

Wojtyła's Philosophy of Woman

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1. Abstract

There is a fast-emerging social crisis in the West that has hit the entire globe including the Sri Lankan urban western society. That is the radicalized feminism's deconstruction, demolition and dissolution of every definition 'woman.' Now as it stands it is politically incorrect to define what the word 'woman' means. As a result of this radical turn in feminism, a wave of new social issues has emerged in the West, and fast becoming influential even in the East. With this radical turn, modern feminism is changing for the worse, especially against Christian values. The urgent need for a 'New Feminism' is now felt like never before, especially the need for a 'Catholic Feminism'. It is in this context that the philosophy of Karol Józef Wojtyła (1920 – 2005) the late Pope, St. John Paul II (JP II), is a turning point in the history of feminism. The possibility of a 'New Feminism' is now, within reach of those women willing to promote a culture of life. Only they can make marriage, family, children and men relevant in the lives of women once again. Modern Feminism has alienated women from their nature and capacity as life bearers. In this regard Edith Stein's profound philosophical influence on Wojtyła is undeniable. This new feminism treats men and women as equal, but different, and therefore complementary. It is not gender-neutral but respectfully gender specific and values both similarities and differences between men and women.

Keywords: patriarchy, gender, sex, masculinity, femininity, male, female, woman, binary, complementary, performativity, personalism, biology, body, receptivity, image, relationality

2. Introduction

It is undoubtedly Wojtyła who revealed to the modern world that the teaching of the Catholic church is pro-feminine to the core, and by simply labeling it 'patriarchal conservatism' one cannot negate the truth and the perennial validity of the Catholic teaching on woman. For Wojtyła the Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of Life and the woman is the sanctuary of this culture of life:

In transforming culture so that it supports life, women occupy a place, in thought and action, which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a 'new feminism' which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination', in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation. (EV, 1995, n.99)

Wojtyła's New Feminism (Gawkowska, 2017) demands an honest question: "what's wrong with old feminism of the 1960s style," which has won most of what women enjoy today such as right to vote, employment, education, property, leadership etc.? It is an undeniable fact that many women of today are reluctant to publicly identify themselves with the label feminism or feminist, which indicates a dissatisfaction of its present direction (Cairo, 2016). John Paul II, clearly saw

that old feminism needed to be replaced because of its hostility towards life, family and men. It isolated woman from her very nature and capacity that distinguished her from man and masculinity. (Hollowise, 2025). In this regard Edith Stein's profound philosophical influence on Wojtyła requires consideration. According to Wojtyła, neither man nor woman can be spoken of without implying one within the discourse of the other—*original solitude-unity* (West, 2003, p.67). As much as one helps to define the other, one also helps distinguish and differentiate the other. But modern feminism rejects definitions of woman relative to man, by teaching that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman' (Beauvoir, 1949), implying that femininity is but a cultural construct and a performance based on a patriarchal script. Thus gender (femininity) was stripped from the sexual identity of woman and that identity hollow was filled with traits which were mostly associated with masculinity and patriarchy in the past. This masculinized woman is defined as the strong, independent, self-sufficient woman who needs no one, especially man. Hence modern feminism in its quest for women's equality, based on the logic of sameness (sexual monism), has gradually paved way to the eradication of feminine women and to the rise of masculine women.

It is in this context of the radical turn in modern feminism that the validity and the necessity of a philosophy of woman similar to the line of thinking found in Karol Wojtyła is discussed. Across his books, encyclicals, apostolic letters and public discourses one finds this Catholic philosophy of woman. In this study Wojtyła's works such as *Love and Responsibility* (1960), *The Acting Person* (1969), *Theology of the Body* [TOB] (1979–1984), *Mulieris dignitatem* [MD] (1988), *Evangelium vitae* [EV] (1995), *Letter to Women* [LW] (1995) was particularly considered.

Methodologically, a critical, normative, comparative reading of primary and secondary texts was employed using both philosophical and theological approaches of phenomenology, personalism and Thomism combined. A hundred randomly selected YouTube podcast video clips produced in line with issues related to feminism, gender and culture were viewed and information was gathered based on a list of general categories that reflected social issues directly emerging from modern feminist ideology to compare them with Wojtyła's understanding of woman. Hence the research perspective is both quantitative and qualitative as it involves a categorization of the hundred randomly selected podcast video clips and the critical reading of the primary and secondary texts, focusing on terminological analysis and commentarial comparisons in search of nuances, meanings and their hermeneutics. The data gathered will be primarily descriptive, and the analysis of which is finally aimed at explanatory and illuminative outcomes.

