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Moral life as a journey towards human transcendence²

Introduction

The moral life as a journey, the end of which is human transcendence. This can be shown from the perspective of aretology³, whereby ‘virtues’ can be metaphorically described in terms of the German word ‘Verkehrsmittel’ (English: ‘means of transportation’) by which the moral voyage towards human transcendence is accomplished. Seen in this metaphorical light, the need to board the ship of classical virtue ethics in view of attaining the destination, human transcendence, is indispensable. Expressed in a more lucid language, one could say that in order to attain human transcendence in practical moral behaviour, the human person must develop moral skills.

It is however reassuring to note that this requirement for skills of excellence is not exclusive to morality alone but obtains in every dimension of human acti-

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2 This article is originally written as part of my dissertation thesis: “The Basis of Human Transcendence According to Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec” which was defended in the Faculty of Philosophy of The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin on Wednesday, 11th December, 2019.

3 Aretology is the theory of moral virtues. It focuses on the understanding of the nature, acquisition, and loss of skills for excelling in moral behavior. Central to aretology is the study of the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and justice.

vities, broadly grouped by classical tradition into theoretical (θεωρία), practical/moral (πραξίς), productive (ποίησις), and artistic creativity/craftmanship (τεχνη)] activities. Consequently, as Piotr Jaroszynski had noted, “We should not be afraid that the theory of virtues would mechanize man’s moral life. Virtues are moral skills and habits. Just as we must develop skills in art, science, and other parts of our lives, we must also develop moral skills. The philosophical theory of virtues is not intended to make us into trained animals. A trained animal does what we want, but an educated man with a solid ethical formation knows best how to do what he wants”⁴.

With the aid of moral virtues, the human person is equipped to perform the fundamental moral act of decision to realize in each practical situation, the moral principle of choosing to ‘do good and avoid evil’. When this moral principle is actualized, thanks to the personal decision of the human moral agent, the result is the orientation of man to the perfection of his nature, hence towards attaining the full realization of his being as a person. This orientation towards personhood, towards the end which perfects human nature is meant here as the moral journey towards human transcendence.

This article attempts the exposition of the unfolding dynamics of this journey, which begins precisely with the act of moral decision, and gradually orients the potencies in human nature towards their end, which the good of man as a person. I shall proceed in the following order: First I shall attempt to situate moral actions within its social context with the aim of demonstrating the necessity of the society (e.g. family) as an objective source for the acquisition of seminal sensitivities to moral values (e.g. good, bad), otherwise the human being falls into the danger of moral relativism, to which the individual conscience can be easily drawn. Second, I shall discuss the understanding of moral perfection as a realization of human transcendence. Third, I shall turn my attention to the realization of human transcendence in the experience of moral correction. Finally, I shall consider decision

4 P. Jaroszynski, M. Anderson, *Ethics: The Drama of the Moral Life*, Colorado: Socratic Press, 2013, p. xxvii.

as the ultimate moral act of human transcendence in overcoming evil.

The social context of the moral journey towards human transcendence

Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec has argued that several values which implicate man's personal transcendence require the necessity of the society, since these are values which individuals alone are not able to achieve on their own. As a justification for this claim, he went on to demonstrate that this claim is manifestly evident in cognitive, emotional and volitive spheres of our theoretical and practical life:

Values which surpass the possibility of particular human individuals are, undoubtedly, cognitive values, values in the sphere of human volitional, emotional acts, as well as values in the area of productive-creative activity. The first one stands at the basis of a science, understood in a sociological sense, and hence of various social arrangements which are ordered to a scientific knowledge and an objective development of scientific thought, not merely for the use of one person, but for the use of a great number of people, even for generations of people. ... In like manner, the good will of an individual man is not enough for the realization of a good – even if a purely moral good – as for example, of a communal justice, living in peace... Only a society can effectively guarantee the realization of an interhuman moral good. Finally, the entire area of creativity, which is linked with industry and technology, clearly exceeds the possibility of an individual... [So also], the development of the personal “I” [for instance in friendship, marriage/family and religion] takes place through the relations, “I-Thou”, which presuppose a personal “openness” of a [human] person [to other human or divine persons respectively]⁵.

The above presentation of the context of human transcendence in relation to society coincides with our common-sense expectations that the social goal of theoretical activities (e.g. science) and practical activities (e.g. technology) ought to be the realization of common good. It is however significant that this social context serves as a field of opportunity which enables the human person to experience the

5 M. A. Krąpiec, *I-Man: An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology*, Connecticut: Mar-
riel Publications, 1983, p. 244.

personal transcendence (i.e. perfection, fulfillment) of his natural capacities much more than he could have attained on his own. In the moral sphere this is true of the acquisition of the moral sensitivity, given that on its own, the conscience of each individual human being is not sufficient to work out all the moral truths. For this reasons, individual human beings need the social context of the acquisition of moral values, otherwise it will be impossible to avoid the danger of relativism (often associated with the otherwise correct appeal to the dictate of conscience).

