

JOHN PAUL II

Man and Woman  
He Created Them

A Theology of the Body

Translation, Introduction, and Index  
by Michael Waldstein



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person's solitude is broken, because the first "man" reawakens from his sleep as "male and female."

### Dimensions of Homogeneity

4. The woman is made "with the rib" that God-Yahweh had taken from the man. Considering the archaic, metaphorical, and figurative way of expressing the thought, we can establish that what is meant is the homogeneity of the whole being of both; this homogeneity regards above all the body, the somatic structure, and it is also confirmed by the man's first words to the woman just created: "This time she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones" (Gen 2:23).<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the words quoted also refer to the humanity of the male human being. They should be read in the context of the statements made before the creation of the woman, in which, though the "incarnation" of man does not yet exist, she is defined as "help similar to himself" (see Gen 2:18, 20).<sup>16</sup> Thus, *the woman is created in a certain sense based on the same humanity.*

15. It is interesting to note that for the ancient Sumerians, the cuneiform sign used to indicate the noun "rib" was the same as the one used to indicate the word "life." As for the Yahwist narrative, according to one interpretation of Genesis 2:21, God covers the rib with flesh (rather than closing up the flesh in its place) and in this way "forms" the woman, who thus draws her origin from the "flesh and bones" of the first (male) man.

In biblical language, this is a definition of consanguinity or belonging to the same lineage (e.g., Gen 29:14): the woman belongs to the same species as the man, distinct from other living beings created earlier.

In biblical anthropology, "bones" signify a very important component of the body, given that for the Hebrews there was no precise distinction between "body" and "soul," (the body was considered the outer manifestation of the personality), "bones" signified simply, by synecdoche, the human "being" (e.g., Ps 139:15, "my bones were not hidden from you").

"Bone from my bones" can thus be understood in the relational sense, like "being from being." "Flesh from flesh" signifies that, although she has different physical characteristics, the woman has the same personhood that the man has.

In the first "wedding song" of the first man, the expression, "bone of bones, flesh of flesh" is a form of the superlative, underlined by the threefold repetition: "she, she, she."

16. It is difficult to find an exact translation of the Hebrew expression, עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ, which is differently translated in European languages, e.g., Latin: "adiutori-um ei conveniens sicut oportebat iuxta eum"; German: "eine Hilfe, die ihm entspricht";

Despite the diversity in constitution tied to the sexual difference, *somatic homogeneity* is so evident that the man, on waking up from genetic sleep, expresses it immediately when he says, "This time she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones. She will be called woman because from man has she been taken" (Gen 2:23). In this way, for the first time, the man (male) shows joy and even exultation, for which he had no reason before, due to the lack of a being similar to himself. Joy for the other human being, for the second "I," dominates in the words the man (male) speaks on seeing the woman (female). All this helps to establish the full meaning of original unity. The words here are few, but each has great weight. We must therefore take into account—and will do so later—the fact that that first woman "formed with the rib taken from the man" is immediately accepted as a help suited to him.

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

### 9 General Audience of November 14, 1979 (*Insegnamenti*, 2, no. 2 [1979]: 1153–57)

1. FOLLOWING THE NARRATIVE OF GENESIS, we observed that the "definitive" creation of man consists in the creation of the unity of two beings. Their *unity denotes* above all *the identity of human nature; duality, on the other hand, shows what, on the basis of this identity, constitutes the masculinity and femininity* of created man. This ontological dimension of unity and duality has, at the same time, an axiological meaning. From the text of Genesis 2:23 and the whole context, it is clear that man has been created as a particular value before God ("God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good," Gen 1:31), but also as a particular value for man himself: first, because he is "man"; second, because the "woman" is for the man and,

French: "égal vis-à-vis de lui"; Italian: "un aiuto che gli sia simile"; Spanish: "como él que le ayude"; English: "a helper fit for him"; Polish: "odpowiednia dla niego pomoc."

Since the term "help" seems to suggest the concept of "complementarity," or, better, of exact correspondence, the term [k'negdô, translated as] "similar" is connected rather with that of "similarity," but in a sense that differs from man's likeness with God.

vice versa, the "man" for the woman. While Genesis 1 expresses this value in a purely theological (and indirectly metaphysical) form, Genesis 2, by contrast, *reveals, so to speak, the first circle of experience lived by man as a value*. This experience is inscribed already in the meaning of original solitude, and then in the whole account of the creation of man as male and female. The concise text of Genesis 2:23, which contains the words of the first man on seeing the newly created woman, "taken from him," can be considered the biblical prototype of the Song of Songs. In addition, if it is possible to read impressions and emotions through such remote words, one could even venture to say that the depth and power of this first and "original" emotion of the man before the humanity of the woman, and at the same time before the femininity of the other human being, seems something unique and unrepeatable.

### "Communion of Persons"

2. In this way, the meaning of man's original unity through masculinity and femininity expresses itself as an overcoming of the frontier of solitude and at the same time as an affirmation—for both human beings—of everything in solitude that constitutes "man." In the biblical account, solitude is the way that leads to the unity that we can define, following Vatican II, as *communio personarum*.<sup>17</sup> As we observed before, in his original solitude man reaches personal consciousness in the process of "distinction" from all living beings (*animalia*), and at the same time, in this solitude, he opens himself toward a being akin to himself, defined by Genesis as "a help similar to himself" (Gen 2:18, 20). This opening is no less decisive for man as a person; in fact, it is perhaps more decisive than the "distinction" itself. The man's solitude in the Yahwist account presents itself to us not only as the first discovery of the characteristic transcendence proper to the person, but also as the discovery of an adequate relation "to" the person, and thus as opening toward and waiting for a "communion of persons."

17. "But God did not create man abandoning him alone, for from the beginning 'male and female he created them' (Gen 1:27), and their union constitutes the first form of the communion of persons [*communio personarum*]" (GS 12).

One could also use the term "community" here, if it were not so generic and did not have so many meanings. "*Communio*" says more and with greater precision, because *it indicates precisely the "help" that derives in some way from the very fact of existing as a person "beside" a person*. In the biblical account, this fact becomes *eo ipso*—through itself—*existence of the person "for" the person*, given that in his original solitude man existed in some way already in this relation. This is confirmed, in a negative sense, precisely by his solitude. In addition, the communion of persons could form itself only on the basis of a "double solitude" of the man and the woman, or as an encounter in their "distinction" from the world of living beings (*animalia*), which gave to both the possibility of being and existing in a particular reciprocity. The concept of "help" also expresses this reciprocity in existence, which no other living being could have ensured. Indispensable for this solitude was everything that was constitutive in providing the foundation for the solitude of each, and thus also self-knowledge and self-determination, that is, subjectivity and the awareness of the meaning of one's own body.

3. The account of the creation of man in Genesis 1 affirms from the beginning and directly that man was created in the image of God inasmuch as he is male and female. The account in Genesis 2, by contrast, does not speak of the "image of God," but reveals, in the manner proper to it, that the complete and definitive creation of "man" (subject first to the experience of original solitude) expresses itself in giving life to the "*communio personarum*" that man and woman form. In this way, the Yahwist account agrees with the content of the first account. If, vice versa, we want to retrieve also from the account of the Yahwist text the concept of "image of God," we can deduce that *man became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons*, which man and woman form from the very beginning. The function of the image is that of mirroring the one who is the model, of reproducing its own prototype. Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. He is, in fact, "from the beginning" not only an image in which the solitude of one Person, who rules the world, mirrors itself, but also and essentially the image of an inscrutable divine communion of Persons.



