

## NOTE

### INFALLIBILITY AND CONTRACEPTION: THE DEBATE CONTINUES

Given the importance of the issue addressed, Germain Grisez's "Infallibility and Contraception: A Reply to Garth Hallett"<sup>1</sup> merits a response. First, however, I shall need to clarify just how Grisez and I differ and why; for his account tends to obscure both the nature of our disagreement and the reasons for it.

#### THE DISAGREEMENT AND THE REASONS

According to Grisez, he and John Ford argued that the received Catholic teaching on the morality of contraception satisfies the conditions for the infallible exercise of the ordinary magisterium stated by Vatican II and so has been proposed infallibly by the ordinary magisterium,<sup>2</sup> whereas "Hallett argues that despite appearances the received teaching on contraception has not been proposed by the *universal* ordinary magisterium. Thus his article directly challenges Ford's and my thesis."<sup>3</sup> This is misleading. What is the "received teaching" here referred to, and what do I in fact deny? Not that the ordinary magisterium has consistently declared artificial contraception to be immoral, nor that this teaching has held constant in its prescriptive and emotive content, but that its cognitive content has been invariant. If by "received teaching" Grisez means "standard cognitive content," then he is supposing the very thing to be proved; if by "received teaching" he means "standard way of speaking about contraception," then I do not deny the fact of such teaching nor its universality.

Continuing his account of my views, Grisez writes: "As we shall see, his thesis is that there has been no constant position on the *immorality* of contraception, but only a constant practical *deterrence* of contraceptive behavior."<sup>4</sup> This, too, is a misleading formulation, which subtly introduces Grisez's opinions into his statement of mine. In the ordinary, most obvious meaning of the words, of course there has been a constant position on the immorality of contraception; the magisterium has constantly declared the practice "immoral." The question is, whether in

<sup>1</sup> *TS* 47 (1986) 134–45. The reply is to my "Contraception and Prescriptive Infallibility," *TS* 43 (1982) 629–50.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 134. See John C. Ford, S.J., and Germain Grisez, "Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium," *TS* 39 (1978) 258–312.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 135.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

addition to its deterrent effect, which has been constant, this teaching has had an equally constant cognitive content. I believe that it has not, Grisez believes that it has; hence he believes that it satisfies Vatican II's conditions for infallible teaching, while I do not. Such is the nature of our disagreement, plainly stated.<sup>5</sup>

In support of cognitive invariance, Grisez asks: "Do not Christians draw upon faith itself for criteria, and so share the same moral meanings? Hallett denies it."<sup>6</sup> Again, this misrepresents my position. I do not deny that Christians draw upon faith itself for criteria (in the sense of implicit or explicit descriptive definitions for their terms); nor do I deny that they share moral meanings. What I do deny is that Christians invariably give the same sense to their terms and that the sense they give them always agrees with what careful reflection on their faith would recommend. These points I develop in a general way in my *Christian Moral Reasoning: An Analytic Guide* (Univ. of Notre Dame, 1983) and in a more focused manner in my article on contraception. The stress in both places is on *contextual* variations, from specific discussion to specific discussion through the course of Christian history, whereas Grisez largely ignores context.

He apparently reasons as follows.<sup>7</sup> Faith provides Christian criteria of right and wrong. Hence Christians, sharing the same faith, share basically similar criteria. Accordingly, whatever their tongue, reasoning, arguments, or conclusions may be on any given occasion, they mean much the same thing by their moral expressions. In particular, in their discussions—or teachings—concerning contraception, the cognitive content of

<sup>5</sup> This second misstatement of my views relates closely to a third, worth citing for the background it can furnish readers unfamiliar with my article and its terminology. "Hallett sets out a theory," Grisez explains, "which . . . distinguishes (1) the *prescriptive* aspect of moral expressions, (2) the *criteria* for individual moral terms, (3) the *descriptive* content of moral statements, and (4) mere *clues* as to the presence of the thing constituted and defined by the criteria" (ibid.). This is accurate enough, and the distinction between defining criteria and mere clues is important to keep in mind. However, Grisez continues: "The criteria for moral terms are defining, constitutive traits—in other words, the essential meanings of expressions such as 'morally right' and 'morally evil.'" This reference to "essential meanings" I find objectionable both in itself and as a statement of my position. As has often been noted, the multiple aspects—descriptive, prescriptive, emotive, etc.—of a single rich meaning are not themselves meanings. And in what sense is the descriptive aspect alone "essential"? In thus relegating the nondescriptive aspects of moral terms to semantic limbo, Grisez unwittingly supports a claim he elsewhere contests (ibid. 139), that till recently "ethicians have for the most part viewed moral statements as statements like any others, just differing in their content from those in other areas" (Hallett, "Contraception" 630). His practice and his terminology suggest a variant formulation of the claim: moral terms and statements, like nonmoral, have been viewed as "essentially" descriptive.

