

THE INTEGRAL FEMINISM OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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I. Introduction

It is true that the area of feminism or of the philosophy of woman has not been seen as one of Thomas' great strengths. For example, Janet Radcliffe Richards writes in *The Sceptical Feminist: A Philosophical Enquiry*: "Aristotle, Aquinas, and the like contrived by some feat of their highly sophisticated reasoning process to ... see her (woman's) whole essence as a series of inadequacies and absences..."¹

Or again, Mary Daly in *The Church and the Second Sex* says that Thomas holds that women are naturally defective. She then states: "Thomas, of course, shares the feeling that women as such are not quite human. However, leaving all questions of grace aside, there is indecision in his thought on the level of nature itself."²

In this paper, we will not defend Thomas against these remarks. We have done so in another work.³ Rather, our intention is to emphasize the positive, though culturally and scientifically limited, philosophy of woman that St. Thomas held. In order to accomplish this, we have used, what may be called, the hermeneutics of integral feminism.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, we will explain, as clearly as possible, the integral feminism of St. Thomas. Second, we will argue that an "old" integral feminism actually exists in his writings; and, this feminism must be understood within the context of his integral humanism. In order to achieve this purpose, we have divided this paper into five sections.

In section two, we will discuss St. Thomas' integral humanism. Here we will rely on the paradigm provided by Jacques Maritain. Under this division we will examine two points. We will explain the essential structure of integral humanism and its analogous application to different historical periods.

The third section of this paper will focus on St. Thomas' anthropology of woman. First, we will discuss the anthropology of woman in general. Second, we will discuss her constitution in a more particular way. Here we will note how St. Thomas distinguishes woman from man both in nature and in domestic activity.

In the fourth section, we will draw some conclusions about integral feminism. Finally, in section five, we will consider two texts which illustrate the spirit of St. Thomas' integral feminism.

II. The Integral Humanism of St. Thomas Aquinas

In his famous work, *Integral Humanism*, Maritain points out that humanism may be defined as that which "...tends essentially to render man more truly human, and to manifest his original greatness by having him participate in all that which can enrich him in nature and in history..."⁴ Thus understood,

¹ JANET RADCLIFFE RICHARDS. *The Sceptical Feminist: A Philosophical Enquiry*. England: Penguin Books, 1982. 162.

² MARY DALY. *The Church and the Second Sex*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1985.91, 92, 95.

³ See my book, *Femina Ut Imago Dei: In the Integral Feminism of St. Thomas Aquinas*. *Analecta Gregoriana*. Vol. 260. Series Facultatis Philosophiae: sectio B. n. 18. Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1993.

⁴ JACQUES MARITAIN. *Integral Humanism*. trans. Joseph W. Evans. New York: Charles Scribner and Sons. 1968. 2.

for Maritain. "...humanism is inseparable from civilization or culture, these two words being themselves taken as synonymous."⁵

Humanism, however, is an ambiguous term. It depends upon the concept of man that one holds. And so Maritain points out:

"It is clear that who ever uses it brings into play thereby an entire metaphysic, and that, according as there is or is not in man something which breathes above time, and a personality whose most profound needs surpass the whole order of the universe, the idea that one forms of humanism will have very different resonances".⁶

Now there are basic ways that we can form our concept of man. We can define man according to anthropocentric humanism or theocentric humanism. For Maritain, anthropocentric humanism regards human nature and culture as shut up in themselves and as excluding everything which is not of themselves. Anthropocentric humanism, then, cuts off all reference to the divine, the superhuman, or the transcendent. It sees human nature as closed up upon itself. It makes man the center of man.⁷

Theocentric humanism, however, includes references to the divine and the transcendent as part of its essential structure. It makes God the center of man. More precisely, it makes the Christian God the center of man.⁸ Thus, as Maritain states in criticism of an anthropocentric conception of man and of culture:

"Instead of an open human nature and an open reason, which are real nature and real reason, people pretend that there exists a nature and a reason isolated by themselves and shut up in themselves, excluding everything which is not themselves.

Instead of a development of man and reason in continuity with the Gospel, people demand such a development from pure reason apart from the Gospel. And for human life, for the concrete movement of history, this means real and serious amputations.

Prayer, divine love, super-rational truths, the idea of sin and of grace, the evangelical beatitudes, the necessity of asceticism, of contemplation, of the way of the Cross, - all this is either put in parenthesis or is once for all denied. In the concrete government of human life, reason is isolated from the supra-rational".⁹

Theocentric humanism, then, seeks the development of man and reason in continuity with the Gospel. It thereby takes man's center of focus to be the Christian God. A problem, however, immediately occurs.

In our modern century, it is sometimes hard to take Maritain seriously. Isn't he after all confusing the basic orders of reason and faith. How can a philosopher start his humanism with a Christian notion of man and remain a philosopher? If Maritain were playing some sort of game, we might then cry foul and throw down a philosophical red flag.

