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Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration

EVERY TIME MAN-WOMAN relations moved out of balance in western thought or practice, someone—a philosopher and/or a theologian—responding to a deep source of Catholic inspiration, sought ways to bring the balance back. What do I mean by “out of balance”? When one of two fundamental principles of gender relation—equal dignity and significant difference—is missing from the respective identities of man and woman, the balance of a complementarity disappears into either a polarity or unisex theory. Table 1 provides a simple summary of these principles and theories with an asterisk indicating the best option of integral gender complementarity.

Table 1. Structure of Theories of Gender Identity

THEORY	EQUAL DIGNITY OF MAN AND WOMAN	SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENTIATION OF MAN AND WOMAN
Gender unity or unisex	yes	no
Traditional gender polarity	no man per se superior to woman	yes

Table 1. Structure of Theories of Gender Identity (*continued*)

THEORY	EQUAL DIGNITY OF MAN AND WOMAN	SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENTIATION OF MAN AND WOMAN
Reverse gender polarity	no woman per se superior to man	yes
Fractional gender complementarity	yes	yes complementary as parts
*Integral gender complementarity	yes	yes complementary as wholes
Gender neutrality	neutral	neutral

This article is divided into two parts. First, a general summary of the drama of basic theories of gender relation up through post-Enlightenment philosophy will be given. Second, a more detailed analysis of modern and contemporary Catholic inspirations for man-woman integral complementarity will be provided. For those readers who want evidence to support these summarized claims, endnotes referring to primary and secondary sources are provided. Also dates provided for each philosopher will allow the reader to follow the chronology of the dramatic philosophical developments in the history of man-woman relational identities.

Historical Overview of Theories of Gender Identity

The unisex position, first articulated by Plato (428–355 B.C.), rejected significant differentiation while defending the basic equality of man and woman. The polarity position, first articulated by Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), rejected fundamental equality while defending the natural superiority of man over woman. Neoplatonic and Aristotelian positions continued to promote these imbalances respectively until Augustine (354–430), Hildegard of Bingen (1033–1109), and

Thomas Aquinas (1224–74) attempted, in different ways, to articulate new Christian theological and philosophical foundations for the fundamental equality *and* significant differentiation of man and woman.¹ While their works did not contain consistent foundations for gender complementarity, they nonetheless moved public discourse toward a more balanced man-woman complementarity.

After the triumphal entry of Aristotelian texts into western Europe in the thirteenth century, the gender polarity position gained new momentum especially in medical, ethical, political, and satirical texts. Eventually, a new kind of Catholic inspiration to defend gender complementarity emerged within Renaissance humanism in the works of Christine de Pizan (1344–1430), Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64), Albrecht von Eyb (1420–75), Isotta Nogarola (1418–66), and Laura Cereta (1469–99).² Here, Italian, French, and German Catholic authors sought to provide multiple foundations for the complementarity of women and men in marriage and in broader society.

Soon, however, arguments in support of reverse gender polarity—a new form of imbalance—began to appear in a few authors, such as Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1536) and Lucrezia Marinelli (1571–1653).³ They defended the position that there are significant differences between the sexes but that woman is naturally superior to man.

In the same time period, other movements supported new foundations for unisex arguments. The infusion of translations of Plato's dialogues into Latin contained a metaphysical argument based on a sexless soul reincarnated into different kinds of bodies. Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), founder of the Florentine Platonic Academy, also supported some fractional complementarity, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) also had a gender-neutral approach. While gender neutrality basically ignored sex and gender differences, unisex theories made direct arguments that differences between men and women were not significant.

Another gender-neutral position was provided by René Des-

cartes' (1590–1650) metaphysical argument that the nonextended, sexless mind was entirely distinct from the extended material body, and that a human being was to be more identified with the mind alone, the “I am a thinking thing,” than with the body or with the union of mind and body. The Cartesian approach positively provided a basis from which equal access to education and suffrage for women and men was directly supported by such authors as François Poullain de la Barre (1647–1723), Mary Astell (1688–1731), and the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–94).⁴

Cartesian dualism also spawned, especially among Protestants, an Enlightenment form of fractional complementarity, claiming that male and female are significantly different, but each provides only a fraction of one whole person. Woman was thought to provide half of the mind's operations (i.e., intuition, sensation, or particular judgments) and man the other half (i.e., reason or universal judgments). These two fractional epistemological operations, if added together, produced only one mind. When the specifics of the engendered contributions were identified, these fractional relations often contained stereotypes of a hidden traditional polarity, with the man as superior to the female. Examples of fractional complementarity with a hidden polarity can be found in the philosophies of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), Frederick Hegel (1770–1831), and Soren Kierkegaard (1813–55).⁵

The problem here is that Cartesian dualism separated the mind from the body, so that these Protestant writers had lost a solid metaphysical and ontological foundation based on the integral unity of a human person. Although John Stuart Mill (1806–73) and Harriet Taylor (1807–58) tried to defend complementarity, they also slid into the fractional version because of the lack of an ontological foundation for an adequate (*hylomorphic*) philosophical anthropology.

