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# What is a Man? What is a Woman?

*Fundamental truths about being created in God's image*

## What is a Man?

*Looking at a historical, contemporary, and essential answer*  
Gregg R. Allison

To pose the question “what is a man?” a few decades ago in the United States, and to pose it now in most parts of the world, the inquiry would be met by a snicker or look of puzzlement. The question “what is a man?”—and its counterpart, “what is a woman?”—was/is so obvious that even if no formal definition might be forthcoming, everyone intuitively knew/knows the answer. Such is no longer the case in some societies today. Thus, the question is here re-proposed. To answer it, I will first summarize two common answers—one historical, one contemporary—then defend the following definition:

A man is a human being created in the divine image in the male-type of humankind and who inherently expresses the common human capacities and the common human properties in ways that are typical of and fitting for a man.

### A HISTORICAL ANSWER

Following Prudence Allen’s historical study, *The Concept of Woman*, I describe in four parts a dominant Greco-Roman philosophical perspective on what is a man, offering for each part an example from Aristotle.<sup>1</sup>

First, sex polarity is the dominant view: men and women are not equal but significantly different, with men being superior to women. Aristotle believed that men and women are opposites as contraries; furthermore, as a pair of contraries, the woman must be the privation of the man. Specifically, women are inferior to men and are

identified with matter (rather than form), passivity, and the lowest elements. Oppositely, men are superior to women and are identified with form (rather than matter), activity, and the higher elements.<sup>2</sup>

Second, men are superior to women because men possess the ability to produce seed (sperm), and this “particular aspect of human materiality is . . . the key to all valuation of sex identity.”<sup>3</sup> Aristotle rejected the correct double seed theory that both male seed (sperm) and female seed (ova) are necessary for reproduction.<sup>4</sup> Instead, he affirmed sex polarity based on his (incorrect) view that the woman provides no seed in generation because she, as the privation of the man, is by nature colder than the man, who is superior to her. As the colder privation of a man, the woman is a deformed man.

Third, men are superior to women because men are more highly rational than are women. Human nature consists of both body and soul, which itself consists of two parts. The first is the rational aspect that corresponds to reason; male identity is tied to this higher function of the soul. The second is the irrational aspect that corresponds to the appetite; female identity is tied to this lower function of the soul. According to Aristotle, men and women alike have a rational capacity. In the man, however, his higher power of reason exercises authority over his lower/irrational powers; thus, men have superior reasoning capacity.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, in the woman, her higher power of reason is without authority over her baser powers; thus, women have an inferior reasoning capacity. Therefore, they are “capable only of true opinion and not of knowledge . . . and cannot be wise in the same way as men.”<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, being inferior epistemologically, women cannot engage in philosophical pursuits nor participate in public life.

Fourth, men and women have different functions and thus have different virtues, with men's virtues being superior to women's virtues. Specifically, men rule and women obey, and this is according to nature, not just convention.<sup>7</sup> For Aristotle, because ethics involves a capacity to reason and engage in philosophical argumentation, and because of a woman's inferior reasoning capacity (which is without authority in women), she is not capable of virtuous activity in this realm. Rather, to be virtuous, a woman must place herself in obedience to a virtuous man (who, as naturally superior, rules her) and express her virtues—e.g., compassion, silence—in the private context of her household and friendship.<sup>8</sup>

In summary, this dominant Greco-Roman historical perspective offered this answer to our question: a man is a person who is significantly different from and superior to a woman because he is formed rather than deformed, rational rather than irrational, active rather than passive, hot rather than cold, publicly rather than privately engaged, and is the sole contributor to reproduction. Tragically, this framework has exerted and continues to exert a widespread influence, particularly in Western societies, for over two millennia. One appalling consequence is the dishonoring and demeaning of women. This historical answer is a dreadfully wrong answer.

### A CONTEMPORARY ANSWER

In response to evangelical feminism, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood proposed the *Danvers Statement* (1988) with Wayne Grudem and John Piper editing *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (1991). While not directly answering our question, the latter work defined manhood. Modifying that definition for our purpose, *RBMW's* answer is that a man is a person whose "heart of mature masculinity" is characterized by "a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and

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protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships."<sup>9</sup> This answer stands in conjunction with another modified definition: a woman is a person whose "heart of mature femininity" is characterized by "a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships."<sup>10</sup> Five observations follow, but first a clarification is needed.