2. Results and Findings

2.1. Emerging social problems

Modern Western Feminist movement has started losing its way (Gibson, 2019). It has provoked women from both East and West to question its latest direction, and it has caused majority of men to disavow it for the sake of their own safety and survival. Having randomly selected, a hundred podcast video clips, produced by popular YouTube vloggers and influencers in the West, who create social media content on culture, gender, feminism, masculinity, dating, marriage etc., I have identified a set of social issues commonly being discussed at present, which are directly relatable

to feminism. Feminism examines systematically the socio-cultural structural and conceptual biases that discriminate women from receiving equal status similar to men—their direct social counterparts. Out of the many issues emerging from these Western social media content I have presented the following list of 25 issues that are most commonly addressed in them as the direct outcome of modern-day feminism's trajectory, which is regarded as the 'post third wave' in the history of the feminist movement. The common issues are as follows:

1. Demonization of male sexuality (Nina Power & Gus Carter, 2023, *The Spectator*)
2. Toxicification of masculinity (Jason Lee & John Regalado, 2019, *Jubilee*)
3. Male social inequality (Richard Reeves, 2023, *Big Think*)
4. Gender fluidification in Trans-philosophy (Kane Baker, 2022, *Kane B*)
5. Female hypergamy and modern dating (Orion Taraban, 2023, *PsychHacks*)
6. Toxic femininity (Douglas Murray & Rita Panahi, 2025, *Sky News Australia*)
7. Feminism's marginalization of boys and Incel culture (Michelle Elias, 2023, *SBS The Feed*)
8. Birth control affecting female perception of men (Jordan Peterson, 2025, *AV Mind*)
9. Men following misogynist role models (Scott Galloway & Christine Emba, 2023, *MSNBC*)
10. Birthrate crisis and population collapse (Katherine Boyle, 2025, *Shawn Ryan Clips*)
11. Men opting out of marriage (Helen Smith, 2013, *Encounter Books*)
12. Cultural and Judicial misandry (Deepika Bhardwaj, 2015, *TEDx Talks*)
13. Involuntary Childlessness of women & Femcel culture (Anonymous, 2025, *Sigma Traits*)
14. A future without men (Aaron Clarey & Pearl Davis, 2025, *The Sitdown*)
15. Loss of Fatherhood (Marilyn York, 2020, *TEDx Talks*)
16. Mankeeping and the problematization of men (James Nuzzo, 2025, *Psychobabble with Dr. Spier*)
17. Dissolving male/female differences (Richard Dawkins, 2025, *UnHerd*)
18. Feminization of men (Michael Franzese, 2024, *Zuby*)
19. Normalization of male bashing rhetoric (Camille Paglia, 2017, *CBC News: The National*)
20. Devaluation of male labor & working-class men (Christina Hoff Sommers, 2024, *Dad Saves America*)
21. AI wives and artificial wombs (Ella Al-Shamahi, 2025, *Manosphere Highlights Daily*)
22. Feminization of education (Christina Hoff Sommers, 2014, *PragerU*)
23. Feminization of media & entertainment (2025, *TheBackgroundNPC*)
24. Culture of distrust between genders [#MeToo] (Chris Williamson, 2023, *The Diary Of A CEO Clips*)
25. Making girls become boys (Abigail Shrier, 2021, *PragerU*)

The 25 social issues listed above despite their diversities and similarities can further be reduced to three main pillars (Bruce, 2014) on which modern-day feminism rests and operates. They are:

1. Dignity → *A woman should be able to freely choose her own path in life*
2. Autonomy → *A woman should have freedom to define herself*
3. Men → *The principal agents of patriarchy and the oppressors of women*

These three pillars correspond to the three waves of feminism that popularly structure its history of development. Every wave defines history and a new direction in which the movement evolved.

