Kupczak, Jaroslaw. O.P. *Destined for Liberty: The Human Person in the Philosophy of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000. 161 + xxiii pp.

A significant problem surrounds Catholic bioethics at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Within the dominant culture, it suffers from an imposed *credibility gap*. This gap has two principal sources. First, because Catholic bioethics is "Catholic," it has frequently been dismissed out-of-hand as nothing more than a series of theological "pronouncements" with little or no philosophical merit. Second, and more generally, bioethics itself has often been labeled by academics as "philosophy-lite"— having a shiny intellectual veneer, but neither very original nor very profound.

Jaroslaw Kupczak's recent book *Destined for Liberty* (2000) may go a long way toward closing the credibility gap on both fronts, if bioethicists will only understand its significance. Kupczak outlines, in a clear, and concise fashion, the complicated philosophical anthropology of Karol Wojtyla, the poet, dramatist, philosopher, and theologian who would later become Pope John Paul II. The author—rector and theologian at the Dominican House of Studies in Krakow—makes no specific reference to bioethics, nor does he offer to the field particular applications of Wojtyla's view of man. Yet, for the Catholic and non-Catholic bioethicist interested in understanding the Pope's view of the human person at a foundational level, the book will prove an invaluable resource. Furthermore, the skeptic will soon realize that so-called papal "pronouncements" in the field of bioethics are actually practical manifestations of a highly sophisticated philosophical structure that must be taken seriously.

Wojtyla's project, to articulate the significance of *being* a human person revealed through action, is not only central to the great encyclicals of his pontificate—*Veritatis splendor*, *Evangelium vitae*, and *Fides et ratio*—but is also the *sine qua non* of any authentic bioethics. For every ethical action presupposes the ethical person who originates the action or to whom it is directed. If we fail to understand the nature of that person, we fall prey to the criticism that bioethics is philosophically "toothless"; we also make little progress toward truth if we ignore the anthropology from which our philosophy (or that of our adversaries) derives.

In the first two chapters, Kupczak meticulously traces Wojtyla's thought in his early writings—from his habilitation thesis (1951–53) to his lectures at the Catholic University of Lublin (mid-1950s). This is not an easy task, given the complicated nature of the philosophy involved; however, Kupczak's writing is clear, concise, and sufficiently explanatory. The reader unfamiliar with the history of philosophy will find the reading challenging, but not impossible; the more experienced philosopher will be delighted by Kupczak's lucid and intelligent style. For this accomplishment alone, the author deserves much credit.

From the beginning chapter, Kupczak continually measures the Pope's philosophic genius by pointing to Wojtyla's ability to draw on, and successfully synthesize, divergent modes of thought. In constructing his philosophical anthropology, Wojtyla relies on two radically different approaches to truth: the metaphysics of St. Thomas, and the phenomenology of Max Scheler. Scheler's phenomenology is in large part a reaction to Kantian formalism, a formalism also heavily criticized by Wojtyla in his Lublin lectures. Kant's major objective was to assert the primacy of reason over the conditions of its own knowledge—all aspects of knowledge must have the form of reason. Scheler, however, saw what Kant failed to see: that pure consciousness is not the entirety of ethical experience, and that values and feelings have a pervasive role in human acts. Wojtyla sees Scheler as an improvement on Kant, and was deeply influenced by him.

Wojtyla's main criticism of Scheler is that, since the subject is passively drawn to

values, *choice* (and with it a prominent role for the will) disappears from Scheler's account altogether. The cornerstone of Wojtyla's theory, Kupczak tells us early on, is the recognition by the person of his action as his own. When the person experiences himself as the efficient cause of the act, he accepts responsibility for it. This self-determination is necessary for the ethical act to ultimately transform the person, to allow the person to fulfill his own being.

The author aims in chapter 3 to describe the methodology of Wojtyla's project: *how* does he accomplish the synthesis of Thomistic metaphysics and Schelerian phenomenology to produce a theory of the acting person? This is perhaps the most complicated section of the book. Kupczak describes in too much detail the background debates in Polish academia surrounding Wojtyla's more controversial approaches to philosophy. The bioethicist should be prepared for a rigorous mental hike, but certainly not be deterred from moving forward—for at the end of the steepest trails lie the most satisfying vistas.

The final two substantive chapters (chapters 4 and 5) of Kupczak's work elucidate the core principles of Wojtyla's theory in the defining *Acting Person* (1969). It is here that we find the subjects of specific interest to the bioethicist: causal efficacy, self-determination, the will, freedom, and conscience.