Any Catholic foundation for an integral gender complementarity was rejected further by atheistic post-Enlightenment philosophers.

Karl Marx (1818–83) fostered a unisex approach to man-woman relations. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) promoted a traditional polarity approach. The philosophies of Jean Paul Sartre (1905–80) and Simone de Beauvoir (1908–85) drew from both of these sources to defend an atheistic existentialism that, following sex polarity, devalued woman in relation to man. Anti-religious secular humanism instead gravitated toward a unisex approach. Finally, postmodern radical feminism vacillated between a reverse gender polarity that exalted woman's nature over man's and a deconstruction of gender differentiation altogether.⁶

How would the Catholic inspiration for an integral gender complementarity overcome the extreme distortions of post-Enlightenment theories of man-woman relations? With the imbalance in man-woman relations becoming increasingly extreme in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophies, the Catholic inspiration for a new approach to integral gender complementarity came from surprising new sources.

Contemporary Catholic Theories of Gender Complementarity

Two students of Edmund Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological movement, laid new foundations for an ontological and experiential complementarity of man and woman: Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889–1977) and St. Edith Stein (1891–1942). Stein's conversion to Catholicism from Judaism in 1922 followed von Hildebrand's conversion from Evangelical Lutheranism in 1914. Yet, as early as 1914 Stein and von Hildebrand had both been members of the Philosophical Society, composed of students studying under Husserl and Scheler in Göttingen.⁷ By 1930 Stein wrote about her collaboration with von Hildebrand in giving lectures at a conference in Salzburg, Austria.⁸

In 1923 von Hildebrand gave a public lecture in Ulm, Germany, which was expanded and published in 1929 as *Die Ehe (On Marriage)*.⁹ In this text he argued that "it would be incredibly superficial

to consider as a mere biological difference the distinction between man and woman, which really shows us two complementary types of the spiritual person of the human species.”¹⁰ Von Hildebrand explicitly stated that “the difference between man and woman is a *metaphysical one*”; and he drew an analogy for the meaning of their complementary relation from the ways in which different religious orders lived out their aim.¹¹

Arguing against the “terrible anti-personalism” of the age, von Hildebrand proposed that in marriage a man and a woman

form a unity in which they reciprocally complement one another. Marital love—involving the gift of one’s own person, whose decisive character is that the partners form a couple, an *I-thou* communion, in which the whole personality of the beloved is grasped mysteriously as a unity in spite of all outer obstacles—can exist only between two types of the spiritual person, the male and the female, as only between them can this complementary character be found.¹²

Von Hildebrand continued to explore the nature of this complementary relation, and in 1966 in *Man and Woman: Love and the Meaning of Intimacy* he characterized it as “more in a face-to face position than side-by-side” so that “it is precisely the general dissimilarity in the nature of both which enables this deeper penetration into the soul of the other . . . a real complementary relationship.”¹³

Also reacting against a unisex model of gender relation, in 1928 Stein argued in Germany that

in the *beginning of the feminist movement*, it would hardly have been imaginable to consider this theme [“The Significance of Woman’s Intrinsic Value in National Life”]. At that time, the struggle for “Emancipation” was taking place; i.e., actually the goal aspired to was that of *individualism*: to enable women’s personalities to function freely by the opening up of all avenues in education and in the professions. The Suffragettes erred so far as to deny the *singularity* of woman altogether.”¹⁴

Stein's philosophy of woman and man turned to a renewed Thomistic metaphysics to definitively reject Cartesian dualism and its effects. She affirmed the unity of the soul/body *composite*, and argued in 1931 that the soul has priority in gender differentiation: "The insistence that the sexual differences are 'stipulated by the body alone' is questionable from various points of view. 1) If *anima = forma corporis*, then bodily differentiation constitutes an index of differentiation in the spirit. 2) Matter serves form, not the reverse. That strongly suggests that the difference in the psyche is the primary one."¹⁵ Stein also followed von Hildebrand in giving an extensive analysis of love as the "mutual self-giving of persons."¹⁶