Of course, it has to be stated that the ethical appeal to individual conscience is in itself a buffer to the other extreme danger of absolutism, arising from the overt enthronement of social conformity to norms and duties to the detriment of the personal subjective source of morality which is the conscience. The moral values are therefore formed from the amalgam of subjective sources (conscience) and the objective sources (norms) of the moral life. As much as moral responsibility lies with the subjective character of the fundamental moral act – decision, it has to be underscored that the role played by the social context in the acquisition of moral values is indispensable. This is because the basic moral principle of *synderesis* ‘doing good and avoiding evil’ requires that the individual learns first which moral values are ‘good’ and which moral values are ‘evil’.

This moral sensitivity belongs to the initial stages of conscience formation as well as to the continuous adjustment of the rule of conscience to the objective sources of morality. It is through the personal communion and participation of individual members of the society in the search for what constitutes the common-good for the society, that the seminal consciousness of moral values are inculcated in the individual, beginning from the very first experience of social life in the family. As the individual grows up, the acquired seminal consciousness of moral values is then gradually re-assessed in the light of a practical answer to the question of how the good of each being (i.e. nature of being) is perfected in the context of the actions which pertain to the moral sphere.

In a sense, morality is a journey in search of the good of being such that when we speak of the being of the society, we search for the good of the society which

we understand as the ‘common-good’ and when we speak of the being of man, we search for the good of human person. Significantly, since the society is populated by human beings, we underscore that the **values** of both goods, i.e. the end towards which ‘common-good’ (society) and ‘good of man’ (individual) coincide as the human value, which we can call by its more appropriate name “personal good”. It is so-called because as Immanuel Kant reminds the ‘person’ is an ‘end-good’, and as such we can say that the moral journey has as its destination, human transcendence which is the realization of the good of man, precisely as a person.

The above considerations bring us to the moral question of the ‘autonomous-heteronomous ‘sources’ of the moral law (subjective and objective), which is focused on the legitimate sources of morality. To be sure, conscience is the autonomous subjective source of the moral law, but this autonomy of the conscience is in principle subject to the assumption of a formed conscience. So the appeal to the right to conscience has to be made with the conscious acknowledgment of the moral responsibility to form one’s conscience.

So also if we speak of the heteronomous source of the moral as outside the human subject, it still remains a practical question as to how these objective sources are reflective of the moral good of man in accordance with man’s nature as a person. In formulating heteronomous social norms, which are morally relevant, the heteronomous law-giver is equally bound to take into account the moral transcendence of the human subjects to whom these norms apply. The human beings in the society are persons composed of body and soul and whose good as persons is realized to the extent the social norms promote the perfection of their composite nature as persons. This is because, “man is not a mere part of society or state.... Society is not something that exists in and of itself; its existence is rooted in people who are subjects or substances”.⁶

As a substance, man’s nature is not linked to the nature of another being (i.e. even if we speak of the ‘being of society’ or state), the human being has a specific nature or principle of operation, which as substance does not originate from the

6 Jaroszyński, *Ethics: The Drama of Moral Life*, p. XXV.

society, and hence transcends the society in this sense. For this reason, the objective source of the moral life which orients him to his personal transcendence must respect his own nature rather than his social situatedness. Any heteronomous norm which denies or suffocates this personalistic measure of the 'telos' of human nature, cannot be said to be an objective source of morality suitable for human transcendence.

Moral perfection of man as a realization of human transcendence

The goal of morality is the realization of the good in practical action. Being a metaphysician, Albert Krapiec readily accepts the metaphysical understanding of the good as a transcendental property of beings. Given that the transcendentals are convertible to being, it can thus be said that it is only when we connect good to being that we can ask: what is the good of this particular being or that particular being? Such a question leads us to the consideration of the nature or principle of operation of the said being.

In the case of the human being, it can be said that the perfection of human nature constitutes the good for man just as the perfect realization of the nature of any other being (e.g. the perfect realization of 'sharpness', which is the nature of a knife, makes us speak of a 'good' knife). And as we have noted in the preceding section, such a realization of man's moral nature (of making decisions for doing good and avoiding evil) is human transcendence in moral life.

In other words, the man who has acquired the necessary moral skills to make decisions which orients him to habitually perform good actions is the one who has realized human transcendence in the moral domain. Conversely, human transcendence is not realized when the human person takes a decision that dis-orients him from doing good, and so retrogressively directs him away from avoiding evil.