*RBMW* articulated these derived definitions in the context of a repeated and biblically grounded affirmation of the equality of men and women in terms of essence. For example, men and women

alike are created in the divine image; thus, even if role differences between men and women exist, by nature the sexes are equal. This perspective is a far cry from and much needed corrective to the historical answer presented above.

The five observations are: First, the definition focuses on a man's roles: leadership, provision, and protection.<sup>11</sup> Second, these roles are primarily (though not exclusively) for a man who is a husband. Third, *RBMW* noted that this "roled" approach is a secondary matter, with the more fundamental matter being a man's nature (though it did not treat this latter aspect).<sup>12</sup> Fourth, the definition of a woman is formulated in relationship to the definition of man.<sup>13</sup> Fifth, these points underscore the fact that *RBMW*, while well-meaning for the context it addresses, does not penetrate below the surface to actually define manhood and womanhood in terms of nature or essence. Thus, the derived definition of a man is reductionistic.

### AN ESSENTIAL ANSWER

The need to properly define a man by focusing on his nature leads to the definition presented at the outset:<sup>14</sup>

A man is a human being created in the divine image in the male-type of humankind and who inherently expresses the common human capacities and the common human properties in ways that are typical of and fitting for a man.

A brief justification follows:<sup>15</sup> First, God created human beings in his image, and those made in his image are either male or female (Gen 1:26-27). In other words, there is the general *kind*—humanity, or humankind—of which there are two *types*: male-gendered image bearers and female-gendered image bearers.<sup>16</sup> Second, there is no such thing as a genderless or agendered human being; rather, God created his image bearers as either men or women. He did not begin with some kind of generic human being then add on genderedness as a secondary characteristic or type. Everything about human beings as divine image bearers is gendered.

Third, the ground for the distinction between these two types is biological. Men and women are fundamentally different because of chromosome, hormones, and other physiological particularities (e.g., genitalia; skeletal, muscular, and brain structures). Thus, a man is a human being who is characterized by a penis, testicles, the production of sperm, a general range of testosterone to estrogen ratio (T/E2) that is different from that range in women, a general range of muscle mass that is different from that range in women, and more.<sup>17</sup> From this biological foundation flows a man's capacity to impregnate women and his potential of being a father.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, this position is not what is generally considered to be gender essentialism in the sense of biological essentialism or determinism.<sup>19</sup>

Fourth, God created men and women alike with (1) human capacities: rationality, cognition, memory, imagination, emotions, feelings, volition, motivations, purposing, and more; and (2) human properties—gentleness, courage, initiative, nurturing, patience, protectiveness, goodness, and more. These are *common*

capacities and *common* properties;<sup>20</sup> there are no particular capacities and properties that belong exclusively to men or to women.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, given the divinely created design of embodied genderedness, these common capacities and common properties must and will be inherently expressed in gendered ways that are appropriate to men and appropriate to women. Men typically and fittingly express these commonalities in male-gendered ways, and women typically and fittingly express these commonalities in female-gendered ways.

Fifth, articulating what these “typical and fitting” expressions look like is notoriously difficult. Three errors must be avoided. The one is to so differentiate male and female expressions that the properties expressed become two distinct properties; for example, male goodness and female goodness.<sup>22</sup> The second error is to so stereotype these expressions that men and women who don’t “fit the mold” become confused and doubt their maleness and femaleness. The third error is to consider “typical and fitting” to be anything that cultural context allows.

As for the first error, the trajectory tends to end up in a double-columned chart with the headings “characteristics of a man” and “characteristics of a woman;” each column is populated by properties that belong uniquely to men or uniquely to women. To illustrate, the common property of nurturing inevitably falls under the second category as we simplistically view that property in terms of mothers breastfeeding their babies. While the biological foundation necessitates that only women can nurture *in that manner*, men are not thereby excluded from possessing the common property of nurturing. An example is a man who coaches Little League baseball, affirming his players’ progress, developing their batting skills, and correcting errors and meltdowns without belittling his team.

