

The Ontological Priority of Being a Body

Beth Zagrobelny Lofgren

RECENTLY, THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGIES THAT depend on a traditional binary notion of sex for understanding the human person have drawn criticism. Scholars argue that they are inadequate to account for all of humanity because of the existence of intersex persons.¹ Intersex bodies seem to cast doubt on binary gender and blur lines between male and female. Megan DeFranza, in particular, engages with John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, in order to argue that the pope's anthropology fails to offer a coherent way of being a person in a sexually ambiguous body.² Therefore, she concludes that she can reject the pope's teaching and offer a different view of the role of gender and sex in personhood. In this paper, I argue that DeFranza misses a key portion of John Paul II's anthropology and that this portion speaks to the challenge raised by intersex bodies. John Paul II's concept of original solitude offers a starting place for considering sexually ambiguous bodies in light of his *Theology of the Body*. To make this argument, I first clarify what is meant by the term "intersex" — what bodies are at stake here? Second, I present DeFranza's challenge to John Paul II. Next, I offer a missing piece from her reading of John Paul II by explaining his concept of original solitude. Finally, I discuss how this concept demonstrates the way that the original man's body primed him for relationship with God even before humanity was distinguished into male and female and thus provides a valuable hermeneutic for viewing the intersex body.

¹ See for example Susannah Cornwall, *Sex and Uncertainty in the Body of Christ: Intersex Conditions and Christian Theology* (Oakville: Equinox, 2010); Christine E. Gudorf, "The Erosion of Sexual Dimorphism: Challenges to Religion and Religious Ethics," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69, no. 4 (2001): 863-891; Patricia Beattie Jung, "Christianity and Human Sexual Polymorphism: Are They Compatible?" in *Ethics and Intersex*, ed. Sharon E. Sytsma (Netherlands: Springer, 2006): 293-309; and Emma Percy, "Can a Eunuch Be Baptized?: Insights for Gender Inclusion from Acts 8," *Theology* 119, no. 5 (2016): 327-334.

² Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

INTERSEXED BODIES AS BIOLOGICAL REALITY AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

Before discussing the relationship between intersexed bodies and theological anthropologies, it is helpful to clarify what is meant by the term "intersex." The word is an umbrella term, referring to a number of conditions that manifest in ambiguity of a person's biological sex.³ Thus, intersex conditions can manifest in genital ambiguity, abnormalities of sex chromosomes, or mismatch between various facets of biological sex.⁴ (For instance, a person's gonads may be female while their genitals are male.) A few examples can clarify, though these examples by no means cover the entire spectrum of possibilities. These examples are all conditions that affect the complex pattern of hormones that cause sex characteristics to develop in utero and in puberty. In Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS), a person's body does not respond as normal to testosterone; thus, an AIS baby who has XY chromosomes will not develop male genitals, but rather will present as a female externally and have underdeveloped male gonads (testes).⁵ Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) causes a person in utero who is genotypically XX to develop either male external genitalia or genitalia that are ambiguous.⁶ Five-alpha reductase deficiency can cause a child born presenting as a female appearance to develop a male appearance (including male external genitalia) at puberty.⁷ These and other conditions are included under the "intersex" umbrella.

The incidence rate of intersex conditions is unclear, because there is a debate among experts as to which conditions fit under the umbrella.⁸ This number is also hard to estimate because some conditions

³ Cornwall, *Sex and Uncertainty*, 237.

⁴ In general, biological sex refers to a person's external genitalia, internal genitalia, gonads, sex chromosomes, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics (such as breast size and facial hair). A typical male will have a penis and scrotum, Wolffian ducts, testes, XY chromosomes, little breast tissue, and male-pattern body hair. A typical female will have a vulva and vagina, a uterus and fallopian tubes, ovaries, XX chromosomes, developed breast tissue, and female-pattern body hair. (This does not list all the secondary sex characteristics.)

⁵ Leonard Sax, "How Common Is Intersex?: A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling," *Journal of Sex Research* 39, no. 3 (2002): 174-178, at 174.

⁶ Sax, "How Common Is Intersex?" 174-175.

⁷ Urological Sciences Research Foundation, "The 'Guevedoces' of the Dominican Republic," *USRF: Urological Sciences Research Foundation*, www.usrf.org/news/010308-guevedoces.html.