In order to see the resolution to this problem, it is vital to understand the importance of the term integral for Maritain. The term integral means whole. Whole, complete, or individualized beings exist

Hereafter referred to as: *I.H.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *I.H.*, 2.

⁷ *Ibid.* 28-34.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ JACQUES MARRTAIN. *Scholasticism And Politcis.* trans. Mortimer J. Adler. London: Geoffrey Bles. 1954. 2-3.

Hereafter referred to as: *S.P.*

only in the existential order. And, it is precisely the order of actual existence which may unite or mix together the different levels of reason and faith without confusing them. As Maritain states in *Scholasticism and Politics*:

“Such a humanism, which considers man in the wholeness of his natural and supernatural being, and which sets no a priori limit to the descent of the divine into man, we may call the humanism of the Incarnation. It is an 'integral' and 'progressive' Christian position, which I believe conforms to the principles representative of the genuine spirit of Thomism”.¹⁰

Another sign that Maritain's focus is on the existential order is that, as we have noted, he considers humanism to be inseparable from civilization and history. Humanism and civilization are taken to be synonymous. And civilization itself exists in different temporal periods. Integral humanism merely specifies Christian civilization or culture. Maritain, then, is simply giving us an analysis of the way human nature has existed, continues to imperfectly exist, and should exist in the future. The problem then is not with Maritain's formulation; it is with our own anthropocentric culture.

It is important, however, that we state the structure of integral humanism as clearly as possible. There are two essential facets, the first is speculative and the second practical. Both are found in the following text. As Maritain states:

“...What the world needs is a new humanism, a theocentric or integral humanism which would consider man in all his natural grandeur and weakness, in the entirety of his wounded being inhabited by God, in the full reality of nature, sin and sainthood. Such a humanism would recognize all that is irrational in man, in order to tame it to reason, and all that is suprarational, in order to have reason vivified by it and to open man to the descent of the divine into him. Its main work would be to cause the Gospel leaven and inspiration to penetrate the secular structures of life - a work of sanctification of the temporal order”.¹¹

The first facet, in the text above, is speculative or metaphysical. The key phrase is that integral humanism considers man in the entirety of his wounded being. When we consider man in his totality or wholeness, we consider him as a person. The term person means totality.¹² Integral humanism considers the human person in the entirety of his natural and supernatural being. By nature man is a being individualized by matter. His form or intellectual soul places him in the genus of intellectual or spiritual creatures. Matter and form are fused in being. They form one substance, the substance of an incarnate spirit.¹³

Integral humanism, however, also considers man's being from the point of view of faith and revelation. The human person has a spiritual soul which is created immediately by God. The person does not exist in a state of pure nature. Man is wounded by Original Sin. Integral humanism, then, considers man as a wounded being subject to the privation of sin and selfishness. It considers the human person in the full reality of nature, sin, and sainthood.

The second essential facet of integral humanism, noted in the text above, is practical. As Maritain notes in the foreword of *Integral Humanism*:

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 8.

¹¹ JACQUES MARITAIN. "Christian Humanism". *The Social And Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. 1976. 165. Hereafter referred to as: "C.H." Bold print is my addition.

¹² JACQUES MARITAIN. *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law*. trans. Doris C. Anson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1947. 7-9. Hereafter referred to as: *R.M.*

¹³ "C.H." 166-168.

“The questions dealt with here belong to that part of philosophy which Aristotle and St. Thomas call practical philosophy, because it envelops in a general way the whole philosophy of human action ... Practical philosophy remains philosophy, it remains a knowledge speculative in mode; but unlike metaphysics and the philosophy of nature, it is ordered from the very beginning to an object which is action...”¹⁴

The main purpose or *telos* of integral humanism is practical. As Maritain has stated, its task is to cause the Gospel to penetrate the secular structures of life. Integral humanism, then, would emphasize care of the masses. It would care for a temporal condition worthy of man. It would promote the dignity of the human person and the value of the spiritual life. In addition, it would guide a community to be vitally and not simply decoratively Christian.¹⁵

The integral humanism which Maritain has outlined finds its general principles to be representative of the genuine spirit of Thomism. Maritain, however, means more than this. He believes that the new integral humanism of modern times is the analogue of an old integral humanism that St. Thomas actually held. Thus, in an article entitled: "The Humanism of St. Thomas Aquinas", he analyzes the integral humanism of St. Thomas from three different points of view. Thomas's humanism may be studied in the speculative order, the practical order, or in the spiritual order. And, at the conclusion of the second subdivision, Maritain states: "In general, we can say that, St. Thomas Aquinas draws a broad outline of a true social and political humanism, the application of which depends upon the particular circumstances of each historic era."¹⁶

The old integral humanism of St. Thomas is taken as representative of the particular historic circumstances of mediaeval civilization. The particular circumstance of this era was that Christian civilization was "sacral". Temporal things were subservient to spiritual things. Thus, all learning in philosophy and science was subservient to the needs of the Church. In the universities, empirical science itself was in a state of infancy. It was, in fact, dominated by Aristotle.¹⁷