2.2. Three Pillars and Waves

Firstly, dignity is inextricably linked to freedom of choice. By their choice women will either receive or lose their dignity. Modern feminism has gradually downplayed the desire for women to have a family, calling it less dignifying to be a wife and a mother, while hyping the rewards of

career, image and sexual liberalism. This pillar is closely linked to the *first wave* of feminism led by women such as Susan B. Anthony, Elisabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth, who were 19th century abolitionists and temperance advocates against slavery, domestic violence and alcohol abuse which were destroying families (Ann-Michelle, 2025). They fought for family and social order, focused on the order between men and women, and not against them. They sought basic legal protection and recognition, the right to vote, property rights for married women, access to education and legal recourse in abusive marriages. (Kuttianimattathil, 2009, p.130) They formulated their arguments not to overthrow the patriarchy or to embrace spiritual rebellion, but in terms of moral responsibility, justice and civic duty based on natural law and biblical principles. They believed in the distinct power and identity of womanhood, not in its denial or androgenous cosmetic reduction (Paglia, 2016). They upheld marriage, motherhood, family, children, men and virtue as good and central to a woman's role. There was no cult of the self (you do you). They operated under a framework of duty, sacrifice and service. They didn't seek to separate women from family, marriage, children or men. They believed in God-given roles and demanded integration, not demolition.

Secondly, self-autonomy is when a woman has freedom of consent or dissent, to use the word 'No' univocally, without social, cultural or institutional pressures of any kind. This pillar is the pillar of social defiance and rebellion that the *second wave* feminism severely radicalized and made into a dictatorship of emotions against scientific, rational thinking. Theosophy, goddess worship, spiritual rebellion crept in with the influence of women like Helena Blavatsky, Margaret Sanger and Alice Baily, replacing the *first wave's* moral language of justice with esoteric visions of power and championed birth control influenced by occult ideas (Wilson, 2021). The struggle for fairness turned into a seed bed of revolt, that overturned the *first wave* feminists' 'No' into a big 'Yes', to things such as birth control, divorce, single parenthood, abortion, casual sex etc. The *second wave* is the great inversion demanding demolition (Ann-Michelle, 2025). Instead of refining society it wanted to reimagine it—the family, gender roles, religion, and the essence of womanhood itself. Thinkers like Gloria Steinem preached marriage as optional, children as inconvenient, abortion as empowerment and men as oppressors (Bennetts, 2013). Endorsing feminist occultism, she made what began as a movement of equality into a full-blown ideological inversion, a deliberate psychological operation to destroy modesty, shame and sexual restraint in young women. Betty Friedan encouraged women to say 'No' to housewife's role, domestic life, motherhood and to leave home and marriage in search of careerism lest wasting one's potential (Friedan, 1963).

By encouraging women to divorce, work and raise children independently, the *second wave* feminism replaced husbands with the state, government welfare programs, state-run schools, legal and financial systems that incentivized single motherhood and positioned husband and wife interdependence on the covenant of marriage as a mistake (Boyle, 2025). With thinkers like Shulamith Firestone the decisive transition from the *second* to the *third wave* of feminism occurred. Firestone attacked biology itself with her *Dialectic of Sex*, defining pregnancy as barbaric, and family unit as a form of tyranny, creating a chilling vision of the future reproduction without women and families without fathers and bodies without boundaries (Firestone, 1970). The *third wave* saw the erasure of womanhood entirely: removal of pregnancy from the body (Al-Shamahi,

2025) and abolishment of the nuclear family, replacing biology with technology; a complete escape from the female body and form itself marked complete freedom (EG., *n. 94*). Motherhood was desacralized, sexual boundaries were seen as a violation of freedom, virtue as oppression and the feminine was made into a costume that any individual could simply wear.

Thirdly, by declaring equality between men and women as sameness, *third wave* feminism encouraged women to be like men, and to do whatever men did and however they did it (Shrier, 2021). Feminists were taught to be angry at men (Seitz, 2023) but ironically, they were asked to be like them at the same time. Feminism taught that gender differences are mere social constructs based on circumstantial socialization. But actually, men are different from women, substantially, essentially and biologically. Men have contributed politically, socially, economically, technologically for the liberation of women hence they are not oppressors or competitors but collaborators and partners (Bruce, 2014). Yet the *third wave* declared an all-out war against men and initiated the complete deconstruction and annihilation of masculinity by criminalizing patriarchy (Valenti 2017). Men were regarded as oppressors, obstacles and useless for the progress of women, and masculinity was declared toxic (Murray, 2025) and problematic to society.

2.3. A feminism in crisis

It is with the *third wave* that feminism and womanhood started to disappear completely. Judith Butler defined gender as performative and not real (Butler, 2023). It encouraged a radicalized political queer theory. Being a woman is now reduced to a (non-genetics) feeling something that anybody could claim, learn and perform, including a biological male (GE., *n. 36*). Radical inclusivity, the focus on emotional safety opened up exclusive female social spaces even to men who claimed to be transsexual women (Luna, 2022). Womanhood and gender were made fluid and undefinable. Having a female biological body is seen as insufficient without having a female experience or a feeling. Intersectionality is now made a legit critique that leads women away from unity into a fractured feminism breaking into diverse subcategories—advocating queer, color, non-binary as necessary to claim moral authority (Explainer, 2025). Biology was erased and binary gender complementary roles were rejected for multigender, pangender, multiple identity theories.