The Thomistic metaphysical foundation for the ontological unity of the human person was joined by Stein to a phenomenological analysis to uncover the essence of the "lived experience of the body" in women and in men. In her *Essays on Women*, although Stein did not use the word "complementary," she nonetheless articulated foundational complementary structures of female/male, feminine/masculine, and woman/man. A brief summary of her views will help situate Stein in these historical moments of Catholic inspiration.¹⁷

In female/male complementarity, the female corporeal structure is oriented toward supporting new life within the mother while the male corporeal structure is oriented toward reproducing by detachment of seed as father. This root leads to a different lived experience in which the feminine structure receives the world inwardly more through the passions, and the masculine structure, being less affected by the body, receives the world more through the intellect. The feminine intellect tends to comprehend the value of an existent in its totality while the masculine intellect tends to judge in a compartmentalized manner; and the feminine will tends to emphasize personal and holistic choices, while the masculine will tends to emphasize exterior specialized choices. Drawing upon the phenomenological method, Stein identified specific essential characteristics of woman's singular identity:

Her *point of view embraces the living and personal* rather than the objective; . . . she tends towards *wholeness and self-containment* in contrast to one-sided specialization; . . . [with an ability] to become a *complete person* oneself . . . whose faculties are developed and coexist in harmony; . . . [who] helps others to become *complete human beings*; and in all contact with other persons, [who] *respects the complete human being*. . . . Woman's *intrinsic value* can contribute productively to the *national community* by her activities in the home as well as in professional and public life.¹⁸

At times, Stein's specified content of gender complementarity moved into a fractional mode, although without any of the hidden polarity that was so common to previous theories. Yet, she also argued that in woman/man complementarity, the person can and should integrate the feminine and masculine aspects of the complementary gender. This integration protects a woman or a man from the extremes of either gender propensities. Stein concluded that Jesus Christ is the perfect example of such integration; St. Teresa of Avila is another example. While Stein stands as an important moment of Catholic inspiration toward gender complementarity, her theory at times is weakened by its stereotypical account of masculine and feminine characteristics.

In the early 1930s, before her entrance into Carmel, Stein met Jacques Maritain (1892–1973) and Raissa Maritain (1893–1960) at conferences for Catholic philosophers in France.¹⁹ In 1906 Raissa, of Jewish parentage, and Jacques, with no religious background, had been baptized and received into the Catholic Church. In 1932 Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain founded in Paris a personalist review titled *Esprit*. By 1934 Mounier and Maritain were meeting regularly with Gabriel Marcel and Nikolai Berdyaev in a philosophy discussion group. Together they published a "Personalist Manifesto," a public articulation of a new Catholic personalism. In 1936 Mounier published in *Esprit* the first article on the relation between personalism and woman's identity, titled "La femme aussi est une personne" ("Woman is also a Person").²⁰

The early founders of the personalist movement all chose to marry. Consequently, many of their writings focused on dynamics of integral complementarity relationship in marriage. In 1936 Jacques Maritain wrote a didactic essay on “Love and Friendship” in which he distinguished different kinds of love. “A love of *dilection* . . . [is] that absolutely unique *friendship* between married people one of whose essential ends is the spiritual companionship between a man and a woman in order that they may help each other fulfill their destiny in this world.”²¹ In 1942 Raissa Maritain published *We Have Been Friends Together*, demonstrating the lived integral gender complementarity of this married couple. In the 1950 essay “Personalism and the Revolution of the Twentieth Century,” Mounier argued against utilitarian and secular feminist critiques of marriage: “Man and woman can only find fulfillment in one another, and their union only finds its fulfillment in the child; such is their inherent orientation towards a kind of abundance and overflow, not to an intrinsic and utilitarian end.”²²

In the 1960s, arguing against the traditional polarity model, Dietrich von Hildebrand and Alice von Hildebrand emphasized that the fulfilling relationship of man and woman essentially requires that “partners in marriage must remain independent persons.” If this is not present, “to use Marcel’s terminology, instead of having a real *we communion*, . . . all that is left is an inflated ego, in this case that of the husband. He treats his wife as a possession, as a thing; he no longer treats her as a person.”²³ The integral complementarity model, already being articulated in some form in early personalism, argues that each man and each woman is a complete person, in an ontologically important sense. When they enter into interpersonal relations, the effect is synergetic; something more happens in relationship than parts of a person adding up to one person; something new is generated. While fractional complementarity can be represented by the formula $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1$, integral complementarity can be represented by the formula $1 + 1 \rightarrow 3$.