⁸ For this debate, see DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 44-46; Sax, "How Common Is Intersex?"; Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes Revisited," *Sciences* 40, no. 4 (2000): 18-23; Melanie Blackless, Anthony Charuvastra, Amanda Derryck, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Karl Lauzanne, and Ellen Lee, "How Sexually Dimorphic Are We?: Review and Synthesis," *American Journal of Human Biology* 12 (2000): 151-166. The percentages here come from DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 45. The 0.22% figure comes from an international team of intersex specialists. As DeFranza's discussion makes clear, the counting or discounting of conditions and bodies is ideologically fraught.

are not visible until later in life and may be unnoticed entirely unless the intersexed person investigates infertility. The most inclusive definitions place the incidence rate at about 4% of births, but this number includes many conditions that do not actually cast ambiguity on a person's biological sex. Rather, they represent abnormal presentations of male or female. For example, hypospadias, a condition in which a male's urethra opens at a place other than the penile glans, is included in the 4% but does not represent real ambiguity of sex. The lowest estimates place the number at close to 0.02% of births; still, others place the rates at 0.22%. No matter the rate of incidence, the fact remains that not all bodies are easily classifiable. While the vast majority of bodies are male or female, not all bodies fit neatly or easily into these two options.

The lived experiences of intersexed persons are, of course, even more varied than the conditions. While this variety makes it hard to draw generalizations about "the" intersex experience, psychologists and gender studies scholars have taken up this very task. The question of how intersexed people understand their own identities is contested.⁹ While some studies suggest that intersex people who are assigned a gender identity based on their condition are at ease in this identity, these studies are limited by reference to specific conditions and foci on childhood.¹⁰ Work that engages in deep conversation with inter-

For this reason, I hesitate to pick a "best" number. I simply note that these conditions are both extant and rare.

⁹ Hilary Malatino, *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 21.

¹⁰ For example, Richard C. Friedman and Jennifer I. Downey, *Sexual Orientation and Psychodynamic Psychotherapy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 72-86 (Chapter Four: "Psychoendocrinology and Gender Role Behavior"); Melissa Hines, Charles Brook, and Gerard S. Conway, "Adrogen and Psychosexual Development: Core Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, and Recalled Childhood Gender Role Behavior in Women and Men with Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia," *The Journal of Sex Research* 41, no. 1 (2004): 75-81; Hertha Richter-Appelt, Christine Discher, and Benjamin Gedrose, "Gender Identity and Recalled Gender Related Childhood Play-Behavior in Adult Individuals with Different Forms of Intersexuality," *Anthropologischer Anzeiger* 63, no. 3 (2005): 241-256; Milton Diamond, "Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation in Children with Traumatized or Ambiguous Genitalia," *The Journal of Sex Research* 34, no. 2 (1997): 199-211; for an overview of some of this work, see Kenneth J. Zucker, "Evaluation of Sex- and Gender-Assignment Decisions in Patients with Physical Intersex Conditions: A Methodological and Statistical Note," *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* 28 (2002): 269-274. John Money's work is sometimes mentioned to support this view as well, but his work was highly problematic and has since been discredited. (See Kenneth Kipnis and Milton Diamond, "Pediatric Ethics and the Surgical Assignment of Sex," in *Intersex in the Age of Ethics*, ed. Alice Domurat Dreger (Hagerstown: University Publishing Group, 1999), 175-80, and Sharon E. Preves, *Intersex and Identity: The Contested Self* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 95-7.) Money published a case study regarding twin boys.

sexed people tends to present a more nuanced view of how they understand their own sex and gender.¹¹ This scholarship demonstrates great variability in the life-experience of intersexed people. While some individuals take on a clear and untroubled gender identity, others find great difficulty in navigating their own identity. Some of this difficulty may come from a lack of proper guidance from the medical community. Myra Hird argues that the focus in clinical practice surrounding intersex on the creation of a stable gender causes therapists to neglect other key issues that affect intersexed people, such as the trauma associated with repeated genital surgery and the difficulties in understanding their own sexual orientation.¹² Of particular interest for the question of applying John Paul II's anthropology is the difficulty for intersexed people, described poignantly by Susannah Cornwall and Hilary Malatino, in speaking of and even determining "sexual orientation" as commonly understood.¹³ Again, the literature is far from consistent, but in broad strokes, it does reflect the fact that intersexed people encounter difficulty in understanding the meanings of their own bodies, both for their personal identity and as they engage in interpersonal relationships.