This ‘woke feminism’ has moved away from the universal definition of womanhood creating a fractured identity matrix where being a biological female is no longer the uniting thread. Now women’s rights no longer have a subject; a female specific issue can no longer be pursued without being accused of exclusion. This is the final inversion—*third wave* feminism embracing the denial of objective scientific truth (Dawkins, 2025). Words are now redefined as violence by the personal emotional response they trigger. Reason, intent, action or truth no longer mattered, but how safe one feels emotionally (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). This is the present crisis that makes Catholic Anthropology of Wojtyła a worthwhile reconsideration within feminism to find a new direction.

2.4. Catholic philosophy of gender and sexuality

Human being is an ensouled body or an embodied soul and not an imprisoned soul in a body; not a dichotomy rather an integrated whole (Kuttianimattathil, 2009, *p.85-86*). The current separation of gender and sexuality is a form of gnostic dualism similar to the ancient separation of matter and

spirit or body and soul which creates an irreconcilable operational opposition rather than an integration that explains the necessity and relevance of binary opposites (Wittenberg, 2025). Corporeality unifies both mind and spirit in a body, which has sexual identity not only as an anatomical configuration but as an existential individual as male or female. Sex is both a biological and psychological fact, whereas sexuality is the configuration of the entire person in accordance with a male or female identity (PCF., 1995, *n.10*). Sexuality expresses the unity of the entire human person, in whom body, mind, and spirit cannot be separated (Lombo & Russo, 2007, *cp.11, 2*). Every individual has a very specific duty to integrate his or her gender into the overall framework of his or her life as virtue and duty, as it (i.e. sexual tendency) is not something automatic and it can be a source of disintegration and conflict. A human being becoming a human person with this integration is a unitary vision that prevents one from falling prey to reductionism of culture and freedom and finally to individualism. As integrated beings of body, soul and spirit, human beings have freedom and are not determined by natural tendencies alone including sexual tendencies, although this freedom can be used or misused to transform oneself according to subjective taste.

2.5. Paradigm of complementary partnership

In today's secular society where 'Man' or 'Woman' is undefinable, it is only in the context of Catholic Philosophy, can we enter into the proper understanding of Wojtyła's philosophy of woman. Wojtyła's discourse on woman does not exclude man, which is deeply rooted in the theological anthropology of the Bible: "God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). This is a complementary anthropology with fourfold roots where women and men illustrate biological, individual, personal and spiritual complementarity (Huntzinger, 2016). Wojtyła's paradigm of Man-Woman relationship is the complementary-partnership model, compared to many other models of man-woman relationship (Kuttianimattathil, 2009, *p.131-138*) such as:

- i. Man and woman—Not equal, one superior to the other
- ii. Man and woman—Equal, but both are the same (univocal)
- iii. Man and woman—Equal, yet both are different (analogous)
- iv. Man and woman—Equal, different and complementary
- v. Man and woman—Equal, different and are partners

Wojtyła's notion of complementarity is an equality of difference (Lemmons, 2002). This complementarity of man and woman is an openness both sexual and relational and not a form of biological conditioning to overcome. Sexual complementarity rejects unisex theories and sexual polarization theories (Allen, 2002, *p.5-7*). It is built on the understanding that data is inscribed from the beginning into the very anthropological structure of individuals (not only physical, psychological but ontologically founded identity) and consequently of society. Complementarity stresses interdependence (CCC 340) that prevents the danger of social division that can limit common social progress if men and women start working separately and not together. It asserts that man and woman when taken individually possess a set of skills and characteristics that the other hasn't by nature of being a man or a woman. Exclusion of one will only lead to the restriction and not to the expansion of the other. This *integral gender complementarity* when achieved leads to the synergistic effects of the union between man and woman in interpersonal relation (Allen, 2009, *p.21*).

