

# THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF CONTRACEPTION WITH RESPECT FOR LIFE

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ONE MIGHT SUPPOSE that increasing the availability and use of contraception<sup>1</sup> would decrease the abortion rate. In view of such a supposition, it is very often suggested that those wishing fewer abortions, whether for moral or medical reasons, should promote access to contraception, even as a matter of public policy. At the very least, it is suggested, opposition to contraception should not be linked with opposition to abortion; opponents of abortion should, as such, prefer contraception as a lesser evil.<sup>2</sup> And many of the groups that comprise the pro-life movement have adopted a strategic neutrality toward contraception in order, at best, to encompass people who are not opposed to contraception and, at least, to avoid alienating them.<sup>3</sup> Even though this neutrality probably does not often reflect agreement with the above premise about contraception and abortion—indeed, even though this neutrality probably often coincides with opposition to contraception on its own terms—it does reflect an implicit assumption that opposition to abortion does not, either theoretically or practically, itself entail opposition to contraception.

Now in fact, increased acceptance and use of artificial methods of contraception seems to correlate to some degree with increased acceptance of and recourse to abortion.<sup>4</sup> But since in any case causality cannot be demonstrated from correlation alone, it seems to me that to explore the possibility and nature of a link between abortion and contraception and to determine what abortion opponents should, as such, do about contraception, it is, finally, necessary to develop a moral evaluation of contraception and to inquire whether the precise manner in which contraception is contrary to human goodness, if it turns out to be so contrary, is related to the evil of abortion. I shall in this essay undertake such an inquiry and argue that the use of contraception promotes dispositions that are contrary to those necessary for respect for life and therefore required for what Pope John Paul II has called a “culture of life.”<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the pope has been right to say that pro-

life strategy must, in fact, include teaching the unacceptability of contraception (EV #13, 97; cf. 88).

My argument will be presented in four parts. The first will assess a proposal that contraception is itself contralife. I shall show that this argument is inadequate. A more adequate argument will require an analysis of the manner in which marital intercourse serves human goodness, since contraception affects the act of intercourse, and not merely accidentally. I shall allow John Paul's writings, especially some of his pre-papal philosophical work, to guide this analysis, not as an appeal to authority, but because one finds in them a detailed and especially insightful account of the issue, and because he has shown a concern about contraception that is a manifestation of this insight. Thus the second part of this essay will present some features of John Paul's philosophical anthropology and the starting point of his corresponding personalistic ethics.<sup>6</sup> The third will use this ethics to evaluate marital love, intercourse, and contraception. In these parts I shall explain that marital intercourse modified by contraception is immoral for the reason that it objectively embodies a disposition toward one's spouse that treats this person as an object of use rather than love, and therefore not as a person.

In light of this evaluation of contraception, the fourth part will return to the question of whether the dispositions embodied and therefore promoted by contraception are compatible with respect for life. Here I shall argue, again following the pope, that it is precisely use of persons, as opposed to love for them, that is most fully manifest in disrespect for life. It follows that, while the disposition toward one's spouse objectively embodied by contraception is specifically different from the disrespect for life embodied by abortion, the two dispositions are nevertheless related—both are species of a general disposition toward use rather than love of persons. Acceptance and reinforcement of this disposition, as by contraception, leads ultimately to the deaths of those who are most vulnerable, especially the unborn. I shall suggest some implications for pro-life efforts.

#### I. THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTRACEPTION AND LIFE ISSUES

One argument for the evil of contraception that implies a very close linkage between it and abortion is the now-well-known argument of a school of moral theorists whose founding member is Germain Grisez.<sup>7</sup> According to this argument, the primary evil of contraception is that it

is itself contralife. If this is true, then acceptance of contraception entails acceptance of a contralife principle, and it is easy to see how this could pave the way for acceptance of, *inter alia*, abortion. In fact, this argument is inadequate, but explanation of its inadequacies will not only clear the way for the pope's more adequate but more complicated argument, but also help to introduce the key features of that argument.

Grisez and his co-authors have argued that contraceptive behavior is, by definition, chosen to impede the coming to be of a new life that might result from some other behavior.<sup>8</sup> Thus it involves a contralife will, a "practical hatred" similar to that in homicide.<sup>9</sup> But human life is a human good, and the coming to be of human life is included in this good.<sup>10</sup> And a will or choice contrary to this good can never be rationally justified. There can be no standard by which rationally to compare the reason not to contracept (the good of human coming to be) with a reason to contracept.<sup>11</sup> "Therefore, [contraception] is contrary to *reason itself*, and so it is immoral."<sup>12</sup>

This approach is problematic on more than one level. To begin with, the moral theory it employs can be questioned. While the recent explication of the argument of Grisez and his colleagues that I have summarized does not explicitly invoke Grisez's concept of "basic goods" that serve as *per se nota* principles of practical reason,<sup>13</sup> "human life" seems to function in their argument as such a good.<sup>14</sup> According to Grisez's theory, one may never will directly against such a good.<sup>15</sup>

This theory in fact seems necessary to ground the comparison of contraception with homicide. For it is clear that the actions chosen in homicide and in contraception differ, at least in that the former ends an existing life while the latter prevents a non-existing life from coming to exist. Homicide therefore does a kind of injustice that is not done in contraception. To minimize the moral relevance of this difference requires recourse to a moral theory that reduces the injustice of homicide to an expression of a will contrary to the good of life. Thus, Grisez and co-authors respond to the objection that homicide and contraception differ in their relation to human life by arguing that "homicide is wrong not only because it involves an injustice, but also because it carries out a nonrationally grounded, contralife will—a will that the one killed not be.... Thus, even if contraception does no injustice to anyone, it is wrong because it necessarily involves a nonrationally grounded, contralife will—the same sort of will which also is essential to the wrongness of... homicide in general."<sup>16</sup>

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A problem with this theory is that it envisages goods, like “life,” only abstractly, apart from their relation to existing human or other beings.<sup>17</sup> This raises the question of the relationship between such goods and morally good action. Contrary to Grisez’s claim, it is simply not clear that it is contrary to moral reason to act against such a good.<sup>18</sup> One cannot begin moral theorizing with such goods. One must begin with the human person (and other beings) as good and conceive morally good action as action in harmony with its good.<sup>19</sup> Thus, deliberate homicide is evil (when it is evil) not because it is “contralife” but because it is “contralife” in an unjust way —because it is inordinate (unjust) to intend directly to take the life of an (existing) innocent person.<sup>20</sup> In light of this objection, one should say that Grisez and his colleagues’ analysis of contraception begs the question of why contraception is a *morally inappropriate* “contralife” action.<sup>21</sup> To the extent that it does so it also leaves obscure the possible connection between abortion and contraception.

Questions can also be raised concerning Grisez and his colleagues’ treatment of contraception itself. Closely related to the above objection is the more specific issue of whether, if contraception is contralife, this is the primary evil of contraception. Grisez and his co-authors discuss the effects of contraception on the sexual act and on spouses as partners in that act, but they also maintain that contraception “is not a sexual sin.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, they say, “Contraception is related to marital acts only instrumentally.”<sup>23</sup> The latter statement is correct (and they rightly conclude that contracepted intercourse cannot be justified by the principle of double effect, which requires precisely one action with multiple effects, not multiple actions). But it does not follow that the primary evil of contraception could not be its effects on intercourse as an act of the spouses themselves, rather than its relationship to the life that could result from fertile intercourse. This is rather an assumption than a conclusion.

Grisez and co-authors say that in contraception, by definition, “one’s relevant immediate intention... is that... prospective new life not begin.”<sup>24</sup> This is not sufficiently precise, and further precision clarifies that the authors are wrong to assume that contraception is not primarily a sexual sin. It can more precisely be said that the most immediate relevant intention in contraception is *to modify* (extrinsically or intrinsically) *acting persons’* (spouses’) *potentialities vis-à-vis intercourse so that* “prospective new life [will] not begin.”<sup>25</sup> With this clarification it becomes obvious that one should examine as matter for

moral evaluation what contraception, in seeking to impede the genesis of life, does to intercourse as an act of the spouses.<sup>26</sup>

As a final consideration, Grisez and his co-authors contend that the use of natural family planning (NFP) to postpone childbearing<sup>27</sup> is not objectively contralife as contraception is. Indeed, establishing this difference is a primary purpose of their efforts.<sup>28</sup> Their argument is that what is chosen in NFP is to abstain from something not itself morally obligatory, namely, fertile intercourse. This, they say, is done “with the intent that the bad consequences of the baby’s coming to be will be avoided, and with the *acceptance as side effects* of both the baby’s not-coming-to-be and the bad consequences of his or her not-coming-to-be.”<sup>29</sup>

The characterization of “the baby’s not-coming-to-be” as a “side effect” of avoidance of “the bad consequences of the baby’s coming to be” is not credible, since the former is the means to the latter and is chosen for the sake of the latter. And NFP involves even more immediately the choice of certain methods which provide a couple with the information needed to time intercourse to avoid fertility. It is not clear that choosing not to have recourse to naturally fertile acts *qua* fertile, in order to avoid further consequences of fertility, is any less “contralife” than choosing to render a naturally fertile act infertile, to the same end. So if in fact contraception were evil because “contralife,” NFP would also be evil. NFP does, however, differ from contraception with respect to its relation to the natural (in *at least* the sense of “biological”) potentialities of the acting persons. NFP does not modify these potentialities *vis-à-vis* intercourse as does contraception. Here again is matter for moral evaluation.<sup>30</sup>

Now it is clear that contraception (as also NFP) can be *subjectively* contralife. Pope John Paul speaks in *Evangelium Vitae* (#13) of what is perhaps most likely to underlie this, saying that “contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree.... [I]n very many... instances such practices are rooted in a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and they imply a self-centered concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfillment. The life which could result from a sexual encounter thus becomes an enemy to be avoided at all costs, and abortion becomes the only possible decisive response to failed contraception.” It might be added that the very actualization of contralife selfishness by the practice of contraception could probably exercise it, so to speak, making it a stronger disposition,

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and so make people more accepting of its more radical actualization in abortion. But the pope also teaches that “from the [objective] moral point of view contraception and abortion are *specifically different* evils: the former contradicts the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love, while the latter destroys the life of a human being; the former is opposed to the virtue of chastity in marriage, the latter is opposed to the virtue of justice and directly violates the divine commandment ‘You shall not kill.’”

Yet John Paul does not view the connection between abortion and contraception as only subjective. He suggests that precisely contraception’s opposition to “the virtue of chastity in marriage” grounds its objective incompatibility with respect for life. For he says in his explanation of what is necessary to bring about a transformation of culture into a culture of life, “The trivialization of sexuality is among the principal factors which have led to contempt for new life. Only a true love is able to protect life. There can be no avoiding the duty to offer... an authentic *education in sexuality and in love*, an education which involves *training in chastity* as a virtue which fosters personal maturity and makes one capable of respecting the ‘spousal’ meaning of the body” (EV #97). As I shall show, contraception *qua* unchaste, *qua* opposed to “true love,” to a right respect for the (embodied) person, is already the beginning of the hedonism or self-centeredness of which John Paul has spoken.<sup>31</sup>

Fully to explicate his insights into the connection between abortion and contraception requires elaboration of the meaning of spousal love and contraception’s effects on it.<sup>32</sup> John Paul’s understanding of these matters is developed at length in his pre-papal works, especially *Love and Responsibility*.<sup>33</sup> This pre-papal thought has informed philosophically his papal treatment of the issues. I shall, in the next sections of this essay, present the key steps in the argument, which include (1) a philosophy of the human person and the ethical requirements corresponding to the person, the primary one being the “personalistic norm,” and (2) an examination of marital intercourse in relation to the human person and the personalistic norm, with development of more specific norms concerning contraception (and NFP) insofar as these bear upon the personalistic meaning of intercourse. I shall then consider the significance of these (personalistic) norms for the abortion issue.