INTERSEXED BODIES AS A CHALLENGE TO JOHN PAUL II

Megan DeFranza, after reviewing this picture of intersex conditions and intersexed people, argues that theological anthropologies that rely on the male-female distinction of human beings are inadequate. She draws specifically on John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* as one of the preeminent current examples of such anthropologies. DeFranza focuses on John Paul II's concept of the spousal meaning of

One boy, Bruce Remier, known in the literature as John, lost his penis in a circumcision complication and doctors advised the parents to raise John as a girl. Surgically converted to Joan, the child was raised female and studied by Money through early childhood. Money claimed success, although his claim ignored the reality of the child's difficulty in adjusting to a female role. Milton Diamond published an article describing the "failure" of Money's experiment: Joan reverted to John (taking on the name David in his real life) as a young man and continued to live his life as a man, husband, and father. For an account of this story, see John Colapinto, *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001). Remier died from suicide in 2004.

¹¹ See, for example, Malatino's autobiographically-infused study *Queer Embodiment*; Preves, *Intersex and Identity*; Suzanne J. Kessler, ed., *Lessons from the Intersexed* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); and Ellen K. Feder, *Making Sense of Intersex* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 44-64 (Chapter Two: "'In Their Best Interests': Parents' Experience of Atypical Sex Anatomy in Children").

¹² Myra J. Hird, "Considerations for a Psychoanalytical Theory of Gender Identity and Sexual Desire: The Case of Intersex," *Signs: Journal Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 4 (2003): 1069. Hird's study took place in 2003. It would be valuable to repeat her work now to determine if the changes in cultural reception of LGBT+ individuals have affected clinicians' approach to intersexed individuals.

¹³ Malatino, *Queer Embodiment*, 33-4. Cornwall, *Sex and Uncertainty*, 74-75.

the body. She argues that by viewing the human body as spousal, John Paul II precludes intersex people from having full participation in their humanity and full hope of human fulfillment.¹⁴

DeFranza identifies the spousal meaning of the body as the central concept in John Paul II's Theology of the Body. The spousal meaning, in her reading, refers to the way in which the male and female bodies point to the unity of marriage as self-gift, the ultimate purpose of the human being.¹⁵ She explains the spousal meaning as "the nuptial meaning of the body insists that masculinity and femininity exist 'for this reason,' that is, to direct women and men into marriage," and "marriage is the paradigmatic form of the 'gift of self' (which is the ultimate form of love—human and divine)."¹⁶ Thus, the body as male and female is necessary to human flourishing; the male and female bodies, as complements, draw man and woman into the ultimate relationship and expression of love of which they are capable. The conjugal act, conjugal love, and marriage are all collapsed into one broad category of "spousal."¹⁷ Because human persons, as male and female, seek the fullness of relationship and their own fulfillment through marriage, any person barred from a marital relationship is necessarily cut off from the fullness of being human. Since this fulfillment is linked to the image of God in man, any person barred from this relationship is also farther from the image of God. As this relationship is tied to the human person's relationship with God, any person barred from a marital relationship will also struggle to form a meaningful relationship with God. The problems for intersex people are myriad, or, rather, because DeFranza does not want to allow that intersex people are deficient in this way, the problems for John Paul II's system are myriad.

Two interrelated questions thus arise. First, does John Paul II's emphasis on the spousal meaning of the body, in fact, lead to these problems? Second, is there any other way in his system to account for the flourishing, relationality, and spiritual life of people who cannot marry? I will leave the first question to be answered elsewhere; I suspect the answer is a subtle "no." In this paper, I take on the second

¹⁴ DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 161.

¹⁵ DeFranza, *Sex Difference*. 190. See also pp. 154, 156-157, 159.

¹⁶ DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 159-160. DeFranza uses the term "nuptial meaning of the body" interchangeably with "spousal meaning of the body." The two terms are different translations of the same phrase ("*significato spousale del corpo*") in the original Italian papal audiences. I use "spousal" in this paper both for consistency and in keeping with Michael Waldstein's translation of the audiences, the version of the Theology of the Body quoted in this paper.

¹⁷ DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 191. This is a slight but significant misreading of his concept, but I will not offer a corrective here. In this reading, John Paul II's concept of celibacy is slightly incoherent (see p. 238), a hint that DeFranza has not quite reached the heart of the pope's key concept.

question and propose John Paul II's concept of original solitude as the answer.