In this way, the second account could also prepare for understanding the trinitarian concept of the "image of God," even if "image" appears only in the first account. This is obviously not without significance for the theology of the body, but constitutes perhaps the deepest theological aspect of everything one can say about man. In the mystery of creation—on the basis of the original and constitutive "solitude" of his being—man has been endowed with a deep unity between what is, humanly and through the body, male in him and what is, equally humanly and through the body, female in him. On all this, right from the beginning, the blessing of fruitfulness descended, linked with human procreation (cf. Gen 1:28).

### "Flesh from my Flesh" (Gen 2:23)

4. In this way, we find ourselves within the very bone marrow of the anthropological reality that has the name "body." The words of Genesis 2:23 speak about this directly and for the first time in the following terms, "*flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones.*" The man speaks these words as if it were only at the sight of the woman that he could identify and call by name *that which makes them in a visible way similar, the one to the other*, and at the same time *that in which humanity is manifested*. In the light of the earlier analysis of all the "bodies" man came in contact with and conceptually defined, giving them their names (*animalia*), the expression "flesh from my flesh" takes on precisely this meaning: the body reveals man. This concise formula already contains all that human science will ever be able to say about the structure of the body as an organism, about its vitality, about its particular sexual physiology, etc. In this first expression of the man, "flesh from my flesh" contains also a reference to that by which that body is authentically human and thus to that which determines man as a person, that is, as a being that is, also in all its bodiliness, "similar" to God.<sup>18</sup>

18. In the conception of the most ancient biblical books, the dualistic antithesis "body-soul" does not appear. As pointed out already [TOB 8:4], one could speak rather of a complementary combination "body-life." The body is an expression of man's personhood and, though it does not completely exhaust this concept, one should understand it in biblical language as "*pars pro toto*" [the part standing for the whole]; cf. "neither flesh nor blood have revealed this to you, but my Father" (Mt 16:17), that is, no *human being* has revealed it to you.

5. We find ourselves, therefore, within the very bone marrow of the anthropological reality whose name is "body," human body. Yet, as can easily be observed, this marrow is not only anthropological, but also essentially theological. The theology of the body, which is linked from the beginning with the creation of man in the image of God, becomes in some way also a theology of sex, or rather a theology of masculinity and femininity, which has its point of departure here, in Genesis. The original meaning of unity, to which the words of Genesis 2:24 bear witness, was to have a broad and far-reaching perspective in God's revelation. This unity through the body ("and the two will be one flesh") possesses a multiform dimension: an ethical dimension, as is confirmed by Christ's response to the Pharisees in Matthew 19 (see also Mk 10), and also a sacramental dimension, strictly theological, as confirmed by the words of Paul to the Ephesians,<sup>19</sup> that likewise refer to the tradition of the prophets (Hosea, Isaiah, Ezekiel). And this is so because the unity that is realized through the body indicates from the beginning not only the "body," but also the "incarnate" communion of persons—*communio personarum*—and requires this communion right from the beginning. Masculinity and femininity express *the twofold aspect of man's somatic constitution* ("this time she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones") and *indicate*, in addition, through the same words of Genesis 2:23, *the new consciousness of the meaning of one's body*. This meaning, one can say, consists in *reciprocal enrichment*. Precisely this consciousness, through which humanity forms itself anew as a communion of persons, seems to constitute the layer in the account of the creation of man (and in the revelation of the body contained in it) that is deeper than the somatic structure as male and female. In any case, this structure is presented from the beginning with a deep consciousness of human bodiliness and sexuality, and this establishes an inalienable norm for the understanding of man on the theological plane.

19. "No one, in fact, ever hates his own flesh, but he nourishes and cares for it, as Christ does with the Church, because we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife and the two will form one flesh. This mystery is great; I say this with reference to Christ and the Church" (Eph 5:29-32).

## 10 General Audience of November 21, 1979 (*Insegnamenti*, 2, no. 2 [1979]: 1212-15)

1. LET US RECALL THAT CHRIST, when he was asked about the unity and indissolubility of marriage, appealed to what was "at the beginning." He quoted the words written in the first chapters of Genesis. This is the reason why we are attempting in the present reflections to penetrate into the meaning that truly belongs to these words and these chapters.

The meaning of the original unity of man, whom God has created "male and female," is grasped (particularly in the light of Genesis 2:23) by knowing man in the whole endowment of his being, that is, in the whole wealth of that mystery of creation standing at the basis of theological anthropology. This knowledge, that is, the search for the human identity of the one who, at the beginning, is "alone," must always pass through duality, through "communion."

Let us recall the passage of Genesis 2:23: "Then the man said, 'This time she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones. She will be called woman because from man has she been taken.'" In the light of this text we understand that the knowledge of man passes through masculinity and femininity, which are, as it were, two "incarnations" of the same metaphysical solitude before God and the world—*two reciprocally completing ways of "being a body" and at the same time of being human*—as two complementary dimensions of self-knowledge and self-determination and, at the same time, *two complementary ways of being conscious of the meaning of the body*. Thus, as Genesis 2:23 already shows, femininity in some way finds itself before masculinity, while masculinity confirms itself through femininity. Precisely the function of sex [that is, being male or female], which in some way is "constitutive for the person" (not only "an attribute of the person"), shows how deeply man, with all his spiritual solitude, with the uniqueness and unrepeatability proper to the person, is constituted by the body as "he" or "she." The presence of the feminine element, next to the masculine and together with it, signifies an enrichment for man in the whole perspective of his history, including the history of salvation. All this teaching on unity has already been originally expressed in Genesis 2:23.

## The Unity of Becoming "One Flesh"

2. The unity about which Genesis 2:24 speaks ("and the two will be one flesh") is without doubt the unity that is expressed and realized in the conjugal act. The biblical formulation, so extremely concise and simple, indicates sex, that is, masculinity and femininity, as that characteristic of man—male and female—that allows them, when they become one flesh, to place their whole humanity at the same time under the blessing of fruitfulness. Yet, the whole context of the lapidary formulation does not allow us to stop on the surface of human sexuality; it does not allow us to treat the body and sex outside the full dimension of man and the "communion of persons," but imposes on us from the "beginning" the obligation to see the fullness and depth proper to this unity, the unity that man and woman must constitute in the light of the revelation of the body.

Before all else, therefore, the future-oriented expression, "the man...will unite with his wife" so intimately that "the two will be one flesh," always leads us to turn to what the biblical text expresses before this with respect to union in humanity, which connects the woman and the man in the very mystery of creation. The words of Genesis 2:23 just analyzed explain this concept in a particular way. When they unite with each other (in the conjugal act) so closely so as to become "one flesh," man and woman rediscover every time and in a special way the mystery of creation, thus returning to the union in humanity ("flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones") that allows them to recognize each other reciprocally and to call each other by name, as they did the first time. This means reliving in some way man's original virginal value, which emerges from the mystery of his solitude before God and in the midst of the world. The fact that they become "one flesh" is a powerful bond established by the Creator through which they discover their own humanity, both in its original unity and in the duality of a mysterious reciprocal attraction. Sex, however, is something more than the mysterious power of human bodiliness, which acts, as it were, by virtue of instinct. On the level of man and in the reciprocal relationship of persons, sex expresses an ever-new surpassing of the limit of man's solitude, which lies within the makeup of his body and determines its original meaning. This surpassing always

implies that in a certain way one takes upon oneself the solitude of the body of the second "I" as one's own.