As for the second error, and relying on Robert Spaemann’s *Persons: The Difference between ‘Someone’ and ‘Something’*, “Persons are not roles, but they are role-players, who stylize themselves in one or another manner.”<sup>23</sup> For our purposes, then, “man” is not a role, but “a man” is a role-player; as such, he expresses himself within a culturally-stylized framework. In one context, a man wears a ten-gallon hat and cowboy boots, loves to hunt and fish, smokes cigars, attends NASCAR races, and drives a monster truck. In another context, a man wears an apron and chef’s hat, loves to cook and bake, sips San Pellegrino, attends operas, and rides around in a convertible MINI Cooper. We err when we insist on stereotyping expressions of maleness, elevating what is contextually stylized to a universal sign of being a man. According to a famous proverb, a man is one who has planted a tree, written a book, and fathered a child. Improperly understood and applied, this maxim means that the vast majority of XY-chromosome human beings are not men. That conclusion, of course, is absurd.

As for the third error, affirming that male expressions are contextually stylized does not mean that just any expression is “fitting” for a man. Scripture clearly draws the line. To take one example, a key expression that is culturally influenced is clothing, and Scripture denounces cross-dressing as an abomination to the Lord (Deut 22:5). This law is not only a sartorial rule; it gets to the

nature of a man, who is to express himself appropriately as one whom God created to be a man. For a second example, Scripture prohibits “soft” or “effeminate” men, probably a reference to those who play the passive role in sexual activity with other men (1 Cor. 6:9). A man who postures himself and acts effeminately is crossing a biblical line.<sup>24</sup>

In summary, we return to our essential definition:

A man is a human being created in the divine image in the male-type of humankind and who inherently expresses the common human capacities and the common human properties in ways that are typical of and fitting for a man.

This definition has important overlap with Jordan Steffaniak’s recent proposal of the causal type of gender essentialism.<sup>25</sup> This is the view that human essence or nature is the ground—the fundamental cause—from which flow human characteristics. While this proposal does not directly address our question, a definition

*We err when we insist on stereotyping expressions of maleness, elevating what is contextually stylized to a universal sign of being a man.*

derived for our purpose is that a man is a person who is biologically grounded and ordered to express the common human virtues in a masculine way. To put this notion in a broader context:<sup>26</sup>

Human beings of either sex can practice every virtue indiscriminately. Men are not designed to practice protection whereas women are designed to practice nurturing, as if it is a scale of extremes with men and women on opposing sides and only physically capable of pursuing certain virtues. Men and women can pursue all the same virtues—love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, self-control, etc. However, biology does determine that men have differing levels of *capability* than women to display particular virtues and differing levels of *potentiality* to display them.

His illustration echoes an earlier one: “For example, a mother is ordered to express nurturing in a different way than a father upon the birth of a child. Since only the mother is capable of breastfeeding a child, she is given to a form of nurturing that the father is not. While the father can display the same amount of nurturing, he cannot display the virtue in the same ways. Therefore, the social characteristics can be shared by both, but each sex has the potential to display them differently.”<sup>27</sup>

The advantages of this essential definition of a man include: making a clear break from the disconcerting Greco-Roman

framework; moving the discussion from a focus on secondary matters like roles and grounding it in nature or essence; encouraging more work on the metaphysics of manhood and womanhood; removing the stumbling blocks of stereotyping male and female roles, behaviors, responsibilities, vocations, and other matters that stem from cultural and ecclesial preferences, traditions, and prejudices rather than from Scripture; and directing future work to champion the pursuit of Christlikeness. As Spaemann, in his presentation of persons as role-players, urged Christians, “take on the only true role that a human being can play—‘putting on Christ.’”<sup>28</sup> This expression (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27) is typical and fitting for men—and for women as well.

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## What is a Woman?

*God’s intent for sex and gender*

Katie McCoy

As many a man has discovered, most women don’t like being called “emotional.” The term is at once a dismissal and a put-down, an implication that she is melodramatic, irrational, or even unhinged. Ironically, men are equally as emotional as women; they just express their emotions differently. Despite cultural stereotypes, the presence or intensity of feeling does not exclusively belong to women. Nor does the presence or intensity of a feeling exclusively define women. A woman’s emotions are not the sum of her identity. She is more than her feelings.