In 1934 Mounier had published an article in a Polish review

(*Wiadomości Literackie*) describing the personalist movement in France. *The Personalist Manifesto* was translated into Polish and distributed underground in Poland during World War II. After the war, in May 1946, Mounier was invited to lecture at Jagiellonian University in Cracow while Karol Wojtyła was a new seminarian studying there. It is not surprising then that in the summer of 1947, Wojtyła, who was studying in Rome and living at the Belgian College, decided to go to France to study the worker-priest movement. John Paul II tells us directly in *Gift and Mystery* that “my formation within the cultural horizon of personalism also gave me a deeper awareness of how each individual is a unique person.”²⁴

In 1960 the young priest Karol Wojtyła published his first major work on ethics in marriage titled *Love and Responsibility*. Already new roots for man-woman integral complementarity were being put down. Marriage is described as having a “distinctive inter-personal structure”; with laws “derived from the principles of the personalistic norm, for only in this way can the genuinely personal character of a union of two persons be ensured.”²⁵ The personalistic norm claims that one should always treat another person as an end in the self and never only as a means.

In *Love and Responsibility* Wojtyła also considered what will become a biological foundation for woman’s unique approach to another person, namely that by a woman’s ovulation from puberty to menopause she has a monthly rhythm that disposes her to welcome new life, even if she never becomes pregnant. Man has a different biological foundation for his unique identity as a father (280). It is important to note that for Wojtyła, nature does not determine identity, which must also include acts of will and intelligence. He identifies a challenge for man to overcome all utilitarian propensities to use a woman for her sensual value to him, and alternately the challenge for woman to overcome all utilitarian propensities to use a man for his sentimental value to her (104–14).

Integration—a key element in integral gender complementarity—is introduced: love “aims not only at integration ‘within’

the person but at integration ‘between’ persons; . . . ‘integration’ means ‘making whole,’ . . . [and it] relies on the primary elements of the human spirit—freedom and truth” (116). In 1969 Wojtyła provided a metaphysical foundation for integration in *The Acting Person* by retrieving the *hylomorphism* of Thomas Aquinas. He stated his intention to “rethink anew the dynamic human reality” this medieval theory contained.²⁶ Wojtyła argued that “integration complements transcendence and . . . they thus form a dynamic ‘person-action-whole,’ and that without integration transcendence (i.e., going forth into the world and forming the self by personal acts) remains . . . suspended.”²⁷

With the beginnings of a personalist structure of human relations established, in 1974–75 Wojtyła presented a theological framework for a genuine communion of persons in two lectures: “The Family as a Community of Persons” and “Parenthood as a Communion of Persons.”²⁸ He joined the mystery of human communities called to grow in likeness of the Divine Communion of Persons with an integration of the biological and personal dynamics of man and woman in marriage and in the family.

Within the year of being elected on October 16, 1978, Pope John Paul II (previously Cardinal Karol Wojtyła) gave a series of audiences in which he analyzed the structure of man-woman complementarity as revealed in Genesis. Asserting that God created man and woman equal as human beings and equal as persons, he defended the first principle of integral complementarity. Stating that man and woman are two significantly different ways of being persons in the world, he defended the second principle of integral complementarity. Demonstrating how a man and a woman are called by God into a union of love in marriage, he proclaimed the vocational dimension of integral complementarity.²⁹

At the same time, Pope John Paul II took a different approach to masculinity and femininity than did his predecessor Stein. He did not then, nor did he ever, suggest that a man may have femininity or a woman masculinity. Instead, he argued that masculinity is a man’s

way of being and acting in the world, and femininity is a woman's way of being and acting in the world: "masculinity and femininity [are] . . . two ways of 'being a body.'"³⁰ In most other respects, John Paul II followed the insights of Stein about woman's and man's identity. It is likely that he learned Stein's phenomenological approach to woman's identity through Roman Ingarden, who had studied with Stein under Edmund Husserl and who became John Paul II's teacher in Cracow. Recently, in *Rise, Let Us Be On our Way* John Paul II indicated his "rapport" with Roman Ingarden, and on the same page he added, "I was interested in her [Edith Stein's] philosophy. I read her writings."³¹ Stein's approach will be foundational to John Paul II's later development of a theory of women's genius and new feminism.

