

Review of the Doctoral Thesis by Kingsley Chidiebere Ekeocha, titled “The Conception of Realistic Metaphysics according to Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec”

Introduction

The philosophy of Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec developed over the years at the Catholic University of Lublin has its established validity and position in the philosophical landscape of Poland and Europe. It is deeply rooted in the classical philosophy of Aristotle, St Thomas Aquinas and other famous figures of European philosophy. A special position in Krąpiec's philosophical projects plays his metaphysics. Although strongly associated with the Thomistic school, this kind of metaphysics has its original version within existential Thomism. Krąpiec's work is relatively well known in Poland but not so much worldwide. Hence, it is important to make it available to a wider philosophical audience because the philosopher makes some strong points, which can be of vital importance when we discuss whether metaphysics is possible at all and how can we apply it to various investigations.

The work of Kingsley Chidiebere Ekeocha is a part of the studies on Krąpiec's metaphysics, which can be helpful in various respects. The author has undertaken a great task in understanding this complex project and in penetrating its intricate aspects. He has tried to present all the necessary steps to understand Krąpiec's project, to assess its coherence and completeness and to compare and contrast his achievements with other philosophers who are critical or skeptical as to a possibility of metaphysical thought in its classical version. Thus, the doctoral candidate goes much further than a sole exposition of Krąpiec's philosophy, which by many is declared as a well-known and acquired philosophical heritage.

There is one more reason, which supports this scholarly enterprise. It starts with a question: do we need metaphysics nowadays? This is difficult, contentious and we are far from a common project of this philosophical discipline. Moreover, it seems that we live in post-metaphysical times and, as some argue, philosophy should do without the strong concepts of

metaphysics. Thus, maybe other branches of philosophy can manage without metaphysics and make up for its lack. Maybe, for example, philosophical anthropology and philosophy of science can compensate for what has been delivered by metaphysics thus far without getting entangled in very abstract strategies of thinking. This is an open and disturbing question and the work of Kingsley Chidiebere Ekeocha brings with it the potential to answer it.

Description of the Structure

The work is divided into four chapters, abbreviations, general introduction, bibliography, evaluations and conclusions.

Chapter one deals with some basic concepts of metaphysics like realism, metaphysics, realistic metaphysics and realistic philosophy. In this part, the author undertakes other fundamental issues like historical considerations concerning the object of philosophy and the role of the subject and his cognition within the project of metaphysics. In the center of this section is being *qua*, being as the first object of cognition. This chapter is necessary in order to clarify important elements of metaphysical thinking and thanks to that we are introduced into a realist tradition of philosophizing.

In chapter two the Ph. D. candidate considers three fundamental issues: the transcendental properties of being, the first metaphysical principles and the analogical existence/predication of being. The author undertakes here a method of analogical cognition but a special emphasis is put on the transcendental proprieties and the use of metaphysical separation. The latter seems to be a main method used by M. A. Krąpiec in his metaphysical investigations.

Chapter three is dedicated to the description of the fundamental structure of being. Thanks to that it is possible to reveal the inner nature of being. It is comprised of such important elements like act and potency, matter and form, substance and accident, essence and existence. In this chapter the doctoral candidate undertakes the *sapiential* character of metaphysical cognition through the casual apprehension of being too.

Chapter four revolves around some fundamental matters of metaphysics and methodology, which Krąpiec worked out together with Stanisław Kamiński. Here some metaphysical considerations are addressed as continuation of key metaphysical questions from previous chapters. In this chapter the author tries to establish what is the place of Krąpiec's metaphysics in contemporary discussions. His intention also is to contrast this kind of metaphysics with positions proposed by nominalist, idealist and positivist schools. The Ph.D.

student offers here his own evaluations of Krąpiec's project as well as his discoveries made during his research.

Formal Remarks

The Ph. D. thesis by Kingsley Chidiebere Ekeocha has been prepared under the supervision of Rev. Prof. Andrzej Maryniarczyk and Rev. Dr. Hab. Tomasz Duma, at the Seminar of Metaphysics and Philosophical Anthropology, at the Department of Philosophy. It contains 282 pages.

The English language of the work is very good. Quotations and references need some ordering because there are some inconsistencies. The plan of the thesis is quite complex and detailed. By itself is it informative and a sole glance at it introduces the reader into the topic. References and quotations are very rich and provide many additional information concerning the main topic. The author made a great effort to find suitable sources in various languages: Polish, English and Latin. Although the main figure, i. e., Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec had written his works basically in Polish, the doctoral candidate made references to many Thomists active in the English-speaking philosophy by drawing on their books and articles.

