

Faustinus I. Ugwuanyi

Krapiec on the Specificity of Man

While France had its Étienne Gilson (1884–1978) and Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), and Germany had its Josef Pieper (1904–1997)—Poland had its Mieczysław Albert Krapiec (1921–2008).¹ He was “a philosopher, theologian, humanist, co-founder of the Lublin Philosophical School, rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, initiator and chairman of the scientific committee of *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.”² His academic legacy now extends its influence over many minds who see the originality of his thought, especially in the field of metaphysics and philosophical anthropology.³

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¹ The original Polish pronunciation of *Mieczysław Albert Krapiec* is: *mʲɛtʂi'swaf albert krompyetz*.

² Wojciech Chudy, “*Mieczysław Albert Krapiec in The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 549.

³ See, for example, Gabriela Besler, “The Connection between M. A. Krapiec’s Existential Thomism and P. F. Strawson’s Analytic Philosophy,” in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale su L’Umanesimo Cristiano nel III Millennio: La Prospettiva di Tommaso d’Aquino 21–25 Settembre 2003*, vol. 2 (Vatican City 2005), 194–203; Natalia Kunat, “The Good as the Motive of Human Action According to Mieczysław Albert Krapiec,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 3 (2014): 155–166; Tomasz Duma, “To Know or to Think? The Controversy over the Understanding of Philosophical Knowledge in the Light of the Studies of Mieczysław A. Krapiec,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 3 (2014): 277–299; Arkadiusz Gudaniec, “The Foundations of Mieczysław Albert Krapiec’s Metaphysical Personalism,” *Forum Philosophicum* 19, no. 1 (2014): 61–96; Fr. Paweł Tarasiewicz, “Gilson, Krapiec and Christian Philosophy Today,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 4, no. 4 (October–December 2015): 381–392; Fr. Tomasz Duma, “Personalism in the Lublin School of Philosophy (Card. Karol Wojtyła, Fr. Mieczysław A. Krapiec),” *Studia Gilsoniana* 5, no. 2 (April–June 2016): 365–390; Rafał D. Grabowski, “La concepción finalista del

This paper aims at presenting selected insights Krąpiec had about the specificity of man. It will start with making a methodological remark about the correlation between Krąpiec's anthropology and metaphysics. Then, it will try to grasp essentials in his interpretation of attributes traditionally indicated as defining man alone, namely *animal rationale*, *animal culturale*, *animal sociale*, *homo faber*, and *homo religiosus*. Note that the term *man* in Krąpiec's philosophical anthropology, used in this paper, is equivalent of the Polish *człowiek*, which includes all human beings, regardless of their sex—i.e., both men and women.⁴

Anthropology: A Metaphysics of Man

Krąpiec's main philosophical interests are focused on metaphysics and anthropology. He holds that the classical understanding of science developed in the Aristotelian tradition should form the basis of every rational knowledge and inquiry. Our daily experience then should provide the basis for scientific knowledge and be the starting point for philosophy. He appeals to the immediate experience of being (first cognitive act) which explains how the human intellect first comes into contact with reality. The conception of immediate experience, also known as that of existential judgment, describes how man's pre-reflective or

derecho natural en Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec," *Cuadernos de Filosofía* IX (1999): 391–472; Rafał D. Grabowski, "La ley natural, el derecho positivo y los derechos humanos en el pensamiento de Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec," *Colloquia Theologica Adalbertina. Systematica* 3 (2002): 7–30; Marek Krawczyk, *L'ente intenzionale come chiave nel dialogo tra la fenomenologia di R. Ingarden e il tomismo esistenziale di M. A. Krąpiec* (Kraków: Instytut Teologiczny Księży Misjonarzy, 2005).

⁴ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*," *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 597–664.

spontaneous knowledge is the basis for the cognitive relation between the knowing subject and the known object.⁵

For Krapiec, metaphysics is the primary domain of philosophy. He defines metaphysics as “the general theory of being, where being is understood primarily as the concrete existing thing.”⁶ Metaphysics, therefore, is a first philosophy upon which other disciplines of philosophy are dependent, including philosophical anthropology.⁷

Krapiec’s anthropology studies man from a holistic point of view: it considers man from within and without. Man, according to Krapiec, does not have a direct intuition of his nature but can get to know it through the analysis of his actions and passions. This “indirect way of getting to know man through his activities and creativity can show us who man is, what the meaning of his life is, what his essential functions and the conditions for their attainment are, and what man’s destiny is.”⁸

For Krapiec, man is “a concretely living being of a corporeal and spiritual nature.”⁹ Man is then a unity of material and immaterial elements and, as such, is the subject matter of philosophical anthropology

⁵ See Chudy, “Mieczysław Albert Krapiec in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,” 555.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 553.