ORIGINAL SOLITUDE AND THE ONTOLOGICAL PRIORITY OF BEING A BODY

John Paul II developed his now well-known theological anthropology in a series of papal audiences collectively known as the "Theology of the Body." He begins his Theology of the Body by reading Christ's words in Matthew 19 ("Have you not read that from the beginning *the Creator created them male and female* and said, '*For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife and the two will be one flesh*'?") and following them back to Genesis.¹⁸ From there, John Paul II spends most of his early catechesis in a spiritual exploration of the first three chapters of Genesis. He follows the story of creation and of the Fall to explain what sort of creatures God creates human persons to be, focusing most of his attention on the second creation account in Genesis 2. Here he develops three concepts that are collectively "original innocence." The components of original innocence are original solitude, original unity, and original nakedness.¹⁹ From this concept of original innocence, John Paul II draws the "spousal meaning of the body." Original solitude, unity, and nakedness thus are all necessary for the spousal meaning of the body.

Original solitude appears first in Genesis 2. While in Genesis 1, particularly verse 27, God creates man and woman simultaneously with little fanfare about sex, in Genesis 2 their creation is split. God creates first the man, '*adam*, and places him on the earth. Before the creation of woman, '*adam* encounters creation and interacts with the other living creatures, naming the animals. After meeting all the animals, '*adam* has found none like himself: he "does not find a help similar to himself."²⁰ This moment leads him to an awareness of his aloneness that, in turn, puts him in touch with his own subjectivity; it makes him aware of the fact that he is a person. John Paul II writes:

The Yahwist text allows us, however, to discover also further elements of this admirable passage, in which man finds himself alone before God, above all to express, through a first self-definition, his

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), no. 1:2 (p. 132). Emphasis in original. All quotations from John Paul II reflect the original emphasis. For the trajectory of the beginning of the catecheses, see no. 1:1-5 (pp. 131-133).

¹⁹ This paper focuses on the concept of original solitude. Original unity springs from solitude and furthers the human person's self-understanding. For a discussion of original solitude and the relationship between original solitude and original unity, see Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 95-105.

²⁰ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 5:3 (p. 148), quoting Genesis 2:20.

own self-knowledge as the first and most fundamental manifestation of humanity.... Solitude also signifies man's subjectivity, which constitutes itself through self-knowledge. Man is alone because he is "different" from the visible world, from the world of living beings. When we analyze the text of Genesis, we are in some way witnesses of how man, with the first act of self-consciousness, "distinguishes himself" before God-Yahweh from the whole world of living beings (*animalia*), how he consequently reveals himself to himself and at the same time affirms himself in the visible world as a "person."²¹

Solitude, then, leads 'adam to his own personhood.

Yet, solitude also leads 'adam past his own personhood. It points towards relationship. In order to be alone, one must be the sort of being who ought to have a partner. Most fundamentally, solitude means that as a person, 'adam is "*partner of the Absolute*": his relationality first speaks to his relationship with God.²² "*Man is 'alone': this is to say that through his own humanity, through what he is, he is at the same time set into a unique, exclusive, unrepeatable relationship with God himself.*"²³ This relationship with God becomes clear when 'adam is given a choice regarding good and evil.²⁴

Although his solitude sets 'adam up for relationship with a non-material God, the solitude itself is by no means spiritualized. Solitude characterizes all of man, and man is part of visible, created reality. Indeed 'adam's body leads him to an awareness of his solitude: it is by comparing his body to other bodies that he realizes his own dissimilarity. He is a person *through* his body, and so it is through his body that he learns and experiences this solitude and thus his capacity for relationship. Everything that 'adam learns he learns through both the body and the mind because he is a composite being. In this way, he comes to know a key aspect of himself, namely his rationality.²⁵

This rationality has specific content that 'adam learns from his body as he realizes his difference from the animals. He realizes that he has self-consciousness and self-determination. Self-knowledge arises as 'adam comes to know the animals and contrasts his consciousness to their natures.²⁶ He undergoes here "an experiential indication of the uniqueness of humanity in the face of the rest of creation."²⁷ Self-determination arises as the result of God's command regarding the tree

²¹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 5:6 (p. 150).

²² John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 6:2 (p. 151), emphasis in original. The italics in all quotations here reflect John Paul II's use of italics in Waldstein's edition.

²³ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 6:2 (p. 151).