From our experience, it is not always the case that we are able to realize this moral transcendence but since our nature is oriented towards being a person, we can either affirm this nature by our decision for good or we fail to affirm this personal nature by decisions for evil. As P. Jaroszynski puts it, "Morality is per-

manently and essentially inscribed into human life. Each person is the author of his own decisions, and these decisions are either good or evil”.⁷

In fact, for each human being, the moral life is a journey either towards *transcendence* or a journey of *retroscendence*, depending on our particular decisions in the moral sphere. Of course, as expected the ability to make the good moral decisions is facilitated in proportion to our habitual dispositions – i.e. according to the moral virtues we have acquired. Moral virtues are essentially related to our rational faculties of the intellect and the will, both of which help us to generally *know* the good to be done and the evil to be avoided, as well as help us to *decide* (*choose or will*) to do the known good as well as avoid the known evil in concrete practical circumstances.

The experience of human transcendence in moral correction

Moral correction is a specific experience of human transcendence given that moral transcendence consists of the perfection of human nature as person. Moral correction can be understood as a *return* to the path towards the perfection of human nature, which perfection is what is referred to as human transcendence in the moral domain. If this is the case, then it becomes important, to consider whether we know exactly this nature towards which a journey of return is being made.

Krapiec’s understanding human nature, is wholistic as it does not only focus on the rational nature of the human soul but subscribes to the composite unity of man from body and soul principles. He takes into consideration not only the experience of rational acts related to the soul, which of course highlights the intellectual and volitive core of moral actions, but he goes further to demonstrate that it is reductive to consider only the soul as *the* human nature in much the same way it is equally reductive to speak of human nature as constituted only by the body. The one reduction is characteristic of Platonic anthropology which is spiritualistic and makes the human being an angelic person; whereas the other reduction which is materialistic is prevalent amongst naturalists. He argues that the reductionist

7 Jarozyński, *Ethics: The Drama of the Moral Life*, p. xxiv.

conception of human nature has consequences for the understanding of human transcendence especially in relation to the way of demonstrating the human experience of moral autonomy.

If one takes the materialistic reductionist standpoint which denies the existence of the soul, what is left is the materialistic determination of the body which leads to moral determinism and thus the loss of moral autonomy and moral freedom. Such reductionism will also absolutize Freudian psychologism of the moral life as grounded in unconscious drives of the libido, which jettisons the traditional safeguards for moral correction as well as makes non-sense of the striving for virtues as anti-dote to overcoming moral evil.

The more correct standpoint which aligns with the truth of human transcendence is the understanding of human nature as constituted from the composite structure of unity of the body and soul. Given that human transcendence is the perfection of man's nature (as person), if we misunderstand this nature, then we will equally misunderstand human transcendence – either as the perfection of the nature of human soul or the perfection of the human body, rather than correctly as the perfection of the composite nature of man as a person.

The Krapiec's view thus leads us to the consideration of such manifestations of human nature as emotions, which are based on the bodily constituent of human nature. This broadened consideration of human nature also raises the question of the influence of human emotions in moral decisions. In a sense the drama of morality becomes even more interesting especially from the point of view of the role of such virtues as temperance. I do not intend to engage in a wider discussion of these additional issues (i.e. role of emotion in moral decision or the question of moral virtues associated with the training of bodily aspects of human nature), but it suffices to highlight Matthew Anderson's common examples from our lived experience that Krapiec's vision of human transcendence in moral domain is in tandem with our common experience of the moral drama: "A soldier who faces an enemy, a teenager who resists the temptation to drugs or pre-marital sex or

a business person who is honest in his dealings”.⁸

It is obvious from these examples that the virtues needed for training our nature for moral transcendence are not only those connected with the rational faculties of intellect and will (e.g. prudence and justice) but also those virtues which are relevant for training the psychological and bodily aspects of our nature (e.g. courage and temperance). It is thus evident that Krapiec’s theory of human nature which takes into account the composite unity of body and soul is better suited for the discussion of human transcendence in the moral domain.

The above determination of human nature which reflects our experience of this nature in the moral domain is significant if we are to consider moral correction as a return to the path that orients man towards moral transcendence. This is so because what we aim to achieve in moral correction is to galvanize our decisions for good and evil into a habitual disposition for the moral choices in consonant with our nature. In other words, to acquire the habit of disposing the potentials of our composite nature to “firmly, promptly and with pleasure (*firmiter, prompte, delectabiliter*)”⁹ become part of us, hence we are said to be good persons (moral persons) or evil persons (immoral persons), thanks to the facility with which we are inclined to decide to do good and/or avoid evil. Corroborating Krapiec’s views Karol Wojtyła notes, that “good and evil manifest themselves in actions, and by actions they become a part of man”.¹⁰

Following the above considerations, the ultimate practical *telos*¹¹ of moral cor-