Maritain's new integral humanism represents the particular historic circumstances of a new Christian civilization. This civilization is "secular". Temporal things, philosophy, science, and civil society enjoy their autonomy from spiritual things. These same temporal things, however, would recognize the inspiring role that spiritual things and the Church would play from a higher plane.¹⁸

The analogous application of integral humanism to a new historic period is a contribution that Maritain has made to Thomas' position. The important point is to see that the essential content does not change. In both ages of Christian civilization the human person would be seen as an incarnate spirit who is wounded by sin and rehabilitated in God. There are, however, historical changes in science, culture, and technology. The integral humanism of the future must incorporate these changes. As Charles Fecher states while speaking of Maritain's new humanism:

“...What he advocates is a modern Christendom analogous to medieval times in its spiritual and philosophical orientation. This proposed culture and civilization, though resting on such a background, would nevertheless take its political constitution from the historical developments of the past several centuries and the conditions obtaining today, and would make full use of all the

¹⁴ *I.H.* ix-x.

¹⁵ “C.H.” 165-165.

¹⁶ JACQUES MARITAIN, "The Humanism of St. Thomas Aquinas". *Twentieth Century Philosophy*. Ed. Dagobert D. Runes. New York: Philosophical Library. 1943. 306-307. Following Maritain, I would also hold that integral feminism may be developed according to this threefold division.

¹⁷ *I.H.* 16; “C.H.” 165-165.

¹⁸ “C.H.” 164-165.

material advances and technological achievements that those centuries have wrought”.¹⁹

There are then two main ideas which are necessary for a proper understanding of Maritain's integral humanism. The first has a speculative and practical component. In the speculative order, the human person is understood to be a natural and supernatural being. Man is an incarnate spirit wounded by sin and in need of the cleansing effect of supernatural grace. In the practical order, the person must work to spiritualize the temporal order with the values and religious truth of the Gospel. The second idea is the analogous application of this content to the historical period of a new Christian civilization.

Perhaps the distinction between Christianity and Christendom is helpful here. As Maritain states in *Freedom in the Modern World*:

“The word Christendom relates to the cultural order. It denotes a certain temporal regime that is common to peoples educated by the Church. There is only one Church; there may be diverse types of Christian civilization, different expressions of Christendom. We may say that such different expressions would be generically one but specifically distinct”.²⁰

Christianity is a religion based upon eternal truths revealed by God to man. As such its content does not change. We memorize this content in the Apostles Creed and pass it on from generation to generation. This content may, however, grow through the speculative work of theologians.²¹

Christendom, on the other hand, denotes a particular form of Christian culture. Culture changes and evolves according to its particular historical state and the evolving force of its own intrinsic dynamics. Modern culture is essentially different from mediaeval culture. The rise of empirical science, the awareness of the value of democratic government, the expansion of technology and manipulation of nature are all aspects of twentieth century civilization. Maritain's integral humanism is new only because he applies the Christian concept of the human person to the historical state of a new Christendom. And, it also follows that Maritain's humanism is old in the sense that it has the same principles and content as the humanism of St. Thomas.

III. *The Anthropology of Woman*

For St. Thomas, woman like man, is a person. She is an integrated whole composed of two elements: body and soul. Her body individualizes her soul. And her soul is the very form or act of the body. It establishes the kind of body that she has - a living human body.²²

Woman is one being composed of these two elements. Her vital acts are performed by means of what St. Thomas calls powers. These powers may be divided into three areas. Woman has vegetative powers, sensitive powers, and intellectual powers.²³

Vegetative powers are further divided into the generative power, the augmentative power and the nutritive power. The argumentative and nutritive powers are responsible for growth and nourishment. The generative power is nobler because it is concerned, not with the body itself, but with

¹⁹ CHARLES FECHER. *The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*. Westminster, Maryland. 1953. 266.

²⁰ JACQUES MARITAIN. *Freedom in the Modern World*. trans. Richard O'Sullivan. New York; Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936. 98.

²¹ Fecher. 267.

²² S. THOMAE DE AQUINO. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Romae: Editio Leonia Manualis. 1934.II, 65, 2. hereafter referred to as *S.C.G.*; S. THOMAE AQUINATIS. *Summa Theologiae*. Romae: Marietti. 1952. I, 75, I; 76, 1-3. hereafter referred to as *S.T.*

²³ *S.T.* I, 77, 4.

reproduction.²⁴

In addition to vegetative powers, woman has sensitive powers. These powers are both apprehensive and appetitive. Her sense apprehensive powers are further divided into the external and internal senses. External senses are those of sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing. While her internal senses are divided into imagination, particular reason, memorative, and common sense.²⁵

