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The Moral Difference Between Natural Family Planning and Contraception

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I. Introduction

It is apparently a commonplace nowadays that there is no significant difference between natural Family Planning (NFP) and contraception through artificial means such as the pill, condoms, intrauterine devices, etc.; they are all methods for regulating conception. So widespread is this assumption that, despite consistent magisterial teaching to the contrary, it prevails even among Roman Catholics,—and not just among the faithful, where presumably the lack of a sophisticated moral sensibility precludes the perception of subtle distinctions, but even among specialists in moral thinking whose training would presumably equip them to appreciate any ethically relevant differences between the two practices. Indeed, the moral equivalence of NFP and artificial contraception is so plain to many Catholic moralists that they do not even bother to argue for it; rather, it may simply be asserted. In the light of this prevalent opinion, the official teaching of the Church seems rather unenlightened.

Numerous citations from Catholic moralists could be adduced to document this state of affairs. For the purposes of this exposition, however, it must suffice to consider as representative the influential work *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* by Anthony Kosnik et al. The representative and derivative character of the

work on this issue is evidenced by its citation and endorsement of the views of famous moralists like Charles Curran and Bernard Häring (among others). The Kosnik book considers contraception within the context of family planning and asserts: "Among the methods employed for contraceptive purposes are: (1) complete abstinence, (2) rhythm, (3) the birth control pill, (4) ovulation, (5) the progesterone pill, (6) intrauterine devices, (7) diaphragms, (8) condoms, (9) basal temperature, (10) spermicides, (11) withdrawal, (12) the DES morning-after pill, (13) sterilization."¹

They are all methods of contraception, which itself is equated with family planning. Now the work recognizes that some moral distinctions need to be made between the various methods, based primarily on their impact upon the well-being of the persons involved, but such distinctions serve to dissolve rather than maintain the alleged moral difference between NFP and artificial birth control. Periodic continence is simply one form of family planning or contraception whose "natural" quality does not invest it with a moral superiority over "artificial" methods; to assert otherwise is to betray an excessively biological understanding of the natural law. Thus, if family planning can be licit (all would agree that this is so), then so too are the various contraceptive measures which can pass muster according to newer personal norms (as opposed to the old-fashioned physiological norms of the natural law).

In the face of this widespread moral consensus, the words of Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* appear strange indeed: "It [the difference between contraception and the use of the rhythm of the cycle] is a difference which is much wider and deeper than is usually thought, one which involves in the final analysis *two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality*."² Moreover, he goes on to assert that those who contracept commit an evil act which manipulates and degrades human sexuality, while those who legitimately regulate births through NFP, achieve human love at its deepest level. The strong claim made here, which is fully substantiated in other writings, directly contradicts the popular tendency to conflate NFP and artificial birth control. And like those who oppose the Church's position, the Pope also appeals to a personalistic norm. Is the papal position a hyperbolic attempt to buttress an outmoded teaching? Or is it rather the long-awaited and much needed articulation of the profoundest meaning of the Church's tradition?

The opinion of John Paul II cannot be reconciled with the opinion of the many. One must be true while the other must be false. Either Kosnik *et al* or John Paul II is correct. Therefore it will be the purpose of this paper to advance a resolution of the dispute on the basis of a careful philosophical analysis of the issue. The two positions shall be considered analytically without appeal being made to the unique character of papal teaching authority.³ The first question to be considered is whether there is a significant difference between artificial birth control and NFP when

they are considered as human actions. In other words, does the introduction of a contraceptive device change the character of coition so as to make it a different kind of act from intercourse which does not involve such an intervention? Secondly, if this is found to be the case, then what is the moral significance of the difference? Finally, if there is a moral discrepancy between the two forms of birth regulation, then what is implied about the corresponding perspectives on the human person and human sexuality?

II. The Difference Between Contraceptive Intercourse and Non-contraceptive Intercourse⁴

The question at issue here is the difference between sexual intercourse which involves the use of contraception and intercourse which does not involve contraception. The focus will be on the particular performance of the conjugal act. This insistence is necessary at the outset because the discussion is often muddled by the failure to distinguish between individual acts of contraceptive intercourse and the pattern or attitude of the spouses as a whole. This confusion is fostered by those who would like to redefine contraception as a mentality or disposition marking the marriage as a whole, rather than something which refers primarily and properly to individual acts of intercourse.⁵ Both aspects of the situation, the individual act and the overall attitude, are relevant to the moral assessment of the action. Yet these two aspects must be kept separate in order to understand and then evaluate the deed. It is necessary to consider the action first *qua* individual action and then *qua* part of an established pattern of action.