3. For this reason, the assumption is linked with choice. The formulation of Genesis 2:24 itself indicates not only that human beings, created as man and woman, have been created for unity, but also that precisely this *unity, through which they become "one flesh," has from the beginning the character of a union that derives from a choice.* We read, in fact, "A man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife." While the man, by virtue of generation, belongs "by nature" to his father and mother, "he unites," by contrast, with his wife (or she with her husband) by choice. The text of Genesis 2:24 defines this character of the conjugal bond in reference to the first man and the first woman, but at the same time it does so also in the perspective of man's earthly future as a whole. In his own time, therefore, Christ was to appeal to this text as equally relevant in his age. Since they are formed in the image of God also inasmuch as they form an authentic communion of persons, the first man and the first woman must constitute the beginning and model of that communion for all men and women who in any period unite with each other so intimately that they are "one flesh." The body, which through its own masculinity and femininity helps the two ("a help similar to himself") from the beginning to find themselves in a communion of persons [see *Gaudium et Spes*, 24:3], becomes in a particular way the constitutive element of their union when they become husband and wife. This takes place, however, through a reciprocal choice. The choice is what establishes the conjugal covenant between the persons,<sup>20</sup> who become "one flesh" only based on this choice.

4. This [role of choice] corresponds to the structure of man's solitude, and concretely to a "twofold solitude." As an expression of self-determination, the choice rests on the foundation of that structure, that is, on the foundation of its self-consciousness. It is only based on the structure proper to man that he "is a body" and that, through the

20. "The intimate community of conjugal life and love, established by the Creator and structured by its own laws, is established by the conjugal covenant, that is to say, by irrevocable personal consent" (GS 48).

body, he is also male and female. When both unite so intimately with each other that they become "one flesh," their conjugal union presupposes a mature consciousness of the body. Better yet, this union *carries within itself a particular awareness of the meaning of that body in the reciprocal self-gift of the persons.* In this sense, too, Genesis 2:24 is a future-oriented text. It shows, in fact, that in every conjugal union of man and woman, there is a new discovery of the same original consciousness of the unitive meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity; the biblical text thereby indicates at the same time that each union of this kind renews in some way the mystery of creation in all its original depth and vital power. "Taken from the man" as "flesh from his flesh," the woman consequently becomes, as "wife" and through her motherhood, mother of the living (Gen 3:20), because her motherhood has its proper origin also in him. Procreation is rooted in creation, and every time it reproduces in some way its mystery.

5. To this subject we will devote a special reflection, "Knowledge and Procreation" [see TOB 20–22]. In it, we will refer to further elements of the biblical text. The analysis of the meaning of original unity carried out so far shows in what way "from the beginning" that unity of man and woman, inherent in the mystery of creation, is also given as a task in the perspective of all future time.

#### 4. *The Meaning of Original Nakedness*

##### Introductory Observations about Genesis 2:25

### 11 *General Audience of December 12, 1979* (*Insegnamenti*, 2, no. 2 [1979]: 1378–82)

1. ONE CAN SAY THAT THE ANALYSIS of the first chapters of Genesis forces us in some way to reconstruct the constitutive elements of man's original experience. In this sense, the Yahwist text is by its own character a special source. When we speak of original human experiences, we have in mind not so much their distance in time, as rather their foundational significance. The important thing, therefore, is not that these experiences belong to man's prehistory (to his "theological



ure the particular fullness of interpersonal communion thanks to which man and woman "were naked but did not feel shame."

In our conventional language, the concept of "communication" has been nearly alienated from its deepest, original semantic matrix. It is tied mainly to the realm of the media, that is, for the most part, to products that serve as means for understanding, exchange, and bringing [people] closer together. By contrast, one can rightly assume that in its original and deepest meaning, "communication" was and is directly connected with subjects who "communicate" precisely based on the "common union" that exists between them, both to reach and to express a reality that is proper and pertinent to the sphere of subjects-persons alone. In this way, the human body acquires a completely new meaning, which one cannot place on the same level as the remaining "exterior" perception of the world. In fact, it expresses the person in his or her ontological and essential concreteness, which is something more than "individual," and thus expresses the human, personal "I," which grounds its "exterior" perception from within.

5. The whole biblical narrative, and particularly the Yahwist text, shows that, through its own visibility, the body *manifests* man and, in manifesting him, acts as an intermediary that allows man and woman, from the beginning, to "communicate" with each other according to that *communio personarum* willed for them in particular by the Creator. Only this dimension, it seems, allows us to understand rightly the meaning of original nakedness. In this context, any "naturalistic" criterion is bound to fail, while the "personalistic" criterion can be of great help. Genesis 2:25 certainly speaks about something extraordinary that lies outside the limits of shame known by human experience and that is *decisive for the particular fullness of interpersonal communication*, for the fullness that is rooted in the very heart of the *communio* revealed and developed in this way. In such a relationship, the words "they did not feel shame" can only signify (*in sensu obliquo* [in an indirect sense]) an original depth in affirming what is inherent in the person, that is, what is "visibly" feminine and masculine, through which the "personal intimacy" of reciprocal communication is constituted in all its radical simplicity and purity. To this fullness of "exterior" perception, expressed by physical nakedness, corresponds the "interior" fullness of the vision of man in God, that is, according to the measure of the "image of God" (see

Gen 1:27). According to this measure, man "is" truly naked ("they were naked"),<sup>22</sup> even before becoming aware of it (see Gen 3:7-10).

We must still complete the analysis of this important text in the next meditations.

## Intimacy—The Hidden Meaning of Vision

### 13 *General Audience of January 2, 1980* (*Insegnamenti*, 3, no. 1 [1980]: 11-15)

1. WE RETURN TO THE ANALYSIS of the Genesis text (Gen 2:25) begun a few weeks ago.

According to this passage, the man and the woman see each other, as it were, through the mystery of creation; they see each other in this way before knowing "that they were naked." This reciprocal vision of each other is not only a share in the "exterior" perception of the world, but also has an inner dimension of a share in the vision of the Creator himself—in that vision about which the account of Genesis 1 speaks several times, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). "Nakedness" signifies the original good of the divine vision. It signifies the whole simplicity and fullness of this vision, which shows the "pure" value of man as male and female, the "pure" value of the body and of [its] sex. The situation that is indicated in such a concise, and at the same time suggestive, way by the original revelation of the body as expressed in particular by Genesis 2:25, does not contain an inner break and antithesis between what is spiritual and what is sensible, just as it does not contain a break and antithesis between what constitutes the person as human and what is determined by sex in man, that is, what is male and female.

