today is “exploited at will,” that human sexuality is treated as “a commodity, a mere ‘thing’ to be bought or sold.” The encyclical does not stop there, pointing to the Cartesian/mechanist-inspired attitude of the human body as a contributing cause of such exploitation, and then labels this attitude for what it is: a veritable “debasement of the human body,” a “hatred of [human] bodiliness.”⁴⁸

“The Radiance of the Flesh”

Needless to say, evaluating our sexuality from a Thomist hylemorphic angle places us in a different universe. It is the universe of “the radiance of the flesh,” to use Dante’s phrase from *The Divine Comedy* (a work that draws heavily upon the thought of St. Thomas) when affirming how our humanity is “lovelier for being whole”—and by “whole” he means an organic body “robed about” a rational soul.⁴⁹ If we follow the Thomist

women”: “Young people have virtually abandoned dating and replaced it with group get-togethers and sexual behaviors that are detached from love and commitment—and sometimes even from liking. . . . Relationships have been replaced by the casual sexual encounters known as hookups. Love, while desired by some, is being put on hold or seen as impossible; sex is becoming the primary currency of social interaction. . . . [H]ooking up, in the minds of this generation, carries no commitment. Partners hook up with the understanding that however far they go sexually, neither should become romantically involved in any serious way. Hooking up’s defining characteristic is the ability to *unhook* from a partner at any time.” Later (6) she recounts how in a three-hour conversation with four young working-class women about men and sex, “[n]ever once during the conversation did they use the word ‘love.’”

⁴⁸ “[T]he contemporary way of exalting the body is deceptive. *Eros*, reduced to pure ‘sex’, has become a commodity, a mere ‘thing’ to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity. This is hardly man’s great ‘yes’ to the body. On the contrary, he now considers his body and his sexuality as the purely material part of himself, to be used and exploited at will. . . . Here we are actually dealing with a debasement of the human body: no longer is it integrated into our overall existential freedom; no longer is it a vital expression of our whole being, but it is more or less relegated to the purely biological sphere. The apparent exaltation of the body can quickly turn into a hatred of bodiliness” (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, §5).

⁴⁹ Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto XIV (trans. Anthony Esolen [New York: Modern Library, 2004], 147); according to Esolen (from personal conversation), next to the Bible, Aquinas was Dante’s most influential source. One potent manner by which St. Thomas affirms the goodness and integrity of the human body is to accord it an essential role in the beatific vision of God after the final resurrection, as when he writes: “There will be a kind of beatitude for our bodies, inasmuch as they will see God in his sensible creatures and especially in the body of Christ” (*IV Sent.*, d. 49,

anthropological account to its logical conclusion, as traditional Catholic moral teaching does, we find ourselves affirming the full moral worth and integrity of the human body, that is, the *intrinsic* moral worth of our (procreative) bodies. Convinced that the human being is *on account of* his material body *and* his immaterial soul, Thomistic hylemorphism reminds us that we must take moral ownership of our bodies, together with our souls, since what we do to our bodies we do to our very persons. Hardly morally neutral, the human body is *morally charged*.

Little wonder certain scholars should identify in Aquinas a pronounced anti-Manichaean defense of “the metaphysical and moral goodness of bodiliness, sexuality, marriage, and procreation.”⁵⁰ Aquinas is well known for staking his claim as a tireless defender of God’s entire created order—for which reason G. K. Chesterton dubs him “St. Thomas of the Creator”—no matter how “low grade” or inferior that level of nature might be, including our animal-like procreative embodiedness.⁵¹ Indeed, Aquinas does not hesitate to affirm that the human body, because of its dignity of being fitted to a rational soul, stands apart from all other bodies as a most excellent expression “of the divine art” (*ab arte divina*).⁵²

This must be borne in mind when considering the disparaging criticisms commonly leveled against Catholic moral teaching, and more particularly against *Humanae Vitae*. Often such criticisms amount to nothing more than ruses, either because they outright misrepresent the Catholic defense of the human body, if not of conjugal love, or because they often issue from an underlying Cartesian bias. We see an example of the latter when we are told the Catholic teaching on human sexuality amounts to nothing more than an “obsession” with the “mechanics” of procreation.⁵³

q. 2, a. 2, ad 6; emphasis added). Also, in *Quodlibet* 8, q. 9, a. 2, he explains: “The blessed . . . will find their joy in the contemplation of the divinity and the humanity of Christ.” Our resurrected bodies will share in the contemplation of Christ’s humanity, inasmuch as this contemplation will include the perception our bodily senses will have of his body.

