ery. She suggests that the recovery could come through “default” when the growing economic crises may force families to begin to reclaim some of the duties that have been transferred to the welfare state. Families will need to take back caregiving to the young and elderly once the state can no longer afford to maintain the behemoth welfare state it has created. Or, in an even more optimistic view, Eberstadt suggests that there may come a time when we begin to appreciate once again Christianity’s respect for marriage and the family, and the sacredness of life—including the life of the unborn. This will be the time—and Eberstadt offers us some hope for this time—when we begin to reverse the decline.

Notes


Anne Hendershott
Franciscan University


Christopher Kaczor’s excellent new book is best read as a companion to his Ethics of Abortion (2010), although its opening chapter helpfully summarizes several arguments that all human beings possess intrinsic worth prior to being valued by others or the value they achieve through excellent living. Many chapters were previously published in the National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly and elsewhere as responses to critics of dignity. Its subsequent broad engagement with philosophers, medical associations, and government agencies makes it something of a primer on how the Catholic natural law tradition engages the wider field of bioethics.

Chapters 1–8 concern dignity at the beginning of life. Their brevity and incisiveness would make them suitable for undergraduate logic courses. A typical example of Kaczor’s meat-and-potatoes approach to writing, drawn from the evaluation in chapter three of the American Society for
Reproductive Medicine’s 2009 report recommending mandatory fertility treatment for gay and single persons, reads thus: “The committee report relies on false premises, reasons invalidly, ignores well-known and abundant contrary evidence, leads to absurd conclusions, and fails to address the central question about the relation of conscience to providing fertility treatment” (35).

The ease with which Kaczor justifies such conclusions is almost embarrassing (for the targets of his criticism). Several chapters indict writers for inconsistently applying or reasoning from their own principles. For example, chapter four examines consequentialist justifications of the Principle of Procreative Beneficence (PB), the duty of potential parents to promote the prospective well-being of their children. Typical consequentialists use PB to justify selective abortion based on disappointing prenatal testing during pregnancy, or through the use of genetic testing involved with in vitro fertilization (IVF). In contrast, Kaczor contends utilitarian reasoning would instead require us to reject IVF (it creates higher incidences of birth defects and is more expensive than natural conception), to conclude that parents should only conceive and rear children within marriage (where they flourish better than alternatives), and to admit that “we have a duty not to use IVF and [pre-implantation genetic diagnosis] for at least as long as conditions of famine and poverty exist anywhere in the world,” since the vast sums of money required for IVF would be more effective at increasing well-being by distributing food and mosquito nets to the poor (42).

In chapters five and six, on embryo adoption and artificial wombs and the treatment of ectopic pregnancies, respectively, Kaczor respectfully engages other Catholic ethicists, taking controversial positions in both cases. Given that there presently exist more than 400,000 wrongfully-conceived, frozen embryos whose only chance for survival lies in being gestated in adoptive or artificial wombs, Kaczor considers whether doing so is consistent with current Catholic social teaching. For instance, after distinguishing genetic, gestational, and social parenthood, he notes that while CST prohibits deliberately separating these in violation of the right of a child to “integrative parenthood” (cf. Donum Vitae II.1–2), Catholic practice allows both adoption and the use of incubators to save the lives of children who were otherwise wrongly conceived. He therefore defends the limited use of artificial wombs as “highly advanced incubators,” as well as embryonic adoption, for the purpose of saving human lives (61). Perhaps even more controversial is Kaczor’s use of complex double-effect reasoning to defend salpingostomy (the removal of an ectopic embryo while leaving the fallopian tube intact) and, tentatively, the use of Methotrexate to treat
ectopic pregnancies, contrary to prominent ethicists like William May, Eugene Diamond, and Kelly Bowring. These chapters alone are worth the price of the book.

Chapter 9 criticizes the methodology of two thinkers who approach euthanasia from a perspective “that implicitly rejects the Thomistic [compatibilist] conception of the relationship between faith and reason” (123). Kaczor illustrates how sound philosophy can help one avoid theological error, on the one hand, and how unaided reason is sufficient to grasp the truth of some issues through examination of the natural law. Especially useful is his contrast between voluntaristic approaches to morality, which exhibit what Pinckaers called the ‘morality of obligation,’ and Thomists, who believe that divine law “does no more than help an agent to understand what acts are to be pursued and what acts are to be avoided” (115). The former seek exceptions to rules, the latter assistance in determining how best to achieve our final end given our nature and destiny as human persons. Once again, this chapter would make a superior undergraduate introduction not only to what traditional Thomists believe about the relationship of faith and reason, but also how this position guides their approach to difficult moral issues by advocating reflection on scripture, tradition, venerable authorities, and the discoveries of faithful reason.

Chapters 12 and 13 examine the case for and against conscience protections for healthcare workers who refuse to perform morally objectionable procedures, such as abortion. In chapter twelve, Kaczor favorably reviews and augments Mark Wicclair’s arguments against common justifications of the “Incompatibility Thesis,” that those who will not perform all legally allowed medical procedures should enter other professions. The thesis is philosophically unjustified and also inconsistent with wider medical practice, which allows doctors to specialize (and thus provide some services but not others) and to refuse to provide or refer patients for non-therapeutic services (like liposuction or euthanasia). Chapter 13 provides reasons for rejecting several arguments by Bernard Dickens for limiting or eliminating conscience protections for health-care workers on the grounds that such protections are discriminatory, undermine patient autonomy, and treat people as means.

The strength and weakness of Kaczor’s book is that it limits itself to the articulation and evaluation of philosophical arguments. Although it is on display throughout the book, Kaczor never directly offers a cultural critique of the zeitgeist disposed to treat persons as either material (think embryos) or machines (think doctors and nurses), neither of which is allowed to exercise agency contrary to our technocratic ends. Kaczor also seems overly optimistic about the ability of unaided reason to articulate persu-
sive sound arguments. The circumstances of persuasion include ethos and history, and Kaczor fails to address the fact that while the concept of dignity can be justified on philosophical grounds, it arose within and gains traction (only?) within a Christian culture that believes individual persons have a supernatural destiny. The ‘crisis of reason’ Benedict XVI identified in Regensburg is not a failure to grasp logical norms, but an artificial limitation of the first act of reason to the immediacy of perception and petition. I would relish a philosopher of Kaczor’s caliber and experience addressing these larger issues surrounding our crisis of dignity.

Joshua Schulz
DeSales University


Political scientist Dr. Stephen Krason has edited a much-needed volume examining the origin and results of the troubling child abuse industry known as Child Protective Services (CPS) that operates in all of our states as a result of the unfortunate 1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), or “Mondale Act.” All the papers reproduced in this scholarly volume were originally prepared for a conference co-sponsored by the Society of Catholic Social Scientists (SCSS) and the Catholic Social Workers National Association (CSWNA) at the Catholic University of America in 2012. The other contributors to this volume are experts in law, social work, sociology and psychology such as William L. Saunders, Michael E. Rosman, James R. Mason III, Patrick F. Fagan with co-authors Anna Dorminey and Emily Haring, and Ruth A. White. They reinforce from their own particular professional perspectives the judgment of Dr. Krason that the Mondale legislation providing funding for states to establish CPS agencies was “poorly designed public policy.” It has resulted in a systemic and rogue bureaucratic system, run by aggressive, abusive, and over-zealous government officials and social workers, which tramples the natural and legal rights of millions of parents and children.

In his lead article, Dr. Krason gives a valuable history of the child-protection movement in the U.S., which would manifest an increasing loss of respect for parental rights by elitist “child savers” and a growing “suspicion of parents in general.” He describes in detail the development of