<sup>6</sup> "Infallibility" 136.

<sup>7</sup> See esp. ibid. 141.

terms like "sinful," "wrong," and "immoral" remains basically identical. Hence the ordinary magisterium's consistent condemnation of artificial contraception does indeed reveal cognitive constancy, as well as prescriptive, and *Lumen gentium* 25 therefore applies to it. Hence the teaching is infallible.

More concretely it is as though Grisez were to argue: "When Arthur Vermeersch, for example, condemns artificial contraception on the ground that the act performed is one 'which is primarily an act of the species, to be performed by the spouses as representatives of the human species and acting in its behalf,'<sup>8</sup> does he cease momentarily to be a Christian? Surely not. But the Christian criterion of morality is the one I—Grisez—have proposed in numerous writings. So regardless of the reasons Vermeersch cites, what he really means—or what his words really mean—when he declares contraception 'sinful' or 'immoral' is that contraception acts directly against a basic human good<sup>9</sup> and thereby violates the basic principle of morality: 'In voluntarily acting for human goods and avoiding what is opposed to them, one ought to choose and otherwise will those and only those possibilities whose willing is compatible with a will toward integral human fulfillment.'<sup>10</sup>

#### A FIRST REPLY

One need only articulate such a position to perceive how dubious it is—and also how unclear. What is this invariant "meaning" that endures through variations in speech, thought, context, topic, and conclusion? If the meaning were thus articulated, would Vermeersch agree to it? Would he concede that this is what he meant, believed, or had in mind? Would he or anyone else argue that such was the message conveyed by his words, in that passage, on that topic? Confronted with Grisez's claim of invariance, I am reminded of Wittgenstein's comment: "You say to me: 'You understand this expression, don't you? Well then—I am using it in the sense you are familiar with.'—As if the sense were an atmosphere accompanying the word, which it carried with it into every kind of application."<sup>11</sup> When I try to understand Grisez's invariant Christian criterion contextually and historically, it has the appearance of just such

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Vermeersch, S.J., *De castitate et de vitiis contrariis tractatus doctrinalis et moralis* (2nd ed.; Rome: Gregorian University, 1921) 255. For fuller quotation and discussion, see Garth Hallett, S.J., *Darkness and Light: The Analysis of Doctrinal Statements* (New York: Paulist, 1975) 90–92.

<sup>9</sup> Germain G. Grisez, *Contraception and the Natural Law* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1964) 83.

<sup>10</sup> Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus 1: Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1983) 184.

<sup>11</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees (2nd ed.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967) no. 117.

a nebulous atmosphere.

A comparison may clarify the nature of the difficulties for Grisez's apparent argument and for the conclusion it supports. Consider Bertrand Russell's writings on sensation. Citing the discoveries of modern science, he repeatedly declared that nobody has ever seen another person, touched a table, heard a nightingale sing, or the like. True, common sense and naive realism suppose the contrary. They suppose, for example, that we see physical objects. But science knows better.<sup>12</sup> Physical objects originate impulses which reach our eyes, stimulate our nerves, and finally reach our brains. The end results, there in the brain, are all we actually see. Thus, "To say that you see Jones is no more correct than it would be, if a ball bounced off a wall in your garden and hit you, to say that the wall had hit you. Indeed, the two cases are closely analogous. We do not, therefore, ever see what we think we see."<sup>13</sup>

Now, how shall we interpret the word "see," as employed in such a passage? What is its meaning, its cognitive content? If we followed Grisez's lead, we might reason as follows. Science provides criteria for physical objects and activities. Hence believers in contemporary science share basically similar criteria. They all know, for example, that seeing involves light waves, retinas, optical nerves, and the rest. This, then, is what they mean—invariably—when they speak of "sight" or "seeing." It is, for instance, what Russell means when he says "I'll see you at the party," and it is what he means when he says, in print, that no one ever sees another person. It is what those who hear him understand in the one case and what those who read him understand in the other. Only arguments and claims about sight and sensation vary, not the meaning of "see," "hear," "touch," and the rest—not in a community of scientific believers.