What distinguishes an act of contraceptive intercourse from an act of non-contraceptive intercourse is that the former involves the choice to do something before, during, or after the act which destroys the possibility of conception precisely because it is believed that such a choice will indeed negate the possibility of conception.⁶ In other words, contraception involves the execution of a choice to exclude conception from an act which by nature involves that possibility. Normal sexual intercourse is an intrinsically generative kind of act; one contracepts because conception is considered to be an unacceptable possibility here and now. The choice to exclude conception or to contracept may manifest itself in a physical transformation of the act of coition into one which is intrinsically anti-generative because of the influence of chemical or mechanical agents. It is more usual, however, for contraception to be accomplished by something which involves no physical distortion of the act (e.g. the pill).⁷ This means that *qua* physical act, contraception may be an intrinsically generative kind of act. Yet *qua* intentional act, or *qua* act of an intelligent and deliberative human agent, all acts of contraceptive intercourse are anti-generative kinds of acts.

The key to the entire discussion, as Anscombe clearly demonstrates, is a proper understanding of intention:

The reason why people are confused about intention, and why they sometimes think there is no difference between contraceptive intercourse and the use of infertile times to avoid conception, is this: They don't notice the difference between "intention" when it means the intentionality of the thing you're doing—that you're doing *this* on purpose—and when it means a *further or accompanying* intention with which you do the thing Contraceptive intercourse and intercourse using infertile times may be alike in respect of further intention, and these further intentions may be good, justified, excellent But contraceptive intercourse is faulted, not on account of this further intention, but because of the kind of intentional action you are doing. The action is not left by you as the kind of act by which life is transmitted, but is purposely rendered infertile, and so changed to another sort of act altogether.⁸

Distinction Between Intentions

With this distinction between the intention with which something is done and the further or accompanying intention (that for the sake of which), it is easy to see what the precise difference is between contraceptive intercourse and non-contraceptive intercourse. Both may have the same further intention. But there is clear difference between their respective present intentions, the intentions inherent in the action that is now being performed apart from any accompanying intentions which may or may not be present. The act of contraception *embodies* the intention of avoiding conception and so makes the coital act a different kind of act (anti-generative) from that which would result if that intention were not operative. Moreover, the intention embodied in the action is a cause or part-cause of the infertility of the act; the further circumstances which determine the fertility of the act (since not every intrinsically generative kind of act is, in fact, fertile) include the intention as a cause.⁹

Non-contraceptive intercourse reveals a different structure. It is an intrinsically generative kind of act both physically and intentionally. There may be a further intention to avoid conception (as could be the case in NFP), but the act itself does not embody the present intention to avoid conception as is the case when there is interference by artificial birth control. The further intention to avoid conception does not cause infertility since the act is found to be infertile on its own. The intention to avoid conception is manifested in the determination to avoid intercourse during the woman's fertile period, but this choice does nothing to the sexual intercourse that is chosen during infertile periods to render it anti-generative. Moreover, it should be noted that the choice not to contracept, even when no conception is desired, reveals a fundamentally different attitude toward the procreative aspect of the conjugal act (which will be important in the moral evaluation of the act).

Thus it is the case that contraception purposely transforms intercourse into a different kind of act altogether:

In contraceptive intercourse the intentional action is deliberately altered from being a generative kind of action to being an act of attaining sexual climax. This account of what the intentional act here is ought, I think, to be

accepted, whether we approve of such an act or not. For it is not a question of the further purpose or intention with which the act is done—to foster the well-being of the parents, sustain their love, etc.—but of what the intentional act itself is: namely, the couple's use of one another's bodies, no longer to perform a generative type of act, but for one or both to achieve orgasm.¹⁰

Let it be noted that the essential difference between contraceptive intercourse and non-contraceptive intercourse is located in the intentional structure of the act *qua* human act; the issue is in no way determined by mere biological or physical factors. Having thus isolated the relevant difference as lying in the embodied intention of contraceptive intercourse to negate the procreative aspect of the act and so transform its character, it remains now to evaluate the moral significance of that difference.