The late Pope argued that personal consciousness of the lived experience of one's body as a man or a woman means that masculinity and femininity are not equivalent to male and female. Instead, "masculinity and femininity express the dual aspect of man's somatic constitution . . . and indicate furthermore . . . the new consciousness of the sense of one's own body. . . . Precisely this consciousness . . . is deeper than his very somatic structure as male and female."³²

In his 1981 encyclical *On Human Work* John Paul II began to make some distinctions that later are more generally associated with a man's and a woman's genius in relation to the way they work. He identifies "technology" as *the objective sense of work* and states that it has been an extraordinarily valuable ally to man's physical and intellectual fields of labor. There is no doubt that these contributions to dominion in the world are primarily the result of men's genius. Next, he identifies "the working human person" as *the subjective sense of work*. Work offers the possibility for the enhancement of human dignity through personal fulfillment.³³ John Paul II introduces "The Personalist Argument" saying, "Thus, the principle of the priority of labor over capital is a postulate of the order of social morality."³⁴ This will turn out to be more closely allied to the genius of woman

through her propensity to pay greater attention to the person, than to efficiency or other utilitarian goals.

In his 1988 *Apostolic Letter On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* and 1989 *Apostolic Exhortation on St. Joseph, Guardian of the Redeemer*, John Paul II began to elaborate foundational principles for three kinds of integral complementarity: (1) wife and husband in marriage, (2) mother and father in family, and (3) men's and women's vocations to human and spiritual parenthood. His elaborations affirmed principles directly counter to those prevalent in traditional polarity and unisex theories of man-woman relation in marriage, family, and vocations.

Against polarity theories the Holy Father reaffirmed, with emphasis in italics, the principle of equality: "*Both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree*"; and "*man is a person, man and woman equally so.*"³⁵ Against unisex theories he elaborated, again with emphasis in italics, the principle of significant differences between man and woman: "The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different" (*MD*, 10) and "on the basis of the principle of mutually being 'for' the other, in interpersonal 'communion,' there develops in humanity itself, in accordance with God's will, the integration of what is 'masculine' and what is 'feminine'" (*MD*, 7).

Going deeper into the principle of equality, John Paul II identified the polarity theory with an effect of original sin, because the rupture between man and woman resulted in a tendency for a man to dominate a woman and for a woman to cling to a man out of desire to possess him. Listen to his own words and emphasis: "This 'domination' indicates the disturbance and *loss of the stability* of that *fundamental equality* which the man and the woman possess in the 'unity of the two': and this is especially to the disadvantage of the woman" (*MD*, 10). Next, he offered a command: "*The woman cannot become the 'object' of 'domination' and 'male possession'*" (*ibid.*).³⁶ He stated further that it is the task of every woman and man in succeeding generations to work to overcome this inheritance of original sin, by

joining with the redemptive action of Christ, because “in Christ the mutual opposition between man and woman—which is the inheritance of original sin—is essentially overcome” (*MD*, 11).

John Paul II repeated this principle several times, overturning the inheritance of an Aristotelian polarity that had said that a woman ought to obey her husband because of her inferior nature, and a Christian polarity that said that a wife ought to obey her husband as punishment for Eve’s sin. First, “The Gospel ‘innovation’” (in which the subjection is one-sided in the relationship between Christ and the Church) asks wives and husbands to act in “*mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ*” (*MD*, 24). Second, he emphasized again: “In the relationship between husband and wife the ‘subjection’ is not one-sided but mutual.” Third, to be sure that his readers understood the importance of this principle, he described it as a *call* and an *obligation*: “The awareness that in marriage there is a mutual ‘subjection of the spouses out of reverence for Christ,’ and not just that of the wife to the husband, must gradually establish itself in hearts, consciences, behaviour and customs” of every generation (*MD*, 24).

Going deeper in support of the principle of significant differentiation against unisex theories of parenthood, John Paul II elaborated different ways that a woman discovers and fulfils her femininity in motherhood, and a man discovers and fulfils his masculinity in fatherhood. Continuing to build on his earlier philosophical foundations, he stated that “motherhood implies from the beginning a special openness to the new person: and this is precisely the woman’s ‘part’” (*MD*, 18). Yet, this aspect of motherhood is not a biological determinism, because “motherhood *is linked to the personal structure of the woman and to the personal dimension of the gift*” (*ibid.*).