Wittgenstein spoke of revealing veiled nonsense by means of evident nonsense, and this, at least, is quite evident nonsense. When Russell, citing light waves, denies that we see Jones, he is not saying, in effect, that light waves from Jones do not affect us when light waves from Jones affect us. When, citing sound waves, he denies we hear a train, he is not denying that the train originates such waves, that the waves impinge on our ear drums, and that these in turn beget sensations of sound. Nor would any intelligent person so understand him. For Russell, in the works cited, verbs like "see" and "hear" express direct, unmediated awareness. To say that one sees a horse or hears a train is therefore to assert such a relationship with the horse or the train. The animal or the machine is

<sup>12</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Matter* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954) 155.

<sup>13</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Scientific Outlook* (New York: Free Press, 1931) 78 (paragraph break omitted).

immediately present to the mind. But this, he insists, is a mistake. We are never thus related to the things we say we perceive. In this Russell is correct. However, he is equally correct when on other occasions he spontaneously remarks, like the rest of us, that he saw a movie, watched a game, or spotted a tack in his shoe. For on occasions like these, in our speech and his, the verbs of sensation do not express direct, unmediated awareness, but just the contrary. From this contrast it should be evident that we cannot conclude from the constancy of a person's views to the constancy of his words' meanings. The defining criteria may shift from context to context.

I shall not explain why they shift; the reasons are many and complex. The important fact is that they do. In this respect Russell was typical. Many others have spoken similarly about sensation. Countless others have said things equally at odds with their own normal use of words. As Russell denied that we see or hear physical objects, so others have denied that lights flash; that objects are red or yellow, hot or cold; that adults were once children; that anything has value; that light rays are colored; that we ever step twice into the same stream; that people take interest in their activities; that tables and the like are solid objects; that the sun rises or sets; that people are buried; that they are agreeable or useful; that they love one another; that they feel pain in their extremities or pleasure in their sexual organs; that anything ever changes, comes to be, or passes away; that animals act; that unjust laws are laws; that sentences have meaning; that what we call life is really life; that individual people ever think; and so on endlessly. In instances like these, the only way to make sense of the denials—and the only way most people would take them—is to suppose criteria at variance not only with those of the general populace but also with those of the writers or speakers themselves in their less speculative utterances. Their views of reality do not shift from one setting to the other, but the meanings of their words do.

From even this limited sampling (which could be backed by ample references) it is evident that the inference from invariant theories to invariant meanings does not work. And, despite important differences, it works no better in Christian ethics than elsewhere. As analytic thinkers are not always analytic and scientific thinkers are not always scientific, so, too, Christians are not always fully Christian in their thinking. Everyone admits that Christians may err on occasion; everyone knows that they may sometimes grow confused. Either way, the sense of their expressions may be affected as well as the truth. To suppose basically invariant meanings for Christians' moral terms is no more realistic, I would say, than to suppose basically invariant truth for Christians' moral utterances.

## A SECOND REPLY

I might back up this rejoinder by means of further, fuller samples than the one adduced from Vermeersch. However, I need not do so, nor need I point out numerous defects in Grisez's objections to the evidence already offered in my article. For the burden of proof still rests with Grisez, who claims infallibility, not with me, who question the claim. His original article did not address the problem of cognitive uniformity, nor does his subsequent one face it squarely. He appears to believe that it suffices for him to find flaws in my argument for his case thereby to be established.<sup>14</sup> In response I need not rebut his criticisms one by one; I need only indicate more fully his failure to provide the kind of demonstration still required.

Consider, for example, his remark: "Hallett implicitly admits that he has not *shown* the lack of unity his thesis requires but only failed to find it."<sup>15</sup> True, I only cited the likeliest criteria that might be claimed to be common, and found them all wanting (much as Russell, in an attempt to convince young Wittgenstein that there was not even a baby rhinoceros in the room, could at most point to an empty cupboard, a bare corner, a vacant chimney). However, implicit in my futile search was an invitation to Ford and Grisez to come up with a likelier constant criterion and demonstrate its presence in the widely varied reasonings I cited. There is no other method than the one I employed to establish the nonexistence of a common criterion, whereas anyone who wishes to prove the existence of a common criterion, and thereby cognitive uniformity in contraceptive teaching, and thereby the teaching's infallibility, must specify the criterion in question and demonstrate its universal presence.