⁵⁰ Peter Kwasniewski argues this in his address “Aquinas on the Grandeur and Limitations of Marriage,” offered at the conference “Sacraments in Aquinas,” held at Ave Maria University, Naples, Florida, February 1–3, 2007.

⁵¹ Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Garden City: Image Books, 1956), 119. Among those who have highlighted this aspect of Thomas’s thought, Josef Pieper merits first mention; cf. his *Guide to Thomas Aquinas* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 120–33.

⁵² *ST I*, q. 91, a. 3.

⁵³ Thus, for instance, the Catholic priest and sociologist/novelist Andrew Greeley (*Sex: The Catholic Experience* [Allen, TX: Thomas More, 1994], 75 and 82), who charges “conservative hierarchies” in the Catholic Church with being “obsessed with the mechanics of the pro-creative process” and with holding “romantic

To speak of the procreative process as if it were a mere machine is deeply revealing of a disdain for the organic beauty of the human body and of a supposition that the procreative dimension is purely accidental to our sexuality. Because it embraces all that is authentically human, the Catholic vision of human sexuality draws the line in the sand when confronted with a Cartesian-like disregard for the human body (i.e., for human “biology,” procreation), and thus with a truncated approach to moral living.

Avoiding a Dualist-leaning (Cartesian) Anthropology in Our Sexual Acts

Human sexuality has one end, heterosexual marriage, with two essential dimensions, the procreative (expressive of the body) and unitive (expressive of the soul). Since body and soul always remain a substantial composite, we can see that separating or opposing in any fashion the procreative and unitive dimensions is, at bottom, to opt for a dualist-leaning Cartesian anthropology. Whenever one attempts to further the aims of one of the dimensions at the exclusion of the other, or to pit one dimension in fundamental and perpetual contest with the other, one implies a disintegrated view of the human being.

If we consider those sex acts that Catholic moral teaching has traditionally labeled as opposed to the nuptial meaning of human sexuality, from homosexual intercourse to masturbation, to premarital sexual relations and even to artificial contraceptive use, we can see that each of these acts attempts to uphold one dimension at the expense of the other (normally the unitive at the exclusion of the procreative). There is a denial, at least in practice, of the hylemorphic union of body and soul, of the fundamental unity of the human being. There is a denial of the symbolic meaning of human sexuality as a body-soul (procreative-unitive) composite. By these acts human persons live as if they were either disembodied spirits or pure bodies. Such persons live as “fragmented selves,” to use the memorable line from Augustine when describing his earlier life of sexual dissipation in the *Confessions*.⁵⁴

love” in ill repute. Consider as well the remarks of the psychotherapist and moral theologian Daniel A. Helminiak (*Sex and the Sacred: Gay Identity and Spiritual Growth* [New York: Harrington Park Press, 2006], 93), who takes a Cartesian-like swipe at human bodiliness in favor of the interpersonal dimension of sex when he writes: “Psychological studies show that the *distinctive* function of human sex is intimacy and relationship, not procreation” (emphasis his). The views of Greeley and Helminiak are shared in the very least implicitly by most theologians who dissent from *Humanae Vitae*.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. II, ch. 1 (trans. Henry Chadwick [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], 24). Indeed, in describing his “disintegrated self,” Augustine

Among other things, respecting the human being as a body-soul (procreative-unitive) composite means the sexual act must at all times have at least a symbolic orientation to procreation. This symbolic ordering is absent where the sexual act of its very nature suppresses it, as in the case of intentional sterilization, contraceptive intercourse, or same-sex intercourse.

However, since the actual conception of a child is accidental to this ordering, the symbolic orientation to procreation *is* maintained in those instances where the procreative end is not *per se* suppressed yet where the failure to produce a child is foreseen. This is the case for those couples whose infertility results either from advanced age or from some other natural or accidental cause. It is also the case for those couples who, with the express intention of not conceiving a child for morally justifiable reasons, observe the natural method of birth regulation (natural family planning). Failure to produce a child as a result either of natural or unintended infertility or of following the natural method of birth regulation does not in itself remove the symbolic ordering to procreation. It is analogous to the way the symbolic ordering to seeing is not removed or suppressed when the failure to see results either from natural or accidental blindness (similar to infertility) or from the express intention to close one's eyes in order to sleep (similar to the couple practicing natural family planning). But failure to see as a result of the act of purposefully blinding oneself does remove the symbolic ordering to seeing, since it is *per se* opposed to it.