III. The Morality of Negating the Procreative Aspect of the Conjugal Act

In order to maintain clarity of focus, it must be understood that what precisely is at issue here is the moral difference between contraceptive intercourse and non-contraceptive intercourse as they have been defined in the preceding analysis. What is not at issue is the legitimacy of intelligent family planning, which the Church recognizes and condones.¹¹ For the purposes of the present analysis, the further or surrounding intentions will be presumed upright in both cases; that is, it is assumed that the issue is truly family planning and not the complete avoidance of conception which would be condemnable regardless of how it was achieved because it violates the intrinsic meaning of the marital union.¹² Nor is extra-marital intercourse at issue here, although the moral resolution of contraception in general will affect the evaluation of every act of intercourse. By eliminating these other morally relevant features of the action (the *finis* and the circumstances) from the present consideration, it is possible to focus squarely on the crucial question of the morality of intending here and now to negate the procreative aspect of the conjugal act. For if contraception is condemnable, it is so precisely because it embodies an intention to avoid generation which makes the sexual act a different kind of act regardless of any further intentions.

The moral evaluation can be distinguished into two separate but related questions. The first concerns the morality of the anti-procreative intention embodied in the contraceptive act, while the second concerns the morality of the resulting new kind of action. With regard to the first concern, it is often argued that contraception is wrong because it constitutes an illicit interference into the course of nature. Yet this argument is inadequate insofar as it fails to make clear what makes this form of interference condemnable when other forms of interference (e.g., medical procedures) are licit and even laudable. Anscombe's treatment of the issue is incomplete; she correctly identifies the question without dissecting it with her usual clarity.¹³ She observes that by directly

excluding procreation, contraception deprives sexual intercourse of that which is universally recognized (by a "mystical perception") to be what makes it profoundly significant and indeed unique among all human activities (witness the association of sexuality with shame). The result of this deprivation is a trivialization and degradation of intercourse into something done casually for the sake of sensual gratification. Yet while Anscombe's intuition on this count is surely true, it is still necessary to say more concerning the impropriety of this kind of tampering with natural processes.

Inseparable Dimensions

This brings the discussion directly to the central issue of the inseparability of the unitive and procreative dimensions of sexual intercourse.¹⁴ Why is this natural connection inviolable? The question cannot be satisfactorily settled as long as the connection is seen as a mere biological datum of an impersonal order of nature. According to this perspective, the connection stands manipulatable to human technology like other processes of nature which man masters in order to serve his own ends (sometimes for weal and sometimes for woe). No, the connection must be seen to reflect the will of the personal Creator wherein He safeguards and promotes the highest values of created existence.¹⁵ Observation of the natural law then becomes the means to the authentic realization of the human person and not slavish devotion to biology. It is a matter of justice to the Creator not as a nominalist promulgator of *fiat*, but rather as Wisdom itself ordering all things to their proper ends. The assertion being made here is that, contrary to the claims of its proponents, contraception does not promote the true values of the human person, but instead degrades and contemns them. How this is so will be made clear during the analysis of the second question concerning the new act which results from a contraceptive intent.

Yet before considering this second question, it must be noted that there exists another perspective from which to evaluate the choice to contracept: as a direct attack upon one of the basic goods of human nature. This line of reasoning has been developed by Germain Grisez and others as part of a natural law argument against contraception.¹⁶ The starting point for the argument is the recognition that among the basic goods constitutive of human flourishing is the good of procreation (separate from the good of life itself) which encompasses the total bringing into being and nurturing of a new human person. If this is the case, (and both reason and revelation testify that procreation is indeed a basic human good), then what attitude ought we have with regard to it? Now clearly, those who support contraception must take the position that it is permissible under some conditions to act directly against a basic human good because contraception has already been shown to entail an embodied intention to negate procreation. Therefore, those who defend contraception must argue according to proportionalist principles whereby one may

legitimately act against a basic good in order to bring about some other good(s); in this case the argument would be that one may assail the good of procreation for the sake of the unitive good.¹⁷ Any methodology which allows for the direct commission of evil acts, however, is seriously defective philosophically and theologically.¹⁸ The proper attitude toward basic human goods is that articulated by Grisez:

The good man need not pursue every possible good—in fact, he cannot do so. But he must avoid directly violating any of the fundamental goods. Thus some kinds of acts are intrinsically immoral, for some kinds of acts necessarily include in themselves a turning against some basic good, an aversion which also inevitably implies an aversion from Goodness Itself. This standard is a dynamic and existential one. What is required for the goodness of a human act is not that it have the best possible consequences, but that it proceed from a truly good will, a heart bent upon all the human goods as the images of Goodness Itself. Such a moral standard alone befits the dignity and freedom of man.¹⁹

Therefore contraceptive intercourse is wrong because the direct violation of a basic human good is incompatible with the achievement of moral excellence.

