

Rev. Grzegorz Hołub, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Philosophy
The Pontifical University of John Paul II
Kraków – Poland

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**Review of the Doctoral Thesis of Michael Nnamdi Konye:
“The Basis of Human Transcendence According to Mieczysław Alber Krąpiec”**

Introduction

The topic of the doctoral thesis submitted for review is very important especially against the background of contemporary philosophy. There are at least two reasons for that. On the one hand, the outstanding figure of the Polish philosopher and his achievements are highlighted in this way. His ideas are worth further studies and propagation especially in English-speaking philosophy. On the other, an essential problem present in the contemporary philosophical debates is undertaken and systematically analysed even if in a negative form. These two reasons are not separate but, (as in the course of the work is shown) they can complement each other - at least to a certain degree. The concepts worked out by Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec can be applied to contemporary debates and these debates can take some advantage from original Krąpiec's ideas.

At the centre of the doctoral thesis there is a problem, which has been present in philosophical debates for a very long time. It concerns the basic question about the nature of the human being. Is this nature marked out by a real ability to transcend himself and the surrounding world or is this ability a kind of illusion? The question, although theoretical, has very far-fetched practical ramifications. Thus, on the one hand, we can easily realize that a very strong position of naturalistic philosophy denies in its starting point any transcendence of the human being. The latter is usually reduced to a bundle of personal characteristics, empirically verified; or he is understood as a bio-machine tending to preserve his biological life and to reproduce. On the other hand, the human being is perceived as a biological individual entangled in his basic instincts and needing of the upper structure of the state, the Leviathan, which dominates him and exercises almost total control over him. In the former position, the human being cannot transcend himself, in the latter he is subjected to the society and unable to transcend it.

Various philosophers have tried to overcome the scenarios of the subjection of the human being. The growing number of anti-naturalistic philosophers and thinkers who struggle

with totalitarian tendencies have formulated many interesting lines of critique and worked out many interesting ideas. However, they are often insufficient because they do not touch on the fundamental knowledge about the human being. Thus, it seems that without the anthropology drawing on the well-established project of metaphysics, proving the reality of human transcendence is but one-sided and incomplete. In comparison to this, careful analyses of the project of Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec brings with it a promise to deliver answers stemming from the level of the first philosophy.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has been prepared under supervision of Prof. Andrzej Maryniarczyk and Dr. Hab. Tomasz Duma at the Chair of Metaphysics of the Department of Philosophy (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin). The treatise is made up of an introduction, two parts, four chapters, conclusion, bibliography, appendices, table of contents, and list of abbreviations; total pages 298. The whole is written in English, although the author provided in appendices (Appendix 4) a summary and table of contents in Polish. Each chapter is provided with a short summary, which is helpful in understanding the main points analysed by the author.

The first part of the dissertation is dedicated to facts and kinds of explanations of human transcendence and the second part to dimensions and consequences of human transcendence. Each part is made up of two chapters and those chapters unfold what the author intends to present. He organizes those chapters around four essential factors. The first concerns the method of discovery of facts of human transcendence; the second is about the ways of explaining these facts; the third concerns aspects of human activity, which exemplify human transcendence in relation to nature and society and the fourth in turn is about theoretical and practical consequences stemming from affirmation or rejection of the basis of human transcendence.

In chapter one the author of the thesis concentrates on various facts revealing human transcendence. Following the analyses of Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, he unfolds facts discoverable through external experience, which in turn allow to acknowledge such important discoveries of the human being as its non-necessity, contingency, individuality and substantial unity. In the second part of the chapter, the author undertakes facts discoverable from internal experience, which consequently lead us to acknowledge such essential truths about the human being as personal identity, personal subjectivity of the "I" and rational freedom.

In chapter two the Ph. D. candidate points out to a couple of explanations of human transcendence. These explanations have, of course, anthropological and metaphysical

characters. And thus, he points to the composite unity of man, the composite identity of the “I”, contingency as ontological dependence and teleological finality of human nature. All those explanations were very extensively elaborated on by Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec and his collaborators from the Lublin School of Philosophy (quite recently Andrzej Maryniarczyk and his team of scholars).