In addition to her apprehensive powers, woman also has a sense appetitive power. This power is known as her sense appetite. It represents the desiring element on the level of sense. This power is responsible for woman's sense emotions or passions. Passions or emotions are acts of the sense appetite.²⁶

Lastly, in addition to her vegetative and sensitive powers, woman also possesses intellectual powers. These powers are also divided into apprehensive/appetitive components. The intellect represents the power for abstract thought and the will the power for desire which corresponds to her intellectual power.²⁷

Some of woman's powers belong strictly to the composite. These powers find their subject in the body/soul structure. They represent the powers of vegetation and sense and these require a material organ. Other powers find their subject in the soul alone. They are the intellectual powers of reason and will. All the powers, however, belong to the soul as their principle.²⁸

Woman, however, is both a natural and supernatural being. By reason of her body she is a member of the world of material creatures. She is a member of a species which must reproduce to survive. By reason of her soul, however, she belongs to the genus of intellectual natures. Her soul has received a spiritual act of existing. And this spiritual existence places her value outside the material universe. Her value is found in the fact that she is made in the image and likeness of God.²⁹ This is why, for St. Thomas, woman's value is precisely that of an incarnate spirit.

We should, however, proceed to examine woman's nature in a way which distinguishes her from man. We can then see that Thomas had a very precise understanding of woman's nature. He distinguishes her from man in at least five areas: logic, qualitative physics, biology/cosmology, philosophical psychology, and domestic ethics.

The clearest way to understand the integrated character of these diverse aspects is to focus on the anthropology of woman in a more detailed way. We will discuss this structure from the viewpoint of mediaeval science. Accordingly, we will discuss first, Thomas' understanding of woman's body. After this we will explain the individualization of her soul. Finally, we will end this section, with a brief analysis of the subordination of woman.

Woman's body may be considered from the viewpoint of logic, physics, or biology. In his commentary on the metaphysics of Aristotle, Thomas notes that it is obvious that men and women are of the same species. They are equal in the same level of specific perfection. They differ only as individuals of this species. In logic, the difference between male and female is seen to arise from the basic opposition between contraries. Some contraries cause a difference of species. These are formal differences which divide the genus. For example, the genus animal may be divided by the differences of sensitive and rational.³⁰

Other contraries cause a difference between individuals of the same species. This occurs when the species is divided by designated matter. The resulting difference then divides the species as an

²⁴ *S.T.* I, 78, 1&2.

²⁵ *S.T.* I, 78, 3-4; 80, 1 & 2; 81,1.

²⁶ *S.T.*, I, 80, 1 & 2; 81, 1 & 2; HENRI RENARD. *The Philosophy of Man*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co. 1953. 163.

²⁷ *S.T.* I, 79, &; 80,2; 83,3.

²⁸ *S.T.* I, 77, 5 reply and ad. 1 and 2.

²⁹ *S.T.* I, 75, 2; 6, ?; 93, 2 & 3.

³⁰ AQUINATIS, S. THOMAE. *Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Expositio*. Italy: Marietti. 1964-65.2131; hereafter referred to as *E.A.M.*

individual property of designated matter. Masculinity and femininity result from this basic division. Woman's body, then, is feminine precisely because of the way designated matter has individualized the general form of the species.³¹ For this reason, we may say in reference to the human species that male and female are equally human but not equal humans. Men and women have the same level of specific perfection, but this perfection is divided among male and female subspecific types.³²

Woman's body however may also be viewed physically. Thomas' physics was the qualitative physics of Aristotle.³³ In order to understand Thomas, we must briefly state some basic positions of Aristotelian science.

The Philosopher, like Empedocles, held that matter itself involved one or more of the four elements. These elements are earth, air, water, fire. They are the most basic forms of all natural things. And they originate from one another.³⁴

Now, it is one thing to say that the four elements constitute the basic forms of things, and it is quite another to explain the existence of other forms. How does Aristotle explain the existence of blood, or bone, or flesh? How, too, are these things related to the four elements? In order to answer these and other questions, Aristotle had to develop a distinction between simple and compound bodies.³⁵

Simple bodies are the elements taken separately. Compound bodies are mixtures of the elements. Now a mixture may occur in two ways. First, there may be a simple agglomeration. A useful example is a pile of seeds. No new form is realized. There is no organization. Second there is combination. Here various substances interact with each other to produce a new substance with properties of its own. In this second sense, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. It is an organized whole because a new form, a new order, is realized. The first, a pile of seeds, is an aggregate, that is, an unorganized whole.³⁶ For Aristotle, bone, flesh, hair, and blood are all viewed as compounds which realize a new form in this second sense. If we probe deeper, we may ask what is the mechanism whereby the elements or simple bodies are able to form compounds. In order to answer this question, Aristotle had to go further in his analysis of matter.