Seeing each other reciprocally, *through the very mystery of creation, as it were*, the man and the woman *see each other still more fully and clearly* than through the sense of sight itself, that is, through the eyes

22. According to the words of Sacred Scripture, God penetrates the creature, who is completely "naked" before him. "There is no creature that can hide before him, but everything is naked (*panta gymna*) and laid bare to his eyes, and to him we must give an account" (Heb 4:13). This character belongs in particular to divine wisdom. "Wisdom...by its purity pervades and penetrates all things" (Wis 7:24).

of the body. They see and know each other, in fact, with all the peace of the interior gaze, which creates precisely the fullness of the intimacy of persons. If "shame" carries with it a specific limitation of vision through the eyes of the body, this happens above all because personal intimacy is, as it were, troubled and "threatened" by such vision. According to Genesis 2:25, the man and the woman "did not feel shame"; seeing and knowing each other in all the peace and tranquility of the interior gaze, they "communicate" in the fullness of humanity, which shows itself in them as reciprocal complementarity precisely because they are "male" and "female." At the same time, they "communicate" based on the communion of persons in which they become a mutual gift for each other, through femininity and masculinity. In reciprocity, they reach in this way a particular understanding of the meaning of their own bodies. The original meaning of nakedness corresponds to the simplicity and fullness of vision in which their understanding of the meaning of the body is born from the very heart, as it were, of their community-communion. We will call this meaning "spousal." The man and the woman in Genesis 2:23-25 emerge, precisely at the very "beginning," with this consciousness of the meaning of their own bodies. This deserves a deepened analysis.

## 5. Man in the Dimension of Gift

### A. THE SPOUSAL MEANING OF THE BODY

#### Creation as Giving

2. If the account of the creation of man in the two versions, that of Genesis 1 and the Yahwist version in Genesis 2, allows us to establish the original meaning of solitude, unity, and nakedness, by this very fact it allows us also to reach the basis of an adequate anthropology, which seeks to understand and interpret man in what is essentially human.<sup>23</sup>

23. The concept of "adequate anthropology" has been explained in the text itself as "an understanding and interpretation of man in what is essentially human." This concept determines the principle of reduction, which is proper to the philosophy of man; it indicates the limits of this principle and indirectly excludes the possibility of going

The biblical texts contain the essential elements of such an anthropology, which become clear in the theological context of the "image of God." This concept contains in a hidden way the very root of the truth about man revealed by the "beginning," to which Christ appeals in the dialogue with the Pharisees (see Mt 19:3-9) when he speaks about the creation of man as male and female. One must remember that all the analyses we are carrying out here are connected, at least indirectly, with precisely these words. Man, whom God created "male and female," bears the divine image impressed in the body "from the beginning"; man and woman constitute, so to speak, two diverse ways of "being a body" that are proper to human nature in the unity of this image.

We should now turn anew to those fundamental words that Christ used, that is, to the word "created" and to the subject, "Creator," introducing into the considerations carried out so far a *new dimension, a new criterion of understanding and of interpretation* that we will call "*hermeneutics of the gift*." The dimension of gift is decisive for the essential truth and depth of the meaning of original solitude-unity-nakedness. It stands also at the very heart of the mystery of creation, which allows us to build the theology of the body "from the beginning," but at the same time demands that we build it in precisely this way.

3. On Christ's lips, the word "created" contains the same truth that we find in Genesis. The first creation account repeats this word several times from Genesis 1:1 ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth") to Genesis 1:27 ("God created man in his image").<sup>24</sup> God reveals himself above all as Creator. Christ appeals to this fundamental revelation contained in Genesis. The concept of

beyond this limit. "Adequate" anthropology relies on essentially "human" experience. It is opposed to reductionism of the "naturalistic" kind, which often goes hand in hand with the theory of evolution about man's beginnings.

24. The Hebrew term *bārā'* (created), which is used only to determine the action of God, appears in the creation account only in 1:1 (creation of heaven and earth), [in 1:21 (creation of the sea monsters)], and in 1:27 (creation of man). Here, however, [that is, in 1:27], it appears as often as three times. This signifies the fullness and perfection of the act of the creation of man, male and female. Such repetition indicates that here the work of creation reached its high point.



creation has all its depth, not only a metaphysical, but also a fully theological depth, in Genesis. The Creator is he who "calls to existence from nothing" and who establishes the world in existence and man in the world, *because he "is love"* (1 Jn 4:8). We admittedly do not find this word love (God is love) in the creation account; nevertheless, that account often repeats, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Through these words we are led to glimpse in love the divine motive for creation, the source, as it were, from which it springs: *only love, in fact, gives rise to the good and is well pleased with the good* (see 1 Cor 13). As an action of God, creation thus means not only calling from nothing to existence and establishing the world's existence as well as man's existence in the world, but, according to the first account, *b' rē'šīt bārā'*, it also signifies *gift*, a fundamental and "radical" gift, that is, an act of giving in which the gift comes into being precisely from nothing.

### Giving and Man

4. Reading the first chapters of Genesis introduces us into the mystery of creation, that is, of the beginning of the world by the will of God, who is omnipotence and love. Consequently, every creature bears within itself the sign of the original and fundamental gift.

Yet, at the same time, the concept of "giving" cannot refer to nothing. It indicates the one who gives and the one who receives the gift, as well as the relation established between them. Now, this relation emerges in the creation account at the very moment of the creation of man. This relation is shown above all by the expression, "God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him" (Gen 1:27). In the account of the creation of the visible world, giving has meaning only in relation to man. In the whole work of creation, it is only about him that one can say, a gift has been granted: the visible world has been created "for him." The biblical creation account offers us sufficient reasons for such an understanding and interpretation: *creation is a gift, because man appears in it, who, as an "image of God," is able to understand the very meaning of the gift in the call from nothing to existence. He is also able to respond to the Creator with the language of this understanding. When one inter-*

prets the creation account precisely with this language, one can deduce from it that creation constitutes the fundamental and original gift: man appears in creation as the one who has received the world as a gift, and vice versa, one can also say that the world has received man as a gift.

At this point, we must interrupt our analysis. What we have said so far stands in the strictest relation with the whole anthropological problematic of the "beginning." Man appears in it as "created," that is, as the one who, in the midst of the "world," has received the other human being as a gift. In what follows, it is precisely this dimension of gift that we must subject to a profound analysis, in order to understand also the meaning of the body in its right measure. This will be the object of our next meditations.