From a personalistic point of view, it is to bring man and woman together in collaboration that the aspect of partnership is necessarily included in Wojtyła's man-woman *relational paradigm* to make a communion of persons: 'the "unity of the two," a relational "uni-duality" which enables each to experience their interpersonal and reciprocal relationship' (LW., n.8). Man and woman together forms the Image of God; this model explicates that both man and woman constitute the norm and standard of being human, but alone they are not self-sufficient (LW., n.7). Hence human sexual identities of man and woman are not simply reduced to biological reproductive goals, but has a transcendental meaning. Man and woman difference is a primary datum, which means that not only at the origin of each human being, in the course of history, lies a union between a woman and a man but also that the human person fulfills and understands him or herself thanks to the reciprocity between man and woman (Lombo & Russo, 2007, *cp.11, 2*). For this reason, man or woman is definable not as separate beings but only in relation to each other and never without the other (DI., n.26). Contemporary feminism's exclusion of men has created an identity vacuum and thus a confusion in what it really means to be a woman.

2.6. Wojtyła's notion of woman

John Paul II's notion of woman is a lifelong reflection on what it means to be a woman in our time. He uses the words 'mystery of woman' to emphasize that which constitutes the eternal measure of the feminine dignity and the vocation and mission given to the woman by God which she accomplishes in the world representing the life of humanity (LW., n.1). The word 'mystery' has sacramental nuances that expresses a commitment to gender equality based upon a sacramental theology wherein human nature images the divine. Man and woman are equal images of God but sexually differentiated. Male and female—as a pair—image God and they are a unit of distinct equals having in each of them a distinct equality (Lemmons, 2002). John Paul II gives a list of ways in which a woman in her distinct femininity alone can represent humanity:

- i. Mother → *shelter of human beings, anchor in the journey of life*
- ii. Wife → *mutual self-giving in the service of love and life*
- iii. Daughter → *heart of the family*
- iv. Sister → *richness of sensitivity, intuitiveness, generosity, fidelity*
- v. Worker → *serves social, economic, education, health, cultural, art, political areas*
- vi. Virgin → *consecrated spousal relationship to God and fellowship with creatures*
- vii. Bride → *nuptial image of the Church as community and the body of Christ*

Being a woman is associated with insight which is regarded as part of womanhood that enriches the world's understanding. This epistemic vocation is realized when woman is at work by building a culture that unites reason and feeling that is open to the sense of mystery (LW., n.2). The use of the word 'mystery' has sacramental implications beyond reductionistic definitions.

2.6.1. Feminine genius:

Women should be valued for their skill, professionalism, intellectual abilities, deep sensitivity, dignity etc., more than for mere physical appearance. Humanization of systems which mark the civilization of love can be achieved only by a greater presence of women in society. For John Paul II, this unique intellectual capacity women have, which he calls 'Feminine Genius' is something superior to science and technology. It is a knowledge with social and ethical dimensions, which deals with human relations and spiritual values, which often develops and begins with the daily

relationships between people, especially within the family and society (LW., n.9-10). It is realized in her ability to discover the truth of her (rational) nature (she is a person of equal dignity with man) and her capacity (freedom) to act on that truth (she is free to give herself as a gift to man) (MD., n.6-8). This genius of women should not be reduced only to her professional or career roles. It refers more to her vocation as a woman beyond professional activities, to what she alone can give by the gifts proper to her femininity, welcoming and defending life not in abstractness but in its concreteness (JP II, 23/7/1995, n.1-3, p.276), giving different valences, resonances and accents as a woman to the fundamental dimensions in values common to all.

2.6.2. *Female body and personhood*

In his *Theology of the Body* (TOB), John Paul II, asserts the constitution of the woman is different compared to man. God has chosen her body to be the place of conception, the shrine of new life. The whole constitution of her body is made for motherhood (West, 2003, p.121). This reveals not only feminine biology; since the body reveals the person, it is about the dignity and nature of woman as a person. Woman's body reveals God's creative love revealed in the mysteries of *creation* and *incarnation* (Allen, 2009, p.15) through generation and procreation (TOB, 81-82). Woman is outside of man as the other body taken out of man, that makes it possible for man to love as God loves—as a communion of persons (Wojtyła, 1979, p.261)—a double unity or two-in-oneness. Eve's creation from Adam's rib indicates the homogeneity of the whole being of both; but two complementary dimensions of being conscious of the human body. Female body has specific value both before God and man. The body is that which makes communion of persons according to *original unity* possible (JP II, 14/11/1979, n.2-3, p.19-21). The body as sacrament (TOB, 65) reveals woman's call to communion with man and enables her to enter into it imaging God. This *nuptial meaning* of the body (TOB, 18) makes love incarnate between spouses as a gift and symbol of God's love. Through her body the woman experiences *original solitude, unity* and *nakedness* (West, 2003, p.67) and comes to know herself and the other person. Separation of her body from its end is a violation.