So in the case of conjugal intercourse between spouses who are infertile or who are observing the natural method of birth regulation, the fullness of embodied complementarity, and thus the symbolic orientation to procreation, remains present. Furthermore, group persons, or societies, such as marriage, whose unity of order transcends the individuals themselves who comprise it, are presumed to last unto perpetuity and do not dissolve simply because they do not achieve their ends. A baseball team survives even if it suffers a losing season; a marriage survives even if it fails to produce children.

Marriage as *Maxima Amicitia*: Uniting the Two Dimensions

Let us return to Aquinas's qualification of marriage as *maxima amicitia*, "the highest type of friendship." That St. Thomas should reserve *maxima amici-*

writes the following: "At one time in adolescence I was burning to find satisfaction in hellish pleasures. I ran wild in the shadowy jungle of erotic adventures." Then in ch. 2 he quickly adds: "Clouds of muddy carnal concupiscence filled the air. The bubbling impulses of puberty befogged and obscured my heart so that it could not see the difference between love's serenity and lust's darkness. Confusion of the two things boiled within me. It seized hold of my youthful weakness sweeping me through the precipitous rocks of desire to submerge me in a whirlpool of vice."

tia for man and woman in marriage, rather than for *men alone*, as one might expect from a medieval author, ought to arrest us. True enough, the opening pages of Genesis, which certainly impacted Aquinas, hold up the conjugal relationship as the most fulfilling of human friendships. But in the history of western literature that stretches even into the Renaissance and modern periods, one would be at pains to find *one* male-female (conjugal) friendship that could rival the deeply fulfilling *male* friendships that abound in the best known pieces of western literature up to Thomas's day—from the friendship enjoyed by Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the Mesopotamian *Gilgamesh* epic, to Achilles and Patroklos in Homer's *Iliad*, to Beowulf and Wiglaf in the early medieval epic *Beowulf*, to Roland and Olivier in the early twelfth-century epic *The Song of Roland*.⁵⁵ Aquinas could easily have echoed this literary tradition. Or he could have stayed within the more measured language of his former Master General of the Dominican Order, Raymond of Peñafort (†1275), who affirms in his *Summa on Marriage* that God created woman to be man's "companion and friend" in marriage.⁵⁶ Furthermore, presumably St. Thomas, writing in an age of arranged marriages, that is, in the age of adulterous courtly romance where affective love often occurred outside marriage, had few contemporary examples in mind on which to stake his claim of *maxima amicitia*.⁵⁷ If

⁵⁵ Perhaps there is one exception to this: the marriage of Odysseus and Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*, symbolized by their immovable marriage bed which Odysseus built around the stump of an olive tree, fashioning one of the bed posts out of that stump still rooted in the ground. But as in the marriage ceremonies of the Shakespearean comedies or of the Jane Austen novels, which occur only at the end of the work, even here we fail to see the conjugal friendship from within and the subsequent long-term playing out of the marriage: Odysseus is absent for twenty long years and we merely witness his reunion with Penelope at the end of the epic. It is my colleague in English literature Brian Barbour who has pointed out to me (in personal conversation) this absence of a sympathetic presentation of a happy, fulfilling marriage from within and of the subsequent playing out of that marriage in Western literature. Again, if one does find a happy marriage in literature, invariably it occurs only in the context of the wedding ceremony itself (à la Shakespeare or Jane Austen), that is, only at the inception of the marriage rather than in the long-term playing out of the marriage. On the other hand, presentations of bad marriages from within, including the playing out of those marriages, abound in the history of Western literature.

⁵⁶ Raymond of Peñafort, *Summa on Marriage*, Title II, n. 3 (trans. Payer, 20): "The Lord did not form (the first woman) from the man's head lest she seem to be the ruling lady, nor from the feet lest she be considered a servant, but from his side so as to be a companion and friend." According to Payer ("Introduction," 6), "the parallels [between Raymond and Aquinas] suggest a use of Raymond by Aquinas."

⁵⁷ Charles J. Reid (*Power over the Body, Equality in the Family*, 29–30) notes: "the canonists [and thus also the theologians] of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

mutual respect was often present in such arranged marriages, friendship in the highest sense of the term most likely was not.