## 14 General Audience of January 9, 1980

(*Insegnamenti*, 3, no. 1 [1980]: 88-92)

1. AS WE REREAD AND ANALYZE the second creation account, that is, the Yahwist text, we must ask ourselves whether the first "man" (*'ādām*), in his original solitude, "lived" the world truly as a gift, with an attitude that conforms to the actual condition of someone who has received a gift, as one can gather from the account in Genesis 1. The second account, in fact, shows us man in the garden of Eden (see Gen 2:8); but we must observe that, though man existed in this situation of original happiness, the Creator himself (God-Yahweh) and then also the "man" emphasize that the man is "alone," instead of underlining the aspect of the world as a subjectively beatifying gift created for man (see the first narrative and especially Gen 1:26-29). We have already analyzed the meaning of original solitude; now, however, it is necessary to note that for the first time there clearly appears a certain lack of good, "It is not good that the man" (male) "should be alone," God-Yahweh says, "I want to make him a help..." (Gen 2:18). The same thing is affirmed by the first "man": he, too, after having become completely conscious of his own solitude among all the living beings on the earth, awaits a "help similar to himself" (see Gen 2:20). None of these beings (*animalia*), in fact, offers man the basic conditions that *make it possible to exist in a relation of reciprocal gift.*

## Gift—Mystery of a Beatifying Beginning

2. In this way, then, these two expressions, that is, the adjective "alone" and the noun "help," seem truly to be the key for understanding the essence of the gift on the level of man, as the existential content inscribed in the truth of the "image of God." In fact, the gift reveals, so to speak, *a particular characteristic of personal existence*, or even of the very essence of the person. When God-Yahweh says, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen 2:18), he affirms that, "alone," the man does not completely realize this essence. He realizes it only by existing "*with someone*"—and, put even more deeply and completely, by existing "*for someone*." This norm of existing as a person is demonstrated in Genesis as a characteristic of creation precisely by the meaning of these two words, "alone" and "help." They point out how fundamental and constitutive the relationship and the communion of persons is for man. Communion of persons means living in a reciprocal "for," in a relationship of reciprocal gift. And this relationship is precisely the fulfillment of "man's" original solitude.

3. In its origin, such a fulfillment is beatifying. Undoubtedly, it is implicit in man's original solitude, and precisely constitutes the happiness that belongs to the mystery of creation made by love, that is, it belongs to the very essence of creative giving. When the "male" man, awakened from his Genesis sleep, says, "This time she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones" (Gen 2:23), these words in some way express the subjectively beatifying beginning of man's existence in the world. Inasmuch as this [expression of joy] was verified at the "beginning," it confirms the process of man's individuation in the world, and is born, so to speak, from the very depth of his human solitude, which he lives as a person in the face of all other creatures and all living beings (*animalia*). This "beginning," too, belongs thus to an adequate anthropology and can always be verified based on that anthropology. This purely anthropological verification brings us, at the same time, to the topic of the "person" and to the topic of "body/sex."

This simultaneity is essential. In fact, if we dealt with sex without the person, this would destroy the whole adequacy of the anthropology that we find in Genesis. Moreover, for our theological study, it

would veil the essential light of the revelation of the body, which shines through these first statements with such great fullness.

4. There is a strong link between the mystery of creation, as a gift that springs from Love, and that beatifying "beginning" of man's existence as male and female, in the whole truth of their bodies and of their sexes, which is the simple and pure truth of communion between the persons. When the first man exclaims at the sight of the woman, "she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones" (Gen 2:23), he simply affirms the human identity of both. By exclaiming this, he seems to say, *Look, a body that expresses the "person"!* Following an earlier passage of the Yahwist text, one can also say that this "body" reveals the "living soul," which man became when God-Yahweh breathed life into him (see Gen 2:7). His solitude before all other living beings began in virtue of this act. Exactly through the depth of that original solitude, man now emerges in the dimension of reciprocal gift, the expression of which—by that very fact the expression of his existence as a person—is the human body in all the original truth of its masculinity and femininity. The body, which expresses femininity "for" masculinity and, vice versa, masculinity "for" femininity, manifests the reciprocity and the communion of persons. It expresses it through gift as the fundamental characteristic of personal existence. This is *the body: a witness* to creation as a fundamental gift, and therefore a witness *to Love as the source from which this same giving springs*. Masculinity-femininity—namely, sex—is the original sign of a creative donation and at the same time <the sign of a gift that>\* man, male-female, becomes aware of as a gift lived so to speak in an original way. This is the meaning with which sex enters into the theology of the body.

## Discovery of the "Spousal" Meaning of the Body

5. This beatifying "beginning" of man's being and existing as male and female is connected with the revelation and the discovery of the meaning of the body that is rightly called "spousal." If we speak of revelation together with discovery, we do so in reference to the speci-

\*Translator's note: Text in angled brackets supplied from the Polish.

ficity of the Yahwist text, in which the theological guiding thread is also anthropological, or better still, appears as a certain reality that is consciously lived by man. We have already observed that after the words expressing the first joy of man's coming into existence as "male and female" (Gen 2:23) there follows the verse that establishes their conjugal unity (Gen 2:24), and then the one that attests the nakedness of both without reciprocal shame (Gen 2:25). That these verses face each other in such a significant way allows us to speak of *revelation together with the discovery of the "spousal" meaning of the body in the mystery of creation*. This meaning (inasmuch as it is revealed and also consciously "lived" by man) completely confirms the fact that creative giving, which springs from Love, has reached man's original consciousness by becoming an experience of reciprocal gift, as one can already see in the archaic text. A testimony to this fact seems also to be—perhaps even in a very specific way—that nakedness of both our first parents, free from shame.

6. Genesis 2:24 speaks about the ordering of man's masculinity and femininity to an end, in the life of the spouses-parents. Uniting so closely with each other that they become "one flesh," they place their humanity in some way under the blessing of fruitfulness, that is, of "procreation," about which the first account speaks (Gen 1:28). Man enters "into being" with the consciousness that his own masculinity-femininity, that is, his own sexuality, is ordered to an end. At the same time, the words of Genesis 2:25, "Both were naked, the man and his wife, but they did not feel shame," seem to add to this fundamental truth of the meaning of the human body, of its masculinity and femininity, another truth that is not in any way less essential and fundamental. Aware of the procreative power of his own body and of his own sex, man *is at the same time free from the "constraint" of his own body and his own sex*.

The original reciprocal nakedness, which was at the same time not weighed down by shame, expresses such an interior freedom in man. Is this freedom a freedom from "sexual drive"? The concept of "drive" already implies an inner constraint, analogous to the instinct that stimulates fruitfulness and procreation in the whole world of living beings (*animalia*). It seems, however, that both Genesis texts, the first and the second account of the creation of man, sufficiently

connect the perspective of procreation with the fundamental characteristic of human existence in the personal sense. Consequently, the analogy of the human body and of sex in relation to the world of animals—which we can call analogy "of nature"—is in both accounts (though in each in a different way) also raised in some way to the level of "image of God" and to the level of the person and communion among persons.

To this essential problem, we will have to devote further analyses. For the consciousness of man—also for that of contemporary man—it is important to know that in the biblical texts that speak about man's "beginning" one can find the revelation of the "spousal meaning of the body." However, it is even more important to establish what this meaning properly expresses.

### "Freedom of the Gift"—Foundation of the Spousal Meaning of the Body

#### 15 *General Audience of January 16, 1980* (*Insegnamenti*, 3, no. 1 [1980]: 148–52)

1. WE CONTINUE TODAY THE ANALYSIS of the texts of Genesis we have undertaken according to the line of Christ's teaching. We recall, in fact, that in the dialogue about marriage he appealed to the "beginning."