Elements, as we have seen, are the smallest forms of reality; yet they are not the smallest realities. These elements, themselves, are composed of contrary qualities. Thus, fire is composed of the contrary qualities of hot and dry. Air is composed of the contrary qualities of hot and fluid. Water is made up of the qualities of cold and fluid. And, earth is composed of cold and dry.³⁷

Each element, then, signifies a certain set of contraries. Some of these elements, too, are active (hot and cold) and some are passive (dry and wet). By displacing a contrary quality, one element may change into another. For example, when water is evaporated by the sun Aristotle believed that water changed into air. Water which is cold and wet is changed to air which is hot and wet. The contrary quality of cold leaves and is replaced by that of hot. In addition two elements may change to one by each

³¹ *E.A.M.* 2128-2134.

³² On the same level of specific perfection see: *E.A.M.* 2134; male and female are equally human because the concept of humanity prescind from designated matter. Humanity signifies only the common matter and form of the species. On this point see: AQUINATIS, St. THOMAE. *De Ente Et Essentia*. CAROLUS BOYER. Romae: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana. 1970. ca. 3.

³³ ETIENNE GILSON. *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*. trans. L.K. Shook. New York: Random House. 1956. 174.

³⁴ ARISTOTLE. *Meteorologica and De Generatione et Corruptione*. in *Great Books of the Western World*. vol. 8. Chicago: U of Chicago P. 1952. 378b 10-15, 334b1-35; G.E.R. LLOYD. *Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of his Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1968. 164-165; SIR DAVID ROSS. *Aristotle*. London: Methuen and Co. 1971. 105-106.

³⁵ ARISTOTLE, *De Generatione et Corruptione*. 334b1-35; Lloyd. 171; D.J. ALLEN. *The Philosophy of Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1970. 41-43.

³⁶ LLOYD. 171-172; ALLEN 41-43.

³⁷ ROSS. 105-106; LLOYD. 168-169.

dropping a quality. Fire, for example, may lose dryness and water may drop cold. The result is air which is hot and fluid.³⁸

It is through contrary qualities, then, that the matter of one element is disposed to become the matter of another element. It is through these contrary qualities, too, that matter may be disposed to a new form, the form of a mixed or compound body. Qualities then are the dispositions of the elements and the elements retain this disposition in the mixed or compound bodies they form. Thus, Aristotle, in his analysis of matter is in favor of a qualitative as opposed to a quantitative physics. He does not, like Democritus, explain the difference between simple and compound bodies in terms of a mixture of atoms. For Aristotle, simple bodies are different from compound bodies because the matter itself of these bodies have a different disposition which enabled it to receive a new form.

Thomas upholds the basic division between simple and compound bodies.³⁹ In addition, he held that the qualities of the elements represent the proper disposition for the substantial form or soul. As he states:

“...We must say, in accordance with the Philosopher, that the forms of the elements remain in the mixed body, not actually but virtually. For the proper qualities of the elements remain, though modified; and in these qualities is the power of the elementary forms. This quality of the mixture is the proper disposition (*dispositio*) for the substantial form of the mixed body, the form of a stone, or any sort of soul”⁴⁰

Now, for Thomas, the human body is the most perfect type of mixed body.⁴¹ The disposition (*dispositionem*) of the body has the most tempered combination (*temperantissimae complexionis*).⁴² The female body, however, is different from the male. The female body has a weak disposition or temperament (*debilem complexionem*).⁴³ And, as the disposition itself is caused by the qualities of the elements, the female body must have a difference in the mixture of these qualities. Also, there must be a cause or reason why a different qualitative mixture and disposition is produced in the female as opposed to the male body. In order to grasp this cause, we must discuss Thomas' reproductive theory. In biology, Thomas holds that there are three components in human conception: the contribution of the male, the contribution of the female and the influence of the heavenly bodies.⁴⁴ Thomas again follows the basic insights of Aristotelian science.

Aristotle held that there are three components in human conception. The female supplies the matter. He calls this matter the catamenia. It is a sanguineous liquid or secretion which is not semen but is like the semen of the male. And the catamenia causes generation by mixing with the semen of the male.⁴⁵

The second component is the semen. The male contributes the semen which is identified with the efficient, formal, and final causes. The male does not add any matter to conception. Rather, the male generates by setting up a certain kind of movement. This movement is directed toward the male form. This movement is also an organic force. It conveys the soul which is the principle of spirit or vital heat.⁴⁶

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *S.C.G.* II, 68, 8, 9.

⁴⁰ *S.T.* I, 76, 4, ad.4.

⁴¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Questiones De Anima*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. 1968, Question 8.

⁴² *D.A.* 8.

⁴³ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*. trans. C.I. Litzinger. Chicago: Henery Regnery Co., 1964. book VII, lec. 5; *S.T.*, II-II, 156, 1, ad. 1.

⁴⁴ *S.T.* I, 92, 1, ad. 1.

⁴⁵ *De Generatione Animalium*. 716a5-9; 726b30-727b35.