Contrary to the suggestion of Grisez and his co-authors, who admirably present some personalistic concerns about contraception,<sup>34</sup>

that these concerns do not ground an adequate moral evaluation of contraception because people could (and do) “redefine marriage” to avoid “faith’s teaching about what marriage is” (which requires that personalistic values be honored),<sup>35</sup> I shall clarify that it is precisely the requirements of adequate personalistic ethics that constitute an argument against a vision of marriage and sexuality that could encompass contraception. I shall also try to clarify the important role of nature in John Paul’s argument, the normative status of nature being a major philosophical issue today (including in Grisez’s work, since he self-consciously avoids both deriving goods from an account of human nature, and speaking of the natural structure of actions).<sup>36</sup>

## II. PERSON, NATURE, THE PERSONALISTIC NORM, AND LOVE

What is signified by calling the human being a person? “Person” is not simply a synonym for “human being,” although all human beings are persons. For the opposite is not true: not all persons are human beings. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are persons, but divine beings and therefore divine persons (though the Son has, since the Incarnation, a human nature as well as a divine one). Indeed the theological and philosophical importance of the word “person” has owed especially to its role in Trinitarian theology. Some non-human creatures, the spiritual creatures we call “angels” from their office as messengers, are also persons.

What divine persons, created spiritual persons, and human persons have in common is that each has an intellect and a will (cf. LR 21–22). So profound are the implications of this that personhood is rightly called a mode of being. Rationality, which results from having an intellect and a will, is not something superadded in us to otherwise integral animal natures. Rather, as what is distinctive about our natures,<sup>37</sup> it makes us fundamentally, and so as wholes, different from (non-human) animals. It is the core of our being—our being, therefore, human “persons.” Our embodiment with all that it entails is certainly not accidental to ourselves; yet our intellect and will give us an “interior life” or “spiritual life” (LR 22–23), so that even in our embodied life we are akin not only to other embodied creatures, the (non-human) animals, but to spiritual beings.

The interior or spiritual life of intellect and will does not, however, close persons up within themselves. On the contrary, precisely this life confers upon persons an intimate contact and involvement with the world outside themselves that non-persons could never attain, since

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persons can know other beings (beyond being moved in other ways, including through sensation), and persons can also choose to act to bring about desired states of affairs among beings (LR 23–24). Furthermore, knowledge can guide choices. Knowledge of truth or being brings with it also knowledge of goodness or value.<sup>38</sup> We must choose to act in ways that either are or are not in conformity with that truth or goodness, and therefore in ways that are or are not ordinate to ourselves as beings fundamentally capable of knowing truth and striving for goodness—ways that objectively are or are not fulfilling of ourselves as persons.<sup>39</sup> Failures in this regard threaten our own integrity profoundly.<sup>40</sup> “Consequently, every being—or, more precisely, the essence, or nature, of every being—can serve as the basis of an ethical norm and of the positing of norms.”<sup>41</sup>

The nature of these norms becomes particularly important when the object of a human act is another human being, a person.<sup>42</sup> The personhood of the human being, constituted by the life of intellect and will, grounds a moral norm unlike those grounded by other beings. The inseparable connection between the interior life of the person and the person’s relationships with other beings means that “personality is *alteri incommunicabilis*,” not communicable to others (LR 24). For to the extent that you “act” solely insofar as you are responding to (my) force, to that extent do you not act *as a person*.<sup>43</sup> And to that extent also are the relationships constituted between you and other beings (including me) by such actions not properly personal relationships. Your personhood—your ability to establish certain kinds of relationships—is not something that anyone else can exercise for you. *When the object of an action is another person, this character of personhood must be respected.* This fundamental ethical requirement<sup>44</sup> is expressed by what John Paul has called the “personalistic norm.”

The good of the person entails the good of human nature as a whole, not only of its distinctly personal dimension (LR 229–30). All of “human nature actually exists always in a concrete *suppositum* that is a person,”<sup>45</sup> which as a person has value.<sup>46</sup> Personal interiority and incommunicability is respected only when we respect the entire being that this spiritual life binds together and informs. We may contrast the respect owed to those dimensions of our nature that we share with animals, with the respect owed to these dimensions of a (non-human) animal’s nature. We do owe respect to animals, and indeed to all beings, and therefore are not at liberty to treat them arbitrarily (cf. EV #42). We may not, for example, take an animal’s life for no good

reason. We may, however, do so for a good reason. We may say that nothing about the nature of an animal precludes our regarding it as a source of food or other important human goods, or even as something to be destroyed if it is dangerous or even, sometimes, merely annoying. This is not true of a human person.

But respect for dimensions of nature below the distinctly personal, while necessary, is not sufficient. Nature itself calls for the elevation and integration of respect for all of human nature into respect for the person as such, or conformity with the personalistic norm.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, full explanation of the evil inherent in any action bearing upon another person that is “contrary to nature” must include reference to the manner in which such an action is contrary to the personalistic norm.<sup>48</sup>

The personalistic norm can be formulated substantively in at least two equivalent ways. The first, and negative, form makes more explicit reference to the norm’s basis in the nature of the person. Treating persons as persons means not acting upon them apart from their knowing and willing participation in the end of the action, so that their “part” in the action is also a properly personal one. This is reflected in the norm: “[W]henever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person as only the means to an end, but must allow for the fact that he or she, too, has, or at least should have, distinct personal ends” (LR 28). That is, persons must not be used, since to “use” is to treat as merely the means to an end (LR 25, 41). This norm is respected even by God, who created us as personal beings and who, consistently, “does not [even] redeem man against his will” (LR 27).<sup>49</sup>

If use of a person violates the personalistic norm, the norm’s second, “positive form,” which clarifies how it is fulfilled, “confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love” (LR 41). To see how love is the opposite of use requires a proper understanding of the word “love.” “[L]ove is always a mutual relationship between persons... based on particular attitudes to the good, adopted by each of them individually and by both jointly” (LR 73, emphasis deleted). It is necessary to attend to the phrase, “attitudes to the good.” “The good” encompasses not only or even primarily some extrinsic object of (coincidentally shared) pursuit, but also, more importantly, one’s partner in that pursuit (and, necessarily, *qua* person, not *qua* means). Accordingly, “[m]an’s capacity for love depends on his willingness consciously to seek a good together with others, *and to*

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*subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good*” (LR 29, emphasis added). That is, the pursuit of good that constitutes a loving relationship is not a selfish pursuit in which another person is still used as a means, if perhaps willingly and so more decorously—it is a pursuit for the sake of one’s partner as much as of oneself; and, even insofar as a good is pursued for one’s own sake, it is sought in a manner that gives primacy to the good of the partner. In true love “[i]t is not enough to long for a person as a good for oneself, one must also, and above all, long for that person’s good” (LR 83). Love involves “the drive to endow beloved persons with the good” (LR 138).

Now in the subordination to the other that is essential to love, one endows the other not only with extrinsic goods, but with one’s own good *qua* person. Thus the personal self-donation that “is impossible and illegitimate in the natural order and in a physical sense, can come about in the order of love and in a moral sense” (LR 96–97). This self-donation is the way—the only way—to self-fulfillment. I cannot substitute for someone else’s personhood, nor vice-versa: this expresses “natural” incommunicability. Were I to use another, in this use the other would be less than a person, and I would be neither giving nor receiving personhood. But when I subordinate my personhood to another’s in pursuit of some common good, the other as a partner in this pursuit remains a personal good, and one even more fulfilled by the good bestowed and pursued (cf. LR 82–83). Then my own personhood can in turn live more fully in that of the other.<sup>50</sup> This is “the law of *ekstasis*”: “the lover ‘goes outside’ the self to find a fuller existence in another” (LR 126). It reflects the Gospel that one who loses one’s life will save it (LR 97). And love “does not merely mean that [persons] both seek a common good, it also unites [them] internally” (LR 28). In sum, “only the spirituality and the ‘inwardness’ of persons”—conferring as they do a mode of being that is at once incommunicable and relational, each characteristic necessary for the other’s perfection<sup>51</sup>—“create the conditions for mutual interpenetration” (LR 131).<sup>52</sup>

It is crucial to add at this juncture that love is expressed or withheld by the action one chooses (moral object), not only by the further intention for the sake of which one chooses an action. This further intention is morally important. But an action itself constitutes a relationship between the self and the other, a relationship that is already either one of love (or incipient love since a good further intention is

also necessary), or of use. For an action intends to affect the other, independent of the further intention for the sake of which the effect is chosen, and some intended effects of human acts are only uses, not bestowals of personal good.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, a personal action contributes to the formation of a settled disposition (*hexis, habitus*) on the part of the acting person.<sup>54</sup> Such dispositions themselves can be dispositions of love or use. Right (virtuous) relationships with others require right dispositions; the truest love comes from a true heart.<sup>55</sup> But right dispositions are also “practical”: while not essential for right action, they make it easier. This practical importance increases as temptations to act wrongly in a given sphere of life increase. And the various kinds of actions that come under the headings of “love” and “use” are related to each other in such a way that to become disposed to one kind of act of love or of use might in fact dispose one to love or use in general.

Finally, love can and must become a sociocultural reality, not only an individual one. Societies, from the small (families) to the large (nations), are not simply sums of their (individual human) parts; precisely as societies do they correspond to irreducible human needs, and so have their own proper “subjectivities.”<sup>56</sup> Yet they are nonetheless human entities, dimensions of human activity and life, and so must respect the personalistic norm. Indeed they attain their meaning and integrity only by respecting this and related norms.<sup>57</sup> Societies not “disposed” to love, as we might say, by being informed by these norms degenerate into “structures of sin,” themselves using persons (EV #12) and encouraging individuals also to use rather than love.<sup>58</sup>

### III. SEXUAL LOVE AND CONTRACEPTIVE USE

The anthropological and ethical considerations I have outlined can be applied to marital sexuality and to the problem of contraception. As I shall proceed in this section to explain, the pursuit of pleasure cannot found a loving relationship between persons. If pleasure is the ultimate goal of sexual activity, that activity can only be use. Yet marital sexuality can found that realization of love in which the self is most fully given to the other. This is so because of the good of procreation. Procreation is of more than merely biological significance for the human person; it is of existential significance. And the good of procreation is self-transcendent and common (since a child, a new person, transcends either parent’s individuality) as well as intimately personal. With this good as its natural purpose, sexuality can and must

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be approached in accordance with the personalistic norm as well as the other requirements of nature. And contraception, but not NFP, destroys the relationship of this good to the acting person so as to leave pleasure as the sole or highest goal of intercourse. Accordingly, contracepted intercourse, and contraception insofar as it envisages such intercourse, is an act of use, incompatible with love.

That pleasure or enjoyment does not found love, so that one may not treat sexuality and marital intercourse in particular as means to pleasure as the primary end, can be seen by considering first that pleasure is in no way trans-subjective (LR 37, 156–57). When “John” experiences pleasure, his pleasure is just and never more than, precisely, “his.” It cannot be “Jean’s” as well. Intercourse in which each partner seeks primarily his or her own pleasure must therefore be egoistic and an act of use, not loving and unifying.

And egoism is not transformed into altruism if the partners each simply agree either to allow the other to pursue pleasure, or even actively to seek to bestow pleasure on the other, with pleasure still the primary end. It might be thought that each partner could then be said to be pursuing the pleasure of both. But there is no such thing as “the pleasure of both.” Each partner will be striving for merely a coincidence of two pleasures, each pleasure remaining wholly subjective (LR 38–39, 157). And there being no pleasure for John but “his” own, he will, insofar as pleasure is his primary end, pursue Jean’s pleasure also only because this has as a further effect his experiencing pleasure as well—either because it happens to give him pleasure to see her experiencing pleasure, or because he calculates that if he give her pleasure she will choose to reciprocate. Her pursuit of his pleasure will be similarly accidental. Each partner will be giving only to receive. This remains use, if bilateral use (LR 39; cf. 87–88). It is therefore necessary for the partners to subordinate pleasure to the good of the person—for each to pursue pleasure only for the good of the other.

But an action that is objectively primarily the pursuit of even another’s pleasure for its own sake is still not pursuit of personal good. Pleasure may certainly be appreciated and welcomed as a sign of such a good, and indeed it is of great psychological importance, but it is nonetheless “essentially incidental [and] contingent” (LR 36). Pursuit of a personal good will not necessarily give pleasure, and many things that may give pleasure are not good for the person. Therefore pursuit of pleasure does not suffice to justify intercourse as an act of love.<sup>59</sup> It is

necessary to turn to an evaluation of the natural and personal significance of intercourse to see how it might be an act of love.