In a similar vein, Grisez observes: "When Hallett tries to show that not even Christians [always] agree on the criteria for moral terms, perhaps he shows that they do not entirely agree. But if so, it does not follow that they entirely disagree."<sup>16</sup> To be sure, it does not. Nor would I question his claim that "Christians can agree insofar as they share the same faith but disagree insofar as they develop diverse and incompatible theological reflections on their faith," or that "they can come not simply to one prescription but to one judgment on a moral issue."<sup>17</sup> They both can and do. The question is whether they always do agree or have agreed,

<sup>14</sup> See "Infallibility" 141: "Since Hallett cannot sustain his thesis without establishing both the theoretical and the factual premises of his argument, the preceding critique of his theoretical framework by itself would be a sufficient reply to the challenge he attempts to offer to Ford's and my thesis."

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 142.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 140.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

on all occasions and on all topics, and specifically in their sayings and reasonings concerning contraception. And when Grisez stresses the similarity of Christian moral criteria, it is incumbent on him to establish the nature and degree of the similarity and the relevance of that kind and that degree for his conclusion. Grisez's criterion, for example, developed in various works, importantly resembles the one I propose in *Christian Moral Reasoning*; yet the two criteria are incompatible, as are others—more or less teleological, more or less deontological—that share overlapping traits with our conflicting pair and that have been held and applied by other Christians. Does such similarity suffice to establish “cognitive constancy”?

Again, Grisez writes: “Even in the case of specific norms explicitly mentioned in the Bible, such as the prohibition of adultery, Christian teachers try to *clarify* the reasons why various kinds of acts do or do not meet Christian standards. In this theological work Christians use diverse and sometimes inconsistent arguments. But that does not show they do not share a common core of what Hallett calls a ‘criterion.’”<sup>18</sup> Granted, it does not, especially if the sharing is understood abstractly and not contextually. Even on the specific occasions to which Grisez alludes, where the clarifications and arguments disagree, it is conceivable (prior to actual scrutiny) that the general standards stated or implied might agree. However, this would have to be shown. The signs are all against it.

Mistaken in his impression that his critique of my arguments, by itself, would adequately answer my challenge to his thesis, Grisez is likewise mistaken in his belief that he has supplied a positive proof of the kind demanded. He writes:

I already sketched out a plausible reply to Hallett's demand for a common Christian criterion of right and wrong. That reply refers not only to God's good will but to His wise plan, not only to the destiny of human life in Christ but to the moral demand this vocation makes upon us. One could offer scriptural proof texts for this sketch of the Christian criterion of morality, but the real evidence for it is not in one or another text so much as in the Bible as a whole. God's commands are stipulations of the covenant He makes with His people; they direct members of the covenant community how to co-operate in reaching the promised fulfilment for which they hope. God's promises appeal to human persons because they know by the law written in their hearts that God offers rescue from human misery and help toward real human fulfilment.<sup>19</sup>

This response suggests that Grisez has not understood my article nor

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 143.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 142.

the nature of the challenge it poses. A criterion such as he describes I not only do not deny, but have provided in *Christian Moral Reasoning*. "There is no more crucial question in all of Christian ethics," I there suggest, "than this: By what criterion or criteria should a Christian define 'right' and 'wrong'?"<sup>20</sup> However, I do not confuse "should define" with "always does define" or "always has defined," or suppose perfect uniformity in the thinking and practice of Christians. Rather, noting strong evidence to the contrary, I reformulate the question to read: "If we wish to be *both consistent and* true to our Christian heritage, what criterion of right and wrong should we adopt?"<sup>21</sup> And I then sift much historical evidence before arriving at a verdict, in a manner Grisez does not attempt. In the passage just cited, he alludes only to the criterion Christians should embrace, indicated by Scripture, and pays no heed to the question whether in subsequent ages Christians have faithfully formulated and applied just that one acceptable criterion, for instance in their treatment of contraception. Consequently, his answer fails to meet my challenge.<sup>22</sup>

More relevant, though no more adequate, is his remark: "If there were no common core, then on Hallett's theory there would be no Christian moral tradition at all, only a history of attempts to induce or deter behavior, whether with respect to contraception or with respect to adultery, killing the innocent, loving enemies, feeding the hungry, non-discrimination between rich and poor, and everything else."<sup>23</sup> I am puzzled by this all-or-nothing inference. It is not warranted by what I have written, but directly conflicts with it.<sup>24</sup> And surely there is middle ground between the extremes Grisez mentions. The moral reasoning of

<sup>20</sup> Page 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 45 (emphasis added).