Escape from Justice

It is important to understand why NFP intercourse escapes the above judgment. The earlier intentional analysis makes this an easy task. While the further intentions of those who contracept and those who do not may be the same, their present intentions are quite different. The present intentions of those engaging in NFP do not embody the decision to act directly against the possibility of conception. The choice to forego intercourse when it is believed to be potentially procreative in nowise represents a repudiation of the good of procreation. One does not act against a good simply by not intending it here and now. Indeed, abstinence represents a respectful valuing of the good since it is chosen precisely because procreation cannot be legitimately negated. To be sure, those who engage in NFP for legitimate reasons are not pursuing the good of procreation when they choose to have intercourse only during infertile periods. As Grisez notes above, however, it is not necessary to pursue all the human goods at once; but it is required that one not act directly against any of the basic goods in the course of pursuing another good. Thus while NFP intercourse may be non-procreative by virtue of its further intentions, it is never directly anti-procreative like contraceptive intercourse. Therein lies perhaps the most important moral difference.

It remains now to consider the morality of the new sexual act brought into being by the intention to contracept. As was established earlier, contraception transforms intercourse from a generative kind of action (and so a true marital act) into an act of attaining sexual climax through the use of one another's bodies (an ersatz marital act).²⁰ Does this negation of the procreative aspect truly serve the unitive personal dimension of sexuality as the defenders of contraception claim? Or are the two aspects of

coition so inextricably intertwined that to negate the procreative dimension is to vitiate the unitive dimension? The truth of the latter position has been convincingly articulated by John Paul II, especially in a work which he authored prior to assuming the papacy entitled *Love and Responsibility*.²¹

The fundamental moral principle of *Love and Responsibility* is the personalistic norm:

This norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good toward which the only proper and adequate attitude is love. The positive content of the personalistic norm is precisely what the commandment to love teaches.²²

Within the context of marriage as the lasting union of persons involving the possibility of procreation, sexual relations are evaluated according to this norm as the safeguard against utilitarianism (treating the person as an object). The inseparability of the unitive and procreative aspects of the marital act is predicted upon this principle. Contraception violates the principle.

The proper way for a person to deal with his or her sexuality is to recognize that the inner dynamism of the sexual act toward procreation is the indispensable condition for the realization of love between persons. The latter must respect the inner logic of the former in order to be authentic. This means that the mutual acceptance of procreation and the possibility of parenthood are necessary for the sexual union to be truly personal union: "Neither in the man nor in the woman can affirmation of the value of the person be divorced from awareness and willing acceptance that he may become a father and that she may become a mother."²³ True personal love demands both the conscious acceptance of the other as a potential parent and the conscious donation of the self as a potential parent.

Exclusion of Possible Parenthood

If the possibility of parenthood is deliberately excluded from marital relations by contraception, then the character of the relationship changes radically. The transformation is from a relationship of authentic personal love toward a utilitarian relationship of mutual enjoyment which is incompatible with the personalistic norm. Instead of regarding the spouse as a potential co-creator in love of another person, the other becomes a partner in an erotic experience. In this case, the erotic urges degrade the relationship of love by negating the true value of persons in favor of mutual sensual satisfaction divorced from total reciprocal self-donation. By violating the natural dynamism toward procreation, which is a constitutive feature of the sexual act, one exploits the other by making him or her into something less than a person (i.e., an object for enjoyment). And by succumbing to sexual urges in this way, rather than mastering

them in the service of authentic personal love, the agent acts in a less than personal way himself.²⁴

IV. The Ultimate Distinction Between Contraception and NFP

Having established the philosophical difference between contraceptive intercourse and non-contraceptive intercourse and having shown that the former is intrinsically immoral because it constitutes a direct assault upon the procreative good which is creatively inscribed with the unitive good at the heart of human sexuality in order to promote the good of the person, the essay can now conclude with a consideration of the implications of these findings for an understanding of the human person and human sexuality. It should be possible now to discern the full import of the previously quoted words of John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*: "It is a difference [between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle] which is much wider and deeper than is usually thought, one which involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and human sexuality."