The “sexual urge,” and the behaviors to which it gives rise, culminating in intercourse, have a natural purpose or end: procreation. To describe this purpose as natural is to say that sexuality has this purpose independent of personal acts of will (LR 51; cf. 49).<sup>60</sup> Importantly, the natural end of intercourse belongs to every act of intercourse, not only to all the acts of a marriage somehow considered as a “totality.” An act of intercourse implicates procreation in an irreducible way (cf. LR 226)—such acts do not give rise to procreation by cumulative effect.<sup>61</sup> It remains only for acting persons to choose whether to accept or reject this potentiality. And procreation represents not only a biological finality, but an existential one (LR 51–52, 56–57, 62–63, 226; cf. 230). Each human person exists because of the sexual urge. Because of our sexuality, we can participate in the order of existence in a trans-personal way. Insofar as existence, of the species as well as of ourselves as individuals, is the “first and most basic good” (LR 52), procreation is not a humanly indifferent purpose. The natural end of intercourse is normative for the acting person.<sup>62</sup> Without respect for it, there can be no love of the person who is one’s partner in intercourse, only use (LR 226–27), since the nature of the person is integral (LR 229–30).<sup>63</sup>

But the problem of the “rigorist” interpretation of sexuality illustrates that respect for nature, in the sense of this purpose, is, while necessary, still insufficient for love. Rigorism respects the finality of sexuality as such, but uses the person as a means to sexuality’s end of procreation (LR 57–61; cf. 233–34). For rigorism does not respect the nature of the person as such. In fact, in view of the integrity of the person, the sexual urge itself must be understood as being directed to a person (LR 49, 76–82, 107–10, 122–24, 128–30, 132–34, 150, 160, 178), and this rules out the rigorist interpretation of the urge just as it rules out the (more common) “libidinic” one (LR 61–66).<sup>64</sup> Thus, “the norm that emerges from an understanding of the nature and purpose of the sexual urge must be supplemented with the personalistic norm. The necessity of combining these two norms into one ... is *indispensable for preserving the order of nature*. ... [T]he aims of nature must always come together with the value of the person. Otherwise the reasoning will be *incomplete, or even one-sided and partially flawed*.”<sup>65</sup> Indeed, in view of the integral nature of the person, one can even say: “To realize merely the ends of the urge without realizing the personalistic

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norm would not satisfy the normative principle of the order of nature.”<sup>66</sup> Only given the understanding that “[n]aturalness’ ... is an expression of harmony not just with nature but also with the person” can one conclude: “In sexual activity... a person is not an object of use to the extent that the act is in harmony with nature and, therefore, basically subordinated to its purpose.”<sup>67</sup>

Sexual love is not something superadded to the natural purpose of intercourse, but rather a way of choosing that purpose in partnership with another person. Procreation, as the natural end of sexuality, makes it possible for sexual intercourse to be an act of love (LR 30). Thus nature supplies, as it were, the “material” for love in the natural purpose of sexuality (LR 53, 226). Persons recognize this material and by acts of will “form” it into love (cf. LR 49–50). And because the good shared in this love is such an intimate good of the person, the love in which sexuality finds its place has, like no other kind of love, as “[i]ts decisive character ... the giving of one’s own person (to another),” even though other loves “are all ways by which one person goes out towards another” (LR 96; cf. 125–26).<sup>68</sup> The union that results from mutual self-donation of this kind gives rise to an ecstasy (*ekstasis*) that is more than a psychological phenomenon; indeed, subjectively important as the psychological component of love is, it must be integrated into objective love to be itself really love (LR 119–20, 127–28).

Objective love requires the choice of certain kinds of actions, and it is now possible to inquire into how specific actions bear upon the above principles. Let us consider first the use of naturally infertile times to regulate procreation. Now even those acts of intercourse that we tend to describe as naturally infertile are nonetheless rightly said to have procreation as a natural end, since such acts still engage a system whose full function would make them fertile but is lacking for reasons independent of human intention.<sup>69</sup> Certainly, then, marital intercourse during naturally infertile times is not *ipso facto* immoral. It is still the kind of intended act (moral object) that is compatible with love. Such intercourse is an expression of tenderness, and this is a part of love, so long as it is not isolated from the good of the person, which it is not so long as the act itself is natural (see LR 200–208) since it then retains its natural end. But the question still arises whether it is illicit to reserve intercourse for infertile times with the intention of excluding procreation. Does this intention make intercourse an act of use for the sake of pleasure only? One can, in fact, to broaden the question. Does

not the lack of desire to procreate transform even naturally fertile intercourse into “use”?

To answer these questions requires the introduction of some distinctions. First, a positive (subjective) desire to procreate is never necessary. On the contrary: “Marital intercourse is in itself an interpersonal act, an act of betrothed love, so that the intentions and the attention of each partner must be fixed upon the other, upon his or her true good. They must not be concentrated upon the possible consequences of the act, especially if that would mean a diversion of attention from the partner. It is certainly not necessary always to resolve that ‘we are performing this act in order to become parents.’ It is sufficient to say that ‘in performing this act we know that we may become parents and we are willing for that to happen.’ That approach alone is compatible with love...” (LR 233–34; cf. 229).

Second, a positive desire not to procreate at a given time can be just or unjust. Acceptance of procreation does need to characterize the marital relationship as a whole (LR 242–43).<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, to the extent that a marital act is naturally fertile, this must be accepted along with the possibility of procreation that follows, even if there is a desire that this possibility not be actualized (LR 227–29, 231, 243–44). “There are, however, circumstances in which [the] disposition [to procreate] itself demands renunciation of procreation, [because] any further increase in the size of the family would be incompatible with parental duty” (LR 243).<sup>71</sup> Now if a couple have a just reason to avoid procreation, they need not have intercourse at the times when it might be fertile. And this does not transform any acts of intercourse during infertile times into acts of use. It entails no objective rejection of the natural end of any act of intercourse (LR 236). And the just (subjective) intention to avoid procreation cannot change what we have seen to be an objectively moral choice of action into an immoral one.<sup>72</sup> Hence, in both its avoidance of intercourse during fertile times and its use of intercourse during infertile times, NFP is morally licit and compatible with love.

Contraception, however, is morally different from NFP. Contraception alters the moral object “intercourse,” the choice to have intercourse. For unlike NFP, contraception alters the acting persons *vis-à-vis* intercourse— specifically, in such a way as objectively to entail rejection of the natural structure of intercourse with its finality. Therefore, contracepted intercourse (unlike naturally infertile intercourse) is no longer the kind of intended action that is ordered to procreation. Consequently, contracepted intercourse is no longer the

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kind of action that can be chosen as an act of love. As a rejection of nature, contraception is a rejection of the integrity of the person.<sup>73</sup> But furthermore, it leaves nothing to serve as the basis for unification in love by intercourse. Objectively, “[t]he very fact of deliberately [artificially] excluding the possibility of parenthood from marital intercourse makes ‘enjoyment’ the intention of the act” (LR 235; cf. 228, 234). Enjoyment or pleasure, as we have seen, of its nature cannot found love.<sup>74</sup> And since love is the only morally adequate way in which to treat a person, one cannot simply redefine marriage to allow contraception. “Marriage” so redefined would not only not be something other than marriage, it would be an immoral situation for a human person.

Now insofar as contracepted sex is as such an act of use, it forms the acting person to be disposed to use other persons. Presumably this disposition will manifest itself especially in sexual matters, since contraception is specifically sexual use (unchastity). However, the principle allowing one to make another an instrument for sexual pleasure must be broad enough to encompass other kinds of use as well. Either one is objectively required to respect the good of the person, or one is not. If one is not required to respect the good of the person in one kind of action (sexual intercourse), then there is no objective reason to regard oneself as required to respect the good of the person in other kinds of actions. A disposition toward this false principle will be a disposition contrary to the good of the person as such and will probably come to manifest itself in ways other than contraception and other subspecies of unchastity. At most, subjective qualms will inhibit such use. But strong though they may be, subjective qualms are not reliable. We all face situations of grave temptation, especially when many others are using people in some way.<sup>75</sup> Eventually people will find themselves in situations in which their subjective affection for another is weak, or in which the gain from use would be very great and is therefore very attractive, and use will follow if they have admitted its possibility. Only true marital love is likely to guarantee familial love and even social justice.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, contraception affects cultural dispositions, not only individual ones. And when contraception becomes culturally widespread and, finally, typical, it becomes more difficult to encourage chastity or other forms of love on the part of individuals. Furthermore, societies are more than sums of individuals, and cultural acceptance of contraception affects the way in which our common life is organized. As an obvious

example, public funding for contraception has become a major component of our political response to certain situations both foreign and domestic. Consider only the role contraception plays in domestic social policy. Few proposals or programs to address the problem of childbearing by unmarried women, especially teenagers, do not have a contraceptive component. And this “squeezes” out willingness to encourage chastity, not only because limited availability of time and money usually sets up something close to a zero-sum game, but more importantly because contracepted intercourse is use and unchaste *qua* contracepted. To teach that contraception is acceptable, even if not best, is therefore *ipso facto* to teach that unchastity is acceptable. Any accompanying message that “abstinence is best” can then only be a calculation, and one that is dubious insofar as it prescind from the value of pleasure. Those who formulate or administer programs know this, if only inchoately, even if they are not already ideologically committed to the proposition that fornication is *per se* desirable, and social policy is set on a downward spiral. And again, sociopolitical acceptance of contraception and of other forms of use are mutually reinforcing dispositions.<sup>77</sup>

#### IV. CONSEQUENCES FOR LIFE ISSUES

The meaning and significance of Pope John Paul’s statements in *Evangelium Vitae* characterizing contraception as unchaste and, as such, contrary to “true love” have now been explained. To complete the argument concerning the relationship between contraception and abortion requires that I show why it is true that, in the pope’s words, “[o]nly a true love is able to protect life.” Given an understanding of the meaning of “love” as opposed to “use,” one can explain the need for love to protect life—and thus also the relationship between unchastity and contraception on the one hand, and life issues on the other—with reference to *Evangelium Vitae*’s discussion of the meaning of a “culture of life.”

The idea of a culture of life is introduced by implication when John Paul’s initial diagnosis of today’s problematic situation finds that the opposite of such a culture now prevails. The pope says that “while the climate of widespread moral uncertainty can in some way be explained by... today’s social problems, ...it is no less true that we are confronted by an even larger reality, which can be described as a veritable *structure of sin*. This reality is characterized by the emergence of a culture which... in many cases takes the form of a veritable ‘culture of

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death.’ This culture is actively fostered by powerful... currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency” (EV #12).

Now such a culture is precisely a culture of use of persons (cf. esp. EV #19, 23). For efficiency looks only to predetermined ends and to the potential usefulness of things and persons for achieving those ends, not to whether the ends in question are good for other persons and things, nor, *a fortiori*, whether other persons are willing or able to pursue the same ends. Other persons become at best tools. Moreover, they become at worst, and often, obstacles and enemies. The extreme but logically inexorable manifestation of use is the taking of innocent life when the killing itself would serve a chosen end or when an end would be more easily attained were some person not alive. This is what is meant by the statement that the disposition toward oneself and one’s spouse embodied by contraception is related to the disposition embodied by disrespect for life. While the unchastity of contracepted intercourse and the injustice of immoral homicide are specifically different insofar as they use persons in different ways, or insofar as they contravene different natural goods of persons under different kinds of circumstances, they do have in common the objective, false principle that persons may be used.

We may turn next to John Paul’s positive description of a culture of life. *Evangelium Vitae*’s third chapter, “You Shall Not Kill: God’s Holy Law,” concludes with a section explaining that the law’s negative precepts, proscribing irredeemable actions, are a “minimum” (#75), and that to “promote” life “is not only a personal but a social concern which we must all foster... so that our time... may at last witness the establishment of a new culture of life, the fruit of the culture of truth and of love” (#77). The fourth chapter then proceeds to describe in more detail people’s responsibilities toward the end of building such a culture.