So if marriage holds the rank of *maxima amicitia* in Aquinas's estimation, it is because marriage, to quote him again, constitutes an "indivisible union of souls" (*indivisibili coniunctione animorum*), or a domestic society of loving personal communion (*domesticæ conversationis consortium*), which enjoys the "sweet bond" (*suavem societatem*) of sexual procreative union.⁵⁸ In other words, marriage rises to the level of *maxima amicitia* because it unites the two essential dimensions of human sexuality, procreative and unitive. No other type of friendship can rival the degree of intimacy and union, which is both physical and affective/spiritual, that marriage attains. It is not without pertinence that in his commentary on the Genesis creation narrative, woven into the anthropological section of the *Prima pars* of the *Summa*, Thomas asserts that one of God's purposes in the creation of man and woman was "so that man might love (*diligeret*) woman all the more, and

did not share our conception of marriage as belonging primarily to the parties themselves to arrange. . . . Most marital decisions in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe continued to be influenced, above all else, by dynastic and familial considerations." Thus courtly love, i.e., the genre of romance literature dating from the High to Late Middle Ages (e.g., Andreas Capellanus's *Art of Courtly Love* or Chretien de Troyes's *Lancelot: Knight of the Cart*), celebrates adulterous love for the simple reason that romantic sentiments typically occur outside (arranged) marriages. However, the anonymous late-medieval *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which aims at countering the dominant adulterous, unchaste themes of courtly love, marks an exception to this. For more on the relation of canon law to Thomas's teaching on marriage, cf. Seamus P. Heaney, *The Development of the Sacramentality of Marriage from Laon to Thomas Aquinas*, S.T.D. dissertation (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963).

⁵⁸ ScG III, ch. 123: "The greater the friendship, the more need for it to be firm and lasting. But the friendship of man and woman is counted strongest of all, since they are united not only in the union of the sexes, which even among beasts makes a sweet bond, but also in all things related to their society of domestic fellowship, as a sign whereof a man leaves even father and mother for the sake of his wife (Gen 2:24)." In the following chapter, Thomas explains how polygamy is opposed to the friendship of marriage: "If the wife has one husband only, whereas the husband has more than one wife, there will not be a friendship of equality on both sides (*non erit aequalis amicitia ex utraque parte*). There will not be the friendship of a free man with a free woman, but a sort of friendship of a slave with his master." My gratitude here to Michael Sherwin, O.P. Likewise for Raymond of Peñafort (*Summa on Marriage*, Title II, n. 3 [trans. Payer, 20]), the companionship and friendship that husband and wife enjoy, as implied in the Genesis creation account, entails a "conjugal society" whereby both enjoy "an undivided manner of life."

cleave to her more closely.”⁵⁹ *Humanae Vitae*, for its part, holds that marriage marks a “very special form of personal friendship, in which husband and wife generously share everything, without undue reservations or selfish convictions” (§9).

We can say more. The term Aquinas employs to speak of marriage as a “society” of domestic fellowship is *consortium*. *Consortium* as it applies to conjugal life means marriage is more than a simple social union. It is a society that has been institutionalized in the robust juridical sense of the term.⁶⁰ Marriage is not “merely” a friendship or a communion, but a permanent aspect of the entire human social order, that is, an institution. Since the *consortium* of marriage is an institution with permanent value and is of interest to everyone in society, it is wrongheaded for western culture to seek to turn marriage into a “private agreement.”

To be sure, Aquinas’s denomination of marriage as a *consortium* only underscores how deeply “personalist” and unitive his vision of sex and marriage truly is. This term *consortium* means marriage is to be regarded as a group person, a society with a unity of order that transcends the spouses as individual partners. Married partners hold themselves out as one; they attain a veritable “two-in-oneness”—something no society would say, for instance, of cohabitating couples. Speaking juridically, marriage is more than a mere “partnership,” since partnerships are for a determinate period of time (as when an individual and an automobile dealership agree on a lease contract) and can dissolve at any moment, and normally do dissolve when the determinate period of time expires. The *consortium* of marriage, on the other hand, is again presumed to last unto perpetuity, that is, it is a unity (a group person) that is regarded as permanent. Evidence for this is seen in the fact that no state reduces marriage to a pure partnership, since

⁵⁹ ST I, q. 92, a. 2. The Latin verb Thomas uses for love, *diligere*, signifies a properly human form of love, that is, freely chosen, spiritual love. It is significant that he elects not to use *amare*, which signifies more general, sensual love (as it relates to sex), even if *diligere* includes *amare*, at least in reference to marriage. These words on marriage as *maxima amicitia* serve as an important qualification of Aquinas’s more off-putting remarks, at least as these remarks sound to modern ears. These would include Thomas’s assertion (in ST I, q. 98, a. 2, *sed contra* [cf. as well q. 92, a. 1], and II–II, q. 164, a. 2, ad 1) that women are of most help to men in the begetting and rearing of children, or that in this domestic fellowship the man is by nature the “head” (*caput*) and “governor” (*gubernator*) of the woman—though Aquinas *does* add (in ST II–II, q. 164, a. 2, ad 1) that in the post-lapsarian condition the woman suffers on account of such headship, as she is made “to obey her husband’s will even against her own.”