The revelation together with the original discovery of the "spousal" meaning of the body consists in presenting man, male and female, in the whole reality and truth of his body and his sex ("they were naked"), and at the same time in the full freedom from all constraint of the body and of [its] sex. A witness of this seems to be the nakedness of our first parents, interiorly free from shame. One can say that, created by Love, that is, endowed in their being with masculinity and femininity, both are "naked," because they are *free with the very freedom of the gift*. This freedom lies exactly at the basis of the spousal meaning of the body. The human body, with its sex—its masculinity and femininity—seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and of procreation, as in the whole natural order, but contains "from the beginning" the "spousal" attribute, that is, *the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person*

ness of the meaning of the body—that is, of the spousal meaning of human masculinity and femininity—is conditioned by original innocence. There is no obstacle, it seems, against understanding this original innocence as a particular "purity of heart" preserving interior faithfulness to the gift according to the spousal meaning of the body. Consequently, original innocence conceived in this way manifests itself as a tranquil witness of conscience that (in this case) precedes any experience of good and evil; and yet, this serene witness of conscience is something all the more beatifying. One can say, in fact, that consciousness of the spousal meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity becomes "humanly" beatifying only through this witness.

We will devote the next meditation to this topic, namely, to the link between man's innocence (purity of heart) and his happiness, which becomes evident in the analysis of his "beginning."

### Innocence at the Foundation of the Exchange of the Gift

**17** *General Audience of February 6, 1980*  
(*Insegnamenti*, 3, no. 1 [1980]: 326–29)

1. WE ARE CONTINUING THE EXAMINATION of the "beginning" to which Jesus appealed in his dialogue with the Pharisees about the topic of marriage. This reflection requires us to go beyond the threshold of man's history and to reach the state of original innocence. To grasp the meaning of this innocence, we base ourselves in some way on the experience of "historical" man, on the witness of his heart, of his conscience.

2. As we follow the line of the "historical a posteriori," we attempt to reconstruct the distinctive character of the original innocence contained in the reciprocal experience of the body and of its spousal meaning as Genesis 2:23–25 attests. The situation described in this text reveals the beatifying meaning of the body, which in the sphere of the mystery of creation man attains, so to speak, in the complementarity of what is masculine and feminine in him. At the roots of this

experience, however, must be the interior freedom of the gift, united above all to innocence; *the human will is originally innocent* and thus furthers the reciprocity and the exchange of the gift of the body according to its masculinity and femininity as the gift of the person. Consequently, the innocence attested in Genesis 2:25 can be defined as the innocence of the reciprocal experience of the body. The sentence, "Both were naked, the man and his wife, but they did not feel shame," expresses precisely such innocence in the reciprocal "experience of the body," an innocence that inspires the inner exchange of the gift of the person, which concretely realizes the spousal meaning of masculinity and femininity in their reciprocal relation. Thus, in order to understand the innocence of the mutual experience of the body, we must try to clarify what constitutes the inner innocence of the exchange of the gift of the person. This exchange constitutes, in fact, the true source of the experience of innocence.

3. We can say that inner innocence (that is, the rightness of intention) in the exchange of the gift consists in a reciprocal "acceptance" of the other in such a way that it corresponds to the very essence of the gift; in this way, the mutual gift creates the communion of persons. It is a question, therefore, of "welcoming" the other human being and of "accepting" him or her precisely because in this mutual relationship, about which Genesis 2:23–25 speaks, the man and the woman become a gift, each one for the other, through the whole truth and evidence of their own body in its masculinity and femininity. It is a question, therefore, of such an "acceptance" or "welcome" in reciprocal nakedness that it expresses and sustains the meaning of the gift and thus deepens its reciprocal dignity. This dignity corresponds deeply to the fact that the Creator has willed (and continually wills) man, male and female, "for his own sake" [*Gaudium et Spes*, 24:3]. Innocence "of heart"—and, as a consequence, innocence of experience—signifies a moral participation in the eternal and permanent act of God's will.

The contrary of such "welcoming" or "acceptance" of the other human being as a gift would be a loss of the gift itself and thus a transmutation and even reduction of the other to an "object for myself" (object of concupiscence, of "undue appropriation," etc.).



We will not deal in detail now with this manifold presumable antithesis of the gift. One must, however, note already here, in the context of Genesis 2:23–25, that such extortion of the gift from the other human being (from the woman on the part of the man and vice versa) and his or her inner reduction to a mere "object for me," should mark exactly the beginning of shame. Shame corresponds, in fact, to a threat inflicted on the gift in its personal intimacy and bears witness to the inner downfall of innocence in reciprocal experience.

### Exchange of the Gift—Interpretation of Genesis 2:25

4. According to Genesis 2:25, "the man and the woman did not feel shame." This allows us to reach the conclusion that the exchange of the gift, in which their whole humanity, soul and body, femininity and masculinity, participates, is realized *by preserving the inner characteristic (that is, precisely innocence) of self-donation and of the acceptance of the other as a gift.* These two functions of the mutual exchange are deeply connected in the whole process of the "gift of self": giving and accepting the gift interpenetrate in such a way that the very act of giving becomes acceptance, and acceptance transforms itself into giving.

5. Genesis 2:23–25 allows us to deduce that, due to original innocence, the woman, who in the mystery of creation "is given" by the Creator to the man, is "welcomed" or accepted by him as a gift. The biblical text is completely clear and transparent at this point. At the same time, the acceptance of the woman by the man and the very way of accepting her become, as it were, a first gift in such a way that the woman, in giving herself (from the very first moment, in which, in the mystery of creation, she has been "given" by the Creator to the man), at the same time "discovers herself," thanks to the fact that she has been accepted and welcomed and thanks to *the way* in which she has been received by the man. She therefore finds herself in her own gift of self ("through a sincere gift of self," *Gaudium et Spes*, 24:3) when she has been accepted in the way in which the Creator willed her, namely, "for her own sake," through her humanity and femininity; she comes to the innermost depth of her own person and to the full possession of herself when, in this acceptance, the whole dignity of the

gift is ensured through the offer of what she is in the whole truth of her humanity and in the whole reality of her body and her sex, of her femininity. We add that this *finding of oneself in one's own gift becomes the source of a new gift of self* that grows by the power of the inner disposition to the exchange of the gift and in the measure in which it encounters the same and even deeper acceptance and welcome as the fruit of an ever more intense consciousness of the gift itself.

6. It seems that the second creation account has assigned to the man "from the beginning" the function of the one who above all receives the gift (see Gen 2:23). The woman has "from the beginning" been entrusted to his eyes, to his consciousness, to his sensibility, to his "heart"; he, by contrast, must in some way ensure the very process of the exchange of the gift, the reciprocal interpenetration of giving and receiving the gift, which, precisely through its reciprocity, creates an authentic communion of persons.

While in the mystery of creation the woman is the one who is "given" to the man, he on his part, in receiving her as a gift in the full truth of her person and femininity, enriches her by this very reception, and, at the same time, he too is enriched in this reciprocal relationship. The man is enriched not only through her, who gives her own person and femininity to him, but also by his gift of self. The man's act of self-donation, in answer to that of the woman, is for him himself an enrichment; in fact, it is here that *the specific essence, as it were, of his masculinity is manifested, which, through the reality of the body and of its sex, reaches the innermost depth of "self-possession,"* thanks to which he is able both to give himself and to receive the gift of the other. The man, therefore, not only accepts the gift, but at the same time is welcomed as a gift by the woman in the self-revelation of the inner spiritual essence of his masculinity together with the whole truth of his body and his sex. When he is accepted in this way, he is enriched by this acceptance and welcoming of the gift of his own masculinity. It follows that such an acceptance, in which the man finds himself through the "sincere gift of self," becomes in him a source of a new and more profound enrichment of the woman with himself. The exchange is reciprocal, and the mutual effects of the "sincere gift" and of "finding oneself" reveal themselves and grow in that exchange [*Gaudium et Spes*, 24:3].