⁴⁶ 737a20-25

The semen is naturally fluid and hot. This hot air or vital heat is the natural generative principle within the semen. It is not fire but something analogous to the stars because both the heat of the sun and that of animals generates living things.⁴⁷

The male contains the principle of vital heat and it fixes the material secreted by the female. This heat brings the solid earthly parts together to form the fetus and separates the liquid part off from it.⁴⁸

The third component is the right proportion of heat. This proportion is determined by two factors. The first is the contribution of the male and female components. As Aristotle notes, these components much achieve the right proportion of heat; otherwise no conception will take place. Thus, if the liquid in the catamenia is not present in the right proportion there will be no conception. If the male emits too much semen its heat will dry up the material supplied by the female. Again, if the semen of the male is not hot enough it will not solidify the material and form the fetus.⁴⁹

The second factor which determines the right proportion of heat is the movement of the heavenly bodies. Thus, the temperature of the male and female principles is regulated by the external principle of the sun and moon. These planets in their orbit around the earth cause a change in temperature in the mixture of the male and female elements. As Aristotle states, “For heat and cold varying within certain limits make things to come into being and after this to perish, and it is the motions of the sun and moon that fix the limit both of the beginning and end of these processes.”⁵⁰

In addition to causing generation and destruction, the sun and moon also cause variety in human conception. A cold temperature favors the birth of females; hot that of males. And the sun causes the seasons of the year to be divided into winter and summer. Also, the moon, sharing in the sun's light, causes the beginning of the month to be warmer and the end colder. As a consequence, if conception occurs when the month is waning, this will favor the birth of females. Thus, for Aristotle, the sun and moon are efficient causes not only of all generation and destruction but also of sexual variety itself.⁵¹

When Thomas asks the question whether the heavenly bodies are the cause of what is produced in bodies here below, he follows this basic Aristotelian set-up. He uses the scientific data of Aristotle's qualitative physics, biology, and cosmology. In regard to human generation, Thomas says that the active principles of bodies here below are only the active qualities of the elements, such as hot and cold, and the like. Matter, too, is not of itself sufficient to act. Therefore, it is necessary to suppose some active principle above these material dispositions which will diversify the substantial forms of bodies. This principle is precisely that of the heavenly bodies the presence or absence of which causes variety in all things generated.⁵²

If we ask how the heavenly bodies by their presence or absence cause variety in human conception, we can see that they do so by causing a different temperature in the mixture of the male and female elements. This temperature, then, is responsible for a different disposition in the active/passive qualities of the elements. As Thomas states, the heavenly body can influence the human body directly by its power to move the elementary qualities, such as hot and cold etc.⁵³ He even admits that on rare occasions when matter is not cooperating with the heavenly bodies, the heavenly bodies can sometimes override the disposition of matter.⁵⁴ In any case, it seems that Thomas would agree with Aristotle that: “all female births come from a deficiency in natural heat”.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ 737a1-5; 736b30-737a5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ 739b20-35.

⁵⁰ 777b24-31.

⁵¹ 767a1-10.

⁵² *S.T.*, I, 115, 3, ad. 2 & 4.

⁵³ *De Veritate*, V, 10 ad, 4.

⁵⁴ *S.T.*, I, 115, 3, ad. 4.

⁵⁵ 755b33.

Woman, by nature, would have a weak disposition because she would not realize the same degree of vital heat as the male. Again, for Aristotle, the female is of a naturally colder nature than the male. And this is a biological necessity for she is unable to concoct blood to its final stage which is semen.⁵⁶

We can see, then, the unity between Aristotle's qualitative physics and his reproductive theory. And, it is precisely this science which causes Thomas to place a different disposition in the elemental mixture of woman's body.

In summary, we can see that the designated matter of Thomas' logic becomes the qualitative mixture of the elements in his physics. His physics and cosmology, then, form the basis of a sexual distinction in his biology. The disposition in the body of the male and female is different. And it is precisely this difference in disposition, together with the causality of the heavens, which causes variety in human conception. Also, the resulting mixture is such that woman's body, after conception, is seen to have a weak temperament.

If asked the question whether woman's body was given the right disposition, Thomas answers that it is given the disposition appropriate to the rational soul and its operations. If such defect arises in the human body it follows as a necessary condition of the matter from the conditions required by the body to make it suitable for the operations of the soul.⁵⁷ We must proceed, then, to the operations of woman's soul to see the ultimate reason for the difference in her bodily disposition.⁵⁸

As we noted woman, like man, is constituted by the union of body and soul. The different blending of active/passive qualities of her body, however, causes a different individualization of her soul.