⁷ On the relation between metaphysics and other domains of philosophy, see Mieczysław A. Krapiec, Andrzej Maryniarczyk, “Metaphysics in the Lublin Philosophical School,” trans. Hugh McDonald, *Studia Gilsoniana* 5, no. 2 (April–June 2016): 422–426. On the nature of philosophical anthropology as such, see Mieczysław A. Krapiec, “Towards an Integral Anthropology,” trans. Hugh McDonald, *Angelicum* 77, no. 1–2 (2000): 43: “Philosophical anthropology explains the human being in the context of «nature», that is, in the context of the portion of reality which is accessible to man in his natural cognition, by the senses and reason. This philosophical explanation is the foundation for understanding man as the source of personal activities in various human societies.”

⁸ Mieczysław A. Krapiec, *I-Man: An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology*, trans. M. Lescoe et al. (New Britain, Conn.: Mariel Publications, 1983), 2.

⁹ Krapiec, “Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,” 597.

which is nothing but a metaphysics of man whose end is “to present the structure of human being, and to show and explain the foundations of man’s transcendence.”¹⁰

Man’s Specific Differences

Animal Rationale

Being an *animal rationale*, which distinctively makes man a human being, means that it is man only that acquires knowledge for the sake of knowledge alone (*scire propter ipsum scire*).¹¹ Man’s cognition, that is, ability to make abstractions and to create ideas, lies at the basis of scientific knowledge as an organized, methodical and fundamentally rational activity. Krapiec rejects the Cartesian notion of cognition as the consciousness of clear and distinct ideas.¹² He instead sees cognition as the understanding of a concrete thing under the aspect of a grasped meaning, that is, as a derivative of “a system of signs: (a) speech-gestures-writings, (b) concepts, fostered by the mind of the meanings of our speech or writing, (c) the designated things, material objects.”¹³

Krapiec identifies two aspects of a cognitive act: external utterance and its inner sense. The external utterance is a form of speech, writing or gesture, and is only a physical vehicle of an inner meaning. The sense of the external utterance refers then to the meaning of an expression articulated through the medium of signs. It ultimately results in understanding a determined cognitive content which man has “cognitively” experienced.¹⁴ Krapiec explains that,

¹⁰ Chudy, “Mieczysław Albert Krapiec in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,” 558.

¹¹ Cf. Krapiec, *I-Man*, 35.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, 119.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 121.

Everything, whatever man has accomplished in nature within the limits of his existence, is the result of understanding the sense of his utterance or, precisely the result of human cognition—which awakened, from the beginning of the sensation of a perceived particular object; but it is nevertheless a particular representation of a thing.¹⁵

Man as an *animal rationale* is constantly aware of the formation of concepts and judgments taking place in him. This awareness gives credence to the existence of a supra-sensible, non-organic source of concepts and judgments which philosophy calls *reason* or *intellect*.¹⁶ Everything which bears a human stamp—like science, morality, technology, including culture and civilization—is primarily derived from intellectual cognition or somewhat bound with the life of the human intellect (βίος θεωρητικός¹⁷) which defines the specificity of man.

Animal Culturale

Since he is an *animal culturale*,¹⁸ man manifests his specificity in culture. For Krapiec, culture denotes “everything which comes from man as human activity or production.”¹⁹ It is also a kind of the transformation of nature which is capable of producing beauty.²⁰ Cultural

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 121–122.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 150.

¹⁷ More on the *bios theoretikos*, see Piotr Jaroszyński, *Science in Culture*, trans. Hugh McDonald (Amsterdam; New York, N.Y.: 2007), 13–16.

¹⁸ Man is regarded as an *animal culturale*, for example, by St. Thomas Aquinas. See Dario Sessa, “Attualità e fecondità del contributo di San Tommaso alla fondazione di una pedagogia cristiana,” *Rivista e Letteratura Ecclesiastica* XXIII, no. 2 (2017): 112: “Per S. Tommaso l’uomo è un *animal culturale* e la stessa natura avvalorata tale assunto, in quanto dota l’essere umano di due strumenti: la *ratio* e la *manus*, con cui egli gestisce se stesso, la propria vita, i propri bisogni. [For St. Thomas, man is an *animal culturale* which is supported by nature itself, as it endows man with two instruments: *ratio* and *manus*, with which he manages himself, his life, his needs.]”