In this way, by following the trail of the "historical a posteriori"—and above all by following the trail of human hearts—we can reproduce and, as it were, reconstruct that reciprocal exchange of the gift of the person, which is described in the ancient text of Genesis, so rich and profound.

## Theology of Original Innocence

### 18 General Audience of February 13, 1980 (*Insegnamenti*, 3, no. 1 [1980]: 378–81)

1. TODAY'S MEDITATION PRESUPPOSES what has already been established by our various previous analyses. They sprang from the answer Jesus gave to his interlocutors (see Mt 19:3–9; Mk 10:1–12), who had asked him a question about marriage, about its indissolubility and unity. The Teacher had urged them to consider attentively *what was "from the beginning."* For this reason, in the cycle of our meditations up until today, we have attempted to reproduce in some way the reality of union, or better, of the communion of persons, lived "from the beginning" by man and woman. After this, we tried to penetrate into the content of the concise verse Genesis 2:25, "Now both were naked, the man and his wife, but they did not feel shame."

These words refer to the gift of original innocence by revealing its synthetic character, so to speak. On this basis, theology has built *the overall image of man's original innocence and justice before original sin* by applying the method of objectivization specific to metaphysics and metaphysical anthropology. In the present analysis, we are trying rather to take into account the aspect of human subjectivity; subjectivity, moreover, seems to be closer to the original texts, especially to the second creation account, that is, the Yahwist text.

2. A certain diversity of interpretations notwithstanding, it seems sufficiently clear that the "experience of the body," as we can gather from the ancient text of Genesis 2:24 and even more so of Genesis 2:25, indicates a degree of spiritualization of man that differs from the one about which the text speaks after original sin (Gen 3) and which we know from the experience of "historical" man. It is a different measure of "spiritualization" that implies another composition of inner forces in man himself, another body-soul relation, as it were.

other inner proportions between sensitivity, spirituality, and affectivity, that is, another degree of inner sensibility for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. All of this conditions the state of man's original innocence and at the same time determines it, allowing us also to understand the account of Genesis. Theology and also the Church's magisterium have given to these fundamental truths a form of their own.<sup>29</sup>

3. When we undertake the analysis of the "beginning" according to the dimension of the theology of the body, we do so by basing ourselves on the words of Christ with which he himself appealed to that "beginning." When he said, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator created them male and female?" (Mt 19:4), he ordered us and always orders us to return to the depth of the mystery of creation. And we do so in the full awareness of the gift of original innocence, which belonged to man before original sin. Although an insurmountable barrier divides us from what man was then as male and female, through the gift of grace united to the mystery of creation, and from what both were for each other as a reciprocal gift, we are nevertheless *trying to understand that state of original innocence in its link with man's "historical" state after original sin, "status naturae lapsae simul et redemptae* [the state of fallen and at the same time redeemed nature]."

Through the category of the "historical a posteriori" we are attempting to reach the original meaning of the body and to grasp the link that exists between it and the nature of original innocence in the "experience of the body," which is made evident in such a significant way in the Genesis account. We come to the conclusion that it is important and essential to determine this link with precision, not only with reference to man's "theological prehistory," in which the shared life of man and woman was completely permeated, as it were, by the

29. "If anyone does not confess that the first man Adam, when he had transgressed God's commandment in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice which he received originally, let him be anathema." Council of Trent, sess. V, can. 1, 2, DS 88–89.

"The first parents were constituted in the state of holiness and justice.... The state of original justice conferred on the first parents was gratuitous and truly supernatural.... The first parents were constituted in the state of integral nature, that is, immune from concupiscentia, ignorance, pain, and death, and enjoyed a unique happiness.... The gifts of integrity conferred on the first parents were gratuitous and preternatural." A. Tanqueren, *Summa Theologiae Dogmatica*, 14th ed. (Paris, 1948), 534–49.

grace of original innocence, but also in relation to the possibility of its revealing to us the permanent roots of the human and especially the theological aspect of the *ethos of the body*.

### The Root of the Ethos of the Human Body

4. Man enters into the world and into the innermost guiding thread of his future and his history with the consciousness of the spousal meaning of his own body, of his own masculinity and femininity. Original innocence says that this meaning is conditioned "ethically," and further that, on its part, it constitutes the future of human ethos. This is very important for the theology of the body: it is the reason why we must build this theology "from the beginning," carefully following the indication of Christ's words.

In the mystery of creation, man and woman *were in a particular way "given" to one another by the Creator*, not only in the dimension of that first human pair and of that first communion of persons, but in the whole perspective of the existence of the human race and of the human family. The fundamental fact of this existence of man in every stage of his history is that God "created them male and female"; in fact, he always creates them in this way, and they are always such. The understanding of the fundamental meanings contained in the very mystery of creation, such as the spousal meaning of the body (and of the fundamental conditioning of this meaning), is important and indispensable for knowing who man is and who he ought to be, and therefore how he should shape his own activity. It is something essential and important for the future of human ethos.

5. Genesis 2:24 notes that the two, man and woman, were created for marriage: "For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be one flesh." In this way, a great creative perspective is opened up, which is precisely the perspective of man's existence, which continually renews itself by means of "procreation" (one could say of "self-reproduction"). This perspective is deeply rooted in the consciousness of humanity (see Gen 2:23) and also in the particular consciousness of the spousal meaning of the body (Gen 2:25). Before they become husband and wife (a little later, Gen 4:1 speaks of it concretely), man and woman

*come forth from the mystery of creation first of all as brother and sister in the same humanity.* The understanding of the spousal meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity reveals the innermost point of their freedom, which is the freedom of the gift.

It is from here that the communion of persons begins in which both encounter each other and give themselves reciprocally in the fullness of their subjectivity. In this way, both grow as persons-subjects, and grow reciprocally, one for the other, also through their bodies and through that "nakedness" free from shame. In this communion of persons, the whole depth of the original solitude of man (of the first and of all) is perfectly ensured and, at the same time, this solitude is permeated and enlarged in a marvelous way by the gift of the "other." If man and woman cease being reciprocally a disinterested gift, as they were for one another in the mystery of creation, they recognize that "they are naked" (see Gen 3:7). It is then that shame about that nakedness is born in them, a shame they did not feel in the state of original innocence.

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

We will return to this topic.

## 19 General Audience of February 20, 1980 (*Insegnamenti*, 3, no. 1 [1980]: 428-31)

1. GENESIS POINTS OUT THAT MAN AND WOMAN were created for marriage, "A man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

This opens the great creative perspective of human existence, which always renews itself through "procreation," that is, "self-reproduction." This perspective is rooted in the consciousness of humanity and also in the particular understanding of the spousal meaning of the body with its masculinity and femininity. In the mystery of creation, man and woman are a reciprocal gift. Original innocence manifests and at the same time determines the *perfect ethos of the gift*.