As we noted earlier, woman's soul is distinguished by three sets of powers: vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual. The vegetative power, too, is divided into the nutritive, augmentative, and the generative. And, it is precisely in the generative power that a difference of individualization occurs. Thomas holds that the generative power in women is passive. The corresponding power in man is active. Thus, the feminine sex differs from the male sex because of a difference in the generative power of each.⁵⁹

In addition, on the level of the sensitive powers, Thomas makes distinction between woman's sense appetite and man's. In the II-II, of the *Summa Theologiae*, he says that strong passions arise in the sense appetite owing to the bodies disposition.⁶⁰ This is because the sense appetite is a power of a material organ. Consequently, its strength depends not only on the soul alone but also on the disposition of the organ.⁶¹

Woman's body, too, has a weak temperament; and, the resulting effect is that her reason is unstable. She is easily led by her passions. This is why we do not describe women as being continent without qualification.⁶² Now, instability or weakness of reason is proportioned to the very strength of the sense appetite.⁶³ Thus, it is clear that in addition to a distinction in woman's vegetative power, Thomas also places a distinction in woman's sensitive power. Her sense appetite is stronger than man's. Since, too, the sense appetite is a passive power, it must have a greater passivity in woman.

We have seen, then, the huge impact Aristotle's qualitative physics, biology, and cosmology has had on the constitution of woman for St. Thomas. At conception the temperature of the mixture of the elements in woman's body is different from the temperature of the mixture in man's body. Feminine matter has a colder temperature; and, this results in a weaker disposition in woman's body.

Once conception occurs this precise mixture of the elements individualizes her soul. Individualization,

⁵⁶ 765b5-766a1; 772b5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* I, 91, 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 91, 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 92, 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, II-II, 156, 1.

⁶¹ *S.T.*, I-II, 17, 7; 77, 3, ad. 1; II-II, 156, 1, ad. 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, II-II, 156, 1, ad. 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, I-II, 77, 3, ad. 1.

in turn, means that one of woman's vegetative powers is specified into a passive generative power. In addition, we have also seen that one of her sensitive powers is individualized in a different way from man's. Her sensitive appetite is stronger.

The ultimate reason, then, for the difference in woman's bodily disposition is that this disposition is necessary for the subspecific individualization of her soul. A precise mixture of the elements together with a cold temperature is necessary for both the specification of her passive generative power and her stronger sense appetite.

In regard to woman's intellectual powers, we should note that Thomas does not directly distinguish her from man. The difference is indirect. Thus, because woman has a stronger sense appetite she is less likely to control this appetite with reason. Practical reason, in woman, is indirectly weaker than the corresponding rational power in man. It is weakened accidentally by the very force: of her sense appetite. And, so Thomas will say that women are more prone to concupiscence than men because the female does not have sufficient strength of mind to resist concupiscence.⁶⁴

The final distinction Thomas makes in the realm of domestic ethics. Thomas holds that, in the household, the female is subordinate to the male. Again, the man is the head or governor of woman. This follows, he says, from the perfection of the male and imperfection of the female sex.⁶⁵

These statements seem outrageous. They are, however, simply reasonable consequences of ancient and medieval science. Thomas simply means that as woman is less continent than man she should be under man's power. Ontologically, subordination would follow from the view that the male as one subspecific type has a greater actuality than the female as another subspecific type. This, in turn, would be based upon the view that the male has more actuality in generation and less of a disorder in practical reason. Thus, the subordination of woman to man follows directly from Thomas' understanding of Aristotle's qualitative physics, biology, and cosmology.

We can see then that Thomas' position is reasonable given the science of the middle ages. Our investigation, then, merely confirms Weisheipl's statement that:

“...Unless the teaching of Aquinas is seen in its true historical perspective, there is not only the danger of misunderstanding his teaching, but also of rendering Thomas irrelevant to our age... Not only a saint, Thomas was above all a reasonable man, a man who makes sense: his teaching is not esoteric, but public and intelligible to all who would take the time to study it”.⁶⁶

IV. The Integral Feminism of St. Thomas Aquinas

Three conclusions immediately follow from the present discussion. First, St. Thomas formulated a very clear anthropology of woman. And, this anthropology of woman takes place within the context of his integral humanism. It seems obvious, then, that this specification of integral humanism by a Christian anthropology of woman may be designated as an old integral feminism. This feminism is representative of mediaeval Christendom's view of woman. And, it is old because it is the analogue of a new integral feminism which should come into being in modern times.

Second, the term feminism itself may be taken as a specification of humanism into one of its concrete analogues. Maritain's definition of humanism, then, may be specified or applied to woman. Feminism then may be defined as that which:

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, II-II, 149, 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, II-II, 164, 2, obj and reply 1.

⁶⁶ JAMES A. WEISHEIPL. *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and His Works*. New York: Doubleday Co. 1974. 1-2.

“...tends essentially to render woman more truly human, and to manifest her original greatness by having her participate in all that which can enrich her in nature and in history...; it at once demands that woman develop the virtualities contained within her, her creative forces and the life of reason, and work to make the forces of the physical world instruments of her freedom”.⁶⁷

In this way, we may say that feminism is inseparable from the idea of woman expressed by civilization and culture. The two may be taken as synonymous.

