

The woman: a defective but necessary being

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, First Part, Question 92 “The production of the woman” Article 1. “Whether the woman should have been made in the first production of things?”

In this work drafted between 1265 and 1269 (and which remains to this day one of the major classics of Roman Catholic theology), Thomas Aquinas bases on Genesis 2:18 (“It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself”) his conclusion that the creation of woman was necessary to help man, not indeed in his work but in the task of generation. As is his practice, he begins with stating the objections to his theory, the first of which is quoted here. We see that he does not question a priori Aristotle’s conception of the female as a defective being (as a person), but that woman broadly fulfils a function necessary to procreation, and that, it being so, she is not, in this respect, a failed creation.

Objection 1. Aristotle says: "the female is a misbegotten male." But nothing misbegotten or defective should have been in the first production of things
[....]

Reply to Objection 1. As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence; such as that of a south wind, which is moist, as the Philosopher observes (*De Gener. Animal.* iv, 2). On the other hand, as regards human nature in general, woman is not misbegotten, but is included in nature's intention as directed to the work of generation. Now the general intention of nature depends on God, Who is the universal Author of nature. Therefore, in producing nature, God formed not only the male but also the female.

Source : Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae*, Book 1 Second and Revised Edition, 1920 Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Extracts from:
<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1092.htm>