⁶⁰ These and the following remarks take their inspiration from Russell Hittinger, both from personal conversation and from his lecture “Social Justice: Devolution or Subsidiarity?,” delivered at Providence College in Providence, RI on Oct. 23, 2007.

no state allows two individuals to contract a marriage for a determinate period of time (say, for eighteen months), something it does for partnerships (as in the case of the automobile lease). Every state presumes that a contracted marriage lasts unto perpetuity, and it is only when informed *after the fact* by those spouses seeking a divorce that it thinks otherwise.

Further, we would be remiss if we did not situate this view of marriage as *maxima amicitia* against the backdrop of the Aristotelian teaching on friendship, which was deeply influential on St. Thomas. If we keep in mind, for instance, the Aristotelian view that friendship implies “equality” and “community,” and that the highest type of friendship is the one where friends admire the virtuous character of each, that is, where friends “are similar in virtue and wish goods [of virtue] to their friend for the friend’s own sake,” we have the foundation for a high estimation of the personalist, unitive dimension of sex: “In fact there is a virtue proper to both husband and wife,” affirms Aquinas in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, “that renders their friendship delightful to each other, [since] friendship of this kind can be based on virtue, utility, and pleasure” (i.e., it unites in a unique way the three types of friendship).⁶¹ And we can be sure Aristotle’s declaration that a friend “is another self” was not lost on Aquinas’s appreciation of Scripture’s claim that in marriage man and woman “become one flesh” (Gen 2:24), in such wise that it can be “put asunder” by no human being (Mk 10:9).⁶² So while looking upon marriage as *maxima amicitia* does not mean that marriage, like the polity, provides all the goods requisite for human flourishing, the friendship of marriage is emblematic of that which the polity ultimately aims at: the cultivation of virtuous friendship.

The Marriage “Debt”

At seeming odds with the view of marriage as *maxima amicitia* is what medieval theologians, Aquinas included, often include in their treatment

⁶¹ Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. C. I. Litzinger [Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1993]), Bk. VIII, lect. 12 (§1723). Aristotle’s remarks on friendship cited in the text come from *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. VIII, chs. 3 (1156b8–11), 8 (1159b3), 9 (1159b32), and Bk. IX, ch. 4 (1166a30). For St. Thomas’s succinct summary of Aristotle’s teaching on friendship, cf. *ST* II–II, q. 25, a. 7.

⁶² In addressing the distinction between love of concupiscence and love of friendship in Aquinas, Ferruccio Galeotti (“Amore e amicizia conjugali secondo S. Tommaso d’Aquinas,” *Doctor Communis* 25 [1972]: 39–59) argues that because marriage implies a love of friendship, which centers on the other as another self rather than on the other as a good ordered to the satisfaction of one’s immediate needs, the friendship of marriage is properly human and thus profoundly personalist.

of marriage: the notion of the marriage “debt” (*debitum*).⁶³ While this notion comes from St. Paul, when it is raised scholars not infrequently snicker at it for the archaic and inadequate way it speaks of marriage, and disregard it as an excusable “hiccup” in the Pauline corpus.

Mindful that married partners have “power” or “dominion” (ἐξουσιάζω in the original Greek; *potestas* in the Latin Vulgate) not over their own bodies but over each other’s bodies, St. Paul enjoins his readers in 1 Corinthians 7:3–4: “Let the husband render the debt (ὀφειλή in Greek; *debitum* in the Vulgate) to his wife, and the wife also in like manner to her husband.” Sometimes ὀφειλή/*debitum* is translated in English as “conjugal rights,” as in the RSV: “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.” Whatever one’s preferred translation, at bottom the marriage “debt” signifies that married partners have the moral obligation to grant conjugal intercourse to each other whenever it is asked, within the bounds of reason.