There *Evangelium Vitae* speaks of the need, in a culture of life and love, for “*a contemplative outlook*”: “the outlook of those who see life in its deeper meaning, who grasp its utter gratuitousness, its beauty and its invitation to freedom and responsibility... of those who do not presume to take possession of reality but instead accept it as a gift” (#83). Consistent with my analysis thus far, this attitude is precisely the opposite of the “excessive concern with efficiency” that underlies use. Indeed, it requires “*a new life-style*, consisting in making practical choices ... on the basis of a correct scale of values: the primacy ... of the

person over things” (#98).<sup>78</sup> Such a primacy cannot allow use of persons. It therefore gives rise to the “true love” that alone protects life, which is mentioned by John Paul in very close connection with the “correct scale of values.”

In *Evangelium Vitae*, the basis for and content of this love are elaborated especially in theological terms, with reference to God not only as creator but also as the end of the life of each human person.<sup>79</sup> This theological anthropology does not contradict the primarily philosophical approach of *Love and Responsibility*, but rather further explains it by revealing its meaning most completely.<sup>80</sup> Indeed *Love and Responsibility* (41) mentions that the personalistic norm is presupposed by the New Testament commandment to love, and even that “we can, taking a broader view, say that the commandment to love is the personalistic norm.”

Now abortion in particular is a manifestation of the culture of death’s use of persons. In fact our culture’s attitude to new life in general reflects a tremendous ignorance of the meaning of procreation, in which a new person comes to be from the love, the mutual personal self-giving, of his or her mother and father, and comes to maturity, fullness of personal being, from that same love.<sup>81</sup> A child is seen as something which can and may be acquired to make adults’ lives fulfilling independent of spousal love.

One sees, for example, single persons or members of homosexual “couples” (couples constituted as such by another form of unchastity) bearing children (often with “surrogate” arrangements, and/or aided by artificial reproductive technology, all of which reflects and compounds the moral evil) or adopting them. One should hasten to add that altruistic desires to give an already-existing and suffering child a better home are likely at work in the case of many such adoptions. But there seems to be no shortage of married couples waiting to adopt, so that the choice need not be between leaving a child in a situation of suffering and allowing his or her adoption into an irregular situation. And in the frequent cases of childbearing outside marital contexts, altruistic motives to rescue an existing child are irrelevant. The conclusion that children are being treated as means to an end seems inescapable. Such treatment is becoming increasingly culturally acceptable, and is allowed and facilitated by the law. Given this general cultural disposition, when a child who has been conceived is seen as an obstacle to the ends of the mother or father, abortion will often be the response; and laws will and do allow and promote abortion (cf. *EV* #23).

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The argument that contracepted intercourse embodies and reinforces a disposition of use of persons that is the same disposition that defines the culture of death in which abortion is acceptable has strategic implications for those who seek to minimize or end abortions. Most obviously, encouraging and facilitating contraceptive use will not minimize abortions, especially over the long term. Certainly babies conceived in cases of contraceptive failure will be especially likely to be aborted. Here the objective disposition of use promoted by contraception will be joined with (and indeed make more selfish, more “contralife”) the subjective desire to avoid bearing a child. However, not all abortions follow contraceptive failure. In some cases, couples want to conceive and bear children, but change their minds for reasons of many kinds, ranging from trivial to serious. In these cases, the probability of recourse to abortion is likely to be proportionate to, *inter alia*, the acceptability of abortion, which will be a function of a more general acceptability of use as opposed to love, which will in turn be greater where contraception is acceptable.

In other cases, couples (often unmarried) do not want to conceive, but, either unrealistically denying the possibility of conception or just carelessly, choose to have intercourse but not to use contraception. No campaign encouraging or facilitating contraception will ever convince everyone in such circumstances to use contraception. Some babies will be conceived, and the acceptability of contraception will increase the acceptability of recourse to abortion. Perhaps even more seriously, however, the acceptability of abortion that is finally of a piece with acceptability of contraception will undermine the promotion of contraception itself. For to the extent that abortion is acceptable, to that extent is the incentive to use contraception diminished.<sup>82</sup> Indeed this may be a root of the invariably (and, my argument implies, inevitably) limited effectiveness of promotion of contraception even at bringing about actual recourse to contraception, let alone at reducing abortions.

When contraception is promoted as a matter of public policy, it becomes an element of the political component of culture, and here, too, it makes abortion more intractable. A politics that actively encourages contraception will be a politics oriented toward use, not love, of persons, and therefore not toward justice. It will be more likely to allow and even encourage forms of injustice including abortion and other unjust homicide (cf. *EV* #20, 68–72).<sup>83</sup>

Most segments of the pro-life movement have not, as such, promoted contraception, although many legislators and administrators who at

least support pro-life measures also support at least some promotion of contraception. However, the implications of the argument I have offered bear upon pro-life groups' common stratagem of neutrality toward contraception as well. An effective campaign against abortion cannot rest content with demonstrating the humanity of the unborn child and pointing to the injustice of killing innocent human persons. Acceptance of the ethos of use of persons is a very great obstacle to acceptance of arguments about justice. It is the very foundation and reality of justice that is in question. Only a culture of life, devoting renewed attention to the good represented by the person, will move people to be just. An unapologetic and clearly explained rejection of contraception is necessary to make that good visible.<sup>84</sup>

To translate this into strategic practice, some distinctions are necessary. First, it is appropriate and prudent for groups to concentrate on fighting the injustice of abortion (and issues very similar in kind, such as euthanasia), and to take no positions on other moral issues. This is all the more the case since a necessary component of a just resolution of the abortion issue must be political: not merely an end to state promotion and funding of abortion, but also legal protection of innocent life through proscription of abortion, is necessary. It is of the very essence of politics to proscribe injustices like abortion. It is only necessary to ensure that groups' specialization is not confused with indifference. When groups dedicated to educational, political, and other efforts specifically against abortion are asked about contraception, their answers should direct attention back to abortion as the issue around which the groups are constituted, explaining that abortion is unjust but not suggesting that contraception is unimportant—merely that it is different.

Such groups cannot, however, represent pro-life strategy in its entirety. Those who would end abortion must also work in other ways, individually and together, against contraception. At this time (and for the foreseeable future), such efforts will not have the political component that efforts directly against abortion will. State promotion of contraception should be fought as much as individual use of contraception. But contraception does not touch upon the common good of the political community as directly as does abortion, and it would be most imprudent to seek laws against it. (Indeed, it would almost certainly be imprudent to campaign at this time for laws against even some abortions—perhaps most notably, those brought about by abortifacient “contraceptives.”)<sup>85</sup> But even prudential legal toleration of

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contraception should be explained, when it needs to be explained, in moral terms, so as not to suggest indifference. That is, it should not be suggested that contraception is not a grave evil; rather the harm that could result from laws against something so widely accepted and consensually employed should be stressed.<sup>86</sup> The conjunction of this explanation with visible efforts to end political promotion of contraception will help to clarify that no indifference is intended.

Finally, the necessary moral campaign against contraception should have a primarily positive focus. It should begin by proclaiming, celebrating, and serving the Gospel of life—the good news concerning and represented by the human person. It should therefore include, as appropriate, evangelization (cf. *EV* #78, 80).<sup>87</sup> It should include also more specific reference to the meaning of sexuality and the value of spousal love. In the context of this teaching concerning love, NFP, a way for spouses to practice true love, should be taught (*EV* #88, 97). By such promotion of love and chastity, not only can situations in which abortion might be a temptation be minimized, but dispositions toward the person can be fostered which will make the rejection of abortion more likely.

### CONCLUSIONS

In *Evangelium Vitae*, written to be “a precise and vigorous reaffirmation of the value of human life and its inviolability” (#5, emphasis deleted), Pope John Paul II teaches that contracepted intercourse is unchaste and that contraception must be therefore be rejected if life is to be protected. This reflects the argument he has developed concerning precisely the good of the person and the inadequacy of unchaste actions and contracepted intercourse in particular as responses to this good. Contraception transforms intercourse into an action that can objectively be no more than use of another person, not the love that persons deserve. Abortion is a manifestation of the same use. In view of these arguments, the notion that promoting contraception will lower the abortion rate should be decisively rejected. In fact, the pro-life movement must clarify the meaning of love and the evil of contraception if individuals and society are to recover pro-life dispositions.

In general, fidelity to the moral law is often difficult. It becomes more so when commandments are seen as extrinsic and unconnected obligations. But the Holy Spirit renews our hearts and enables us to fulfill the law by making loving gifts of our hearts and our whole

selves. The law can then be seen as a unified framework signifying the very purpose of human life, “good news” rather than a burden (*EV* #48–49).<sup>88</sup> Contraception, as an obstacle to love, is an obstacle to this renewal, and therefore also to our obedience to the commandment, “You shall not kill.” And contraception is now deeply rooted in our culture. Yet there is room for hope that the problem is not intractable. The Lord always speaks through the value of the human person, and conscience can always awaken to this voice (*EV* #24–25). Signs of the Lord’s victory over sin and death, of recognition of the transcendent value of the human person, are not lacking even in our culture of death (*EV* #26–27). In company with and inspired by the Mother of God, who alone among humans cooperated without reservation with the Spirit and was associated fully with Christ’s love even through suffering (*EV* #103), let us in hope offer the world even the most countercultural challenges of the Law and Gospel of life, especially by our example, and build upon the signs of hope already present (among them, I might add, the ministry of Pope John Paul II).<sup>89</sup>

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>“Contraception” in this essay denotes *actions or methods chosen to render (marital) intercourse infertile*—that is, to prevent either ovulation, or (using a barrier or spermicide, or, more rarely, withdrawal) fertilization of a released egg. One can rightly call contraception of this sort “artificial,” at least since the infertility is imposed or ensured by human “artifice,” not by the natural absence of an egg or failure of sperm to meet egg. The meaning and implications of this artificiality will be explored in some depth below.

“Contraceptives” that prevent implantation of a fertilized egg, such as “morning-after pills,” are evil and should be rejected primarily because their use is homicidal; homicide, that is, is the means to the end of “contraception.” (The term “abortifacient” is accurate as a moral assessment, but is also controversial because “abortion” is generally defined relative to “pregnancy,” which in turn is defined relative to the mother’s responses to and support of the implanted embryo and later the fetus.) Of course, someone genuinely ignorant of this might use them with only a contraceptive intent, and so only “commit” contraception. (See the references in n. 19 concerning the moral importance of the “intended” action.) My analysis applies to such cases by extension. But education concerning the homicidal nature of these methods is

urgently necessary. Responsibility to the good of life requires that we promote knowledge of what is necessary to avoid its destruction, especially as end or means.

Many “oral contraceptives” that act primarily by suppressing ovulation do not do so with 100% efficacy—a woman taking such a pill may rarely have an ovulatory cycle. For example, the formulations manufactured and sold as the combination (estrogen plus progestin) pills Loestrin 1/20 and 1.5/30 (Parke-Davis) have been reported to allow ovulation in 4.2% of 378 cycles and 0.6% of 629 cycles, respectively (Joseph W. Goldzieher, Armando de la Peña, C. Brandon Chenault, and T. B. Woutersz, “Comparative Studies of the Ethynyl Estrogens Used in Oral Contraceptives: II. Antiovulatory Potency,” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 122 [1975] p.621). (Interestingly, this study found that the formulation in the pill Lo/Ovral [Wyeth-Ayerst] allowed ovulation in none of 266 cycles.) “Minipills,” which contain progestins only, allow ovulation much more frequently. As examples, I. Aref, F. Hefnawi, O. Kandl, and T. Abdel Aziz (“Effect of Minipills on Physiologic Responses of Human Cervical Mucus, Endometrium, and Ovary,” *Fertility and Sterility* 24 [1973] pp.578–83) cite other studies that found ovulation in 66–81% of cycles in women using various progestins, and report results of their own indicating ovulation in, respectively, three out of four cycles, one out of three cycles, two out of three cycles, and three out of four cycles in women using four different progestins; and according to *Physicians’ Desk Reference* (51st ed. [1997] p.1903), the minipill Micronor (Ortho) “prevent[s] conception by suppressing ovulation in approximately half of users....” Both combination pills and minipills also have at least two other modes of action, however: they thicken cervical mucus, decreasing the likelihood that a sperm will reach an egg, *and they alter the endometrium, preventing implantation of a fertilized egg*. As examples, *Physicians’ Desk Reference* (p.1914) says of the combination pills Ortho-Cyclen and Ortho Tri-Cyclen (Ortho), using language typical of its descriptions of combination pills: “Although the primary mechanism of action is inhibition of ovulation, other alterations include changes in the cervical mucus... and the endometrium....” Micronor, in addition to “suppressing ovulation in approximately half of users,” is described as acting also by “thickening the cervical mucus ... and altering the endometrium” (p.1903). (See also Leon Speroff and Philip D. Darney, *A Clinical Guide for Contraception* [Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1992] p.40, concerning combination pills; Aref et al., “Effect of Minipills,” concerning minipills; and concerning both combination pills and minipills, David D. Baird and Anna F. Glasier, “Hormonal Contraception,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 328 [1993] p.1543.) If a woman using a pill has intercourse during an ovulatory cycle (of which she will be unaware), and the mucus-thickening and other genuinely contraceptive modes of action do not suffice, intercourse will be fertile (again, the woman will be unaware of this), but the embryo will likely die. This is a morally unacceptable risk (all the more so since [1] if it happens, it happens as a means to the contraceptive end, not as a side effect; and [2] the

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intended end, contraception, is itself morally unacceptable, as I shall show, and so could not justify any evil even as a side effect). (Cf. Nicholas Tonti-Filipini, “The Pill: Abortifacient or Contraceptive? A Literature Review,” *Linacre Quarterly* 62, no. 1 [1995] pp.5–28.) However the risk is sufficiently low for combination pills (which are more commonly used than minipills) that I think it more helpful to concentrate moral analysis on the truly contraceptive nature of such pills, this alone making them unacceptable. (I am grateful to James Linn, M.D., for providing me with most of the materials cited in this paragraph.)