Every person is more than his or her feelings. Personal identity is not determined or proven by our emotions or perceptions. Yet, when we attempt to determine or prove gender identity, that is precisely the measure our culture employs. To be woman, today, is a feeling.

And this feeling is an irrefutable proof, whether it corresponds to one’s biology, and whether it changes throughout one’s lifetime (or even one’s day).<sup>29</sup> Apart from one’s feeling, the medical community has no physiological, legal, medical, or physical criteria to verify a person’s gender identity.<sup>30</sup> It is a self-reported, self-verified, and self-sustained identity. As Ryan T. Anderson describes in his work, *When Harry Became Sally*, the belief that a biological male can be “a woman stuck in a man’s body” presupposes that he knows what’s it’s like to be a woman, despite his male body, male brain, male reproductive capacities, and male DNA.<sup>31</sup> Even more, it also presupposes that he can separate his biological body from his gender identity.

In other words, the physical self becomes irrelevant to determine a person’s true self. For someone with gender dysphoria, one’s sense of gender is misaligned with one’s biology. The body is a hindrance to authentic self-expression. The condition causes intense psychological distress, often causing gender dysphoric persons to seek relief through social, hormonal, and surgical changes. These changes can be anything as transient as clothing and hairstyles, or as irreparable as cross-sex hormones and organ-removing procedures.

Recent data suggests gender confusion is affecting young women and girls at alarming and precipitous rates. Girls who

identify as transgender have increased from 1/2,000 in 2008 to 1/20 in 2022.<sup>32</sup> *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters*, Abigail Shrier notes the phenomenon of gender dysphoria among teenage girls runs deeper than sudden identity confusion: “For these girls, trans identification offers freedom from anxiety’s relentless pursuit; it satisfies the deepest need for acceptance, the thrill of transgression, the seductive lilt of belonging.”<sup>33</sup>

An entire generation of women and girls is searching for an answer to the question: What is a woman? And in a secularized, hyper-individualistic culture like ours that elevates sexual and gender identity as our true selves, they have little more than feelings to guide them.<sup>34</sup> As gender dysphoria spreads at alarming and precipitous rates, some suggest that Christian compassion would compel us to support someone’s gender transition, even if as a temporary measure to give therapeutic relief.

### THE BIBLE AND THE BODY

In *For the Body*, Timothy Tennent claims the body is not just a biological category; it is also a theological category, one that reveals its Creator. “[T]he body makes the invisible mysteries of God’s nature and redemption manifest and visible as a tangible marker in the world.”<sup>35</sup> Like all of God’s creation, the human body reflects design and purpose; every part has a function, every cell is complex.

Scripture portrays the body as good and essential to our identity (Gen. 1:26-29). If it were not both good and essential, the Lord would not have assumed a physical body (Heb. 2:13), nor would he have resurrected bodily (1 Cor. 15:3; Rev. 22:20), nor would he fulfill the redemption of his saints with a new, physical body (John 6:40; 1 Cor. 15:52; Rom. 8:23).<sup>36</sup> Our bodies are not accidental or incidental to our identity as those who are created in God’s image.

How does our biological sex relate to our gender identity? The Creation narrative gives us a clue. Genesis 1-2 tells, then re-tells, how

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God created humanity. Chapter 1 describes humanity in relationship to the rest of God’s creation. God made mankind—the culmination of his creative work—in his image (Gen. 1:26-29). It describes the first human beings as a male (*zakar*) and female (*nequeba*).<sup>37</sup> This refers to the sexual difference between male and female. It also demonstrates that biological sex is binary.<sup>38</sup> Chapter 2 describes humanity in relationship to each other, what today we would call gender identity. Instead of finding male (*zakar*) and female (*nequeba*), we find man (*ish*) and woman (*ishah*).<sup>39</sup> The male and the female relate to one another as a man and a woman, respectively.