8 M. Anderson, Preface to the English edition of *Ethics: The Drama of the Moral Life*, p. xiii.

9 Krapiec, Foreword to *Ethics: The Drama of Moral Life*, p. xxi.

10 K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn: oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 60.

11 The ultimate subjective *telos* of moral action is the *actor’s personal good* which is a “good of the moral subject” or as contradistinguished from the “the good in the moral object” or *ethical good of the action*. The personal good is not the good intention of the human person but rather the *wholistic* good of the human substance as a person. It is common to speak of good “in” the object from its two aspects: revealed subjectively (intention) or objectively (action) hence the ethical source-principles (arche) of the evaluation of moral good “of action” implicates two aspects of ‘object’ of moral act as relevant source-principles

rection can be described as man's moral freedom from the constraints which make his decisions to realize his good as person or to avoid evil. Freed from these constraints the human person is thus said to have the experience of moral transcendence. Put in another way, moral correction aims at removing the constraints towards the practical actualization of the personal (rational) potencies for moral behaviour. In this sense, it consists in the overcoming of moral evil plaguing the individual for the purposes of promoting the flourishing of the moral good of man as person.

Moral transcendence therefore entails the actualization of the faculties of the personal principle of moral life, namely the soul – not only with respect to the core moral habitus¹² of the intellect and will, but also other ancilliary habitus associated with the emotional life in so far these are capable of constituting constraints for moral decision.

In the light of Krapiec's insistence on the composite understanding of human nature, we already noted that the discussion on moral transcendence should take into account those bodily-based virtue skills for self-control in addition to the consideration of the moral habitus of the intellect and will. Nonetheless, the moral habitus of the intellect and will are central to moral behavior, hence it will be quite helpful to consider how the experience of moral correction implicates the re-orientation of these two faculties towards the path to human transcendence in the moral sphere.

Accordingly, we underscore that in our experience, volition as an act of the will which desires the good as its proper object, can sometimes go contrary to the truth-value of the being which the intellect presents but this is even more worrisome when the theory of moral values of the person is itself defective, hence the

(arche) for imputing responsibility to the moral subject but ultimately, it has to be underscored that the good in the object (action) is not the same with the good of the subject-actor (person).

12 See M. K. Spencer, "The Category of Habitus: Accidents, Artifacts and Human Nature" in: *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, volume 79, no. 1, (January 2015): 113-154, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.2015.0023>

practical consequences which this defective vision of moral values entails becomes even more fundamental than a mere moral mistake. This more fundamental discrepancy between the truth-value and the good-value of moral acts describes why moral evil in the human person persists irrespective of whether the evil-doer is rationally well-informed or not. Knowing good and evil helps to shape our moral decisions but in the long-run, the decision to do good or evil does not spring directly from our knowledge. Instead, our personal decisions to act spring from the moral autonomy of the will¹³, which if in accord with the metaphysical good (*telos*) of the human person is called ‘right desire’ (*rectitude voluntatis*).

In other words, human transcendence is actualized in practical terms to the extent that the human being experiences this *recta voluntatis*, which aligns free acts of decisions to the existential contingency of human nature whose teleological flourishing is the actualization of the full potencies of man as a personal being. Moral autonomy achieves *recta voluntatis* also when it is in accord with the transcendent heteronomy of the moral law, derived from the transcendental property of the good in the objective action which decisions eventually execute. Thus, both from the subjective perspective of personal flourishing and the objective perspective of the moral law, *recta voluntatis* is the alignment of moral good to the metaphysical good. Ignatius Dec has succinctly presented Krapiec’s argument in this regard as follows:

Zdaniem Krapca wyjaśnienie faktu wolności winno uwzględniać ontyczne aspekty ludzkiego bytowania i działania, precyzację pojęcia wolność i analizę mechanizmu wolnego działania... Byt ludzki jest nie tylko kruchy, niestały – jednym słowem: przygodny w swoim istnieniu, ale także w swoim działaniu. Skoro istnienie człowieka jest przygodne, to i działanie jest przygodne. O działaniu ludzkim Krapiec mówi, więc, że „nosi na sobie piętno przemijania i dążenia

13 Moral autonomy of the will is the subjective pole of decisions which is contrasted from the objective pole good which the will desires. For Krapiec, such a difference can be accentuated by distinguishing the “I” who wills from the “not I” that is willed. Whereas the “I” is the subject that wills, the object that I will is “in statu obiectali” or/and “Gegenstand welcher intendiert ist” Cf. M. A. Krapiec, *I-Man*, 173/7.

ku śmierci, a więc przygodności, która w intelektualnym poznaniu przejawia się w możliwości zarówno prawdziwego, jak i błędnego poznania, a w dążeniach wolitywnych przybiera postać skutecznych i nieskutecznych pragnień, pragnień dobrych i złych, pragnień spontanicznych i wolnych, a także i dążności niewolnych, nacechowanych koniecznością¹⁴.