<sup>2</sup>I assume it is unnecessary to document this extensively. One needs only to read regularly the editorial and op-ed pages of any major newspaper to observe examples. To cite but one, consider the article by Naomi Wolf, “Pro-Choice and Pro-Life,” on the *New York Times* 3 April 1997 op-ed page, which I quickly found online and is available in full at <http://search.nytimes.com/search/daily/bin/fastweb?getdoc+site+site+61+0++>. Wolf writes that:

a full-fledged campaign for cheap and easily accessible contraception is the best antidote to our shamefully high abortion rate.... If we asked Americans to send checks to Planned Parenthood to help save hundreds of thousands of women a year from having to face abortions, our support would rise exponentially....

To those who oppose access to contraceptives, yet hold up images of dead fetuses, we should say: This disaster might have been prevented by a few cents' worth of nonoxynol-9; this blood is on your hands.

For whatever the millions of pro-lifers think about birth control, abortion must surely be worse.

A challenge to pro-choicers to abandon a dogmatic approach must be met with a challenge to pro-lifers to separate from the demagogues in their ranks and join us in a drive to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

The Common Ground Network for Life and Choice has brought activists together from both sides.... The network has even found that half of the pro-lifers in some of its groups would support a campaign to improve access to birth control....

...Congress and the Administration should champion the “common ground” approach, and add to it bipartisan support for financing far more research, development and distribution of contraceptives.

We have all lived with the human cost of our hypocrisies for too long. It is time to abandon symbolic debates on Capitol Hill in favor of policies that can give women—who have been so ill-served by the rigid views on both sides—real help and real choice.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. the comments—which bracket a chapter consisting of a generally negative discussion of contraception—of Dr. and Mrs. J. C. Willke (*Abortion:*

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*Questions and Answers* [Cincinnati: Hayes, 1985]): “The [Right to Life] movement limits itself to the protection of life from conception until natural death. It takes no position on the ‘preliminaries.’ Therefore it has no opinion on contraception or sterilization” (p.225); “To the extent that [Planned Parenthood’s activities] help married couples use contraceptives to plan their families, Right to Life has no opinion” (p.232). Perhaps indicating that the Willkes and others in the pro-life movement have begun to reconsider the wisdom of this neutrality, neither these nor similar comments were included in the corresponding chapter (on contraception) of the new, updated version of the Willkes’ book (*Why Can’t We Love Them Both: Questions and Answers about Abortion* [Cincinnati: Hayes, 1997], ch. 35).

<sup>4</sup>This correlation is established with only with some difficulty, especially when one attempts an historical inquiry. In the U.S., there were probably 150,000 to 200,000 abortions annually before legalization (Brian W. Clowes, “The Role of Maternal Deaths in the Abortion Debate,” *St. Louis University Public Law Review* 13 [1993] p.332), or 10–13% as many as there came to be within a few years of *Roe v. Wade*. This (rapid) increase obviously reflects the availability that came with legalization.

Some conclusions about acceptance can be drawn from survey data. While the results of public opinion polls about abortion vary greatly with the exact question asked (probably because many people’s opinions are not firm), we are fortunate to have results from identically-worded survey questions asked repeatedly over a period of years, enabling us to measure changes in opinion. These surveys asked: “Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion (a) if there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby; (b) if she is married and does not want any more children; (c) if the woman’s own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy; (d) if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children; (e) if she became pregnant as a result of rape; (f) if she is not married and does not want to marry the man?”

I present here, and discuss briefly in the following paragraph of this note, selected data from these surveys, namely, the percentage answering yes to each question (a)–(f) above (with 95% confidence intervals), in each of the years 1965, 1972, 1973, and 1982: question (a), 1965:  $54.6 \pm 2.5$ ; 1972:  $74.3 \pm 2.1$ ; 1973:  $82.2 \pm 1.9$ ; 1982:  $81.1 \pm 2.0$ ; question (b), 1965:  $15.4 \pm 1.8$ ; 1972:  $37.6 \pm 2.4$ ; 1973:  $46.1 \pm 2.5$ ; 1982:  $46.3 \pm 2.5$ ; question (c), 1965:  $70.3 \pm 2.3$ ; 1972:  $83.0 \pm 1.8$ ; 1973:  $90.6 \pm 1.5$ ; 1982:  $89.4 \pm 1.6$ ; question (d), 1965:  $21.2 \pm 2.1$ ; 1972:  $45.6 \pm 2.4$ ; 1973:  $51.7 \pm 2.5$ ; 1982:  $49.7 \pm 2.5$ ; question (e), 1965:  $55.7 \pm 2.5$ ; 1972:  $74.1 \pm 2.1$ ; 1973:  $80.6 \pm 2.0$ ; 1982:  $83.1 \pm 1.9$ ; question (f), 1965:  $17.4 \pm 1.9$ ; 1972:  $40.5 \pm 2.4$ ; 1973:  $47.3 \pm 2.5$ ; 1982:  $46.7 \pm 2.5$ . (These data were collected by the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. The 1965 data are from Study 870, conducted for the NBC Study of Honesty and Ethics. The 1972–82 data are published in James A. Davis, *General Social Science Survey Cumulative File*,

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1972–1982 [machine-readable data file], 1st ICPSR ed. [Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1983]. I thank Professor John McAdams for providing me with these sources.)

In summary, the data indicate that acceptability of abortion increased primarily in the years prior to legalization (even though the majority of Americans have never come to accept the virtually unlimited abortion license under *Roe*). There were statistically significant increases in the fraction responding yes to each question between the 1965 and 1972 surveys (I have no data prior to 1965 or for 1966–71). The smallest such increase was for question (c) (danger to woman’s health, which produced the largest yes result to begin with in 1965). Considerably smaller, but still significant, increases were observed between 1972 and 1973. Between 1973 and 1982 there were no significant net increases (I have not analyzed the data from the 1974–81 surveys to determine whether any fluctuations were significant). Thus, not only has abortion become more acceptable, but this has not been primarily the result of legalization. (It might be suggested that the conviction indicated by a yes answer to the question, “Do you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a *legal* abortion if...” is not necessarily that such abortions are morally acceptable, nor even that they, in themselves, benefit society in some non-moral way, but perhaps only that most of them will take place anyway but at lesser cost if they are legal than if not. This hypothesis would not seem, however, to account for the very different numbers of people who approve of legalized abortion under different circumstances—in particular, for the much higher levels of approval in what are generally regarded as the “hardest” cases.)

Now the use of contraception, even as a means to postpone and/or limit marital fertility, clearly increased at around the same time as did the acceptability (though not yet availability and therefore not yet frequency) of abortion. This surely reflects, to some degree, the development of oral contraceptives. However, to what degree it also reflects increased acceptance is unclear. It is doubtful that such figures as Margaret Sanger ever appealed solely to an elite; and the very development of “birth-control pills” reflected some demand. Thus, the circumstances *vis-à-vis* contraception in which abortion became more acceptable are somewhat ambiguous. One might not know what to expect from a situation of demand but not availability.

Furthermore, an increase in acceptability will reflect some combination of persuasion and disposition to be persuaded. Prior to legalization of abortion, attempts to persuade people to accept it did increase (while attempts to persuade people to the contrary lagged). One does not know whether this alone explains the pre-*Roe* increase in acceptance of abortion, or to what degree an increased disposition to be persuaded, perhaps resulting in part from contraception, contributed.

Somewhat more conclusive are studies of the effects of introduction of “family-planning services” to populations whose abortion rates can be predicted. One such study considered data from all 50 states plus the District

of Columbia over the period 1976–1982. With controls for other variables, it was found that per 1000 teen-aged “family-planning service” clients, there were, consistently, 40 more pregnancies and 120 more abortions than would otherwise have been expected (Stan E. Weed and Joseph A. Olsen, “Policy and Program Considerations for Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: A Summary for Policymakers,” *International Review* 13 [1989] pp.273–74).

<sup>5</sup>See especially John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (1995; hereafter cited parenthetically as EV), ch. 4, and the contrasting “culture of death” described in #10–24.

<sup>6</sup>For an excellent introduction to this topic that is more extensive (monograph-length) than is necessary for, or possible within the scope of, this essay, see Andrew N. Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtyła’s Existential Personalism* (New Britain, CT: Mariel Publications, 1980). For further discussion of John Paul’s sources and method, see Kenneth L. Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1993). Finally, see Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyła: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, trans. Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), esp. ch. 4 on *Love and Responsibility*, my most important source (see n. 33).

<sup>7</sup>One of the most recent formulations of this argument is elaborated in Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, John Finnis, and William E. May, “‘Every Marital Act Ought to Be Open to New Life’: Toward a Clearer Understanding,” *The Thomist* 52 (1988) pp.365–426.

<sup>8</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.370.

<sup>9</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” pp.372–74.

<sup>10</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.374.

<sup>11</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.378.

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Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.380.

<sup>13</sup>See Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, vol. 1 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), ch. 5 and pp.180–83.

<sup>14</sup>Grisez repeats virtually the same argument with explicit reference to his “basic goods”/“modes of responsibility” theory (see n. 15) in *Living a*

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*Christian Life*, vol. 2 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Quincy: Franciscan Herald Press, 1993) pp.506–15.

<sup>15</sup>More specifically, reason imposes “modes of responsibility”—also *per se nota*—which distinguish between moral and immoral pursuit of goods. Among these are prohibitions of willing against any of the goods. See Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, ch. 8, esp. pp.215–22; also pp.189–92.

<sup>16</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act,’” p.385. The authors also say that contraception is unjustly contralife because in the event that it fails and a baby is conceived, this baby begins life objectively unwanted (pp.385–86). While more persuasive, this fails adequately to account for the difference between willing that something not come to be and willing not to accept something if it has come to be. Additionally and paradoxically, this argument would no longer apply if a method of contraception guaranteed 100% effective could be developed!

Martin Rhonheimer, in contrast to Grisez *et al.*, says that “to explain the connection between contraception and abortion, there is no need to interpret contraception as being essentially contralife or even in analogy with ‘homicide.’ ... The connection between contraception and abortion is sufficiently explained by the fact that abortion, insofar as it is promoted by spreading contraception, is characterized by a contraceptive mentality, that is, by a mentality which excludes the responsibility for the procreative consequences of one’s sexual behavior. The *basic* problem is not that people do not want to have children; the basic and first problem is that they want to have sex without children” (“Contraception, Sexual Behavior, and Natural Law—Philosophical Foundation of the Norm of ‘*Humanae Vitae*,’” *Linacre Quarterly* 56, no. 2 [1989] p.56, n. 39). This explanation too is undermined by its exploitation of an ambiguity in the meaning of “want[ing] to have sex without children.” There is a difference between wanting to have sex without conceiving children and wanting children conceived not to go on living. It is not clear why the former must objectively entail the latter. Now *insofar as* the two do sometimes in fact coincide in the form of a generalized wanting to have sex while avoiding childbearing at all other costs, even at the cost of childrens’ lives, Rhonheimer is right, and his explanation corresponds to the “subjective” connection between abortion and contraception envisaged in *Evangelium Vitae* and discussed below. However, as I go on to explain, Pope John Paul has reason to think that there is also a deeper, “objective” connection.