²⁴ Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 98-99.

²⁵ Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 97.

²⁶ Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 97.

²⁷ Brian J. Pedraza, "Truth and Love: The Christocentric Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II and Catechesis for the New Evangelization," (PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2015), 239.

of knowledge of good and evil. This command provides 'adam with a choice, which allows him to choose his own destiny.²⁸ Together, these aspects make up man's "subjectivity"; they are constitutive of his soul.²⁹ They are the experiential "flip side" of man's having an intellect and a will. His intellect acting upon himself produces self-consciousness. His awareness of his will, the ability to choose his own fate, as it were, produces self-determination.

Yet, these qualities do not exist in an undirected vacuum. Rather, these qualities point towards the fact that man exists oriented to relationship.³⁰ The commandments from God—to name the animals and to avoid the tree of knowledge of good and evil—also emphasize this call to relationship.³¹ Finding no one like him among the animals emphasizes the aptitude for relationship—no other creature that he can see has this capacity—he is set apart. The command from God allows the first man to choose between life and death. It places him in a relationship with God, both dependent on God and a co-actor with him.³² He is characterized by both his "receptivity towards God *and* his ontological dependency upon God."³³ This relationship reflects back to the man the lesson from Genesis 1:26—that the human person is formed in the image of God.³⁴ The image of God here is 'adam's call to relationship, his existence in preparation for his call to give of himself.

It is through the body that 'adam, an embodied creature, comes to know all of this about himself.³⁵ While the text "only speaks of man and not of his body," so too "in the narrative of his formation from the dust from the ground the reference is to man, not his body."³⁶ While the body and man are not synonymous, they are not, in fact, separable

²⁸ Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 98.

²⁹ Karol Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation?" in *The Self and the Other: The Irreducible Element in Man*, *Analecta Husserliana* vol 6, ed. A-T. Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1977), 61-74, at 63.

³⁰ In presenting the work of John Paul II, I follow his language in describing those qualities of humanity that Adam discovers as the qualities of "man," because it is my goal to accurately present the details of the pope's thought. For John Paul II, the experience of Adam is integrally linked to these qualities. John Paul II discusses the linguistic difficulty of "man" as a gender-neutral term in *Man and Woman*, no. 5:3, n. 9 (p. 147), contrasting European languages that use a sex-generic "man" with the Hebrew *ha'adam* and *is'issah*. This use of the gendered noun is not unproblematic for my work. For this reason, I switch to the more inclusive term "human person" when applying the pope's ideas beyond the text of *Man and Woman*.

³¹ Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 98.

³² Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 99.

³³ Owen Vyner, "The Anthropology of St. John Paul II and Authentic Communal Participation in the Sacrament of Penance," *Antiphon* 19, no. 3 (2015): 275.

³⁴ Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 99.

³⁵ See Pedraza, "Truth and Love," 239, for a similar treatment of the body in this realization.

³⁶ Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 99.

in the Genesis narrative (or really at any point in human existence.)³⁷ He is not, in the method of the angels, given an instantaneous and spiritualized choice. Rather, he encounters this information through the visible, created world and through his existence in it. Original solitude teaches man, through the aloneness of his body his self-consciousness, his self-determination, and his aptitude for relationship. In essence, original solitude teaches 'adam what it is to be human through a "'typically human intuition' of the meaning of his body."³⁸ To be sure, his humanity is waiting, in a sense, for the conditions of its full expression, which will only happen with the creation of woman. Yet all the "pieces" of his humanity, so to speak, are in place at this moment. In fact, without these qualities, 'adam would not be ready for the relationship he will have with the woman. These qualities then create an "ontological openness" not only on the part of the human soul, not only on the part of the human person, but on the part of the human body.³⁹

Notably, John Paul II discusses the importance of 'adam's body for his discovery of solitude with reference to man's orientation to God and his dissimilarity to the animals: this concept does not depend on man finding himself *vis-à-vis* woman at this point.⁴⁰ Instead, the pope "*links man's original solitude with his awareness of the body, through which man distinguishes himself from all the animalia and 'separates himself' from them, and through which he is a person.*"⁴¹ It is not the lack of a genital complement that shows man his aloneness; it is his personhood, his ability to know himself and choose for himself, which is evident from the whole aspect of his body, which makes him "aware of being 'alone.'"⁴² Without the body, it seems, man would not have discovered himself and his solitude; we never hear of angels being "alone."