With regard to the practice of contraception, the Pope notes: "When couples, by means of recourse to contraception, separate these two meanings that God the Creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as 'arbiters' of the divine plan and they 'manipulate' and degrade human sexuality and with it themselves and their married partner by altering its value of 'total' self-giving."²⁵ The severance of the procreative and the unitive dimensions of the conjugal act manifests more than a dubious intervention into nature or even an impious disrespect for the work of the Creator. Rather, it represents a contemning of the infinite value of the human person, through exploitation for pleasure, in the very context (marriage) wherein reverence and love for that value are meant to find their ultimate expression. Sexual acts which deliberately negate the possibility of parenthood cannot lay claim to the description of mutual self-donation: "Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other."²⁶

This leads to the question of the true meaning of the "language of the body", a topic upon which John Paul II has expressed profound considerations. Richard Hogan summarizes some central features of the Pope's thought as follows:

If the body (either male or female) is the expression of a human person, then the gift of a man and a woman to one another is indeed the gift of two persons to one another. As the body is the sacrament of a person, so the physical gift of a man and a woman is the outward sign, the sacrament, of a *communion of persons*. And this sacrament is a shadow or reflection of the communion of the three persons of the blessed Trinity. The body, then, is the means and the sign of the gift of the man-person to the female-person. The Holy Father calls this capacity of the body to express love the *nuptial meaning of the body*.²⁷

Men and women are therefore called to express the language of their bodies in all the truth that is proper to it as the authentic revelation and sacrament of the human person. According to the objective truth of this language, the conjugal act signifies both love *and* potential fecundity such that to deprive it of the latter is also to deprive it of the former. Therefore the Pope concludes:

It can be said that in the case of an artificial separation of these two aspects, there is carried out in the conjugal act a real bodily union, but it does not correspond to the interior truth and to the dignity of personal communion: communion of persons. This communion demands in fact that the 'language of the body' be expressed reciprocally in the integral truth of its meaning. If this truth be lacking, one cannot speak either of the truth of self-mastery, or of the reciprocal gift and of the reciprocal acceptance of self on the part of the other person. Such a violation of the interior order of conjugal union, which is rooted in the very order of the person, constitutes the essential evil of the contraceptive act.²⁸

Those who admit the licitness of contraceptive intercourse obviously cannot accept an anthropology which so intimately connects the spiritual and the corporeal within the unity of the person. In order to legitimate the choice to negate the procreative dimension of sexual intercourse, they must regard that dimension as essentially subordinate to and separate from the relational or unitive dimension of sexuality; the latter belongs intrinsically to the personal order, while the former may or may not, depending upon whether it is consciously assumed and chosen by the subject.²⁹ By itself, the procreative dimension belongs to the biological or sub-personal order (where it becomes "reproduction"). Thus the contraceptive position depends upon a dualist anthropology and its concomitant separatist view of sexuality which are objectionable on both philosophical and theological grounds.³⁰ There is also a deep irony involved in this position because the proponents of contraception normally accuse the Church's teaching of reflecting "physicalism": "The truth is that the advocates of contraception are guilty of physicalism, for they reduce the human body and the human, personal power of giving life to a new person to mere material instruments meant to serve consciously experienced goods, which for them are the 'higher' goods of human existence."³¹

In contrast to the dualist anthropology and separatist understanding of sexuality which undergirds the contraceptive position, the foundations of those who promote NFP are personalist and integralist, along the lines laid down by John Paul II. To regulate births by reading the language of the body in truth is a ministration of God's plan which respects the good of the other by respecting the natural dynamism of the marital act toward true self-giving. As John Paul notes, NFP provides an entirely different context for the communion of persons which is marriage:

The choice of the natural rhythms involves accepting the cycle of the person, that is, the woman, and thereby accepting the dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control. To accept the cycle and to enter into dialogue means to recognize both the spiritual and corporal character of conjugal communion and to live personal love with its requirement of fidelity.³²