It is important to note that in considering human transcendence in the moral dimension, Krapiec accepts that freedom is realized in deliberate attempts of personal efficacy in spite of moral constraints (e.g. erroneous knowledge, circumstantial contingency) to realize the intended 'object' of moral action.¹⁵ Moral transcen-

14 I. Dec, *Transcendencja człowieka w przyrodzie: ujęcie Mieczysława A. Krapca OP i kard. Karola Wojtyły*, (Wrocław: Papieski Wydział Teologiczny, 2011), 190. [According to Krapiec, the explanation of the fact of [moral] freedom should take into account, the ontic aspects of human existence and action precisely the concept of freedom and analysis of the dynamism of free actions ... Being human is not only fragile, unstable – in one word: casual in their existence, but also in its action. Since human existence is contingent, and his action is contingent, the human action, says Krapiec, bears the mark of transience and the pursuit of death, such that through contingency, the [human] intellectual knowledge manifests itself in possibilities of both real and erroneous knowledge, and so also the volitional efforts takes the forms of effective and ineffective desires, desires that can be good or bad, desires that can be spontaneous and free, or determined and necessary]. See also M. A. Krapiec, *O wolności woli*, „Znak”, 16 (1964) nr 119 (5), s. 597-601; *Ja-Człowiek*, s. 226, 241-242; and J. Tischner, *W poszukiwaniu istoty wolności*, „Znak”, 22 (1970) nr 193-194 (7-8), s. 821-838.

15 Moral philosophy usually focuses on nature of the object-action (good in the object) rather than on the experience of the subject-actor (*good of the actor*). In his 2017 Jacek Woroniecki Memorial Lectures, Dr Fulvio Di Blasi summarized the traditional Thomistic view on sources of moral evaluation as a theory of *action*, attempting answers to such questions as: What is a human *action*? What makes *action* good or evil? Accordingly, the contemporary debate has been focused mostly on intention (*finis operantis*) and on the object (*finis operis*) of the human *action*, which supposedly is the element that embodies the very substance or essence of the *action*. Saint John Paul II's encyclical *The Splendor of Truth* calls it “the doctrine of the object as a source of morality” (§82). When this letter clarifies that “the morality of the human act depends primarily and fundamentally on the ‘object’ rationally chosen by the deliberate will” it refers to the “insightful analysis, still valid today, made by Saint Thomas” (§78). Yet, the debate is far from being over. It is my aim in this

dence is therefore a journey made on the expense of free acts, the actualization of each moment of which is marked by the dynamism of personal decisions through which we transcend the determinate contingencies of physical nature.

Each free act of personal decision is therefore a transcendence over the determinations of our fragile and contingent nature in the moral domain. Freedom as an act of transcendence is therefore not understood as an absence of determinations but rather as an *internal* (i.e. efficient causality of the acting person) act of overcoming or transcending the boundaries of the causal determinations set by natural contingencies. The unique moment of transcendence is notably that moment of the efficient act of decision, which is the free choice made from practical judgement, irrespective of the theoretical judgement of truth about the chosen being. This free choice is a practical act of the will, which is specifically transcendent in relation to the theoretical nature of the alternatives presented to the will by the intellect.

This new insight from Krapiec allows us to highlight practical consequences for moral autonomy implicated by an affirmation and/or a rejection of the thesis on human transcendence in the moral domain which highlights the specifically practical moment of moral freedom and ‘self-determination’ for a choice, irrespective of what the intellect presents, hence as the very moment of transcendence in which the human person as subject of his actions is immersed in every moral act. Whe-

part of the dissertation to supply the missing link in the panoply of controversial debates on how to make *actions* good and even better, which is a near absence of theories on how to make *actors* good, which is the ultimate personal *telos* of human moral life. I acknowledge that traditional virtue ethics has already laid the groundwork for the acquisition of moral virtues (how to make actors good) but there is yet to be developed complementary theories of moral evaluation that also accounts for the subjective transcendence in moral life. Traditional moral evaluation still remains entrapped with the object as revealed in action (*finis operis*) or in intention (*finis operantis*) and the correspondence between these two aspects of the object of morality as may be attenuated by context (circumstance). A complementary theory of moral evaluation which accounts for human transcendence from the aspects of the personal subject-actor is needed to account for what becomes of the actor as a result of the moral action. This subjective modification of the moral actor is a meta-ethical question with respect to moral actions.

reas autonomy of the personal subject of decision safeguards “self-determination”, heteronomy of the moral law guarantees a teleological “transcendence” beyond the limited contingencies of auto-determination since no one human person has complete insight about the good. In other words, a moral transcendence is realized when a free decision arises from the harmony of free acts and the transcendental property of idea of the good in being (i.e. moral act) is actualized by the relational agreement between autonomy and heteronomy.