This reading of original solitude sets us up to understand a passage that has puzzled commentators of John Paul II.⁴³ Preparing to move from his construction of original solitude to the creation of woman and the unity of man and woman, John Paul II writes,

³⁷ Death might challenge this notion, though I would argue that the very idea of death depends on this inseparability.

³⁸ Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 100.

³⁹ See Vynar, "Anthropology of St. John Paul," 275.

⁴⁰ See John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 5:6 (p. 149) for this discussion.

⁴¹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 6:3 (p. 152).

⁴² John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 6:3 (p. 152).

⁴³ See, for example, John Grabowski, "The Luminous Excess of the Acting Person: Assessing the Impact of Pope John Paul II on American Catholic Moral Theology," *Journal of Moral Theology* 1, no. 1 (2012): 116-147, at 133, n. 69, and Thomas Petri, O.P., *Aquinas and the Theology of the Body: The Thomistic Foundations of John Paul II's Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 170, n. 27.

Although in its normal constitution the human body carries within itself the signs of sex and is by its nature male or female, *the fact that man is a "body" belongs more deeply to the structure of the personal subject than the fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female*. For this reason, the meaning of original solitude, which can be referred simply to "man," is substantially prior to the meaning of original unity.⁴⁴

Being embodied, having a body, is for humanity ontologically prior to being male or female. It is more fundamental to being human that a person is a body than that a person is sexed. This passage gives us the conceptual framework to begin thinking about what it means to be embodied separately from what it means to have a sexed body. This is not to claim that the body and sex can be separated from each other in reality but that they can be separated in the conceptual realm. In fact, this is what John Paul II has just done in his development of original solitude. His concern lies with 'adam as the primordial human being, not as the primordial male, and he applies the ontological truths drawn from original solitude to Eve as well as Adam, calling their encounter an instance of "double solitude." The truths we learn about being human from 'adam's solitude apply to the body *prior* to its sexed existence.⁴⁵ John Paul II is emphatically not making the claim that 'adam was some sort of sexless or doubled-sexed being, but rather that the description of his actions and experiences prior to Eve's creation allow us access to truths about our human nature that reside on the same ontological plane as embodiment: one level deeper than what we learn from human existence when it is sexed male and female.

Indeed, without the ontological priority of the body to sex, the basis for the Theology of the Body slips away. John Paul II uses original solitude as the foundation, so to speak for the rest of his anthropology. Without this concept squarely established, the concepts of original unity and the spousal meaning of the body, from which John Paul II gets so much mileage, become incoherent. For this reason, John

⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 8:1 (p. 157).

⁴⁵ Here it is useful to consider the distinctions between ontological and historical claims being made about human beings and human bodies. While having a body is more *fundamental* to the human person than having a sex, the pope is not positing that the first human person existed without sex or prior to his masculinity. "Ontological priority" does not refer to a historical or even a "prehistorical" moment but a metaphysical truth about human nature. This truth is necessary to preserve the unity of human nature across sexes. For the relationship between the human sexes and human nature in John Paul II's thought, see Michele M. Schumacher, "The Nature of Nature in Feminism, Old and New: From Dualism to Complementary Unity," in *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism*, ed. Michele M. Schumacher (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 17-51.

Grabowski calls original solitude “a key to the whole of the TOB [Theology of the Body].”⁴⁶ Mary Shivanandan also emphasizes the importance of original solitude to John Paul II’s work.⁴⁷ Before the unity of man and woman can make sense, the nature of the human being as a creature who is fundamentally alone must be firmly established. Original solitude names the fact that man and woman are each incommunicable and inaccessible to the other, no matter how close the union.⁴⁸ The aloneness of man prior to woman, and woman prior to man, keeps the two people from being elided into each other when the unity occurs and allows for each to maintain a unique relationship with God their Creator, in spite of the closeness of their own union. Not only does solitude protect the incommunicability of the person, but it provides the very ground on which the union is made possible. When Adam and Eve first encounter each other, John Paul II writes, they first experience not a sense of difference but a sense of sameness.⁴⁹ The “somatic homogeneity” between man and woman allows for a relationship of equality.⁵⁰ The “somatic homogeneity” is nothing more than the double solitude of this encounter: man recognizes woman as another being who is alone in the body, just as he is alone in the body.