Emphasizing the personalistic structure of motherhood, Mary is described as “*truly the Mother of God, because motherhood concerns the whole person, not just the body, nor even just human ‘nature’*” (*MD*, 4). Further, “Mary exercises her free will and thus fully shares with her personal and feminine ‘I’ in the event of the Annunciation” (*ibid.*). Analogously, St. Joseph’s fatherhood was also a personal act of free

will in his decision to adopt, guard, and protect Mary, and Jesus her son. He exercised his fatherhood in this total gift of self.³⁷ The late Holy Father defended the personalistic dimension of “Joseph’s *fatherhood* [which] is not one that derives from begetting offspring; but neither is it an appearance of merely substitute fatherhood. Rather, it is one that *fully shares in authentic human fatherhood* and the mission of a father in the family.”³⁸

Yet, in integral complementarity, the ways of mothering and fathering are significantly different, even though they are equal in dignity and worth. In a well-known and controversial passage, John Paul II elaborated a root of their significant difference:

This unique contact with the new human being developing within her [the mother] gives rise to an attitude towards human beings—not only towards her own child, but every human being—which profoundly marks the woman’s personality. It is commonly thought that *women* are more capable than men of paying attention *to another person*, and that motherhood develops this predisposition even more. The man—even with all his sharing in parenthood—always remains “outside” the process of pregnancy and the baby’s birth; in many ways he has to *learn* his own “*fatherhood*” *from the mother*. (*MD*, 18)

These claims are not universal or absolute, for we know too well how women often act against their nature by having abortions, and how men often generously welcome and foster the life of children and adults. Yet, there is something deep in this claim that points to a source within a woman’s identity, if she chooses to develop it and share it with men close to her, that can be a great service to the Church and to the world.

John Paul II stated that the spiritual motherhood and fatherhood of consecrated women and priests share this analogical nature with physical motherhood and fatherhood in family life. All forms of parenting are exercised in the context in which the forces of evil, encapsulated in the “father of lies,” waits to devour the child. He concluded

that the vocation of all men and women to fathering and mothering is key to the solution of the culture of death. He called upon women to tap into this dimension of self through an awareness that “*God entrusts the human being to her in a special way, . . . precisely by reason of their femininity . . . [and] always and in every way*” (*MD*, 30).

This call is addressed to women in the contemporary context in which “the successes of sciences and technology . . . and unilateral progress . . . [have led] to a gradual *loss of sensitivity . . . for what is essentially human*” (*MD*, 30). At that moment, John Paul II introduced a new concept to match his call to release new forms of *the genius of women* to engage with and humanize the successes of the genius of men: “Our time in particular *awaits the manifestation* of that ‘genius’ which belongs to women, and which can ensure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance” (*MD*, 18, 30).

The next augmentation of John Paul II’s man-woman integral complementarity occurred in 1995 in the context of the Beijing United Nations Fourth World Meeting on Women. In preceding years, he had focused on many principles of Catholic social-political teachings. Thus, it is not surprising that when he returned to consider the man-woman relationship he would also include a focus that extended into social-political spheres. In *Letter to Women* he said that the greater presence of women in society will lead to a humanization of institutions organized “according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity.”³⁹ He called upon women to be involved in “all areas of education” where “they exhibit a kind of affective, cultural, and spiritual motherhood which has inestimable value for the development of individuals and the future of society.”⁴⁰ The Holy Father said directly to Gertrude Mongella, the Secretary General of the UN Conference on Women, that woman’s genius extends throughout wide areas of society and “that women’s contribution to the welfare and progress of society is incalculable . . . [and even more needed] to save society from the deadly virus of degradation and violence which is today witnessing a dramatic increase.”⁴¹

Making his general principle specific, Pope John Paul II stated in

an Angelus reflection (August 20, 1995), that the greater presence of businesswomen in executive positions in the economy is “giving it a new human inspiration and removing it from the recurring temptation of dull efficiency marked only by laws of profit.”⁴² Then, he asked that women’s genius be “more fully expressed in the life of society as a whole,” and that “the widest possible space [be] open to women in all areas of culture, economics, [and] politics.”⁴³

The metaphysical foundation for integral gender complementarity was directly stated as such in his 1995 *Letter to Women*, positioning it as a Catholic inspiration against traditional polarity, fractional complementarity, and unisex positions. He argued that significant differences between men and women are ontological, rooted in their very being as a human persons: “Womanhood and manhood are complementary *not only from the physical and psychological points of view, but also from the ontological.*”⁴⁴ In addition, the 1995 *Holy See’s Position Paper for Beijing* proposed four integrated categories through which the ontological complementarity of men and women can be analyzed: “Women and men are the illustration of a *biological, individual, personal and spiritual complementarity.*”⁴⁵ This complementarity is always of a man and woman as two concrete human beings in relation and not as fractional parts of a man and a woman who in relation make up only a “single human being.” That is why John Paul II’s ontological complementarity is also an integral gender complementarity.