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While Grisez insists that the basic goods are constitutive of the person (*Christian Moral Principles*, p.121), they clearly function abstractly at least at the beginning of practical reasoning as he envisages them in his moral theory— only in an abstract sense of “life” can both the intentional taking of a

life and the intentional prevention of a new life's genesis be called "contralife." In fact, notwithstanding Grisez's criticism of proportionalists' treatment of human goods as "pre-moral" (pp.144–45), there seems no way to avoid the conclusion that his basic goods are, by the very nature of his theory, pre-moral. Only goods considered from the beginning in relation to the person could be moral goods, goods whose pursuit is *ipso facto* moral.

Grisez's position concerning what count in practical reason as "goods" appears first in his idiosyncratic exegesis of St. Thomas Aquinas's discussion of the principles of the natural law ("The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae* 1-2, Question 94, Article 2," *Natural Law Forum* 10 [1965] pp.168–201), which attributes to Thomas a pre-moral conception of practical reason and human goods. According to Robert P. George's explanation and defense of Grisez's theory ("Recent Criticism of Natural Law Theory," *University of Chicago Law Review* 55 [1988] p.1382), Grisez "retain[s] Aquinas's fundamental theory of practical rationality as he understands it."

For more on the problems with the relationship between person and goods in Grisez, see Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987) pp.66–74.

Martin Rhonheimer rightly denies not only that abstract consideration of goods can "lead to a morally qualifying judgment," but also that a "practical" or willed relation to a good can be non-moral ("'Intrinsically Evil Acts' and the Moral Viewpoint: Clarifying a Central Teaching of *Veritatis Splendor*," *The Thomist* 58 [1994] pp.6–11). Unfortunately, Rhonheimer's understanding of how goods are known [pp.13–16] is problematic in a way reminiscent of the way in which Grisez's is (giving rise to a confused description of the moral object in [just] capital punishment [p.19, n. 20; cf. my discussion in n. 20, below]).

It is precisely because his goods are not moral goods that Grisez must deny that practical reason is moral from the outset in its pursuit of his goods: "The principles of practical reasoning considered so far [*viz.*, that good is to be done and pursued and evil avoided, and the basic goods' specifications of this first principle] do not tell us what is morally good" (*Christian Moral Principles*, p.183). Further acts of reason beyond cognizance of the goods are necessary, for Grisez, to place them in relation to the moral good of the acting person.

It should be noted an account of the relationship between practical reason and morality very different from Grisez's is presented in the discussion of conscience in John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor* (1993; hereafter, VS) #59: "The judgment of conscience... is a judgment which applies to a concrete situation the rational conviction that *one must love and do good and avoid evil. This first principle of practical reason is part of the natural law* [emphasis added]; indeed it constitutes the very foundation of the natural law, inasmuch as it expresses that primordial insight about good and evil... which... shines in the heart of every man. But whereas *the natural law discloses the objective and universal demands of the moral good* [emphasis

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added], conscience is the application of the law to a particular case.... Conscience thus formulates *moral obligation* in the light of the natural law: it is the obligation to do what the individual, through the workings of his conscience, *knows* to be a good he is called to do *here and now*.”

<sup>18</sup>See also Hittinger (*A Critique*, pp.47-48), who argues that Grisez’s conclusions presuppose that the goods have more moral content than Grisez wants them to (or, I would add, than they actually do when they are conceived so abstractly as in Grisez’s theory).

Cf. the description of a certain morality of freedom in VS #48: “A freedom which claims to be absolute ends up treating the human body as a raw datum, devoid of any meaning and moral values until freedom has shaped it in accordance with its design. Consequently, human nature and the body appear as *presuppositions or preambles*, materially *necessary*, for freedom to make its choice, yet extrinsic to the person, the subject of the act. Their functions would not be able to constitute reference points for moral decisions, because the finalities of these inclinations would be merely ‘*physical*’ goods, called by some ‘pre-moral.’ To refer to them, in order to find in them rational indications with regard to the order of morality, would be to expose oneself to the accusation of physicalism or biologism.” Grisez’s clear intention to the contrary notwithstanding, his theory seems to accept too much of the starting point of this logic to avoid its conclusion.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. VS: “[T]he *primordial* moral requirement of loving and respecting the person... also *implies*... respect for certain fundamental goods” (#48, emphasis added); “To give an example, the origin and foundation of the duty of absolute respect for human life are to be found in the dignity proper to the person and not simply in the natural inclination to preserve one’s own physical life. Human life, even though it is a fundamental good of man, thus acquires a moral significance in reference to the good of the person, who must always be affirmed for his own sake.... [N]atural inclinations take on moral relevance only insofar as they refer to the human person and his authentic fulfillment” (#50).

This does not subvert the pope’s critique of proportionalism’s insistence that reference to subjective intention (beyond the intention or choice of the action itself) and/or circumstances is always necessary for (negative) moral evaluation of an object. The contrary is true; moral absolutes are grounded in (personal) being as good. This good (and not basic goods in the abstract) always forbids the choice of certain kinds of actions; thus, moral goodness is never compatible with the direct taking of an innocent human life, nor, as will become clear, with contraception. No further reference to intention or circumstances is necessary to evaluate murder or contraception (except as bearing on their gravity). But reference to “basic goods” alone could not ground such evaluations. (For further, helpful discussion of what is needed to describe a morally relevant object, see Mark Lowery, “A New Proposal for the

Proportionalist/Traditionalist Discussion,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 61 [1995] pp.115–24. For the role of intention specifically, see Steven J. Jensen, “A Defense of Physicalism,” *The Thomist* 61 [1997] pp.377–404; Rhonheimer, “‘Intrinsically Evil Acts’,” pp.11–13; and Martin Rhonheimer, “Intentional Actions and the Meaning of Object: A Reply to Richard McCormick,” *The Thomist* 59 [1995] pp.279–311, with the caveat that Rhonheimer’s application of his principles can be faulty, as in his untenable distinction, in the form of a putative exegesis of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, between masturbation and “the same behavior pattern... to get semen for fertility analysis” [p.296]—untenable since sexual pleasure is a necessary [and still impermissible] means to the end of ejaculation.)

<sup>20</sup>Perhaps the clearest illustration of the distinction between morally licit and illicit actions against such “goods” is provided by the issue of just punishment. Why may political authorities treat someone convicted of a crime (assuming a just criminal code and fair trial) in ways in which one may not treat someone who has not? Either the requirements of the good of the person underlie “retributive justice,” or all punishment is merely utilitarian. Grisez rightly accepts the former position (*Living a Christian Life*, p.891). If acting against any “basic good” is always contrary to the good of the person, however, then a just punishment could never act against such a good. But at least one kind of punishment—capital punishment—does act against such a good, and does so in a more obviously morally relevant way than does contraception, since capital punishment takes the life of an existing person. And capital punishment (while not as in accord with Christian morality, and so to be avoided when protection of society does not demand it as other means; see the end of n. 80, below) is just, since it may be used against those who have committed heinous crimes when nothing else would accomplish punishment’s secondary end of protecting society (EV #56). (Grisez himself would rule out capital punishment in principle, though, strangely, seems to find it necessary to appeal to distinctively Christian principle [*Living a Christian Life*, pp.891–94]. Even given this appeal, incidentally, his argument is problematic. An argument from Christian love could not preclude in principle an act of retributive justice for the reason John Paul suggests: protection of society, so long as it is not accomplished in a way that transgresses the bounds of retributive justice, is itself a matter of justice, a dimension of the common good, for which political authorities are responsible and which is indeed presupposed by Christian love.)

<sup>21</sup>See also Hittinger, *A Critique*, pp.62–63.

<sup>22</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.369.

<sup>23</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.371.

Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.370.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Rhonheimer (“Contraception,” p.30, emphasis deleted): “A contraceptive choice is the choice of an act that prevents... sexual intercourse... foreseen to have procreative consequences, from having these consequence, and which is a choice made just for this reason.”

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Grisez and his co-authors’ reference to suicide as the kind of homicide most similar to contraception: “Although contraception intervenes before any new person emerges, still it is a choice to interfere with existing human life. For... those who chose to contracept attack their own lives as they tend to become one through their sexual act. By contracepting, they as it were commit limited suicide....” (“‘Every Marital Act’,” pp.388–89). In fact those using contraception do seem to attack themselves and each other, though they attack their “lives” only in a very broad sense. Yet the attack on their sexual natures bearing on intercourse is of possible moral relevance. Cf. also the example that Grisez *et al.* employ to illustrate the distinction between contraception and sexual acts: “A dictator who wanted to control population might contracept by having a fertility-reducing additive put in the public water supply. He would engage in no sexual behavior whatsoever, and might not will any such behavior. He might also exhort people to abstain, but reason that if they did not, the additive in the water would prevent the coming to be of some of the possible persons he did not want” (pp.369–70). This dictator would affect those people who engage in sexual behavior more immediately than the potential future generation. This should raise the most immediate moral questions. Finally, that contraception modifies the sexual act is implied by the authors’ argument that rape victims “are morally justified in trying to prevent the ultimate completion— namely, conception itself—of the wrongful intimate bodily union” (p.390). If contraception prevents completion of bodily union when intercourse is a wrongful violation, this is because it does so to intercourse as such. In the case of non-violative intercourse, this again raises moral questions.

<sup>27</sup>NFP is most broadly defined as the determination, through observation of such variables as cervical mucus or body temperature, of the times when a woman is fertile, and the use of these data to time intercourse to maximize *or* minimize fertility. In this essay “NFP” will have the narrower meaning of the use of the above methods to avoid pregnancy.

<sup>28</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.368.

<sup>29</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.402.

For more on the difficulties with Grisez's position, see Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991) pp.340–70.

<sup>31</sup>It might be objected that my exegesis of the teaching that “only a true love is able to protect life” introduces unwarranted complexity. That is, John Paul might mean, simply (and, it would seem, tautologically), that a departure from “true love” or “chastity” will endanger life *qua* (immediately) unreceptive to new life, rather than, as I shall argue, *qua* promoting dispositions contrary to respect for life in an indirect manner. In reply, I would offer the observation, which the remainder of this essay will elaborate and, I hope, bear out, that between John Paul's description in *Evangelium Vitae* of the dispositions toward the unborn underlying abortion, and his pre-papal descriptions (as contrary to love) of the dispositions toward one's spouse underlying contraception, there is such striking similarity that I think the teaching in *Evangelium Vitae* about “true love” must be an allusion to the pre-papal work.

<sup>32</sup>One could also examine in more detail the general meaning of chastity, and the particular threats to love posed by other forms of unchastity besides contracepted intercourse. These matters are beyond my scope. However it should be mentioned that other forms of unchastity (genital acts of themselves not oriented toward spousal love as I shall explain it, intercourse itself between persons not married to each other, and lack of respect for the indissolubility of marriage) will also undermine respect for life, even while many of them give rise to an increasing number of pregnancies in situations themselves representing temptations to have recourse to abortion.

<sup>33</sup>Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993); hereafter cited parenthetically as LR.

<sup>34</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” esp. pp.394–99, 408, 414–15; cf. also Rhonheimer, “Contraception,” pp.47–48.

<sup>35</sup>Grisez *et al.*, “‘Every Marital Act’,” p.416.

<sup>36</sup>On the latter see Grisez, “A New Formulation of a Natural-Law Argument against Contraception,” *The Thomist* 30 (1966) p.343.

<sup>37</sup>See Karol Wojtyła, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, ed. Andrew N. Woznicki, Catholic Thought from Lublin, vol. 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 1993) pp.209–17. Cf. also the description of the rational soul as the “form” of the body, *e.g.*, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, aa. 1, 3, 4, 5; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #365.

See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 5, aa. 1, 3.