But on this matter, too, we need not see the marriage debt as necessarily out of step with contemporary “personalist” approaches to human sexuality. When, through marriage, a man and a woman bind themselves in life-long love and fidelity to each other, they become united in body and soul. They become “another self,” to use Aristotle’s language for friendship, in the deepest and most intimate sense of the term. That is, their entire persons, including their bodies and their souls, belong *to each other*. In a sense, and as in fact evoked by the marriage vows of Thomas’s own day, each has a claim on the other’s body and soul as on his/her very person.⁶⁴ To speak of “debt” is to speak of what is owed, due, on the basis of fundamental equality in personal dignity—and this, essentially, is what Aquinas argues when discussing the matter.⁶⁵ Each spouse is due the total gift of body and soul of the other as another self in the deepest bonds of

⁶³ An entire article is devoted to the matter in *ST Suppl.*, q. 64 (this is pulled from *IV Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1). As remarked earlier, Reid (*Power over the Body*, 105) notes how canonists and lawyers since the twelfth century had stressed “the sense of obligation (*debitum*) that bound [married] parties together.” Raymond of Peñafort, who was himself a thirteenth-century teacher of canon law, gives central treatment to the notion of the marriage debt in his *Summa on Marriage* (cf., e.g., Title II, nn. 9–11 [trans. Payer, 23–24]). For a modern treatment of it, cf. Ford and Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, vol. 2, 63–74.

⁶⁴ According to Raymond of Peñafort (*Summa on Marriage*, Title II, n. 2 [trans. Payer, 20]), the “customary words” pronounced at the moment of marital consent (at least in the thirteenth century) were “I take you as mine” by the bridegroom and “I take you as mine” by the bride.

⁶⁵ *ST Suppl.*, q. 64, a. 5 (*IV Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 3).

friendship (*maxima amicitia*). Granted, the medievals see the rendering of the marriage debt largely as a kind of legal transaction and as an antidote to concupiscence, or, as St. Thomas explains, as an assuagement of sexual desire.⁶⁶ But this does not mean a more “personalist” take on the marriage debt signifying the offering of one’s body and soul in the total gift of self is absent from such a view.

The Primacy of Procreation

At a time when current fashion touts the primacy of the personalist dimension, sometimes at the expense of the procreative, the preeminent role of the procreative needs to be reasserted, at least if we attend to the objective metaphysical facts of the matter. To use Aquinas’s language, procreation marks the primary end (or good), the *principalem finem*, of marriage. Otherwise, we have no way of making proper sense of the uniqueness of marriage, that is, of distinguishing marriage from any other loving, affirming relationship.

Since the unitive dimension characterizes all types of relationships that are not specifically genital or even bodily—after all, we enjoy unitive love with our friends, with our family members, and with God, the angels enjoy it with each other and with God, and God enjoys it with himself—we know the unitive or personalist dimension alone cannot be the defining mark of the nuptial meaning of our sexuality (as Aquinas’s Dominican predecessor Raymond of Peñafort already observed).⁶⁷ Just as human nature cannot be defined in abstraction from the bodily (i.e., animal) dimension, so neither can we abstract the bodily, procreative dimension from the nuptial, symbolic meaning of our sexuality. Marriage is unique among all human relationships in that man and woman, while united in spiritual and affective communion, express their love *specifically* through their *bodies*. To put the matter in more technical Thomistic language, if the unitive dimension (or what Aquinas again calls the indivisible union of souls) signifies what is formal to marriage, the procreative union of bodies corresponds to what is material to marriage. Those who give

⁶⁶ The argument for the marriage debt assuaging concupiscence appears in *ST Suppl.*, q. 64, a. 1, *sed contra* (*IV Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 1, *sed contra*). He adds in q. 64, a. 9 ad 1 (*IV Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 5, q. 3 ad 1): “It is ordained by God, on account of the weakness of the flesh (*propter lubricum carnis*), that the debt must always be paid to the one who asks lest he be afforded an occasion of sin.”

⁶⁷ In his *Summa on Marriage*, Title II, n. 3 (trans. Payer, 20), Raymond notes that without procreation, there would be no real way of distinguishing marriage from any other cohabitating union, such as “between a brother and a sister, between a son and a mother.”

disproportionate emphasis to the personalist dimension risk obscuring this important truth.⁶⁸

The Unitive Marks the Higher, Nobler Dimension of Human Sexuality

At the same time, a Thomist-inspired hylemorphic sexual anthropology does not look upon the unitive or personalist dimension as some kind of a beside-the-fact good. On the contrary, the unitive dimension expresses human sexuality's participation in the rational, in what is highest and noblest in us. The personalist dimension raises our procreative animality, as it were, to the properly human. Signifying what is formal to marriage, the unitive dimension marks the higher, nobler meaning of human sexuality.