¹⁹ Krapiec, *I-Man*, 170.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

beauty is characteristically human—it is an expression of rationality that defines man. Since it cannot do without activities of the intellect, such as concepts, judgments or reasonings, culture also means the rationalization or intellectualization of nature. Nature, however—beside non-human creatures—also includes man himself. Thus, when they are subject to human rationality, all the forms of the transformation of nature—including human nature as well—are manifestations of culture.²¹ Krąpiec explains that “the manifestations of the human spirit, insofar as they are guided by the intellect, human work and activity caused by the human intellect and creations of material nature which have been changed by the human intellect, constitute, in the widest sense, the domain of culture.”²²

Animal Sociale

Man is an *animal sociale*.²³ It means that he is disposed by nature to communicate with other persons. For Krąpiec, this communication is an interpersonal relationship that begins as an “I-Thou” relationship and then leads to a collective form of interpersonal life “which can be called ‘we’ and which is equivalent to a social form of living, which constitutes some new, distinct, real and truly human way of life.”²⁴

The collective bond, according to Krąpiec, is formed by the common good which only can be achieved within the context of a society. Ultimately, the society is destined to take the form of a community which guarantees a personal development, for there “individual persons

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ In Greek: πολιτικὸν ζῷον. Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* I, 1253a: “[I]t is clear that the city-state is a natural growth, and that man is by nature a political animal.” (*Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 21, trans. H. Rackham [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1944], available online [see the section: References]).

²⁴ Krąpiec, *I-Man*, 244.

participate as subjects by realizing that which constitutes the highest personal values and which ultimately opens it to the highest degree, by opening itself to an absolute, objective good, namely the Absolute Being.”²⁵ Such a community—fostering human dignity and personal development—is then a model for all the forms of social life, from the family to the state. All these, however, would not be possible without a rational and free human nature which makes man a specific being in the world—i.e., a person.²⁶

Homo Faber

As a *homo faber*,²⁷ man lives in the world that constitutes the context of his biological and psycho-spiritual life. Man’s realization of himself is only possible through the world, for man “uses the world of things as a means for himself and for self-expression.”²⁸

Homo faber is closely associated with the term *progress* which is another eloquent expression of man’s specificity: it is man as *homo faber* who is behind progress. It clearly manifests itself in the various areas of social organization which aims at making the world a better place to live.²⁹ Man’s ability to use tools requires mastering the world, which becomes possible due to the development of science and technology. The history of science traces the stages of social progress from the age of knapped stone (the *Paleolithic*), through the periods of

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 34: “We mean, rather, a human community of rational and free beings, a community which is an expression of a rational and free human nature. For a human community is a community of persons, and therefore, of people who are striving to develop and improve their knowledge and various intellectual endeavors.”

²⁷ See Maria da Venza Tillmanns, “The Need to Move Beyond Homo Faber,” *Philosophy Now* 106 (February/March 2015): 13: “Homo faber is a concept articulated by Hannah Arendt and Max Scheler referring to humans as controlling the environment through tools.”

²⁸ Krapiec, *I-Man*, 239.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 34.

smoothed stone (the *Neolithic*), bronze and iron, to the present era of pervasive computing.³⁰ Tool production appears as a result of man's self-realization, for it manifests his cognitive sense, that is, it first results from the activity of the human intellect and then is used by the intellect.³¹ For his part, Krapiec sees a strong correlation between progress and the collective "we." He explains:

[T]he basis for human welfare and progress are, fundamentally, cognitive achievements, especially scientific. Scientific progress which takes place, before all, in its specializations surpasses the capability not only of an individual man, but even of smaller social groups. Scientific progress, in its transmission to the next generations, demands collective effort in the attainment and consolidation of theoretical achievements. For this reason, too, value and genuine good which flow from scientific knowledge are something universal communal, something that exceeds the possibility, production, and attainment by one individual. Hence, a communally existing form like 'we' is necessary—a form which has for its object a realization of scientifically-knowing value.³²

Homo Religiosus

Krapiec holds that the religious nature of man has a twofold expression. Intrinsically, it is manifested in man's inescapable reflection on death—man sees the whole cycle of his maturation and ageing as an inevitable journey toward death.³³ Thus, the very fact of man's religiosity can be recognized as a desire to survive death, a desire for life after

³⁰ Cf. Alan M. Greaves and Barbara Helwing, "Archaeology in Turkey: The Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages, 1997–1999," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 3 (July 2001): 463–511.

³¹ Cf. Aleksandr Spirkin, "Man and Culture," in *Dialectical Materialism*, ch. 5: "On the Human Being and Being Human," available online (see the section: References).

³² Krapiec, *I-Man*, 245.