Decision as the ultimate act of human transcendence in overcoming moral evil

The ultimate source of moral transcendence is the decisive self-determination *to act or not to act*; and more so, to actualize *this* moral act or *that* moral act accounts for personal transcendence in relation to human nature, otherwise referred to as moral autonomy. This subjective source of moral autonomy is however aligned to its *teleological* end-purpose, which is the actualization of the good of man as a personal being. The good of man as person to be chosen is however transcending in relation to either autonomy (moral subject) or heteronomy (moral law) taken exclusively. Krapiec discusses this autonomy-heteronomy dimensions as subjectively grounded in both the desire for the particular concrete good and the desire for the transcendent Good as rooted in the eternal law, whose measure is synderesis – first moral principle to do good and avoid evil (to actualize the good for human person and avoid its opposite, which is the evil for man).

Focusing more closely on the practical purposes of overcoming of moral evil, we note that the affirmation of human transcendence engages the whole personal substance-subject through the cognitive and volitive moral powers in relation to the acts which are said to be evil. In his work *Dlaczego zło*¹⁶ Albert Krapiec writes as follows:

The first and fundamental area of moral good and evil is linked with man, his structure, his capacities of both cognitive and volitional acts directing a rational

16 M. A. Krapiec, *Dlaczego zło? Rozważania filozoficzne* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1995).

conduct....In his consciousness, man “recognizes” himself as the author of his actions. He feels himself as a single “I”, a single distinct subject responsible for his own actions....Through acts of decision, man becomes the author, the creator equally of his own personality as also of the object of his activity. Consciousness and freedom and hence autonomy of the human person are not “given” in a ready and changeless form. Rather, they are ‘pre-given’ it, and through it they carry the stamp of potentiality...they form and concretize themselves in activity and thereby, activities take on improvements and a permanence ... The ordering of being to activity and through it to a commensurate realization for a given nature of good is a foundation of a natural law of particular beings...Strictly speaking, moral evil as evil does not fulfil a function of transcendence...Moral evil, as every evil, does not exist through its own existence but through the existence of the subject in which it resides...Evil can be “fought” through a healing of the subject and by providing it with goods which it does not possess¹⁷.

Significantly, Karol Wojtyła, who is a close-collaborate with Krapiec in developing the moral dimension of human transcendence reaches the same conclusion when he writes that:

The basic intuition of the transcendence of the person in action allows us to perceive simultaneously that moment of the integration of the person in action which is complementary in relation to transcendence.... In the structure of “man-acts” we also have what may be defined as the immanence of man in his own acting and at the same time what has to be regarded as his transcendence relatively to this acting... Man is not only the agent of his acting, he is also the creator of it.... The efficacy of the human ego [‘I’] pertaining to action reveals the transcendence of the person, without, however, separating the person from nature... It indicates the forces [potencies] that constitutes the being and the acting of man at the level of person....acting also consists in the dynamization of the subject. The dynamic transcendence of the person is itself based on freedom, which is lacking in the causation of nature ...The performance itself of the action by the person is

17 M. A. Krapiec, *I-Man*, p. 220.

a value. If we call this value “personalistic”, it is because the person performing the action also fulfills himself in it, that is acquires a personal feature..., however, this fulfilment is reached only through the good, while moral evil leads or amounts to, nonfulfillment of the self in acting¹⁸.

In laying the arguments of Albert Krąpiec side by side with those of Karol Wojtyła, we underscore the convergence of the Lublin scholars on the personalistic consequences of moral actions. Their views also coincide on the considerations of the object of moral actions, i.e. the dynamic *medium*, through which these consequences are realized to the effect that the human subject of moral action transcends nature of the moral actions (as evil or as good) and fulfills his being as a person. In this respect, they argue that whereas in evil moral actions, the human subject loses the opportunity to transcend his nature as a person being since what we refer to as the objective evil moral action is rather a *diminution* or lack of actualization of the potency for good in the subject of moral action which weakens the personal appetency or drive towards moral flourishing of the human person.

For Albert Krąpiec it was clear that moral evil impedes the flourishing of the being of man as person hence he insists that “Strictly speaking, however, moral evil as evil does not fulfil a function of transcendence”¹⁹. In other words, we can only speak of existence of evil in relation to a “lack of the ultimate good of man as person” or as is traditionally rendered by St. Augustine – a moral “privation of the good of man as a personal being”. However, this privation, if of a moral sort (moral privation) is fused with the personal subject and affects the human person most intimately as Krąpiec observes:

Moral good and evil are a particular instance of good and evil existing in the world and which affect us [human persons] directly. If, however, considerations about good and evil in an analogical generality have an impersonal character which is somewhat “detached”, investigations which concern morality from the

18 Cf. The Polish Edition of K. J. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn: oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, Redacted by Einsiedel, E. et al. (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolicki Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II, 2011), pp. 68, 133, 306.