In order to practice NFP as this kind of *communio personarum*, mere empirical knowledge of the cycle of fertility is insufficient. Rather, what is required is virtuous self-mastery or the "capacity to direct the sensual and emotive reactions [so] as to make possible the giving of self to the other 'I' on the grounds of mature self-possession of one's own 'I' in its corporeal and emotive subjectivity."³³ The sexual urge must be mastered so as to resist any tendencies to degrade the relationship to where it expresses something other than personal love. NFP is based on the virtue of continence or marital chastity not simply because of the requirement of periodic abstinence, but rather because it is only by mature self-possession of one's psychosomatic subjectivity that the sexual union truly becomes a personal union. The virtue of marital chastity is not a priggish "refraining from", but rather a positive "capacity for"; it does not detract from personal love, but rather enhances it. Personal love and chastity are inseparable. John Paul summarizes this beautifully as follows:

If conjugal chastity (and chastity in general) is manifested at first as the capacity to resist the concupiscence of the flesh, it later gradually reveals itself as a singular capacity to perceive, love and practice those meanings of the 'language of the body' which remain altogether unknown to concupiscence itself and which progressively enrich the marital dialogue of the couple, purifying it, deepening it, and at the same time simplifying it. Therefore, that asceticism of continence, of which the encyclical speaks (*Humanae Vitae*, n.21), does not impoverish 'affective manifestations,' but rather makes them spiritually more intense and therefore enriches them.³⁴

By now it should be plain that contraception and NFP are not two equal "methods" to the same end as suggested by Kosnik et al. It would be better to categorize them as representing two radically different approaches to the human person and human sexuality or as two competing "theologies of the body". Both style themselves as serving the authentic values of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God. Yet both cannot be true; their opposition is too great. If the preceding analysis is accurate, then the judgment concerning their relative merits should prove to be relatively easy. The view which recognizes the critical moral importance of the intentional structure of human action and the authentic meaning of personal love is the view which ought to compel assent. That such a view is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is perhaps no accident. Yet in the final analysis, the grounds for submitting to it are nothing other than the grounds of truth itself.

REFERENCES

1. Kosnik, Anthony, et al., *Human Sexuality: New Dimensions in American Catholic Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 114-115. See the entire discussion of family planning on pp. 114-128 and the chart on pp. 292-295.
2. *The Apostolic Exhortation on the Family*, n. 32. The translation cited is that which appears in *Origins* 11, nn.28-29 (December 24, 1981): 437-468. The italics are mine.

3. I am heavily dependent in this section on the philosophical analysis of contraception by G. E. M. Anscombe: "You Can Have Sex Without Children: Christianity and the New Offer," in Vol. III of her collected papers: *Ethics, Religion, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 82-96 and a later version which appeared in pamphlet form as *Contraception and Chastity* (London: The Catholic Truth Society, 1977). I shall cite the first as YCHSWC and the second as C&C. I have been helped also by an analysis of Anscombe's position by Jenny Teichman: "Intention and Sex" in *Intention and Intentionality*, ed. Cora Diamond and Jenny Teichman (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1979), pp. 147-161. Anscombe's work is of tremendous importance because it clearly analyzes contraception as a human action. Most of the moral theologians who write about contraception either neglect to undertake this task at all or they erroneously redescribe it in terms of the agents' ultimate intentions. In this regard, see the comments by William E. May on p. 54 of his *Sex and the Sanctity of Human Life* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom College Press, 1984).

4. The question of the infallibility of the received Catholic teaching on contraception is much disputed. Perhaps the most significant recent attempt at defending an infallible interpretation of the Church's teaching on contraception is that of John C. Ford S.J. and Germain Grisez in "Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium," *Theological Studies*, 39 (1978): 259-312. Their argument has been challenged by Francis A. Sullivan S.J. in the sixth chapter (pp. 119-152) of his *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983). Grisez's response and defense can be found in "Infallibility and Specific Moral Norms: A Review Discussion," *The Thomist*, 49 (April 1985): 248-287. I do not propose to enter into this dispute and shall therefore abstract from the issue without prejudice to either side. Thus the position of John Paul II, in both its pre-papal and papal forms, will be deemed worthy of assent only because of its intrinsic intellectual merit rather than on the basis of any special authority.

5. See the Majority Report of the Papal Commission translated as "The Question is Not Closed" in *The Birth Control Debate*, ed. Robert Hoyt (Kansas City: National Catholic Reporter, 1969), p. 72.

6. This is a paraphrase of Anscombe's definition on p. 84 of YCHSWC. Note also the definition of contraception by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14: "Every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible."