³³ No wonder that Martin Heidegger calls man a *being-towards-death*. See Heidegger's *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 298.

death.³⁴ Extrinsicly, man's religious nature, as we read in the *I-Man*, consists in "man's very reference and direction to a transcendent reality."³⁵ The subjective basis for man's inclination to a transcendent reality lies in his being dynamized. For Krapiec, the term *dynamized being* means "one who has certain dispositions and who realizes (actualizes) them in contact with the world and other personal beings, through respective activity in relation to their potentialities."³⁶

Krapiec maintains that religion makes a vital contribution to the realization of man's personal potentials. For religion is a bond of all kinds of human activity—it is the only factor which penetrates both *theoria*, *praxis*, and *poiesis*, to concentrate them on the vertical transcendence of man. Consequently, separating man from religion would be tantamount to depriving him of his vertical transcendence which would result in subordinating him to a kind of ideology (e.g., anarchism, communism, imperialism, libertinism, militarism, Nazism, racism, secularism, or the like).³⁷ Krapiec believes that both the protection from ideology and the actualization of personal potentials come from the same source: man's intellect and will which, as his highest potentials, are actualized and perfected by their proper objects—respectively truth and goodness which are ultimately identified with God.³⁸

³⁴ Cf. Krapiec, *I-Man*, 35. Krapiec concludes that the very thinking of his own death is a hidden confirmation of man's transcendence. It is also a proof that man's "I" can think of everything except the non-existence of itself. For man cannot cognitively experience his death "in some isolated cognitive act"—what he can do is to "constantly experience it in an *accompanying* way . . . in [his] various cognitive-appetitive psychic experiences" (*ibid.*, 341).

³⁵ Zofia J. Zdybicka, "Man and Religion," in Krapiec, *I-Man*, 278.

³⁶ Krapiec, *I-Man*, 305.

³⁷ Cf. Tarasiewicz, "Gilson, Krapiec and Christian Philosophy Today," 390.

³⁸ To show how the human person is actualized through cognition and freedom (love), Krapiec explains that the object of the intellect is truth and of the will is goodness. Thus, while the human intellect is disposed to the cognition of truth, the will is disposed to the attainment of goodness. Ultimately, man's intellect and will (desire) are oriented to the Absolute which is the highest truth and goodness. Although the proper object of

Conclusion

Krapiec's philosophical anthropology points to the conclusion that, although such names as *animal rationale*, *animal culturale*, *animal sociale*, *homo faber*, and *homo religiosus*, aptly describe the specificity of man, they all are reducible to a common denominator, that is, to the fact that man is a person.

Why do we only call man a person? Why would it be inappropriate to apply the name *person* to a cat or a dog? Krapiec answers that a cat or a dog cannot be regarded as a person, because it "is only an example of a nature," that is, because "its operation is determined by animal nature, its knowing is marked out by material stimuli and the determined reception of nature."³⁹ In contrast, man is a person, because he not only transcends "the works of pure biology,"⁴⁰ that is, "a defined genetic code,"⁴¹ but can also overcome "the cultural code . . . and find his own personal way of acting."⁴²

the intellect is the essence of material things, the intellectual cognition realizes itself by seeking the essence of these things (since its end is truth in general) and by tracing their causes back to the Absolute truth. Thus, the full actualization of the intellect's potentiality is only realized by direct contact with the Absolute Truth—God. The same applies to the will. Just as the human intellect is oriented to the cognition of all what is true, so the will is oriented to the good in general. The essence of love as a desire is to cognize and unite with the good. Thus, the ultimate goal of human love is the Absolute Goodness—God. In sum, man's actualization and assurance of his total satisfaction are fully achieved only by a personal bond with the perfect personal Absolute Being—God. See also Chudy, "*Mieczysław Albert Krapiec in The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*," 553: "According to Krapiec, without an appeal to existence as the fundamental reason for being, metaphysics cannot be cultivated, and philosophy becomes at most mythology or ideology."

³⁹ *Conversations with Father Krapiec: On Man*, trans. Weronika Hansen (Lublin: PTTA, 2012), 84.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 70.

Krapiec on the Specificity of Man

SUMMARY

The author presents selected insights offered by Mieczysław A. Krapiec, O.P., about the specificity of man. He starts with making a methodological remark about the correlation between Krapiec's anthropology and metaphysics. Then, he tries to grasp essentials in Krapiec's interpretation of attributes traditionally indicated as defining man alone, namely *animal rationale*, *animal culturale*, *animal sociale*, *homo faber*, and *homo religiosus*. Finally, he concludes that, although all these attributes aptly describe the specificity of man, they all are reducible to the fact that man is a person.

KEYWORDS

Mieczysław A. Krapiec, man, human being, human person, specificity of man, anthropology, metaphysics, *animal rationale*, *animal culturale*, *animal sociale*, *homo faber*, *homo religiosus*.

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