Here we find God's original intent for sex and gender. In both Genesis 1 and 2, the sets of terms correspond. If a human being is a male (*zakar*), then God created him a man (*ish*). If a human being is a female (*nequeba*), then God created her as woman (*ishah*). Our biological sex indicates and informs gender identity.

Prenatal development confirms this. The male and female are comprehensive and complex. At the cellular level, there are only two biological types of reproductive cells: male and female.<sup>40</sup> The first evidence of sex differentiation occurs *in utero*, during the eighth week of gestation. At eight weeks, a male baby experiences a flood of testosterone, which shapes his brain development.<sup>41</sup> The absence of testosterone for a female baby shapes her brain

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development as well. The centers of her brain that control communication, observation, and processing of emotion are larger. Female infants are born hardwired for emotional connection.

In a female baby's first three months, she will increase in eye contact and “mutual facial gazing” by 400%.<sup>42</sup> As her brain develops,<sup>43</sup> she will process facial features more quickly and have greater sensitivity to social experiences involving faces and emotions.<sup>44</sup> Her brain also has larger limbic systems, affecting language, relationships, and memory,<sup>45</sup> as well as bonding, nesting, and one's connection to one's emotions.<sup>46</sup> The *corpus callosum* is also larger in the female brain, which facilitates transfer of information between the left and right hemispheres. The two areas of the frontal and temporal lobes that are associated with language are significantly larger in women than in men. All of this occurs before she can be imprinted by gendered social norms.<sup>47</sup>

## THE BRAIN AND THE BODY

These neurobiological differences guide gender behavior. Baby girls prefer to look at faces (i.e., people), while baby boys prefer to look at mechanical mobiles (i.e., motion). As young as 9 months old, boys and girls will gravitate toward gender-typical toys (girls to dolls and boys to cars, for example). As Dr. Debra Soh notes, this age is before children are old enough to recognize gender as a concept, which usually occurs between 18 and 24 months.<sup>48</sup>

Expressions of gender differences will vary from culture to culture; what is considered masculine or feminine in a given society or era will be different from another. But, whether a child gravitates toward, and identifies with, traits that are masculine

or feminine within his or her own culture is “driven by biology.”<sup>49</sup> The biological differences in the brain lead to differences in behavior.<sup>50</sup> This doesn't negate individuality or people whose interests aren't gender-typical. And it doesn't mean women have to conform to culturally contrived stereotypes.<sup>51</sup> Nancy Pearcey summarizes this well: “We must take care not to add to Scripture by baptizing gender expectations that are in reality historically contingent and arbitrary. . . . The church should be the first place where young people can find freedom from unbiblical stereotypes—the freedom to work out what it means to be created in God's image as wholistic and redeemed people.”<sup>52</sup> These patterns do show, however, that God's created our physical selves and our relational selves to be a unified whole.<sup>53</sup> So, we can plainly state:

*A woman is a biologically female human being*

But, what if the physical body and the inner sense of gender don't align? Which one determines who we are? Preston Sprinkle gives guidance in his book, *Embodied*, when he says our biological sex “determines who we are . . . and our embodiment is an essential part of how we image God in the world.”<sup>54</sup> Our created, embodied selves tell us who we are. Who we are is not determined on how we feel. The pain of gender dysphoria is real. Longing for inner wholeness is real. But the promise of peace<sup>55</sup> through hormone treatments and surgical procedures is an illusion.<sup>56</sup> Because the purpose for our sex and gender—the purpose for which we were made—will never be discovered from knowing ourselves, but in knowing the God who made us for himself.<sup>57</sup>



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1 Sister Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 B.C.—A.D. 1250* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). Allen herself presents the diversity in this Greco-Roman perspective; Plato, for one, differs significantly at many points from it. Aristotle is highlighted because of his influence on Thomas Aquinas and, through him, Roman Catholic theology. Allen traces the widespread acceptance of Aristotelian sex polarity in latter medieval Christianity (pp. 361-407).

2 Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 89.

3 Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 4.

4 Allen notes that the philosopher Empedocles (c. 450 B.C.) “was one of the few [philosophers of medicine] before the seventeenth century to have proposed the correct theory of reproduction, namely, that the mother and the father each provide one-half of the seed needed for the production of the fetus.” Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 33.