<sup>39</sup>See Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Theory of Morality” in *Person and Community*, pp.142–50, 154–157; also, esp. on the resulting self-determination of the acting person, Wojtyła, “Human Nature as the Basis of Ethical Formation” in *Person and Community*, pp.95–99; “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” in *Person and Community*, pp.187–95. For further discussion see John F. Crosby, “The Personalism of John Paul II as the Basis of His Approach to the Teaching of *Humanae Vitae*” in *Why Humanae Vitae was Right: A Reader*, ed. Janet E. Smith (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993) pp.208–10; and Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later*, pp.232–37.

<sup>40</sup>Cf. the discussion of wrongs specifically against persons in the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) #27: “[W]hatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but *they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury*” (emphasis added; quoted also in EV #3).

<sup>41</sup>Wojtyła, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics” in *Person and Community*, p.287; cf. p.280; cf. also Wojtyła, “The Human Person and Natural Law” in *Person and Community*, pp.181–85.

<sup>42</sup>For further comments on the subject of the following paragraphs, see John Grondelski, “Nature and Natural Law in the Pre-Pontifical Thought of John Paul II,” *Angelicum* 72 (1995) pp.519–39.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 1, a. 1.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. also VS #48; EV #19, 57, 76, 99.

<sup>45</sup>Wojtyła, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics,” p.284.

<sup>46</sup>Wojtyła, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics,” p.287.

<sup>47</sup>Cf. Crosby, “The Personalism of John Paul II,” pp.220–21. Crosby refers more specifically to the “love” that, I shall explain, is the substantive requirement of the personalistic norm.

<sup>48</sup>

Note also LR 57: “[T]he ‘order of nature’... means the totality of the cosmic relationships that arise among really existing entities.”

<sup>49</sup>None of this implies that it is never appropriate to act toward another person in a manner contrary to his or her will. One should note the qualified formulation quoted above: “remember... that he or she too has, *or at least should have*, distinct personal ends” (LR 28, emphasis added). The qualification reflects recognition that “we must demand from a person... that his or her ends should be genuinely good, since the pursuit of evil ends is contrary to the rational nature of the person. This is also the purpose of education, both the education of children, and the mutual education of adults; it is just that—a matter of seeking true ends, *i.e.* real goods as the ends of our actions, and of finding and showing to others the ways to realize them. But in this educational activity, especially when we have to do with the upbringing of young children, we must never treat a person as the means to an end” (p.27). The latter is avoided precisely in an education that directs children to what is genuinely good for them, as opposed to merely what it would be useful to others for them to believe and do. (For an illuminating discussion, see C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man; or, Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools*, U. of Durham Riddell Memorial Lectures, 15th series [New York: MacMillan, 1947], esp. pp.13–16.) The degree to which one is morally required to respect the willingness, or lack thereof, of the one being educated will depend on that person’s maturity. Additionally, insofar as the actions of even an adult bear upon the requirements for the common good in society as these are codified in law by the competent authorities, the representatives of the political community may justly punish people for choosing to violate these laws, unwilling as they may be to accept punishment. We may say that someone who consents to an action thereby also consents to the requirements of retributive justice. Fully to explain this, however, would require more detailed moral analysis of authority and consent, a much-needed project but beyond the scope of this essay.

<sup>50</sup>See also John S. Grabowski, “Person: Substance and Relation,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 22 (1995) pp.154–56.

<sup>51</sup>In view of the interpersonal communion to which it gives rise, the person’s relational being is called *communio*. See Wojtyła, “The Family as a Community of Persons” in *Person and Community*, pp.320–23.

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<sup>52</sup>See also, for this in relation to personal self-determination (cf. the works referred to in n. 39), Wojtyła, “The Person: Subject and Community” in *Person and Community*, pp.219–261. For further discussion see Crosby, “The Personalism of John Paul II,” *passim*.

<sup>53</sup>See VS #73, 78; cf. n. 19.

<sup>54</sup>

See Aristotle, *Categories*, 8b26–35; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105b19–7a8; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, qq. 49–55; and q. 71, aa. 1–3; cf. Wojtyła, “Human Nature as the Basis of Ethical Formation,” pp.98–99.

<sup>55</sup>This is because such dispositions are grounded in the (moral) self-determination of the acting person (see again the references in n. 39).

<sup>56</sup>John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1991) #13; Letter to Families *Gratissimam sane* (1994) #17.

<sup>57</sup>Cf. VS #98–101.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1869.

<sup>59</sup>For the importance of “justification” of the concrete act, see esp. LR 225.

<sup>60</sup>Thus, while it is true that every human act, *qua* intentional, is in one sense not “natural,” one can still speak of intentions and intentional acts as being more or less harmonious with nature.

Rhonheimer shares Grisez’s reluctance to speak of nature and his dichotomy between nature and intention (“Contraception,” pp.25–26), yet he appeals to “procreative meaning” or “dimension” (pp.33–36), and refers to intercourse (even naturally infertile intercourse) as “an act... which by its very nature serves procreation” (p.36).

<sup>61</sup>This situation differs from that of, for example, eating and nutrition. It has been objected that the claim that it is morally illegitimate to frustrate the natural end of intercourse by contraception would imply that it is morally illegitimate to frustrate the natural end of eating by chewing gum, since chewing seems naturally to belong to the process of eating as the beginning of digestion to the end of nutrition and eventual health and growth (cf. Rhonheimer, “Contraception,” p.26, and Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, p.105). What precludes this analogy and the *reductio ad absurdum* is that in general, no one act of eating puts the health and existence of a human person at stake (and if a situation arose in which this were the case, it would indeed be morally wrong to choose to chew gum instead of eating!).

<sup>62</sup>One should note the difference between this appeal to the good of existence and Grisez's appeal to the "good" of life (see n. 17). Here, existence, even insofar as it is trans-personal, is nonetheless clearly treated not abstractly but insofar as it is a good in which the existing person participates, and so is a moral good. And precisely because of the difference between the manner in which the person participates in it in sexuality and the manner in which another person participates in it by living, no analogy is drawn between contraception and homicide.

<sup>63</sup>

Also Wojtyła, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics," pp.289–90.

<sup>64</sup>It is chastity that disposes us to an integral view of the human person *qua* sexual; see LR 143–73. By virtue of its "transparency" to the person, chastity "is above all the 'yes' of which certain 'no's' are the consequence" (p.170). As will be seen, contraception is one of these "no's."

<sup>65</sup>Wojtyła, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics," p.288, emphasis added.

<sup>66</sup>Wojtyła, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics," p.289.

<sup>67</sup>Wojtyła, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics," p.295.

<sup>68</sup>This is the philosophical basis for the "nuptial meaning of the body," which has become very important for John Paul. The scope of this essay precludes full explanation. Briefly, the "nuptial meaning of the body" refers to the "potential of the masculinity and the femininity of the human body to serve the supreme self-donation of persons" (Crosby, "The Personalism of John Paul II," p.221). This is a strikingly anti-dualist anthropology (cf. LR 107). See Smith (*Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later*, pp.243–55) for explanation of the theological dimension of this anthropology; this is elaborated in John Paul's 1979–84 Wednesday addresses, which have been published as the following four volumes by the Daughters of St. Paul (Boston): *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (1981), *Blessed are the Pure of Heart: Catechesis on the Sermon on the Mount and Writings of St. Paul* (1983), *Reflections on Humanae Vitae* (1984), and *The Theology of Marriage and Celibacy* (1986).

<sup>69</sup>In cases in which a man or woman suffers from a condition that prevents fertility by preventing full function of the reproductive system, we all recognize that the infertility leaves the system's purpose unrealizable, not irrelevant. In cases in which a woman's age or the time of her cycle do not allow for fertility, we recognize that this natural infertility results from mechanisms that facilitate the functioning of the system as a whole, ordered as it is to fertility. Most relevant for a discussion of NFP, the infertile times

during the cycle make possible the fertile times because they are necessary for preparation for ovulation and for the implantation of a fertilized egg (the cycle itself is necessary because an unfertilized egg cannot survive indefinitely after ovulation). Infertility after menopause happens to correspond, first, to the aging of the oocytes in a woman's ovaries. Before a woman's own birth, the DNA in these cells has undergone its final replication and the cells have undergone the first of their two meiotic divisions (in which a "polar body," containing little except one of each pair of replicated chromosomes, is ejected). Only the final cellular fission (ejection of a second polar body containing little except a copy of each replicated chromosome) remains to be completed prior to ovulation. With the aging of a woman and therefore of these cells and the DNA within them, there is some increase in the frequency of abnormalities in that DNA. But more importantly, infertility after menopause corresponds to the appropriateness that a woman giving birth be sufficiently young that she will be able to be an active mother for years to come, given a normal life-span — this maternal role in children's formation, as well as the corresponding paternal role, being part of procreation (LR 260; cf. also John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* [1981] #36).

<sup>70</sup>Since sexual expressions of love are distinctive to marriage, the requirements for loving sexuality give rise to the Church's understanding of the ends of marriage. This has been the subject of much confusion in recent decades. Historically the primary end of marriage has been understood to be procreation; mutual assistance (*mutuum adiutorium*) has been considered a secondary end, and relief of concupiscence (*remedium concupiscentiae*), a tertiary end (cf. LR 66). Prior to the Second Vatican Council, personalist considerations about the importance of love had led to the calling into question of the primacy of procreation. Then, the Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* seemed not to repeat the teaching concerning the hierarchy of ends: "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children.... Hence, *while not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account*, the true practice of conjugal love... ha[s] this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and Savior, Who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family..." (#50, emphasis added). Likewise, *Humanae Vitae* speaks of "the inseparable connection... between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning (*ratio*)" (#12). Closely linked with questioning of the hierarchy was a confusion of the personalist good of love with the secondary end in the traditional hierarchy, mutual assistance.

John Paul responded to this confusion, denying that the teaching concerning the hierarchy of ends could be revoked, both before (LR [originally published in 1960], pp.66–69; cf. pp.217–18) and after (Wojtyła, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics" [originally published in 1965], p.291) the Council (in which he took an active part, including in the composition of *Gaudium et*

*Spes*). In brief, love in the personalist sense is emphatically not to be identified with mutual assistance, and furthermore it is rather a formal principle than an end. For this reason it can be said to be of neither more nor less importance than procreation; comparing the importance of principles of different kinds seems dubiously meaningful. But in pointing to the way in which all the ends should be realized, love requires the preservation of the objective hierarchy of those ends. In particular, mutual assistance serves loving procreation (understood as entailing cooperation in family life), which gives procreation a certain priority over mutual assistance.

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Such circumstances include most prominently those in which the effects of a larger family would harm all the children—any already existing as well as those whose conception is at issue. Additionally, when it is foreseen that pregnancy would put a mother's health in grave jeopardy, this not only involves the risk of serious harm to her children, but also threatens the good of fertility for her, so for this reason too she could legitimately seek to avoid use of the reproductive faculty. The most obvious such cases are those in which a woman's reproductive system itself can be adjudged to be probably incapable of supporting pregnancy to the point of viability, whether or not the mother's health would be gravely endangered in other ways by a pregnancy. In such cases, it seems to me, it would be entirely licit to perform a hysterectomy. The express purpose of the operation would be to remove an organ that is irreversibly diseased and indeed dangerous in its inability to function normally. The "contraceptive" effect of the operation would be tolerated as inseparable from the removal of the organ, not intended as either a means or an end. When a condition not related to the reproductive system itself (*e.g.*, a heart condition) would make pregnancy dangerous for the mother, NFP would seem the proper recourse.

<sup>72</sup>In fact when this intention leads to practices such as NFP, practices involving temporarily abstaining from intercourse, the intention is being used in accordance with continence. Insofar as continence is willing to forego intercourse for the good and specifically for the good of the person, it is a virtue and it promotes love (LR 241). This is because continence is part of chastity (LR 173); it is a response to "the superiority of the value of the person to that of sex" (LR 197).