It is in this sense that we can say the procreative is for the sake of the unitive, just as matter is for the sake of form, body is for the sake of soul. The procreative is for the sake of the building up of the love between spouses. And just as the common good is always for the sake of the individual good, so is human sexuality's orientation to the common good of the human race (procreation) for the sake of our sexuality's orientation to the private good of the spouses themselves (unitive love-making).

Further, since form is the principle of unity between matter and form, the unitive dimension marks the principle of unity between the two dimensions. This explains why it would be odd to hear the engaged couple *first* say they are getting married because they want to have children and *only afterward* say they are getting married because they love each other. Their spousal unitive love is the "soul" of their procreative fecundity.

The Procreative Reaches Beyond the Purely "Biological"

The foregoing remarks expose how misleading it is to stick pejorative labels like "physicalist" or "biological" onto those moral (natural law) accounts of human sexuality which place such heavy emphasis upon the procreative dimension. Not only is the procreative for the sake of (or even internal to) the unitive love between spouses, but procreation itself signifies something much broader than a mere "biological" or "physicalist" act: "one should not

⁶⁸ While perhaps inadvertent, Grabowski's decision in *Sex and Virtue: An Introduction to Sexual Ethics* to wait until the sixth chapter to examine the procreative dimension of human sexuality is yet quite telling. Such a delay in treating the procreative is unthinkable from a Thomist hylemorphic (or even natural law) perspective; thus, Fulvio Di Blasi ("What Nature? Whose Nature? Reflecting on Some Recent Arguments in Natural Law Ethics," in *Restoring Nature: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Michael M. Waddell [South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2008]) writes: "procreation, far from being extrinsic or secondary, is exactly the *defining trait* of marriage as a *specific* communion of persons."

make the mistake of imagining that procreation and the rearing of children are not personalist values, too," argue the moralists Ford and Kelly, "or that the so-called personalist values do not contribute to the biological or social ends."⁶⁹

To be sure, since form actualizes, informs, matter and provides the principle of unity, we can say the unitive informs the procreative and marks the principle of unity between the two. How does this translate concretely? It means we do not just "produce babies" like animals. Human biology does not function as a kind of free-floating mechanism in isolation from a social unit. Rather, we first enter into a communion of personal spousal love, from which the begetting of human children flows, followed by the welcoming of these children into this same communion of love, into a family. Procreation means the begetting of new life, the begetting of new human persons, *along with* the subsequent rearing or educating of those new human persons as members of a community (a family). It means attending to what Thomas calls "the training of the soul" (*instructio quantum ad animam*), that is, attending to the full physical, emotional and spiritual needs of these new human persons who, while lacking in knowledge and virtue, are yet made to know and love the good.⁷⁰ It is in this way that the unitive love between husband and wife informs and unites to it the procreative. The procreative end cannot remain confined to the "animal" or purely "biological" dimension of human life.

Aquinas drives home the personalist depth of the procreative dimension in a significantly, if subtly, worded phrase: *finis autem matrimonii est proles generanda et educanda*, "the end of marriage is the producing and rearing of offspring."⁷¹ What stands out here is how this statement's grammatical struc-

⁶⁹ Ford and Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, vol. 2, 49.

⁷⁰ ScG III, ch. 122: "in vain would be the generation of man unless due nurture (*debita nutritio*) followed, without which the offspring generated could not endure. (Sexual intercourse) then ought to be so directed as that both the proper generation may ensue and the rearing of the offspring be secured. . . . [For] in the human species the young need not only bodily nutrition, as animals do, but also the training of the soul." Reid (*Power over the Body*, 87) notes that this teaching on parental responsibility by St. Thomas marks a significant theological development. Indeed, Reid explains that by appealing to 2 Corinthians 12:13–15 in expressing his view on the matter in *ST* Suppl., q. 49, a. 2, ad 1 (which opens with the assertion "offspring signifies not merely the begetting of children, but also their rearing"), Aquinas suggests that "sacrificial giving should characterize the parents' relationship with the child."