5 Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 109.

6 Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 103.

7 For the contrast between nature and convention, see Allen's discussion of Aristotle and the Sophists. Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 43.

8 Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 111.

9 John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991, 2006), 29. Henceforth, *RBW*.

10 *RBMW*, 29.

11 The *Danvers Statement* underscores this focus: “Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart” (Affirmation 2).

12 As for points 2 and 3, *RBMW* offers, “We are persuaded from Scripture that masculinity and femininity are rooted in who we are by nature. They are not simply reflexes of a marriage relationship. Man does not become man by getting married. Woman does not become woman by getting married.” *RBMW*, 21. One wishes that the book would have developed those two concepts beginning with nature. An improper approach is to define a thing by listing its roles, activities, and functions. Rather, a proper definition is about the nature or essence of that thing. For critiques of this “roled” approach (and, by extension, other “roled” approaches), see Jordan L. Steffaniak, “Saving Masculinity and Femininity from the Morgue: A Defense of Gender Essentialism,” *Southeastern Review* 12.1 (Spring 2021): 15–35; Patrick Schreiner, “Man and Woman: Toward an Ontology,” *Eikon*, vol. 2.2 (Nov 20, 2020).

13 This observation is the center of many critiques of the *RBMW* approach. For example, David C. Freeman, “The Search for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Preliminary Response to the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,” *Alliance Studies at Ambrose University College* (November, 1999), available at <https://online.ambrose.edu/alliancestudies/>

14 My thanks to Gracilynn Hanson for her work on female-gendered embodied image bearing, from which my definition is adapted. “Establishing a Framework for Female-Gendered Embodied Image Bearers in a Redemptive Context” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022).

15 For further discussion, see Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021).

16 For simplicity sake (and while recognizing the contemporary bifurcation in the use of these terms), in the following discussion, the terms “gender” and “gendered” are synonymous with the terms “sex” and “sexed.”

17 Helpful contributions include J. Budziszewski, “The Meaning of Sexual Differences,” and Paul C. Vitz, “Men and Women: Their Differences and Their Complementarity; Evidence from Psychology and Neuroscience,” in *The Complementarity of Women and Men: Philosophy, Theology, Psychology, and Art*, ed. Paul C. Vitz (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 9–34, 182–215. In discussions of biological differences, some people offer objections from the (alleged) ambiguity of intersex conditions. For responses to these objections, see Tomas Bogardus, “Evaluating Arguments for the Sex/Gender Distinction,” *Philosophia* 48 (3) (2020), 873–892; Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgendered Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2021); do Vale, “Gender as Love,” 312–27.

18 Appeals to biology are often part of a “natural law” argument in discussions of manhood and womanhood. For example, Patrick Schreiner, in “Man and Woman,” offers a short treatment of biological sameness and difference between the two sexes. In part, he relies on J. Budziszewski, *What We Can’t Not Know: A Guide* (Wilmington, DE: Ignatius Press, 2011). Interestingly, various implications are drawn from this natural law argument. In the example that was just given, because of biology, a man possesses the potentiality for fatherhood and a woman possesses the potentiality for motherhood. For further development, see Budziszewski, “The Meaning of Sexual Differences,” 25–29. As a second example, because their reproductive organs are more on the “outside” of their body than are the complementary “inside” organs of women, men are more externally oriented than women, who are more internally oriented. A third example centers around potency: biologically, men are relatively strong, and women are relatively weak, which translates into men being leaders, initiators, protectors, and warriors who are courageous, aggressive, and fearless. As Schreiner explains, “Men are typically (though not always) initiators, builders, and protectors of communities, while women are formers, nurturers, and sustainers of community.” Schreiner, “Man and Woman,” 76. A fourth example draws the following implication for husbands and wives: “the logic of asymmetry operates, and the relationship is profoundly advanced, when partners differentiate: namely, the man by responsibility-assuming and secure-making and mission-defining, and the woman by promoting and strong-helping and rest giving.” Sam A. Andreaes, *enGendered: God’s Gift of Gender Difference in Relationship* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2015), 133. The large range of implications drawn from biological realities of men and women should caution us to be circumspect about the consequences we locate in human nature.