We spoke about this during the last meeting. The ethos of the gift delineates in part the problem of the "subjectivity" of man, who is a subject made in the image and likeness of God. In the creation



account (see Gen 2:23–25), "the woman" is certainly not just "an object" for the man, although both remain before one another in the whole fullness of their objectivity as creatures, as "bone from my bones, flesh from my flesh," as male and female, both of them naked. Only the nakedness that turns the woman into an "object" for the man, or vice versa, is a source of shame. The fact that "they did not feel shame" means that the woman was not an "object" for the man, nor he for her. Inner innocence as "purity of heart" made it impossible somehow for one to be reduced by the other to the level of a mere object. If "they did not feel shame," this means that they were united by the consciousness of the gift, that they had reciprocal *awareness of the spousal meaning of their bodies*, in which the freedom of the gift is expressed and *the whole inner richness of the person as subject is shown*. This reciprocal interpenetration of the "I" of the human persons, of the man and the woman, seems to exclude subjectively any "reduction to an object." What is revealed here is the subjective profile of that love, about which one can say, moreover, that "it is objective" to the very depths, inasmuch as it is nourished by the same reciprocal "objectivity of the gift."

2. After original sin, man and woman were to lose the grace of original innocence. The discovery of the spousal meaning of the body was to cease being for them a simple reality of revelation and of grace. Yet, this meaning was to *remain as a task given to man by the ethos of the gift*, inscribed in the depth of the human heart as a distant echo, as it were, of original innocence. From that spousal meaning, human love was to be formed in its interior truth and authentic subjectivity. And even through the veil of shame, man was continually to discover himself in it as the guardian of the mystery of the subject, that is, of the freedom of the gift, in order to defend this freedom from any reduction to the position of a mere object.

### The Foundation of the Primordial Sacrament— The Body as Sign

3. For the present, however, we find ourselves before the threshold of man's earthly history. The man and the woman have not crossed it yet toward the knowledge of good and evil. They are immersed in the

very mystery of creation, and the depth of this mystery hidden in their heart is innocence, grace, love, and justice. "And God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Man appears in the visible world as the highest expression of the divine gift, because he bears within himself the inner dimension of the gift. And with it he carries into the world his particular likeness to God, with which he transcends and also rules his "visibility" in the world, his bodiliness, his masculinity or femininity, his nakedness. A reflection of this likeness is also the primordial awareness of the spousal meaning of the body pervaded by the mystery of original innocence.

4. Thus, in this dimension, a primordial *sacrament* is constituted, understood as a *sign that efficaciously transmits in the visible world the invisible mystery hidden in God from eternity*. And this is the mystery of Truth and Love, the mystery of divine life, in which man really participates. In the history of man, it is original innocence that begins this participation and is also the source of original happiness. The sacrament, as a visible sign, is constituted with man, inasmuch as he is a "body," through his "visible" masculinity and femininity. The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.

5. In man, created in the image of God, the very sacramentality of creation, the sacramentality of the world, was thus in some way revealed. In fact, through his bodiliness, his masculinity and femininity, man becomes a visible sign of the economy of Truth and Love, which has its source in God himself and was revealed already in the mystery of creation. Against this vast background, we fully understand the words in Genesis 2:24 that are constitutive of the sacrament of Marriage: "For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be one flesh." Against this vast background we also understand that, through the whole depth of their anthropological meaning, the words of Genesis 2:25 ("Both were naked, the man and his wife, but they did not feel shame") express the fact that, *together with man, holiness has entered the*



*visible world*, the world created for him. The sacrament of the world, and the sacrament of man in the world, comes forth from the divine source of holiness and is instituted, at the same time, for holiness. Original innocence, connected with the experience of the spousal meaning of the body, is holiness itself, which permits man to express himself deeply with his own body, precisely through the "sincere gift" of self [*Gaudium et Spes*, 24:3]. Consciousness of the gift conditions in this case "the sacrament of the body": in his body as man or woman, man senses himself as a subject of holiness.

6. With this consciousness of the meaning of his own body, man, as male and female, enters into the world as a subject of truth and love. One can say that Genesis 2:23–25 speaks about *the first feast of humanity, as it were*, in the whole original fullness of the experience of the spousal meaning of the body: and it is *a feast of humanity* that draws its origin from the divine sources of Truth and Love in the very mystery of creation. And although over this feast the horizon of sin and death (Gen 3) was very soon to be extended, nevertheless, we draw a first hope already from the mystery of creation: namely, that the fruit of the divine economy of truth and love, which revealed itself "at the beginning," is not Death, but Life, and not so much the destruction of the body <of man made "in the image">\* of God," but rather the "call to glory" (Rom 8:30).

## 6. "Knowledge" and Procreation (Gen 4:1)

### Between Poverty of Expression and Depth of Meaning

20 *General Audience of March 5, 1980*  
(*Insegnamenti*, 3, no. 1 [1980]: 517–21)

1. TO THE WHOLE OF OUR ANALYSES devoted to the biblical "beginning," we wish to add a further brief passage taken from Genesis 4. For this purpose, however, we must always go back to the words spoken by Jesus Christ in the dialogue with the Pharisees (see Mt 19 and

\*Translator's note: The words in angle brackets are missing in the *Insegnamenti* text, and have been supplied from UD.

Mk 10)<sup>30</sup> within the sphere of which our reflections are unfolding; they concern the context of human existence, according to which death and the destruction of the body connected with it (according to those words, "to dust you shall return," Gen 3:19) have become man's common lot. Christ appeals to the "beginning," to the original dimension of the mystery of creation, when this dimension had already been shattered by the *mysterium iniquitatis* [mystery of iniquity], that is, by sin and, together with sin, also by death: *mysterium mortis* [mystery of death]. Sin and death have entered into man's history *in some way through the very heart of that unity that had from the "beginning" been formed by man and woman*, created and called to become "one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Already at the beginning of our meditations we observed that, by appealing to the "beginning," Christ leads us in some way beyond the limits of man's hereditary sinfulness to his original innocence; he thus allows us to find the continuity and the link that exists between these two situations, the situations by which the drama of the origins was produced as well as the revelation of the mystery of man to historical man.

This authorizes us, so to speak, after the analyses concerning the state of original innocence, to move on to the last of these analyses, namely, to the analysis of "knowledge and procreation." Thematically, knowledge is closely tied to the blessing of fruitfulness inserted in the first account of the creation of man as male and female (Gen 1:27–28). Historically, by contrast, it is already inserted into the horizon of sin and death, which, as Genesis 3 teaches, has weighed heavily on the consciousness of the meaning of the human body, as soon as the first covenant with the Creator was broken.

2. In Genesis 4, and thus still within the boundaries of the Yahwist text, we read, "Adam united himself with Eve his wife, who conceived and gave birth to Cain and said, 'I have acquired a man from the Lord.' Then she gave birth also to his brother Abel" (Gen

30. One must keep in mind the fact that in the dialogue with the Pharisees (Mt 19:7–9; Mk 10:4–6) Christ takes a position with regard to the practice of the Mosaic Law concerning the so-called "certificate of divorce." The words, "because of the hardness of your heart," spoken by Christ reflect not only "the history of hearts," but also the whole complexity of the positive law of the Old Testament, which always sought "human compromise" in this very delicate area.