ORIGINAL SOLITUDE AND INTERSEXED BODIES

What does this all mean for intersexed persons? Again, John Paul II is clear that he does not present *'adam* as a sexually undifferentiated being, waiting to be split into two sexes. In fact, my use of the term *'adam* to distinguish man before the creation of Eve is misleading as to the pope’s text. Adam and *'adam* are two names for the same person. Furthermore, John Paul II assumes that all human bodies have a sex by the very nature of being human. The only suggestion in his entire Theology of the Body that he recognizes that intersexual people exist was quoted above: “in its normal constitution the human body carries within itself the signs of sex and is by its nature male or female.” The intersex person would then have an “abnormal constitution,” whatever that would mean. This provides a challenge for applying John Paul II’s ideas regarding sex: original unity and spousal meaning of the body. However, the characteristics of the human body that are evident in original solitude apply without trouble to intersexed human bodies.

These characteristics, self-consciousness and self-determination, allow for the capacity for relationship: the image of God. First and

⁴⁶ Grabowski, “Luminous Excess,” 133.

⁴⁷ For her treatment of original solitude, see Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold*, 96-101.

⁴⁸ See John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 9:2 (p. 162-3).

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 9:4 (p. 164).

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 8:4 (p. 161).

foremost, the body manifests a person. It expresses an inner self-consciousness and self-determination. Because of this meaning of the body, the body also points towards relationship. The relationality of the human being is written into the body more deeply than maleness or femaleness. Specifically, the human body as a human body speaks to its capacity for relationship with God and with other human persons. A person's ambiguous sex does not threaten the humanity of their body and therefore does not threaten the capacity for relationship manifest in that body, even and especially in John Paul II's anthropology.

The most fundamental relationship of any human person is between that person and God, as evidenced by the fact that this relationship is written into the body prior to its sex. This relationship is so important for John Paul II's anthropology that Owen Vyner suggests the pope's theology be read as a "filial-nuptial anthropology."⁵¹ Vyner argues against reading the pope's anthropology as strictly nuptial given the initial relationship between God and 'adam in original solitude.⁵² A key to the pope's thought is the fact that "in his original solitude, man is therefore relative to God; he is always 'from God' and 'for God.'"⁵³ Original solitude shows 'adam in relationship with God and thus marks his "initial passage from solitude to communion."⁵⁴ Man experiences himself in a partnership with God in his solitude, before sex has taken on any significance. His body participates in this call, because only through the body can he obey God's commandment to fully human activity and thus engage in the partnership.⁵⁵ This call to relationship with God, to be fulfilled by obedience and activity in and through the body, is then the most basic meaning of human relationality.

⁵¹ Vyner, "Anthropology of St. John Paul," 271.

⁵² Vyner, "Anthropology of St. John Paul," 271-272, n. 19. Vyner bases this argument on the adoption of man as sons of God at redemption as well. He is also concerned about the over-emphasis on the marital relationship in the interpretation of the Theology of the Body that springs from the term "spousal meaning of the body." He suggests reading instead the "filial-spousal" meaning of the body, though the pope does not use this term. Such a step seems more than a minor revision of the pope's theological work. Without needing to use the term "filial-spousal," it is possible to prescind from understanding the spousal as strictly marital.

⁵³ Vyner, "Anthropology of St. John Paul," 274.

⁵⁴ Pedraza, "Truth and Love," 242.

⁵⁵ Shivanandan writes, "It is on the basis of an *activity* that this consciousness takes place.... His bodily structure enables him to fulfill the command to till the earth. 'In this activity *the body expresses the person*'" (*Crossing the Threshold*, 100). The italics are Shivanandan's emphasis, and she cites the Theology of the Body audience from October 31, 1979. (Shivanandan is working with the first English edition of the Theology of the Body, which appeared in several volumes and is best referenced by audience date.).

For John Paul II, any particular human person's relationship with God is conditioned upon his solitude and what he experiences of himself in that solitude: his self-knowledge and self-possession. The necessity of solitude for the human person's relationship with God becomes part of why the pope insists that the first woman too experienced solitude: that it is "proper to 'man' as such and not only to...the male."⁵⁶ If existence in communion were enough to cast a human person in relationship with God, there would be no need to insist on the woman's solitude; she could be a creature born in and for communion *simpliciter*. Yet, in the pope's reading, she is not. The woman experiences both solitude and communion, because without the solitude, her relationship with her Creator could not exist on John Paul II's terms.