19 In agreement with Feliipe do Vale, grounding a definition of man in biology does not reduce human nature in general nor the nature of man in particular to biological factors. Nor does this point imply that the answer to our question is that a man is completely explained by biology. Feliipe do Vale, “Gender as Love: A Theological Account” (PhD diss., Dedman College of Southern Methodist University, 2021), 145. As he explains (pp. 148–49), biological essentialism destroys human freedom and moral responsibility, and dismisses the influence of culture and context on the expression of one’s gender (soon to be discussed).

20 Some of these properties would be the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23) and Christian virtues (e.g., wisdom, humility).

21 Note that these common capacities and properties illustrated differ from biological attributes described above.

22 My thanks to Marc Cortez for suggesting this problem in an external reader report.

23 Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between ‘Someone’ and ‘Something’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996/ET 2006), 84.

24 The application of this point becomes of concern due to the constantly changing clothing industry and what it proposes for clothes for men and women. For example, is it “fitting” for men to wear bow neck blouses or cropped sweaters? As difficult as application might be, developing a list of proper and improper clothes is a time-consuming and never-ending task and may not turn out to be as helpful as one might expect. Feliipe do Vale offers an interesting discussion from an Augustinian framework of love; see, for example, his development of love and secondary goods like clothing. “Gender as Love,” 257–58.

25 Steffaniak, “Saving Masculinity and Femininity from the Morgue,” 22–23, 31–33. Steffaniak presents five variants of essentialism; do Vale rehearses four types. “Gender as Love,” 147–54. He opts for an eschatological kind essentialism, modified by the Augustinian love framework.

26 Steffaniak, “Saving Masculinity and Femininity from the Morgue,” 32.

27 Steffaniak, “Saving Masculinity and Femininity from the Morgue,” 31.

28 Spaemann, *Persons*, 85. He appeals to Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.12.29 (which cites Romans 13:13–14).

29 Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions About Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 203.

30 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 197.

31 Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Movement* (New York: Encounter Books, 2018), 104.

32 “The Controversy Over Trans Teens,” *The Week*, October 24, 2021;

accessed May 16, 2022; available from <https://theweek.com/life/1006253/the-controversy-over-trans-teens>.

33 Abigail Shrier, *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters* (Washington D.C.: Regenery Publishing, 2020), xxx.

34 Carl R. Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022),

74. For a more detailed and academic treatment of Trueman’s research, see *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020).

35 Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), 14.

36 Tennent, *For the Body*, 25. “Our created bodies all point to Christ’s incarnation, and in turn, his resurrected body points to our physical, bodily (not just spiritual) resurrection at the end of time...If our bodies are untrustworthy and only serve to mask the true self that is within, then the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity as Jesus of Nazareth cannot be trusted as a reliable means for God’s most profound self-disclosure in history.”

37 Tennent, *For the Body*, 19. Tennent also notes the entire Creation narrative is a series of binaries. “The entire creation account is set up around divinely instituted binaries. The dominant pairs or binaries in the account are ‘light and darkness’ (or ‘day and night’), ‘earth and sky,’ ‘water and land,’ ‘sun and moon,’ and ‘male and female.’” (19).

38 This claim also considers the reality of intersex persons. Intersex refers to a biological state in which a person possesses both male and female reproductive organs at birth. The condition is the result of a chromosomal irregularity *in utero*. Estimations of the intersex population vary; one source claims it is as high as 1.7%, but a later study found a more precise definition of intersex conditions to be much lower. See Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* (David C. Cook, 2021), 117–120. As with all persons born with genetic irregularities, intersex persons deserve compassion and care. However, it is in error to conclude that congenital reproductive abnormalities disprove that sex is binary. See Deborah Soh, “Myth #1: Biological Sex is a Spectrum,” in *The End of Gender: Debunking the Myths About Sex and Identity in Our Society* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2020).

39 “Researchers identify 6,500 genes that are expressed differently in men and woman,” Weizmann Institute of Science, March 5, 2017, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/05/170504104342.htm>. The Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel reported over 6,500 genes that are expressed differently in men and women, many of which are entirely separate from sexual reproduction such as the skin and the left ventricle of the heart.