In chapter three the author undertakes the task of characterizing particular dimensions of human transcendence. In accordance with the assumed classification, he groups them in two relations: to nature and to society. As to the former, the Ph.D. candidate extensively analyses cognitive, moral and affective domains; as to the latter, he concentrates his philosophical thinking on legal, socio-economic and political domains.

In chapter four the author delves into showing possible consequences of accepting or rejecting of human transcendence. He considers those consequences on two levels: theoretical and practical. Theoretical consequences he follows within such realms of investigations as philosophical anthropology (the theory of man), biology (the theory of the human body) and sociology (the theory of the social nature of man). Practical consequences, in turn, he follows in morality (moral autonomy and moral correction), in technology (limits of experimental modifications of human nature) and in religion (spiritual flourishing in religious praxis).

Formal Assessment of the Thesis

The thesis is written in good English. The author is apparently a native-speaker in this language. Generally he sticks to the British version of English although his spelling is occasionally American. There are some expressions that seem to be unusual, rather archaic, e.g. p. 31 – “in thiswise”, p. 32 – “moreso”, p. 71 – “howsoever”. Questionable is the use of the first person singular “I”. In works of this kind the author should use the first person plural “we” or apply a completely non-personal style. Footnotes and references are in order with some exception when the author does not put the full stop or fails to provide a source of citation, e.g. p. 12, no. 9; occasionally he also fails to put “p.” or “pp.” before number of pages.

Another problem concerns the writing of the Polish names and surnames as well as titles of Polish works. The author is not consistent here. It is important to decide at the very outset how such names and titles are written, with or without using Polish letters; e.g. Krąpiec or Krapiec; Wojtyła or Wojtyla, Jaroszyński or Jaroszynski. It seems reasonable to stick to a strictly Polish way of writing.

There are some uncertainties as to why the author inserts in the main texts passages in the Polish language. They are of course accompanied by the English translation in the footnotes but still it is not clear so why not to do so in the opposite way. The author draws on many Polish books and articles and translates their main ideas (and sometimes whole passages) in English and includes them in the main text. Why does he suddenly put in that a long Polish passage? (e.g., pp. 54, 132, 152). If this is an intentional move, it must be somehow justified.

Bibliography is very extensive and includes almost all necessary titles. However, there are some inconsistencies in how those titles are listed. For example, p. 272: there is “Karl, M., *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (...). As we can reasonably assume, the author means Marx, Karl? Also, the Ph.D. candidate is inconsistent in writing the titles of articles from periodicals: sometimes he gives all pages of a given title, and at other times he omits them and elsewhere he writes Polish “s.” (e.g. “s. 111-122”) or just provides only number of pages. These issues must be addressed if the author wants to present his thesis for publication.

It seems necessary to give name(s) of editors of collective works. Occasionally they are provided but in many cases they are lacking.

The strong point of the dissertation is a set of writings put in appendices. They shed some additional light on ideas and circumstances necessary to understand the Polish context of philosophizing (especially the context of the Lublin School of Philosophy) as well as some necessary ideas stemming from the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions.

Comments on the Thesis

The work by Michael Nnamdi Konye is a part of the Lublin School of Philosophy, which is considered, especially in the USA, as an original Polish version of the Thomism, sometimes called “Lublinism.” The topic undertaken is of primary importance not only in the Thomistic School of Philosophy but even more so in contemporary philosophy and culture. The dissertation can be considered as an attempt to prove and secure a transcendent character of the human being; and this approach is today heavily criticised and rejected by many prominent philosophers. As an example of the sphere where it is going on, let us take into account an above mentioned naturalistic philosophy with its popularity and even totalitarian tendency (a famous exclamation of one of American philosophers: “today everyone wants to be a naturalist!”).