7. As Anscombe notes, this new possibility meant that it would no longer suffice to condemn contraception as a sin against nature. This felicitously required the Church to rethink its opposition according to intention. See YCHSWC, pp. 84-85 and C&C, pp. 16-17.

8. C&C, pp. 17-18.

9. This important insight is offered by Teichman on p. 155.

10. YCHSWC, p. 96.

11. See *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 51 and *Humanae Vitae*, n. 16.

12. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 50.

13. YCHSWC, pp. 87ff. and C&C, pp. 21ff.

14. *Humanae Vitae*, n. 12.

15. "The virtuous character of the attitude which is expressed in the 'natural regulation' of fertility is determined not so much by fidelity to an impersonal 'natural law' as to the Creator-Person, the Source and Lord of the Order which is manifested in such a law." John Paul II, *Reflections on Humanae Vitae* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1984), pp. 39-40.

16. Grisez, Germain, "A New Formulation of a Natural Law Argument Against Contraception," *The Thomist* 30 (1966): 343-361. See also the presentation of this argument and the references provided in *Catholic Sexual Ethics* by Ronald Lawler O.F.M., Joseph Boyle, Jr., and William E. May (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985), pp. 159-165.

17. See the analysis of contraception by the avowed proportionalist Philip S. Keane S.S. in his *Sexual Morality: A Catholic Perspective* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 120-140. Note especially the following: "In other words, contraceptive measures, both because of their non-openness to procreation in individual acts and because of problems with various birth control methods, are always ontically evil. They always lack the fullness of human possibility that might be associated with sexual intercourse. . . . At the same time, however, it does not seem arguable that the ontic evil of artificial birth control becomes a moral evil in all sets of circumstances. If a couple face serious medical, psychological, or economic problems, their need for the human values involved in sexual communion would seem to give moral justification to their use of birth control devices. Such a decision will be undertaken with some regret (due to the ontically evil elements in birth control), but with a good conscience and with the conviction that, all things being considered, their action is objectively moral." pp. 124-125.

18. I cannot engage in a detailed critique of proportionalism here. I have found particularly helpful the trenchant analysis of consequentialism by Anscombe in her "Modern Moral Philosophy" in *Ethics, Religion and Politics*, pp. 26-42 (especially pp. 36-37) and the treatment by John Finnis in *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1983), pp. 80-108. See also the discussion and references in Lawler, Boyle, and May's *Catholic Sexual Ethics*, pp. 66-97.

19. Grisez, p. 353.

20. Note the following remarks of Anscombe: "If it is indeed all right to do this for good ends, then it is excessively difficult to see why after all the act need closely resemble a normal complete act of copulation; supposing that to have been made very difficult, say by a crippling accident to the wife, why should the couple not achieve sexual climax by mutual stimulation, rather than hold themselves obliged to a heroic degree of continence?" (p. 96) If the object of sexuality is reduced merely to pleasure, then there is no reason to exclude any kind of sexual behavior.

21. Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, translated by H.T. Willetts (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1981), pp. 224-244. The following analysis is dependent upon these ideas.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

24. See Anscombe's discussion of illicit intercourse "purely for pleasure" on pp. 88ff. of YCHSWC. Note especially the following: "The presence of a positive intention of not procreating when desire leads to intercourse is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for this form of unchastity, but must raise the suspicion of it." p. 90.

25. *Familiaris Consortio*, n.32.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Hogan, Richard, "A Theology of the Body," *Fidelity* v.1, n.1 (December 1981): 12.

28. *Reflections on Humanae Vitae*, pp. 33-34.

29. See, for example, "The Question is not Closed," pp. 70-71.

30. See Chapter One (pp. 1-31) of William E. May's *Sex, Marriage, and Chastity: Reflections of a Catholic Layman, Spouse, and Parent* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981), for a critique of the separatist philosophy of sexuality. The meaning of separatism here is any view of sexuality which severs the existential and psychological bond between the life-giving (procreative) meaning of human sexuality and its person-uniting (unitive) meaning in such a way that the former is subordinated to the latter as the sub-personal (which can be made personal by conscious choice) to the truly personal.

31. May, *Sex and the Sanctity of Human Life*, p. 61.

32. *Familiaris Consortio*, n.32.

33. John Paul II, *Reflections on Humanae Vitae*, p. 80.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 64.