In many places the Ph. D. candidate translates Krąpiec's remarks, analyses and conclusions into English. This is worth noting and appreciating because the Polish philosopher used a very complex and abstract language, very often difficult to understand for a Polish reader. By the end of his thesis the author adds the summary of his work both in English and Polish. These sections allow to get a general idea of what the thesis is about.

The only doubt concerning the plan of the thesis is about the final conclusions. In the volume submitted to the review, conclusions make a part of the final chapter, namely the chapter four. Partly, it is understandable because this chapter contains some assessments and critical remarks. However, it gives the impression that they belong to that chapter only and gather what has been done within it. In fact, these final conclusions concern the whole work. Thus, it would be more suitable to specify them as a separate section.

Remarks concerning the Content

The thesis on the concept of metaphysics by Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec written by Kingsley Chidiebere Ekeocha is a very good piece of scholarly work. It is obvious for a reviewer that the author made an extensive research to understand the metaphysical project by Krąpiec and showed a critical sense in making its evaluation. It is worth noting that the author undertook an effort to bring out some aspects of Krąpiec's thought that have not been so often acknowledged

even by himself, for example that the Polish thinker is rather a realist philosopher rather than a Thomist. This remark is important but needs some qualifications. It is obvious against the background of Thomistic philosophy, specifically when we take into account existential judgments. However, it would be good to provide some other understandings of realism in philosophy, even if the author would signal them only in references.

This doctoral thesis is very much about sketching the project of Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec's realistic metaphysics. Thus, the author analyses step by step all elements making up this concept and, in this way, proves its good understanding. He also delves into some less obvious and disputable parts of Krąpiec's investigations. For example, in his dissertation he observes that "Krąpiec's stance on the act and fact debate as well as the issue of participation which has little attention in his metaphysics" (p. 253). The author proves also successfully that the project is very advanced and coherent in itself.

However, the author of the thesis puts before himself two central tasks. The first one is to prove that Krąpiec's metaphysics is possible and the second concerns its scientificity. Both of these tasks have in their background important problems deeply rooted in the history of philosophy. In modern philosophy there is a growing tendency to reject metaphysics, especially its traditional form. David Hume and Immanuel Kant represent paradigmatically this stance. The doctoral student undertakes a critical dialogue with these philosophers and proves successfully that Krąpiec's proposal can hold its position and respond to criticism levelled against it. Also, a scientific character of metaphysics can be defended and upheld when we assume a wider concept of science than that proposed by a positivist position. The author has indeed demonstrated that this is the case.

The exposition of a project of metaphysics in the contemporary philosophical context demands that it should be compared and contrasted with philosophical currents and schools of today. If we do not deal with a work, which purely belongs to the history of philosophy such a reference must be made. From the reading of the thesis, it seems that the author is aware of this fact. However, more should be done here. Although the Ph. D. student makes references to Immanuel Kant, David Hume or to Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain, we need a stronger comparison. On the one hand, we need a comparison to the Thomistic environment of today and on the other to those contemporary philosophers who deny the possibility of classical metaphysics (and metaphysics as such) at all.

As to the first, it would be good to consider how Krąpiec's project presents itself against the background of such contemporary Thomists like Joseph Bobik or Alfred Freddoso who do not share Krąpiec's enthusiasm for an existential interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's thought.

It would be also necessary to make a similar comparison to a famous American Thomist W. Norris Clarke (who died in 2008, the year of the death of Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec). Clarke worked out an interesting and novel interpretation of Aquinas's thought, including a possible project of metaphysics, and gave lots of attention to the concept of participation (See: W. N. Clarke, *The One and the Many. A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 2006). This is the first problem I expect Kingsley Chidiebere Ekeocha to address during the public defense of his Ph. D. thesis.

As to the latter, it would be good to give more time and energy to investigate how Krąpiec's project of metaphysics answers critical questions formulated by contemporary philosophers with an anti-metaphysical attitude. The doctoral candidate mentions some of them briefly but we need more elaborate answers. This task I am dividing into two. The first one concerns possible replies given from Krąpiec's standpoint to neopositivistic philosophers like Alfred Ayer and Rudolf Carnap who reject a possibility of metaphysics and consider it as pointless. The second one is associated with European continental philosophy and concerns such philosophers, like for example Emmanuel Lévinas, who are convinced that some vital problems can be solved without metaphysics (for example that ethics is given before metaphysics).

Conclusion

The doctoral thesis of Kingsley Chidiebere Ekeocha proves that the author had studied and thought over the metaphysics of Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec in a very detailed and accurate way. This work meets all requirements set by the Polish Higher Education Act. Therefore, I submit an application to the Council of the Institute of Philosophy for admission to further stages of the doctoral proceedings.

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