2.6.3. *Mariological ideal*

John Paul II finds in Mary the highest expression of the “feminine genius” (LW., n.10). Woman's capacity to equally serve both God and man was demonstrated by Mary's unconditional fiat (Luke 1:18) declaring herself as the handmaid, a helper fit for him (Genesis 2:18; West, 2003, p.68). Modern feminism has twisted collaboration between men and women into a fierce competition and it has led to the creation of hostile working environments and social spaces, where men and women refuse to dialogue (Allen, 2009, p.17) or help each other. Woman's collaboration is not a sign of her servitude, oppression or subjugation but a true act of freedom, reciprocity, and love as an adopted daughter of God in Christ. Mary's sacramental role has three such dimensions: consecrated with the integrity of a “virgin” heart to become the “bride” of Christ and “mother” of believers (LW., n.11). There's iconic complementarity of male and female between Christ (new Adam) and Mary (new Eve) bringing to light the *Apostolic principle* and the *Marian principle* in the mission of the church, which mirrors the marriage between husband (Christ) and wife (Church). Mary is the model and the mother of the Church, the only human person who eminently fulfils God's plan of love for humanity, and assumed body and soul into heaven (JP II, 29/11/1995, n.1, p.287)—the true image of a liberated woman, perhaps the most influential woman in human history.

2.6.4. *Feminine distinctiveness*

Women and men share all human faculties, the differences have to do with the order of development, use or emphasis among those faculties and not the faculties *per se* (Sharkey, 2008, p.266). The distinctiveness of women is a particular attention *to* and concern *for* actual concrete human beings and their holistic development and flourishing. This is her maternal care or motherliness which is not simply biological, but a personal orientation based on freedom that marks her feminine distinctiveness (Allen, 2002, p.46-47). John Paul II observes that God entrusts human beings to women in a special way... precisely by reason of their femininity that in a particular way determines her vocation (MD., n.30). The woman has a capacity for the other (opposite to modern feminism's demands for themselves). She is the guardian of the culture of life, preserving the deep intuition of the goodness in their lives of those actions which elicit life and contribute to the growth and protection of life. This intuition is linked to her physical capacity to give, nurture and sustain life and it structures her personality (CDF, 2004, n.13). This special sensitivity characteristic of femininity is the *feminine ethos* which is marked by a readiness to accept life (MD., n.14, 16). Modern feminism penalizes motherhood (LW., n.4) and rewards women to forego it for personal career success, perpetuating a *culture of death* manifested in divorce, abortion, birth control, euthanasia, migration etc.

2.6.5. *Feminine pedagogy*

The world is emersed in war and violence, unable to find lasting peace and peaceful means of conflict resolution. It is important that truth about peace is learnt and taught by every human person. Women as mothers and gatekeepers of life, become the first teachers of peace to humanity with their whole being and in all their actions (MD. n.19). The prerequisite to the pedagogy of peace is a stable marriage and family based on the profound communion of persons between man and woman (JP II, 1/1/1995, n.7, p.233). According to the logic of the complementary roles present in the common vocation to love, a woman has a special role to play because of the sufferings she has endured herself due to violence of men caused by sin (*ibid.*, n.10). Women courageously stood by Christ during his suffering and death and they became the first witnesses and messengers of his Resurrection (MD., n.16). For this reason, prior to formal education, the primary relationship between mother and child in the family has a very particular educational significance (JP II, 1/1/1995, n.6, p.232) in the building up of a peaceful society.

2.6.6. *Feminine inheritance of original sin*

Sin is also at the root of the specific difference manifested between men and women (MD, n.9). Scripture refers to some gender-differentiated inheritances of original sin: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). Wojtyła suggests, due to the rupture between man and woman caused by sin, women tend to use men more out of sentimentality while men tend to use women out of sensuality. What is most affected as a result is the unity of the two, since domination takes the place of "being a sincere gift" and therefore living "for" the other. A woman's constant struggle is man's tendency to dominate her and objectivize her, and her tendency to possess whomsoever she loves. Matrimonial union thus becomes the means of divine grace and human effort for both man and woman to develop respect for and perfect true personal subjectivity of both. The wrong way forward will be the "masculinization" of women (Allen, 2009, p.25). In the name of liberation from male "domination," Wojtyła feels that women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine "originality".