Studies of NFP users indicate that the moral health brought by NFP to relationships bears psychological and spiritual fruit. See J. Marshall and B. Rowe, "Psychologic Aspects of the Basal Body Temperature Method of Regulating Births," *Fertility and Sterility* 21 (1970) pp.14–19; Joseph Tortorici, "Conception Regulation, Self-Esteem, and Marital Satisfaction among Catholic Couples: Michigan State University Study," *International Review of Natural Family Planning* 3 (1979) pp.191–205; Thomasina Borkman and Mary Shivanandan, "The Impact of Natural Family Planning on

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Selected Aspects of the Couple Relationship,” *International Review of Natural Family Planning* 8 (1984) pp.58–66; Richard J. Fehring, Donna M. Lawrence, and Catherine Sauvage, “Self-Esteem, Spiritual Well-Being, and Intimacy: A Comparison Among Couples Using NFP and Oral Contraceptives,” *International Review of Natural Family Planning* 13 (1989) pp.227–36; Richard J. Fehring and Donna M. Lawrence, “Spiritual Well-Being, Self-Esteem and Intimacy Among Couples Using Natural Family Planning,” *Linacre Quarterly* 61/3 (1994) pp.18–29. Results of these and related studies are reviewed and further discussed in Richard J. Fehring, “Reflections on the Spirituality of Natural Family Planning,” *Chicago Studies* 33 (1994) pp.179–87; and Richard J. Fehring, “Toward a Model of Fertility Integration,” in *Life and Learning IV: Proceedings of the Fourth University Faculty for Life Conference*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski (Washington, DC: University Faculty for Life, 1995) pp.216–29.

Additionally, there is some evidence that NFP-using couples become more receptive to pregnancy over time: see Richard J. Fehring, “Contraception and Abortion: Fruits of the Same Tree,” in *Life and Learning VI: Proceedings of the Sixth University Faculty for Life Conference*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski (Washington, DC: University Faculty for Life, 1997) pp.155–57, 160. This, too, would be a result of the dispositions characteristic of (embodied and promoted by) NFP use, dispositions which deepen spousal love, since openness to fertility as appropriate is (partially) constitutive of spousal love.

(I thank Richard Fehring for providing me with these studies.)

<sup>73</sup>Rhonheimer’s argument (“Contraception”) concerning the morally relevant difference between NFP and contraception bears some similarities to John Paul’s on this point. Briefly, Rhonheimer contends that self-giving *human* love must have as its subject the body-soul unity; for actions to express such unity they must be chaste, with bodily goods (procreation) integrated; contraception is opposed to such integration (while periodic continence is compatible with it). However, this integration is evidently regarded by Rhonheimer as existing solely or at least primarily on the level of disposition (see esp. pp.40–44); concrete actions are prescribed or proscribed solely or primarily insofar as they contribute to good or bad dispositions. This stands in contrast to the view I am elaborating that intentional actions as such already embody dispositions; that is, they may, *qua* actions, be evaluated as compatible or incompatible with love (so that the evaluation of actions is prior to, or at least coeval with, the evaluation of dispositions). Additionally, Rhonheimer leaves unclear how self-giving is morally required by the personhood of the other.

<sup>74</sup>Pope John Paul has expressed these considerations in terms of the meaning and language of the body, introduced in n. 68: “[T]he 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. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality” (*Familiaris Consortio* #32). See Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later*, pp.110–18; and Cormac Burke, “Marriage and Contraception” in *Why Humanae Vitae was Right*, pp.160–64.

<sup>75</sup>As an example specifically different from sexual matters (or life issues, to be treated in the section below), economic behavior very easily becomes use of others for profit. This is all the more likely to be the case when “capitalism” or the “free market” is conceived as a “value-neutral” mechanism for maximizing economic growth by harnessing avarice. It may often be true that rational behavior in such a market economy will require treating consumers and workers well (see, e.g., Michael Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good* [Lanham: Madison Books, 1989] pp.55–69). But this will not always be the case. More importantly, the very priority given to profit already embodies use of persons (see David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], ch. 2–3). Calculated beneficence does not cease to be use in economic matters any more than in sexual matters; if either possessions or pleasure is understood as the supreme purpose of an action, the action will *ipso facto* be use. Of course, the economic principles rejected by Catholic social teaching were proposed long before modern contraception became generally acceptable and widespread, so if one helped to pave the way for the other it was probably economic use that fostered dispositions expressed today as sexual use.

<sup>76</sup>This is all the more so since marriage is such an important experience for most people—most people marry (and children all experience the importance of marital love, either by its presence or its absence from the environment in which they are formed), and much of one’s life is spent interacting with one’s spouse or parent(s). See Wojtyla, “Parenthood as a Community of Persons” in *Person and Community*, pp.338–42; cf. *Familiaris Consortio* #42–43; *Gratissimam sane* #13, 17; see for discussion Mary F. Rousseau, “Fairest Love: Pope John Paul II on the Family,” *Anthropotes* 11 (1995) pp.160–65.

<sup>77</sup>Contraception itself becomes a form of use on the part of political authorities when it is offered (frequently with some degree of compulsion) to women on welfare and to poor or developing countries, as an alternative to genuine social and economic assistance (besides as an alternative to promotion of chastity).

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Wojtyla, “The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis” in *Person and Community*, pp.263–75.

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<sup>79</sup>In brief, Jesus Christ reveals human life as a call to receive a share in God's love, a share in the Trinitarian communion (EV #1–2, 29–30, 37–38). The commandment to love and protect human persons and human life, even by self-giving to the point of death, is part of this share (#25, 41, 49, 51, 76). Thus, the anthropological teaching concerning the person's capacity for love, and the ethical requirement that the person therefore be loved, are seen to have a theological and specifically Trinitarian/Christological dimension.

<sup>80</sup>The theological dimension of anthropology and ethics reflects not a superadded perfection, not even a necessary yet extrinsic support, but their intrinsic integrating principle, typical neo-Scholastic (but not authentically Thomistic) dualistic theories of nature and grace to the contrary notwithstanding. See esp. Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967); John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), esp. #10; and for discussion and elaboration, David L. Schindler, "Christology and the *Imago Dei*: Interpreting *Gaudium et Spes*," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 23 (1996) pp.156–184; "Christological aesthetics and *Evangelium Vitae*: Toward a definition of liberalism," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 22 (1995) pp.193–224; *Heart of the World*, Introduction; pp. 77–79; ch. 10; and *passim*; "Reorienting the Church on the Eve of the Millenium: John Paul II's 'New Evangelization,'" *Communio: International Catholic Review* 24 (1997) pp.728–773; and Lawrence J. Welch, "*Gaudium et spes*, the Divine Image, and the Synthesis of *Veritatis splendor*," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 24 (1997) pp.794–814.

The relationship between nature and grace is in fact analogous to the relationship between the distinctively personal dimension of human nature and its other dimensions that was posited in Part II of this essay. Grace and the love in which it gives us a share "bind natural human goods together and make them perfect," just as personhood *qua* natural binds together and transforms from within other natural goods. To fail to respect the human person—to fail to live out the share grace gives us through Christ in the Trinitarian communion—is to fail to live in accordance with this finality in ourselves, essential as this finality is, and so it is profoundly disintegrating, just as to fail to respect the person *qua* person is to fail in our own personhood and is disintegrating. And not only is respect for the person's supernatural finality necessary, and not only does it provide a new reason for respect for the person and for all dimensions of human nature, but it also compels us to respect all dimensions of personhood precisely *qua* integrated and transformed by this finality, just as we must respect all of human nature *qua* personal.

Respect for the person that is "informed" by grace will not always "look" different in practice from respect for the person that considers only nature. Because nature remains real in the theological anthropology I am discussing, we can still know apart from theology that contraception and abortion are wrong and even, in some measure, why they are wrong (as I hope to have

shown in the case of contraception!; concerning abortion, cf. EV #29: The Gospel of life “*can... be known in its essential traits by human reason,*” and #101), and pre-theological considerations are indeed essential to understanding their wrongness and are presupposed by the theological argument. In some cases, however, there will be a “practical” difference (as, for example, in the case of capital punishment, as I understand John Paul’s teaching on the subject [EV #9, 27, 40, 56]).

<sup>81</sup>See Wojtya, “Parenthood,” pp.332–34.

<sup>82</sup>The results of the study cited in the last paragraph of n. 4 are consistent with this hypothesis.

<sup>83</sup>See also my earlier essay, “The Politics of a Culture of Life” in *Life and Learning VI*, pp.245–66.

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It might be asked why *this* particular form of use should be of especial concern to the pro-life movement. In fact, other forms (economic, for example) should also be of concern. However, many other issues are already linked in people’s minds with the abortion issue (cf. the “consistent ethic of life” or “seamless garment”). (Futhermore, disputes about these issues are often purely prudential; *e.g.*, they concern how to form an economy that will serve persons.) Contraception, far from being generally so linked, is, as I have indicated (see n. 2), in fact seen by many people as a solution to the problem of a high abortion rate, as well as to that of a high rate of pregnancies in (subjectively or objectively) undesirable circumstances. But additionally, contraception is especially important because of its impact on marital/familial love, perhaps the most significant love in our lives (see n. 76). Finally, although this essay has considered contraception objectively, it is relevant for the importance of the issue that the objective connection between contraception and abortion can cause a subjective connection between these two to arise more easily than one could arise between most other forms of use and abortion, since abortion can come to be seen specifically as a “backup” or even primary “contraceptive.”

<sup>85</sup>There is an unfortunate tendency within some segments of the pro-life movement to oppose any form (even tactical, let alone strategic) of political compromise. See, *e.g.*, Mary H. Sadik, “Legislating Pro-Life Principle: Victory Without Compromise,” *Linacre Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (1992) pp.27–36. It must be remembered that while abortion is not a *merely* political issue, it is a political issue *insofar as* its resolution must have a political dimension; and in pursuing that dimension one cannot prescind from the limits of politics. Thus, when the only choices in practice would allow one to protect either more or fewer, but not all, lives, one should do what will protect more. “This does not

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in fact represent an illicit cooperation with an unjust law, but rather a legitimate and proper attempt to limit its evil aspects” (EV #73; cf. also #90 which speaks of “political leaders... taking into account what is realistically attainable”). Someone, that is, whose goal is to prohibit one subset of abortions—a just goal—may tolerate that the civil law will not prohibit all others. And neither magisterial teaching nor reason require a narrow understanding of this principle. Its prudent application will be informed by a mature understanding of the political process. For an excellent discussion, see Christopher Wolfe, “Abortion and Political Compromise,” *First Things* no. 24 (1992) pp.22–29. (Furthermore, the problems faced by voters in deciding between candidates, when some or all candidates are not fully pro-life, and/or when some are pro-life but unlikely to be electable or to be effective if elected, are analogous to the problems faced by legislators who cannot accomplish total protection of innocent human life. While the pope only addresses the legislator, he does not deny that what he says should apply to the analogous case of the voter, and it is reasonable to extend such an application, especially since voting in a democracy really is a sharing in the legislative role.)

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Contraception’s relationship to marital intimacy does not necessarily render laws against contraceptive use wrong in principle, *pace* Justice Douglas (*Griswold v. Conn.*, 381 U.S. 479, 482, 484–86 [1965])—though one suspects he was being cynical—and popular perception. First, as has been noted, contraception is an action separate from intercourse, even though its primary effect is on intercourse. Second, laws could be formulated specifically to proscribe the sale (and perhaps the manufacture) of contraceptive devices and drugs (indeed, *Griswold* arose only when a seller of contraceptives was charged as an accessory to violation of the Connecticut statute). (Compare laws against [dangerous] drugs used to heighten sexual drive and pleasure.)

<sup>87</sup>This is true especially because of the intrinsic role within anthropology and ethics of their theological (Trinitarian/Christological, as indicated in n. 79, and, I now add, ecclesiological) dimension (see n. 80). Again, the personal capability to recognize and live in accordance with truth and goodness finds its integrity only within the person’s supernatural finality, not in a still-independent end supported by grace merely extrinsically. In view of this we may conclude that, even when received in cooperation with grace, purely philosophical persuasion will not finally avail. It is necessary that the person come to live in accordance with the fullness of the Gospel.

<sup>88</sup>For the importance of the Holy Spirit, see again nn. 79 and 80. To the discussions therein I add that it is the Spirit who conforms our hearts and persons to Christ’s and so gives us our share in the Trinitarian communion. In sum, we come to receive and return the love of the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

*Life and Learning VII*

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<sup>89</sup>I wish to express gratitude to Professor Christopher Wolfe, who first brought *Love and Responsibility* to my attention and encouraged me to offer a series of lectures several years ago presenting it to interested undergraduates; and also to the Family Life Council of Milwaukee, which more recently allowed me to present, and responded helpfully to, an earlier version of the argument I have developed in this essay.