The Ph.D. candidate proves that he has a good understanding of Mieczysław Krapiec's philosophy and knows how to express his main ideas especially concerning the human being. Michael N. Konye is skilled in using all other resources associated with the Lublin School of Philosophy, especially those worked out by successors of Krapiec.

The strong side of the dissertation is about showing the weaknesses of reductionist and dualistic concepts of the human being, and their inability to prove successfully how the human person transcends both her acts and inner experiences and material and external structures, including social ones. Another strong side of the thesis consists in showing a specificity of Krapiec's thought against the background of the Aristotelian philosophy, with a special emphasis on human existence rather than human essence, and on the aspect of subjectivity of the personal "I" (also other interesting comparisons of these kinds are included in the conclusions). Due to this reorientation in the perception on the human being, we are properly equipped to show how he/she is someone more than internal or external factors constituting the world, and consequently how the human person cannot be reduced to what is not personal.

In the last chapter the author deals with consequences of rejecting of human transcendence. He undertakes a topic of transhumanism but in a quite preliminary and general way. It would be good to set out in more detail this fashionable trend of thinking. Describing more details would be a good opportunity to show in practice how reductionism works against the human being and deforms his life. For example, it would be quite useful to describe the so-called uploading of the person advocated by Ray Kurzweil and on this example to show a failure of materialistic reductionism. Also, undertaking some more examples put forward by radical enhancers can serve the purpose, for example replacing some vital organs like the cortex with artificial counterparts. The question to Ph. D. candidate is: what problems with identity stem from this naturalistic project and how can we assess them from the standpoint of Krapiec's anthropological project?

Similarly, a very advanced debate taking place in the contemporary bioethics concerning the human person can help, by contrast, to show the strength of Krapiec's anthropology. The so-called post-Lockean concept of the person and its naturalization, so strongly advocated in today's bioethics by such philosophers like Joseph Fletcher, Peter Singer or Hugo T. Engelhard (to mention only a few), can be instructive in showing how a bundle concept of substance, underpinning this approach, is inadequate in explaining who the person is. Very interesting in those debates is an attempt to work out a coherent theory of the (naturalized) person, which ends up in withdrawal from thinking about the person altogether

and turning toward personal characteristics. Critical examination of this debate can be very useful in showing that without a concept of the composite structure of the person we are led to a total abandonment of the concept of the person itself and doomed to think about the human world in impersonal categories. The question to Ph.D. candidate is: can the concept of the one-category ontology with all its contemporary resources (offer e. g. by emergentism) prevent this dangerous scenario?

One of the last sections of the thesis undertakes the problem of transcendence of the human being in the encounter with God and in the sphere of religious experience. This is a very important part of the work. However, the author could make clearer references to philosophical positions denying human transcendence (discovered rationally) in this set of activities. Particularly, I want to ask Ph. D. candidate about the so-called Christian naturalism. This project is conducted by philosophers who rather subscribe to the Christian religion. Nevertheless, some of them question the concept of the soul either by replacing it with the concept of *psyche* (or *psych-ism*) or rejecting the concept altogether (see e.g. Kevin Corcoran and some authors, in his book: *Soul, Body, and Survival. Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 2001). The specific problem: can we as human beings participate in the transcendent sphere revealed to us by the Christian religion when we are devoid of transcendence, present and discovered, in our human nature?

Conclusions

The doctoral thesis of Michael Nnamdi Konye is important and well prepared. The author has studied the thought of Mieczysław Albert Krapiec in a very detailed and competent way. He possesses a good understanding of classical philosophy conducted in the Lublin School of Philosophy and knows how to apply it into various spheres of contemporary philosophical debates (but not only such debates). Critical remarks do not concern main points or the methodology of the thesis. The questions directed to Ph. D. candidate have the purpose to clarify some aspects of his analyses and show further and more detailed applications of Krapiec's anthropology.

I declare that the doctoral thesis of Michael Nnamdi Konye meets requirements set by the Polish law concerning doctoral studies and I submit the application to the Council of the Department of Philosophy to permit the doctoral student to participate in further stages of doctoral proceedings.

Łs. Grzegorz Hosiub