

One Nature under God, and Divisible: Augustine's "Duality of Man" Applied to the Creation Stories of Genesis

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Abstract : The notion that women were created as innately inferior to men has yet to be expelled completely from the theological system of humankind. This question and the biblical exegesis it requires are of paramount importance to feminist philosophy—after all, the study can bear little fruit if we cannot even agree on equality within the theological roots of humanity. Augustine's "Duality of Man" gives new context to the two creation stories in Genesis, texts especially relevant given the billions of people worldwide that ascribe to them as philosophical realities. Each creation story describes the origin of human beings and is matched with one of Augustine's two orders of mankind. The first story describes the absolute origin of the human soul and is paired with Augustine's notion of the "spiritual order" of a human being: divine and eternal, fulfilling the biblical idea that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God. The second creation story, in contrast, depicts those aspects of humanity that distinguish and separate us from God: doubt, fear, and sin. It also introduces gender as a concept for the first time in the Bible. This story is better matched with Augustine's idea of the "natural order" of humanity, that by which he believes women, in fact, are inferior. In the synthesis of the two sources, one can see that the natural order and any inferiority that it implies are incidental and not intended in our creation. Gender inequality is introduced with and belongs in the category of human imperfection and to cite the Bible as encouraging it constitutes a gross misunderstanding of scripture. This is easy to see when we divide human nature into "spiritual" and "natural" and look carefully at where scripture falls.

Keywords : augustine, bible, duality of man, feminism, genesis

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