19 M. A. Krąpiec, *I-Man*, p. 235.

aspect of good and evil are, from the nature of things, closer to us, since they are “fused” with the subject.²⁰

Krapiec thus attempts to combine the Augustinian reading of the moral evil as a privation of an expected moral good with the personal effects of this privation in relation to the human *subject* in order to draw out practical consequences for human transcendence in the moral domain. He intends by so doing to show that moral evil (as a privation) can be overcome more efficiently by supplying the good that is lacking in the human *subject* rather than by focusing on the subject which itself as a substance-subject bears simultaneously both the transcendental property of good and moral lack which it only bears as a subject of an accidental lack/privation. Krapiec explains this view of moral transcendence, which is accessible for the morally evil person as follows:

The subject himself as the bearer of evil [subject of lack] is the object equally [cognizable as a bearer of the transcendental property of good as a substance-being] and, ..., we cannot directly fight evil without simultaneously fighting, in some measure, the subject itself of this evil. For if evil is not a good, then it is also not a being [i.e. since good and being/substance are metaphysically convertible], then only the subject-bearer of evil exists as being [i.e. as a human substance]. Accordingly, a positive battle with a moral subject of evil, is, above all, a battle with an already *weakened* good-being-subject otherwise a weakened being-subject or weakened substance-subject who carries deficiencies within himself – namely evil... As long as the subject exists composed in his (moral) structure [i.e. subject-accident, hence actor-act], there can always appear deficiencies in him. Hence a direct and immediate battle with a moral subject of evil is an unsuccessful trial of the hypostasizing of evil, and it really strikes, above all, at the subject as the bearer of evil. Meanwhile the subject of evil is being and thus, good.... Hence from the philosophical point of view, it is proper not so much to remove evil (for only that which exists as a substance can be removed and not that which does not exist) as to strive for good Evil can be “fought” through a healing of the subject and

20 Krapiec, *I-Man*, p. 219.

by providing it with the deficient moral good which it does not possess.²¹

From the above expositions, we underscore that the affirmation of human transcendence attempts a resuscitation of the moral capacities of the human subject of moral evil (person) rather than the unfruitful denial of the object of moral evil (action). From the metaphysical understanding of the human subject of evil, the evil-doer is an existing personal substance, imbued with the inherently moral capacity to actualize the good (which capacity was not fully actualized, hence the moral evil). Since evil, unlike good, requires a good (an existing substance, a being) subject for its existence, we can only speak of moral evil as the failure of the human subject of evil to actualize the potency to attain the personal transcendence due to the failure attain a *recta voluntatis*, which is the failure of the free act of decision to align its object with the metaphysical good of man as person. Moral evil as a failure to attain *recta voluntatis* results therefore in the ‘non-existence of the proper objects of *recta voluntatis*’ in volition of the human subject, which proper object is precisely the good of man as a person, that *telos* of human transcendence realizable in the volitive domain. Thus, moral goodness is the attainment of *recta voluntatis* which is the alignment of the desired good to the actual good which perfects man as a moral being.

From the foregoing it is evident that the specific moment of personal transcendence is the practical moment of rectification of the disposition of the ultimate source of morality, namely the personal agent, who becomes a good person (or a bad person) thanks to his free moral decision, hence he is not only the subject (agent) of the moral act (or moral fact) but also he is the *ultimate good* or the ultimate end of the moral act to the extent that we speak of him or her as the moral actor and so as a ‘good’ or ‘evil’ actor, thanks to his or her personal subjectivity in relation to the moral act that he or she has brought into being (existence).

This assertion is supported by the fact that morality is a dimension of personal transcendence expressed in the free act of decisions. Only persons are said to be subjects of decision – i.e. only persons make decisions in spite of whatsoever

21 Krapiec, *I-Man*, p. 236.

determinate nature is presented. Only persons can say “No” even when a “Yes” is rationally expected and vice versa. That is why we do not speak of morality, (understood as a practical reality which is essentially a product of decision) in relation to activities of non-personal beings such as the rising and setting of the sun, the volcanic eruptions of rocks, the bleating of goats or the singing of birds, or the photosynthetic activities of plants.