<sup>22</sup> Grisez's disinclination to historical inquiry can be seen from the most serious of his numerous misrepresentations. "Criteria," I had written, "are variously established—by usage, theory, explicit definition—and we learn of them in corresponding ways. We may, for instance, infer them from the statements people make, on what occasions, for what reasons; from the evidence that counts with them, and why; from the arguments they adduce. Or we may get a clearer picture from their theories" ("Contraception" 633). As the context required and the ensuing examples should have made doubly clear, "learning of" criteria here meant learning what terms' defining criteria are or have been, on this or that occasion, for this or that person, not what they should ideally be. I was hardly suggesting that moral truth is subjective and may be determined without regard for faith or revelation. Yet this is how Grisez takes my remarks ("Infallibility" 139–40). "There is a very real sense," he urges, "in which the criteria of morality are made in heaven" (*ibid.* 139). Granted, but that sense has next to nothing to do with an inquiry into the constancy of contraceptive teaching. The question that concerned me in my article and that should have concerned Grisez in his reply is historical, not normative.

<sup>23</sup> "Infallibility" 143.

<sup>24</sup> See esp. chaps. 4, 6, and 10 of *Christian Moral Reasoning*.



many or most Christians and their underlying criterion on many or most occasions might be basically similar, yet their reasoning on the single issue of contraception might still reveal notable diversity.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, I think it is patent that the way Christians have discussed the question of contraception differs notably from their treatment of most other issues.<sup>26</sup>

A few lines later, Grisez makes a pertinent but undeveloped claim concerning a suggestion by Noonan. "Summarizing the 'Thomistic argument,'" he writes, "Noonan articulates its heart as a conception of sexual intercourse:

This act is absolute, interference with its natural function is immoral, because it is the act from which life begins.

It would be possible to read the teaching of the theologians and canonists, popes and bishops, for over seventeen hundred years, as embodying this position. To do so would require isolating a single strand of the teaching from other reasons and treating it, abstracted from all contexts, as dispositive of the morality of any act which, in the exercise of coitus, 'intentionally deprives it of its natural power and strength.'

Here Noonan insists on variations in contexts but admits at least one unified strand. That admission by itself is enough to counter Hallett's argument.<sup>27</sup>

This is far too facile. For one thing, Grisez accepts without question the accuracy of Noonan's sweeping surmise. Yet exceptions are so easy to adduce<sup>28</sup> that the principle of charity requires us to take the suggestion as referring to *most* theologians, canonists, bishops, and popes, not all; and a mere majority of bishops does not suffice for Grisez's purposes. Furthermore, this single, specific strand, concerning "the act from which life begins," could not appear sometimes as a mere symptom or clue, sometimes as one element within a total criterion, sometimes as a total criterion, and sometimes as a stray item within an incoherent whole. In order to supply invariant cognitive content for the general moral terms

<sup>25</sup> See *ibid.* 121: "From earlier remarks (B, 3) the reader will doubtless grasp my meaning if I observe, paradoxically, that though value-maximization has been the dominant criterion in Christian moral reasoning, it has not dominated Christian moral reasoning. (Of the many who climb a mountain, most may follow no trail, or may follow no single trail; yet one trail may clearly be the most traveled of all.)"

<sup>26</sup> Grisez has his own explanation of this distinctiveness ("Infallibility" 144). For my different account, see, e.g., *Christian Moral Reasoning* 83-84, 113-14.

<sup>27</sup> "Infallibility" 143.

<sup>28</sup> See the quotation below, from Grisez's own *Contraception and the Natural Law*, according to which a common natural-law argument relies on a different principle than the one Noonan mentions. Grisez aptly labels it "the perverted faculty argument" and contrasts it with his own insistence on "procreative good."

employed in contraceptive teaching (“evil,” “wrong,” “sinful,” “immoral,” etc.), this single, slim thread would somehow have to figure consistently as a total criterion of right and wrong.<sup>29</sup> And this total criterion would have to agree with—indeed, be identical with—that by which Christians judge “adultery, killing the innocent, loving enemies, feeding the hungry, nondiscrimination between rich and poor, and everything else” (to appropriate Grisez’s listing). This is a tall order. Grisez seems not to realize the magnitude of the task that awaits him—or that it still does await him.