The revelation of human efficacy happens only in what Wojtyla refers to as "man-acts" (*actus humanus*); man-acts are active, for they involve the conscious activity of the subject, and are the only acts capable of being *ethical acts*. Unified with man-acts within the person—but conceptually distinct—are "acts-happening-in-man" (*actus hominis*). The key point, Kupczak claims, is that he subject is involved in both "acting" and "happening." Wojtyla therefore seeks another kind of synthesis: to unite the subjective experience of self with the objective transformation of the person through his action. It is the realization of oneself as the cause of one's action that leads to what Wojtyla calls *vertical transcendence*—self-determination and freedom of the person. Kupczak's analysis admirably compels the reader to reflect on how poverty-stricken "self-determination" is simply equated with autonomy. For Wojtyla, self-determination involves not merely willing, but also a transformation of being itself.

The will has a subtler role; it chooses objects or values (defined Thomistically as the good for the being of the person), and in this choosing, subordinated always to truth, human freedom is revealed. The objectivity of freedom is realized through *conscience*, the experience of the moral duty to do or to avoid something. Conscience represents the attempt of the person to grasp the truth; therefore it is linked intrinsically to self-determination.

The conclusion (chapter 6) of Kupczak's book is a summary of the entire work, helpful for those who have finished *Destined for Liberty* clinging to the edge of understanding. It is here that one really appreciates the Dominican's outstanding ability to simply *teach*. The final summary aids even the accomplished philosopher to grasp the significance of Wojtyla's project and retain the "big picture," a task neglected in some earlier attempts to describe Wojtyla's thought.

Kupczak shows the astounding consistency of Wojtyla's thinking throughout, referring to papal documents to show the connection between his early philosophical and current theological mind. This connection is significant, for Wojtyla's promising philosophical career was limited and then terminated by his duties as cardinal and ultimately as pope. Thus even Kupczak acknowledges that there are still gaps within Wojtyla's methodology. Yet, Wojtyla's philosophy does continue through his theological writings, it is evidenced in his unfailing subordination to truth, and most obviously perhaps, it is witnessed through his overwhelming love for the human person.

If any shortcoming could be noted in Kupczak's work, it is only that its scope is necessarily limited to description; such a keen mind could be of great service in ex-

plicitly directing us to the *practical* applications of Wojtyla's work. For *Destined for Liberty* is not merely a service to philosophy because of its descriptive power. Kupczak's underscoring of the originality of the Pope's work should prompt Catholic and non-Catholic scholars to continue work in practical philosophical anthropology. The Catholic bioethicist certainly has an exciting task before him, for he will no longer be satisfied with simply quoting the Pope; Kupczak's book compels us to understand him. The adversaries of authentic Catholic bioethics would also be foolish to continue to oppose papal teaching without grasping the mind of the man and his view of the person. If we meet Kupczak's challenge, we shall have, at last, a truly *philosophical foundation* for Catholic medical ethics, and a bioethics with bite.

Ashley K. Fernandes, M.D., M.A., Ph.D.
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
The Ohio State
University College of Medicine
Columbus, Ohio

Macklin, Ruth. *Against Relativism: Cultural Diversity and the Search for Ethical Universals in Medicine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 290 + xii pp.

In this book, Macklin tackles a critically important topic: the question of ethical relativism in a multicultural world. She discusses this topic against the backdrop of a number of provocative practices that are raising important questions in contemporary bioethics—female circumcision, sex-selection abortion, consent for treatment or research by families or tribal leaders instead of patients themselves, the denial of brain death for cultural or religious reasons, breaches of confidentiality on the basis of a social grouping's "right to know," and the practice of withholding the truth from patients with terminal diagnoses. These views and practices are fairly widespread among various cultures. But while this has undoubtedly been so for many centuries, the global reach of mass media and increasing immigration mean that experience with such cultural diversity in health care is no longer exotic or rare. This experience is raising troubling questions for practitioners who view these practices as morally wrong but also believe they have duties to respect the integrity of their patients' cultures.

Macklin points out how the controversies raised by these practices are even dividing the monolithic American liberal academy. Consider, for example, the case of sex-selection abortion. In this practice, prenatal genetic testing is performed to establish the baby's sex, and if the baby turns out to be a girl, an abortion is performed solely because of a culturally embedded preference for a boy child. This practice has become widespread in India, and among Indians living in Europe and the United States. What can Western bioethics say about this practice?

In Western universities (and increasingly in the culture at large), tolerance has been metamorphosed by the postmodern dictum that nothing is objectively true; that everything one claims to "know" merely reflects unexposed biases and has resulted from various struggles for power and control. This view has marched hand-in-hand with the even more pervasive view that morality is either purely subjective or culturally relative. There is no such thing as universal moral truth or anything approaching objectivity in the determination of right and wrong.

So, on the one hand, in the current moral milieu of Western academe, the moral judgment that sex-selection abortion is morally wrong has been condemned as a species of "Western ethical imperialism"—an "imposition of values" by powerful Western nations upon weaker developing nations that simply hold different sets of values. On the other hand, many feminist ethicists would quickly claim that the preference for boys is itself an "imposition of values," reflecting the views of powerful, patriarchal males imposing their collective will upon weaker females, and so would condemn the prac-