⁷¹ *ST* III, q. 29, a. 2. I am grateful to Mark Johnson for pointing out this phrase to me in an electronic communication on Feb. 20, 2008. One finds nearly the same wording in Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, §50: "Marriage and conjugal love

ture of one noun (*proles*, “offspring”) modified by two gerundives or adjectives (*generanda et educanda*, “producing and rearing”) highlights the “personalist” aim of marriage relative to the procreative dimension. For, one might expect Aquinas to have said, simply, that the end of marriage is procreation, or the production of children. Instead, he inserts “rearing” (*educanda*) as an essential part of the procreative package. Put in other terms, we cannot speak of procreation in abstraction from the concomitant—and more “personalist”—duty of rearing children. Whenever we speak of offspring (*proles*), we imply therein *not only* their being produced (*generanda*), “which is attained by conjugal intercourse,” adds St. Thomas, but *also* their being reared (*educanda*), “which is attained by the other duties of husband and wife, by which they help one another in rearing their offspring.”⁷²

Procreation is therefore brought up and fully integrated into the higher, nobler functions of knowledge and love, into the unitive, personalist dimension of our sexuality. Indeed, procreation targets the common good proper, inasmuch as it ensures the continued (procreated) existence of the human race, and in that it often implies selfless acts of sacrificial love and service more than what the love between husband and wife implies. This allows one to attach the label of unitive love as much to the procreative dimension as to the love between husband and wife proper, if not more.⁷³ And since the private good of persons, hardly opposed or alien to the common good, is itself *enhanced* by and, as St. Thomas affirms, loved “for the sake of the common good,”⁷⁴ only misguided views of sex pit the individual (unitive) good of the spouses in opposition to the common good of procreation.

On this score, Michael Waldstein has rightly criticized current discussions on marriage and human sexuality for largely ignoring the importance of the common good. Instead these discussions opt for a view where marriage “is seen in terms of the individual personal dignity of husband and wife and their personal love for one another as unique

are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children.” Cf. Ford and Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, vol. 2, 84.

⁷² “Procreation is not just a continuation of the race or the nation. It is inherently a continuation and fulfillment of the persons of husband and wife also. Parenthood may well be, and in fact frequently is, the highest of the personalist values in a given marriage which is *de facto* fruitful” (Ford and Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, vol. 2, 49). For more of the same line of reasoning, cf. Galeotti, “Amore e amicizia conjugali secondo S. Tommaso d’Aquinas,” 39–59.

⁷³ For passages relating procreation to the common good in St. Thomas, cf. *ST* II–II, q. 154, a. 2; *ScG* IV, ch. 78; and *IV Sent.* d. 33, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4.

⁷⁴ *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 3.

persons.”⁷⁵ Experience might well show that those married couples who show a greater degree of generosity and self-giving love toward the common good of procreation often enjoy a deeper, stronger unitive bond in their love as spouses. It is *in* their procreative bodily union, as form is in the matter, as the common good subsumes the private good, whereby married couples are united in the deepest bonds of personal love.

Furthermore, marriage not only targets the common good of humanity, as a society it possesses a unity of order itself, which is to say it enjoys a common good on its own, a common good to which it is ordered and by which it is perfected. Marriage in other words imitates God, so to speak, since, as St. Thomas observes, God is *himself* the common good of humanity—indeed, of the entire created order.⁷⁶ Marriage’s *imitatio* of the divine in fact goes further, as married couples (pro)create in the *very same way* that God creates, namely, through love and through a subsequent invitation to this same communion in personal (familial) love. Married spouses participate in God’s creative handiwork in a way no other creature can, not even angels.

Lastly, because God must directly create every human soul, as the union of sperm and ovum cannot “produce” an immaterial rational soul, married spouses *co-create* with God, inasmuch as they provide the matter while God supplies the form. Such is the dignity that the procreative dimension confers upon human sexuality. N V

⁷⁵ Michael Waldstein argues this in his address “Children as the Common Good of Marriage,” offered at the conference “Sacraments in Aquinas,” held at Ave Maria University, Naples, Florida, February 1–3, 2007. Waldstein’s purpose is to recover an element of John Paul II’s teaching (found, for instance, in *Familiaris Consortio*) that, as he notes, “some personalist philosophers and theologians have rejected rather sharply,” but which he shares with Aquinas. Cf. Waldstein’s “The Common Good in St. Thomas and John Paul II,” *Nova et Vetera* 3 (2005): 569–78.

⁷⁶ “God is the common good of the entire universe and of all its parts.” Aquinas, *Quodlibet* I, q. 4, a. 3 (cited in Dewan, “St. Thomas and the Divinity of the Common Good,” 14). Cf. Aquinas’s commentary on Romans, *In ad Roman.*, 1, 6 (commenting on Rm 1:20); and *In Ethic.*, Bk. X, lect. 12. Commenting on this passage from the commentary on Romans, Dewan (“St. Thomas and the Divinity of the Common Good,” 2) writes: “Divinity signifies God’s goodness as a common good participated by all.”