A further concept introduced by Pope John Paul II in relation to integral gender complementarity was named “new feminism”; it was used by him for the first and only time in section number ninety-nine of the 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life). New feminism is described as a call and duty of Catholic women. In his words: “It depends on them [women] to promote a ‘new feminism’” to transform culture.⁴⁶ Since this call, several Catholic women and men have explored how to transform culture through a new feminism.⁴⁷

The new feminism of Pope John Paul II shares with older femi-

nisms the goal of overcoming “all discrimination, violence and exploitation” of women, but it differs from them in two important respects. First, a negative precept: the method of new feminism should not imitate what he called “models of male domination” to achieve its goals. Obviously, this precept harkens back to the call to overcome the effects of original sin in its particular male forms. Second, the positive precept: the method of new feminism should tap into women’s genius with its root of being predisposed to pay attention to the person in all circumstances. This precept also harkens back to the call to overcome the effects of original sin in its particular female forms.

Repeating his previous claim that women who have discovered the root of their feminine genius may lead men to discover their fatherhood, John Paul II described women’s unique mission in a world full of utilitarianism and the culture of death: “Women first learn and then teach others that human relations are authentic if they are open to accepting the other person, a person who is recognized and loved because of the dignity which comes from being a person, and not from other considerations, such as usefulness, strength, intelligence, beauty or help.”⁴⁸ Further, he identified new feminism as “the fundamental contribution which the Church and humanity expect from women,” concluding that “it is the indispensable prerequisite for an authentic cultural change.”⁴⁹

Conclusion

This tracing of some historical moments in the development of philosophical foundations for an integral man-woman complementarity has revealed that when man-woman relations went culturally out of balance toward lack of equal dignity and worth or toward lack of significant differentiation, a Catholic inspiration resurfaced to demonstrate new grounds for complementarity. Eventually ontological and metaphysical grounds were able to provide the much-needed foundation for an integral gender complementarity.

With this conclusion, the most recent Catholic inspiration for integral gender complementarity has moved from an intellectual theory derived from the revelation of the *communio* among the three equal but significantly different Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity to become a precept for transforming the world through a new evangelization of cooperative and interpenetrating work by women and men. Indeed, while man-woman complementarity is the prime model for integral complementarity, John Paul II drew many analogies from this model for the complementarity of the Eastern and Western Churches, complementarity of different cultures, complementarity of faith and reason, and the complementarity of the three paradigm vocations to sacramental marriage, holy orders, and consecrated life.

Pope Benedict XVI, building on the Catholic inspiration of his predecessors, in his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), has opened up the inner heart of complementary relations of love among women and men. In his elaboration of differences and unity among persons through eros, filia, and agape, Benedict XVI has provided a dynamic measure for forces in the world that continue to pressure gender relations to move out of balance by devaluing either the fundamental dignity and worth or the significant differentiation of women and men. Like leaven, integral complementarity in its various forms can build up the kingdom of heaven on earth in likeness to the communion of love among the Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity.⁵⁰

Notes

1. For detailed examples supporting claims about philosophers in ancient and medieval philosophy, see Prudence Allen, RSM, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 b.c.–1250 a.d.* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997).
2. For detailed support for claims about authors during later Scholastic, Renaissance, and early modern periods, see Prudence Allen, RSM, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation (1250–1500)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002).

3. For their specific arguments, see Prudence Allen, RSM, and Filippo Salvatore, "Lucrezia Marinelli and Woman's Identity in Late Italian Renaissance," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 28, no. 4 (1992): 5–39.
4. To trace the Cartesian influence on arguments about gender identity, see Prudence Allen, RSM "Descartes, The Concept of Woman, and The French Revolution," in *Revolution, Violence, and Equality*, ed. Yaeger Hudson and Creighton Peden, in the series Studies in Social and Political Theory, vol. 10, no. 3 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1990), 61–78.
5. For a more detailed survey of the influence of fractional complementarity on epistemological theories, see Prudence Allen, "Rationality, Gender, and History," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Proceedings of 1994 Annual Conference, vol. 68 (1994), 271–88.
6. For the different foundations of atheistic and Christian forms of humanism, see Prudence Allen, RSM, "Can Feminism be a Humanism?" in *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism*, ed. Michele M. Schumacher (Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), 251–84.
7. Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1986), 253–58.
8. Edith Stein, "Letter to Sr. Adelgundis Jaegerschmid, OSB," in *Self Portrait in Letters 1916–1942* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1993), 64.
9. Alice von Hildebrand, introduction to Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1991), xiv–xv. The first English translation of this text was published in 1942.
10. *Ibid.*, 13.
11. *Ibid.*, 15. Emphasis mine.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman: Love and the Meaning of Intimacy* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Press, 1966 / 1992), 91.
14. Edith Stein, "The Significance of Woman's Intrinsic Value in National Life," summary of a lecture given to Bavarian Catholic Women Teachers in Ludwifshafen on the Rhine, April 12, 1928, in *Essays on Women*, 2nd ed., rev. (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996), editor's introduction, 37–38. Italics in the original.
15. Stein, "Letter to Sister Callista Kopf," in *Self Portrait in Letters*, 99.
16. See Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 2002), 453–59.
17. See Prudence Allen, RSM, "Sex and gender differentiation in Hildegard of Bingen and Edith Stein," *Communio* 20 (Summer 1993): 389–414.
18. Stein, "Significance of Woman's Intrinsic Value," editor's introduction, 38–39. Italics in the original.
19. See Stein, Letters to Honecker and Maritain in *Self Portrait in Letters*, no. 199:116–17, no. 125:124–25, and no. 145:146–47.
20. Emmanuel Mounier, *Esprit* (June 1936): 292–97.