The designation integral will specify the general idea of feminism as that of Christian culture and civilization. Integral feminism will thereby be distinguished from anthropocentric feminism which will find various materialistic modes of expression in bourgeois feminism or totalitarian feminism.

Integral feminism, then, will take its starting point in the very existence of the female person. Speculatively, woman is seen as both a natural and supernatural being. Woman is an incarnate spirit. She is feminine by reason of her body and spiritual by reason of her intellectual soul. Woman is a finite spirit.

On the supernatural level, the feminine soul of woman is created directly by God. Nevertheless, her nature, her soul, is wounded by Original Sin and redeemed by the suffering of Christ. Thus woman needs to be dignified and rehabilitated in God. Integral feminism, then, finds woman's center in God and for God. It recognizes the distinction and interplay between nature and grace. It may therefore be called a theocentric feminism.

In the practical order, integral feminism acknowledges the social nature of woman. It affirms the importance of the family and the natural friendship between husband and wife. Integral feminism calls upon woman to spiritualize and humanize the world with the teaching of the Gospel. It requires her to care for the masses and the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It may truly be called a feminism of the Incarnation.

Finally, a third conclusion immediately follows. The followers of St. Thomas are called upon today to develop a new integral feminism which would apply analogously today. Thus, the old qualitative physics and biology of Aristotle should be rejected. We should reject, too, the terminology of perfection vs. imperfection. These terms simply do not apply today. Lastly, as a consequence of this latter position, we should advocate the dismissal of woman's subordination. Integral feminism, however, would retain the basic biological distinction between active and passive generative powers.

V. The Spirit of St. Thomas' Integral Feminism

In conclusion, I would like to end this paper with a brief statement about the spirit of St. Thomas integral feminism. There are two important texts that I will consider. The first text occurs in the *De Veritate*.⁶⁸ Thomas says that a thing is provided for in two ways. Some things are provided for as a means to other things. For example, animals and plants are provided for only because of the species. The species is that which lasts and has an enduring value.

Other things are provided for as individuals. They have an enduring value in their very individuality. In this sense they are like a quasispecies. They are, therefore, ends in themselves which are provided for in themselves. These things are spiritual creatures. And, among these creatures Thomas includes men and women. In this context, when Thomas says that God provides for women in terms of her very individuality, he means that God provides for her as a person. He provides for her, as a metaphysical

⁶⁷ *I.H.*, 2. The generic terms of man and his, in the quotation above, have been changed to his and her.

⁶⁸ *D.V.* V, 3.

whole, in her full individual reality.

The second text, occurs in the *Summa Theologiae*.⁶⁹ St Thomas says: “...in rebus humanis personae sunt principaliores quam res quia res sunt propter personas, et non e converso. In human affairs, people are more important than things because things are for people, not people for things”.

From an analysis of these two texts we can feel the full force of St. Thomas' integral feminism. This feminism takes its starting point in woman as person. In human situations, people are more important than things because people are ends in themselves; things are only a means to an end. This is why Thomas says that people who are ends are not to be reduced to things that are means.

Woman, then, as person is a metaphysical whole who is provided for as an end. She is more important than money, more important than sex, more important than fame, and more important than political power. She is more important than these things because in the flesh and bones of each individual woman there lives a soul which is something spiritual. This spirit has a greater value than the entire material universe. This is why woman is provided for as an end - an end which is directly related to God and which exists for God.⁷⁰

Thus, integral feminism must take its starting point in woman as person. When it does so it will ground her rights on the foundation of her incarnate spirituality - the spirituality of a subsisting feminine substance of a rational nature. This spirituality will be posited as dignified and rehabilitated in God. Woman will have her ontological value centered on God. And, hence, integral feminism will be seen to be both a theocentric feminism and a feminism of the Incarnation. The application of this feminism simply depends upon the work of Christian philosophers and the cultural conditions of the twenty-first century.

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RÉSUMÉ

L'article cherche à montrer que si St Thomas a tenu un ancien humanisme intégral, il a tenu également un ancien féminisme intégral. La méthode est double. D'abord, l'article fait usage de l'humanisme intégral de Maritain comme herméneutique de la philosophie pratique de Saint Thomas. Ensuite, il montre que St Thomas a développé une anthropologie féministe qui spécifie cet humanisme, On fait alors usage de cette anthropologie comme fondement pour un féminisme intégral.

Dans la première partie, on explique l'humanisme intégral de St Thomas. Dans la seconde, on montre comment St Thomas a développé une anthropologie féministe. Dans la troisième, on tire certaines conclusions générales en ce qui regarde le féminisme intégral de St Thomas.

Enfin, la quatrième partie décrit l'esprit du féminisme intégral. L'accent est mis sur le texte dans lequel St Thomas affirme que les personnes, donc les femmes également, importent plus que les choses.

⁶⁹ *S.T.* II-II, 64, 1, obj. and ad. 2.

⁷⁰ *R.M.* 2-3.