The fact that the qualities of original solitude apply to intersex persons means that being intersex does not disrupt access to the most fundamental human relationship and the primary goal of human existence. While the human person's relationship with God is lived out in a bodily manner and, thus, in most cases as male or as female, this relationship is predicated on the somatic existence of the human person, not the sexed existence. The intersex body, by being human, manifests the self-consciousness and self-determination experienced by the first man and by the first woman and therefore primes its person to "partnership with the absolute."⁵⁷ This refutes DeFranza's subtle claim that in John Paul II's system, an intersex body precludes a person from seeking human fulfillment, because such fulfillment necessitates relationality. Such fulfillment in John Paul II's system does necessitate relationality and particularly the ability to enter into relationship with God. The pope's concept of original solitude protects this ability in reference to *any* human body.

Furthermore, the bodily orientation to enter into relationship with other human persons exists on this same level. Adam and Eve first establish a relationship based on the somatic homogeneity of double solitude. It is the sameness of their bodies and not the complementarity of their genitals that most primarily undergirds their relationship. Because original solitude characterizes the human person more deeply than sex, the draw to relationship and ability to enter into relationship must exist more deeply than sex. Far from being barred from communion in John Paul II's thought, the intersexed person, merely by virtue of being human, is drawn to communion as deeply as any other person. This is not to downplay the importance of sex difference, especially as it relates to the capacity for parenthood, in John Paul II's system but rather to differentiate conceptually discrete factors in human relationality. A person living with an intersex body, like *'adam'*, finds himself drawn to seek others like himself. This likeness between

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 5:3 (p. 147).

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, no. 6:2 (p. 151).

all human persons enables a rich communion among people without reference to sexual complementarity.

Indeed, such a reading of John Paul II seems necessary to give proper weight to most human relationships. While all relationships seem in his system to be colored by the possession of a male or female body, this is because the male or female body expresses a masculine or feminine person. Yet, the capacities needed to allow for relationship are those that undergird humanity as a whole: self-consciousness and self-determination. In a real way, "the communal derives from the personal" in the pope's work.⁵⁸ A look at some of John Paul II's work as Karol Wojtyła confirms this reading. Wojtyła describes the way that self-determination leads to self-possession and that self-possession enables relationship.⁵⁹ These qualities are necessary for the type of relationship that Wojtyła values, participation: "the ability to exist and act together with others in such a way that in this existing and acting we remain ourselves and actualize ourselves."⁶⁰ Importantly for this discussion, Wojtyła here works out these ideas with no reference to sexual difference. The basis for participation (the way in which one "I" relates to another "I" by recognizing the self-hood of the other) comes from the human person *qua* human rather than *qua* male-and-female. At least in Wojtyła's thought, these capacities are not limited to expressing sexual difference but are constitutive of human experience without reference to any male-female relations.⁶¹ In developing original solitude, John Paul II is essentially offering the theological version of this same "story" he told with his philosophical anthropology years before.⁶²

CONCLUSION

Because original solitude characterizes the human person more deeply than sex, the draw to relationship and ability to enter into relationship must exist more deeply than sex. Far from being barred from communion, in John Paul II's thought, the intersexed person, merely by virtue of being human, is drawn to communion as deeply as any other person. Insofar as the draw to relationship and the capacity for relationship with other human beings are needed for human fulfillment, intersex people "meet" these "requirements." Intersex bodies are in no way deficient in this meaning of being human.

Clearly, this treatment does not begin to address all of DeFranza's concerns. It does, however, demonstrate that John Paul II's Theology

⁵⁸ Vyner, "Anthropology of St. John Paul," 280.

⁵⁹ Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation?" 64.

⁶⁰ Vyner, "Anthropology of St. John Paul," 267.

⁶¹ Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation?" 64.

⁶² Vyner, "Anthropology of St. John Paul," 276.

of the Body does not *de facto* bar intersex people from full participation in the relationality that is central to his concept of being human. In fact, John Paul II places this quality, DeFranza's primary concern, in the human body *prior* to sexual differentiation. Although certainly not attuned to specific concerns regarding intersexuality, John Paul II has provided an understanding of the human body that allows us to think conceptually about the body while abstracting from sex. This sets the stage for thinking about the status of the ambiguously sexed body as containing the same primordial orientation to relationship that a sexed body does.^M

Beth Zagrobelny Lofgren is a doctoral candidate in moral theology and ethics at Catholic University of America.