21. Jacques Maritain, "Love and Friendship: A Marginal Note to the Journal of Raissa," in *Untrammelled Approaches* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 184. Italics in the original.
22. Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1952), 108.
23. Dietrich and Alice von Hildebrand, *The Art of Living* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1965/1994), 73.
24. John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 94.
25. Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 218–19 (hereafter cited in text with page references).
26. Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1969), 203.
27. *Ibid.*, 190.
28. Karol Wojtyła, "The Family as a Community of Persons," and "Parenthood as a Community of Persons," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (San Francisco: Peter Lang, 1993), chap. 21–22, 315–42.
29. John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis (1979–1980)*, Audiences on October 24, November 14 and 21, and December 12, 1979 (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981), 61–91.
30. *Ibid.* (November 7, 1979), 62.
31. John Paul II, *Rise, Let us Be on our Way* (New York: Time Warner and Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 2004), 90–91.
32. John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman* (November 14, 1979), 76.
33. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work, 1981), nos. 5–6.
34. *Ibid.*, no. 15.
35. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women) (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1988), no. 6. (Hereafter cited in text as *MD*, with references to section numbers.)
36. Italics in this text and in subsequent passages are the author's emphasis unless otherwise indicated. See also no. 18.
37. John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Guardian of the Redeemer* (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1989), nos. 4–8.
38. *Ibid.*, no. 21.
39. John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, in *The Genius of Women* (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), no. 4.
40. *Ibid.*, no. 9.
41. John Paul II, Welcome to Gertrude Mongella (May 1995), in *Genius of Women*, 41, no. 5.
42. John Paul II, Address on August 20, 1995, in *Genius of Women*, no. 1.
43. John Paul II, *Letter to Women* no. 10, and Address on July 23, 1995, no. 1.
44. John Paul II, *Letter to Women.*, no. 7.
45. John Paul II, *Holy See's Position Paper for Beijing* (August 25, 1995), 1.1. Available at <http://www.priestsforlife.org/index.html>. See also Prudence Allen, RSM, "Inte-

- gral Sex Complementarity and the Theology of Communion," *Communio* 17 (Winter 1990): 523–44.
46. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life) (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, March 25, 1995), no. 99.
 47. See the interdisciplinary scholarly work in Michele Schumacher, ed., *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004). My own philosophical approach is found in chapters "Philosophy of Relation in John Paul II's New Feminism," 67–104, and "Can Feminism be a Humanism?" 251–84. Also Helen Alvaré, from the United States Bishop's Conference, published "The New Feminism" in *Liguorian Magazine* (May 1997); and Mary Ann Glendon, the head of the Vatican Delegation to the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing published "What Happened at Beijing?" in *First Things* (January 1996): 30–36, and "The Pope's New Feminism" in *Crisis* 15, no. 3 (March 1997): 28–31.
 48. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 99.
 49. Ibid.
 50. A longer version of this paper was given as "The Catholic Intellectual Tradition Lecture," available through webcast at the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas, October 26, 2004, and developed in greater detail over three lectures in tandem with sacramental theologian Moira Debono, RSM, STD, available in audiotape as "The Second Annual Vital Grandin Lectures," Newman Theological College, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, November 7–8, 2003. I am grateful to those who participated in these public lectures and to Rita Rae Schneider, RSM, PhD, for suggestions for development and revision of this topic.