Moreover, we not only deny moral subjectivity of decisions to non-personal agents but we also do not accord them any *moral* objectivity of culpability (e.g. the *evil* goat, the *evil* stone, this *good* computer or any of such objective description/qualification literally but metaphorically) with respect to their activities hence non-personal actors are not “objectively” described as culpable or praiseworthy in any ‘ontological’ relationship between the elements of a moral universe (i.e. between actors and acts, morally considered). In specifically ethical terminology, actions or activities of non-personal actors do not bring about the moral designation of their subjects (agentive sources) as virtuous or vicious – e.g. *virtuous* sun, *vicious* rocks, *virtuous* goats, or *vicious* birds etc. – as it is the case with human personal actors.

The above considerations are plausible since the affirmation of human transcendence as grounded in the subjective identity of the “I” which transcendence all ‘acts of the I’, entails that personal subjectivity of the human moral agent is incommunicable in all acts of human decisions (both moral or otherwise). For this reason we can always analyze human decisions in terms of principles of morality hence the free ‘religious’ decision to perform an act of prayer, despites its theological context, can be analyzed in terms of justice as the moral duty of *gratitude* to a supreme being whom the one who prays acknowledges as the benefactor of the favours he or she has received supernaturally. In this sense, gratitude as a moral virtue can become morally evaluable even in such context of a religious act of prayer²².

22 Roger Scruton describes the rational ground of the religious obligations of piety as flowing from an “ontological predicament” necessitated by the contingent dependency of the human creature to the Divine Creator. Cf. R. Scruton, “Sacred Obligations” in: R. Scruton, *On Human Nature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 125.

So also, the free ‘scientific’ decision to manufacture a technological artefact or even to draw or paint, despite its economic context, can be analyzed in terms of fortitude as the moral act of magnanimity (generous disposition for the good of others) – using of one’s talents for the improvement of the welfare/worth/dignity of human person, who as Kant would remind us, is an end in relation of which other goods (talents/skills inclusive) stand as means. These examples go to show that from the personalistic²³ perspective of the ultimate *telos* of free subjectively decisive acts, all free acts of human decisions are morally implicative not necessarily in terms of their evaluative sources (*finis operis*, *finis operantis* or *accidens*) but essentially in relation to human transcendence in the moral domain. In other words, at the center of all practical (moral and productive) as well as creative acts, is always the human person. Krapiec was thus right when he insists that the personal I-subject transcends all “I-acts”, which can be considered as ‘mine’.²⁴

Conclusion

In the foregoing considerations of the moral life as a journey towards human transcendence, we are able to demonstrate that the affirmation of human transcendence in the moral domain has practical consequences in the moral behavior. The description of morality as a journey is instructive on the role of virtues which can be shown metaphorically to be analogous to the means of transportation employed by the moral traveler whose destination is human transcendence. Moral transcendence is a journey which begins precisely when the capacity for moral decision has been acquired and the experience of the acts of decision manifests as an experience of moral freedom from the constraints to actualize moral good and avoiding moral evil.

The earlier sections of the article did discuss the social context of the moral life wherein, the need to transcend the limits of relativism in the acquisition of moral

23 M. Konye, Person as subject of human action in Karol Wojtyła. (MA Thesis, Department of Philosophy, Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, 2016).

24 Krapiec, *I-Man*, pp. 320-322.

values was emphasized with respect to the formation of conscience as a subjective source of morality. Following these earlier sections was the determination of the adequate theory of human nature which suits the discussion of moral transcendence as well as the determination of the ultimate act which initiates the journey of moral transcendence as the act of decision.

In the latter section of the article, the discussion of moral correction was taken up and analyzed as an experience of moral transcendence; and amongst other interesting themes, moral freedom was considered equally in this latter sections to be conceptually synonymous with moral self-transcendence since it is a crossing of the previous moral limitations experienced by the one who efficaciously achieves such a moral correction. This same experience in a slightly different manner also applies to the experience of overcoming moral evil, since it equally manifests an experience of crossing of constraints towards the realization of moral transcendence, constraints which when removed facilitates the habitual (virtuous) march towards the destination of moral transcendence.

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Moral life as a journey towards human transcendence

Summary

Personalism in the Lublin School of Philosophy is developed on the foundation of metaphysics of being. One of the most prominent names associated with this school is Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec. I devoted my doctoral dissertation to the search for the basis of human transcendence in the light of Krąpiec's metaphysics of man. This article is originally part of that doctoral research work.

The basic thrust of the article centers on the moral life, which is one of the dimensions in which context human transcendence is realized. In order to demonstrate this, I presented moral life metaphorically as a journey towards a destination, namely human transcendence. Given that moral virtues are indispensable for moral transcendence, I considered them to be the very means of transportation which brings the human being to this destination so described. Besides the introductory and concluding parts, the article consists of four segments, viz: a consideration of the social context of morality, a discourse on the moral journey towards human transcendence, and the discussion of two co-related examples of human transcendence in the moral domain – moral correction and overcoming moral evil.

Key words: personalism, morality, person, metaphysics, Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, transcendence, virtue