3. Edith Stein's influence on Wojtyła

St. Theresa Benedicta (1891 – 1942) or Edith Stein's profound philosophical influence on John Paul II is evident by the pontiff's recommendation of the study of her works at the highest level (FR, *n.74*). John Paul II, beatified (1987), canonized (1998) and proclaimed Stein (1999) co-patroness of Europe. She is most fitting for the title 'patron saint of feminism' (Favale, 2022) because of her struggle to promote the social status of women. She explores the values of womanhood, and woman's mission from human and religious standpoint, and identified distinct vocations of man and woman according to nature and grace (Sharkey, 2008, *p.265*). Wojtyła's complementarianism as laid out in *Love and Responsibility* (Wojtyła, 1981), seems to be following Stein's intellectual lead, which would imply that Wojtyła is Edith Stein's best pupil.

Both have similar resonances on the nature, dignity, distinctive value and vocation of women and men. They both agree that differences between women and men are significant and that they involve some kind of call or gender vocation. (The Church cannot preclude gender inequality by ordaining women, because that would also preclude the ability of the ordained priests to image Christ in His Gender Mission—Lemmons 2002). This difference in gender vocation marks a distinctiveness without undermining equality or common humanity. Stein says, "the existence of all powers, which a man possesses, are within the feminine nature—even though they may generally appear in different degrees and relationships" (Stein, 1996). This is a different view of equality from equality as univocal-sameness, promoted by modern post-third wave feminism, that excludes men as useless for the progress of women. The woman's intrinsic value according to Stein is seen in her interest toward the living-personal and the whole—to cherish, protect, preserve, to bring nearer, to cultivate growth: this is her natural, maternal longing. It is this feminine orientation that John Paul II describes as the genius of women.

Both thinkers agree on the rights of women to enter all professional realms, yet they also think that women will bring particular emphases and orientation that will make them different. Femininity is a fundamental human capacity to live for the other, hence there is a strong drive towards common humanity in women by virtue of their particular destiny to be a mother. Her body disposes her in a particular way to pay attention to another person (Wojtyła, 1981, *p.280*). This gives her capacity to acquire early maturity and initiate collaboration between the sexes towards action that elicit life. The main difference between Stein and Wojtyła is in the way they understand the principle that causes the difference between men and women. For Wojtyła men and women are identical *as form* (soul) but different *as matter* (body) because of their differing bodies (Sharkey, 2008, *p.272*). In contrast for Stein the difference goes beyond *matter* into the *form*. She speaks of a 'species' of woman (species as a permanent category according to Thomistic philosophy means an inner determinant structure). The origin of this masculine and feminine species is the soul itself and not the influence of the body. For Stein not *matter* but the *form* of our soul is the principle of our common humanity, our individual distinctiveness and our gendered nature. Both Stein and Wojtyła accepts the Thomistic understanding of human beings as a unity of matter (body) and form (soul).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Wojtyła's Philosophy of Woman has initiated a new wave of feminism within Catholicism. Do We Really Need a Catholic Feminism? Due to Western secular feminism that is instigating young Catholic women against the Church and her teaching, the answer is a categorical 'Yes'! Catholicism concerns about the good of common humanity that includes both men and women. While affirming the necessity to have a movement within Catholicism that is focused on the flourishing of women specifically, it is important also to ensure that the principles on which this cause is based, and according to which it can be defended and promoted are focused on the good of all humanity (Favale, 2022). It is certain that many problems that have arisen today are not because of feminine emancipation (AL., n.54), but because of false ideologies and political propaganda hijacking the misplaced maternal instinct and hyper sensitive female temperament of the feminist movement (Peterson, 2025). The major difference between old feminism and the new is that the old restrictively operates within the victim-victimizer or predator-infant narrative framework that ends up stigmatizing women always as passive victims of discrimination, violence or exploitation of male sexuality demonized as predatory, whereas the new seems to expand that victim-victimizer framework to include a dimension of power, freedom, responsibility and duty women naturally have to effect change both for themselves and society (Allen, 2002).