40 Biological sex is either male or female. Contrary to what is commonly believed, sex is defined not by chromosomes or our genitals or hormonal profiles, but by gametes, which are mature reproductive cells. There are only two types of gametes: small ones called sperm that are produced by males, and large ones called eggs that are produced by females. There are no intermediate types of gametes between egg and sperm cells. Sex is therefore binary. It is not a spectrum.” (Soh, 16–17)

41 Louann Brizendine, *The Female Brain* (New York: Harmony Books, 2007), 15.

42 Brizendine, *The Female Brain*, 37–38.

43 Debra Soh, *The End of Gender*, Chapter 2 “Myth #2: Gender is a Social Construct.” Soh debunks research that undermines assertions of male/female brain differences (41).

44 Stephen A. Furlich, *Sex Talk: How Biological Sex Influences Gender Communication Differences Throughout Life’s Stages* (Chatham, NJ: Bowker, 2021), Kindle Location: 811.

45 Furlich, *Sex Talk*, Kindle Location: 784.

46 Richard Lippa, *Gender, Nature, and Nurture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Mahway, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005), 100-102, cites many of these studies; Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: Men, Women and the Extreme Male Brain* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), devotes an entire book to the thesis:

“The female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy. The male-brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems” (5).

47 Sex differences in brain anatomy,” National Institute of Health July 28, 2020, accessed May 24, 2022; available from <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/sex-differences-brain-anatomy>. “On average, males and females showed greater volume in different areas of the cortex, the outer brain layer that controls thinking and voluntary movements. Females had greater volume in the prefrontal cortex, orbitofrontal cortex, superior temporal cortex, lateral parietal cortex, and insula. Males, on average, had greater volume in the ventral temporal and occipital regions. Each of these regions is responsible for processing different types of information.”

48 Soh, *The End of Gender*, 255.

49 Soh, *The End of Gender*, 43.

50 Soh, *The End of Gender*, 41. “Social markers for gender may change as decades go by, but this doesn’t mean children are socialized into having a gender....This doesn’t disprove that gender is biological, only that the expression of gender changes depending on what is considered male- and female-typical.” (Soh, 255)

51 Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 152. “Men aren’t commanded to be masculine, and women aren’t commanded to be feminine. They’re both just commanded to be godly.”

52 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body* 218.

53 Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 54, cf. 50-51. Andrew Walker elaborates: “Maleness isn’t only anatomy but anatomy shows that there is maleness. And femaleness isn’t only anatomy, but anatomy shows that there is femaleness. Men and women are more than just their anatomy, but they are not less. Our anatomy tells us what gender we are.”

54 Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 152.

55 Littman conducted a study to explain the phenomena of an increasing and sudden prevalence of gender dysphoria among adolescents, teenagers who had previously expressed no gender dysphoric symptoms. The condition, known as “Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria,” (ROGD) revealed an unexpected — and culturally unwelcome—pattern. Littman found the influence of an adolescent’s relationships directly affected her gender identity. Among adolescents with ROGD, 87% had friends who announced themselves as gender dysphoric, had saturated themselves with material on niche websites discussing gender dysphoria, or both. In other words, a condition believed to find its source and validation in one’s intrinsic sense of self has extrinsic factors. Lisa Littman, “Parent reports of adolescents and young adults perceived to show signs of a rapid onset of gender dysphoria,” *PLOS ONE* Vol 13, No. 8; August 16, 2018, accessed September 1, 2020; available from <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0202330>; internet.

56 Jennifer Smith, “Lesley Stahl Defends CBS 60 Minutes Episode About Transgender People Rushing into Treatment Then Regretting It: Young Man Was Castrated After Taking Female Hormones For Just THREE MONTHS,” *DailyMail.com*, May 26, 2021; accessed May 16, 2022; available from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9621959/Lesley-Stahl-defends-CBS-60-Minutes-episode-transgender-teens-rushed-it.html>.

57 This statement is not intended to dismiss the real and complex challenges of gender dysphoric persons. It is rather to offer hope that being reconciled to Christ is the way to inner peace.