However, he does make one valid and relevant point, which I shall now mention. Misled, as he surmises, by his earlier formulation, I did not note that the conditions set by Vatican II might be met by cognitive uniformity within a fairly limited period of time—say, the present century or some single decade.<sup>30</sup> This should be easier to establish than cognitive constancy throughout two thousand years of teaching. Still, to validate the claim of infallibility, such short-term uniformity would have to be proven; and the proof will not be easy. The evidence which I cite in my article and which Grisez too facetiously dismisses applies to short periods of time as well as to long.

Consider, for instance, the evidence I garner from Grisez’s *Contraception and the Natural Law*: “A basic equivocation, he maintains, infects ‘existing explanations of the intrinsic malice of contraception,’ since they rest uneasily on two different senses of ‘natural,’ one factual and one moral.”<sup>31</sup> In his critique, I observed,

Grisez introduces distinctions not clearly envisaged by the authors in question, and so discriminations not clearly made and senses not surely determined. Which of the alternatives did the author intend? Which would he indicate if interrogated? With the prongs of each dilemma thus sharply revealed, he would probably prefer not to impale himself on either. So neither prospectively nor retrospectively do we seem entitled to foist either interpretation on him. Charity and justice require that we abstain; better no content at all than evident error.<sup>32</sup>

Grisez objects that in my use of his text I overlooked the extent to which

<sup>29</sup> By way of comparison, consider that various human values appear (form a “common strand”) within my total criterion of right and wrong, Grisez’s total criterion, Mill’s, Bentham’s, and many others’. But how differently they figure within them, and how different are the criteria. And the cognitive content of the terms they implicitly or explicitly define varies accordingly.

<sup>30</sup> See Grisez, “Infallibility” 137–39.

<sup>31</sup> Hallett, “Contraception” 643.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 643–44. When I make use of Grisez’s analyses for my own purposes, as here, and suggest what “he *might* have said,” he complains that I have misunderstood what he said and have misinterpreted his project (“Infallibility” 144).

he pointed “to an underlying unity amid the diversity of inadequate efforts to articulate the same truth about the immorality of contraception. For instance, I pointed out about the major premise of the ‘perverted faculty’ argument: ‘The truth of the matter is that the proposition does accurately indicate the reason why contraception is wrong, but it does not apply to any other faculty.’”<sup>33</sup> Characteristically, Grisez does not attend to the meaning the premise has in any specific utterance of any specific individual, but to the abstract “proposition” and the meaning and truth it would possess if correctly understood. And the “underlying unity” he refers to resembles the unity he alleges in Christian moral reasoning as a whole.

To get this purported uniformity in sharper focus, consider the larger passage (with emphasis added) from which Grisez plucks the sentence he quotes:

Once this point is understood, it will be clear how *our* argument is related to the perverted-faculty argument *which we criticized so severely*. The perverted-faculty argument depended upon the defense of the general proposition that the prevention of any act from reaching the end proper to an act of its faculty is intrinsically immoral.

*This proposition we found to be indefensible even when it was taken with restrictions*. The truth of the matter is that the proposition does accurately indicate the reason why contraception is wrong, but it does not apply to any other faculty. Consequently, *our* argument uses the principle of the perverted-faculty argument only after limiting it to the sexual faculty.<sup>34</sup>

By Grisez’s own account, the standard argument he criticized relies on a general proposition and implicit criterion contrary to his own criterion and to that generally operative in Christian moral reasoning. So the passage elicits queries like those raised with regard to Vermeersch. Do the moral terms employed in such reasoning retain the same meanings they have on other occasions or in other authors, for instance in Grisez? In interpreting the expressions, may we disregard the arguments they figure in? Would that make better sense in this case than in Russell’s? From Grisez’s own data and analyses it appears how problematic is his claim of semantic uniformity.

To sum up: Grisez’s and my disagreement may be simply stated by saying that I contest his claim that magisterial teaching on contraception has satisfied the conditions enunciated by Vatican II. My suggested reason is that the teaching’s uniformity has been prescriptive, not cognitive. Grisez maintains that it has been cognitive as well as prescriptive.

<sup>33</sup> “Infallibility” 144.

<sup>34</sup> *Contraception and the Natural Law* 100.

However, his discussion is chiefly theoretical, not historical. To substantiate his claim, something fuller, clearer, more convincing, and more relevant is required than mere shreds of historical evidence or vague allusions to the unity underlying natural-law theory, contraceptive teaching, or Christian ethics generally. The burden of proof still rests with Grisez.

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