Wojtyła's *theocentric feminism* being faithful to the perennial wisdom of Catholic morals promotes truth (reason) before action (will), clearly explaining what women's liberation is and how it ought to be brought about by understanding the truth about woman (Allen, 2009, p.15) according to *Divine Revelation*. Since God, Church and organized Religion are all elements of patriarchy within modern secular feminism, the importance of Catholic feminism is felt all the more for those women who want to promote the cause of feminism without compromising their religious beliefs. Hence within secular academia Catholic Feminism will always be a sign of contradiction (Luke 2:34). But it is a true possibility, as it is built upon the teachings of Jesus Christ the great liberator and savior of humanity, including women (Allen, 2009, p.14). It is a possibility because of an *anthropology of relations* that affirms the unity of body and soul, gender and sexuality (DI, n.59) within the complimentary relationship between man and woman who are equal in their dignity, yet meant to be united despite profound diversity that makes their specific vocations possible through reciprocity, complementarity, collaboration and communion (Benedict XVI, 2008).

Catholic Feminism of Wojtyła, due to its *Personalistic Norm* (Wojtyła, 1981, p. 40 ff.) has the capacity to transcend all limitations that have restricted every other form of feminism such as: Marxist feminism (only for the working class), Radical feminism (only for women), Post-modern feminism (only for nonbinary gender identities), Ecofeminism (only for non-human life forms), Humanist feminism (only for pro-choice) etc., that reject the common good and support the development of a portion of society that includes only the (female) victims. Wojtyła's feminism is based on a universal love (Matthew 5:43-48) for all human persons that also includes the enemy. It is not based on a hedonistic-male or utilitarian-female sexual ethic (Allen, 2009, p.24), that romanticizes victimhood as virtue based on an emotionalized conscience mistaken for feminine compassion, but rather on an anthropological foundation that precedes ethical norms. This means

that norms are derived from the ontological foundation of human identity and not from other sources such as pure reason (Kant), passions (Hume), or usefulness (Mill) (Allen, 2002, p.32).

Wojtyła's feminism does not replace one tyranny (patriarchy) with another (matriarchy). His notion of *Feminine Originality* (MD. n.10) rejects replacing feminine nature with male characteristics or turning women into men and vice versa (gender transition or androgyny). It is contrary to feminine originality and against equality, because it leads to the disfigurement of woman in her essential richness as the embodiment of the culture of life (life bearer) against the logic of power and violence. Based on a feminist sacramentality of the body, Wojtyła sees in the image of the Bride and Mother the feminine capacity for receptivity (MD. n.25) which is the ideal for every human being both male and female in the church. The Bride (Church) alone is able to give of herself as to let the beloved (Christ) literally enter within herself and to receive the seed of that relation (Eucharist) as to nourish and protect its fruit (Allen, 2002, p.43). The false notion that plagues modern feminism is self-sufficiency and total independency which focusses only on *productivity* and not *receptivity*. It is a fallacy to understand a human person as a pure autonomous or isolate entity. Every human person exists only in relation to others. A woman's lived experience of the body predisposes her to receptivity i.e. to be open to another person. Women literally embody receptivity which is an important power of human social intelligence (de Solenni, 2000, p.159). When *feminine receptivity* is lost it drifts society into individualism and breaks down communion (Allen, 2009, p.20)—the relational and communitarian dimensions.

When human receptivity is absent it is always filled with technological devices, instruments and machines. Total individualistic self-sufficiency and independence of one from the human other leads to the total dependency of humanity on technology. Modern feminism's pride of total self-sufficiency and independence from men, family and community is possible only on a total dependency on social infrastructure and technology (Clarey, 2025). Such self-dependent individualistic women exercise their free will in total dominion, manipulation and exploitation of machines, objects of technology and human labor mostly that of men (Sommers, 2024). Independent, isolated, individualistic, self-made woman is not just unrealistic, but also anti-realistic, and such independence is livable only as long as the other is always objectivized.

The future of humanity is decided not by relations between nations, but by relations between men and women (Lawrence, 1922). This self-sufficient, independent modern feminism's liberated woman that rejects men, marriage, family, children, as predicted will lead to a social imbalance and a population collapse, pushing humanity to a state of gradual socio-economic and cultural decline. The thought that technology will provide answers to every problem is based on a utopian assumption that however presupposes a degenerated human state that will initiate a dehumanized future, where men and women no longer interact or collaborate as interdependent agents but rather living life as rivals vying for survival at the expense of the other. On the contrary, Catholic Feminine experience is always open to a relational perspective (Gawkowska, 2012, p.181); this enables the realization that all freedom is relational as human rights are related to one another. The New Feminism of Wojtyła is based on this relational anthropology and philosophy of community which is vital for the present society, to prevent it from rapidly disintegrating and fragmenting.

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