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THE GOOD AS THE MOTIVE OF HUMAN ACTION ACCORDING TO MIECZYŚLAW ALBERT KRĄPIEC

From ancient times up to the present, people have pondered the question of the good in various domains of man's personal life. The importance of this question is seen especially in philosophy. We encounter the problem of the good mainly in ethics, or axiology. The good is one of the fundamental categories at the level of ethics. In that field we understand the good as the ultimate end of man's life and as the criterion for the moral evaluation of an act. At present, the conception of the good as value is dominant (axiology). Moreover, the good is considered in the domain of economic life, where goods as means that are of special importance to man are produced. They determine man's existence, allow him to extend his life, and to make his life good. However, we encounter the fundamental conception of the good primarily in metaphysics, where the good, along with the truth and beauty, is one of the universal properties of beings. In modern and recent times the metaphysical conception of the good has been negated and has been reduced to other spheres, e.g., to the sphere of law and duties, and to the sphere of happiness (I. Kant, J. S. Mill). To guard against such reductionism, we should appeal to the philosophy of being, or metaphysics, which formulates a fundamental understanding of the good. As it turns out, philosophy still has much to say in the search for reasons and nature of the good. In connection with this, in this article, we will present the understanding, which appears in metaphysics, of the good as the motive of human action. Such an interpretation of the good is a new and more profound conception that looks to the position of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, and has been elaborated by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, O.P.

M. A. Krąpiec, who was one of the founders of the Lublin Philosophical School, started a deep and holistic approach to the leading questions in realistic philosophy (reaching to the thought of Aristotle and Thomas). The metaphysical understanding of reality became the foundation for the Lublin Philosophical School. At the source of the fact that metaphysics was given the leading character lay the belief that methodical teaching also depends on metaphysics in other philosophical realms, which have their roots in metaphysics.

Being as the Good is the Object of Action

The analysis of the fact of action is an important element in the interpretation of the good. On the basis of this analysis the understanding of the good as end-motive of action is seen. In the process of action, it is precisely the good-motive that performs the most essential function. According to M. A. Krąpiec, three fundamental elements (or factors) are part of the structure of human action. They are first, the causation of the end (the motive-end), then exemplar causation (the directing and determination of action), and efficient causes (the factual character and realization of action).¹ They are the necessary reasons that appear in every process of concrete action.

With reference to the causation of the end, man's real actions, as well as all other kinds of actions that occur in the world, are not necessary but are contingent. According to M. A. Krąpiec, such actions sometimes appear and sometimes are absent. Therefore if an action that did not previously exist begins to exist, there is a real reason for which the action came into existence. Hence the faculty of the will will be the essential factor in action in the structure of the human being. Man's voluntary actions are dependent on whether we want to act or not. If we want to act, then the action must be directed to "something," that is, to some object, since there is no objectless action. Desire is always the desire for "something" (an object). Then the good is the object of desire (the will); the good appears as the end of action, and so the good and the end are identical to each other.²

¹ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *I-Man. An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology*, trans. M. Lescoe (and others) (New Britain, Conn.: Mariel Publications, 1983), 206–213.

² See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "The Nature of Human Freedom," in *Freedom in Contemporary Culture*, vol. 1, ed. Z. J. Zdybicka (and others) (Lublin: The University Press of the Catholic University of Lublin, 1998), 40. St. Thomas wrote in the *Summa theologiae*: "Manifestum est autem quod omnes actiones quae procedunt ab aliqua potentia, causantur ab ea

In all man's actions, the causation of the end plays the main role, since it is the ultimate reason for the coming-into-existence of the action. The reason why the action came into existence is the end as the motive (Lat. *finis cuius gratia*). The end or motive is the reason that throws the faculty of action out of passivity and neutrality.³ According to M. A. Krąpiec, the function as such of final causation possesses two factors: the cognitive, and the appetitive factor. Hence in his *Metaphysics* Krąpiec writes of the "different intentional directions" due to which we can describe the differences that appear between knowledge and appetite. In knowledge, this direction is from known reality to the known object, that is, reality, as it were, enters into the cognitive apparatus. In turn, in appetite, the movement must be out from the object toward the desired thing. Thereby a real "unification" occurs with the thing as with good (or end) of action. Action is thus a necessary but not sufficient element for final action (or causation).⁴

The end is realized differently in the sphere of beings that do not possess intellectual knowledge (animals and plants). In the action of animals, the end as the motive of action is determined by the nature of those beings. Animals can recognize their own environment and they react to impulses that come from outside of them, but we cannot see in them the formation of the motive of action. In like manner, the motive of action is set by nature in vegetative life, but in a much greater degree. Here also determination (from the outside) appears, and we cannot speak of anything voluntary. However, in man's action, the end as the motive of action is fulfilled in one way in the moral in moral action, and in another way in "poietic" action. If we look at man's moral action, the foundations of moral action are acts of decision. In connection with this, acts of decision are inseparably inscribed in the structure of man's personal action. They have an inalienable character. Because of them, the process of self-determination and of the constitution of the subject as the source of action occur. Moreover, in moral acts we can observe conscious, free, real, and purposeful action that depends on the freedom of the subject. In turn, in man's "poietic" or productive action, we cannot speak entirely of the sub-

secundum rationem sui obiecti. Obiectum autem voluntatis est finis et bonum. Unde oportet quod omnes actiones humanae propter finem sint." S. Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 1, 1, *resp.* (textum Leoninum Romae 1888 editum).

³ See Krąpiec, "The Nature of Human Freedom," 41.

⁴ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Metaphysics. An Outline of the Theory of Being*, trans. T. Sandok (New York: Mariel Publications, 1991), 439-440.

ject's freedom of action. This follows from the fact that a particular object, e.g., a work of art, that is produced by a maker imposes its own objective rules, as it were. Thus the process of "poietic" action does not have a completely voluntary character. According to M. A. Krąpiec, the creative process of action is expressed in the fact that in the choice of the motive we are dealing with a subject that is translated into the finality and freedom of the action. It is the subject who determines whether the concrete action is performed or not.⁵

Man is set apart from the world of nature by the fact that he knows the nature of the good, and as a rational and free being he tends to the good as to an end. In connection with this, by an analysis of the causation of the end, it must be said that the good "throws" man "out of passivity," his volitional (appetitive) acts are directed to the apprehended good, and in turn this good attracts the appetite to itself and becomes "first love." On this account Krąpiec described the motive as first love.⁶ In the analysis of final causation, it should be said that ultimately the good (the end) as the motive is the first and most important factor in the objective explanation of human action.

The second factor that is part of the process of action is exemplar causation, which determines action and gives it a direction. It can be observed both in man and in other natural beings (animals and plants).⁷ In the world of nature, the determination of action is connected with the very nature of being. In animals, determination appears at the level of sensory knowledge. Animals with the help of instincts react to impulses that come from outside of them. In turn, in man, as was mentioned above, the determination runs one course in moral action, and another course in "poietic" action. This is because in the domain of productivity action there is no complete freedom of action, because both the object and its rules must be

⁵ See Krąpiec, "The Nature of Human Freedom," 35–36.

⁶ See Krąpiec, *Metaphysics*, 441: "Our desire, as soon as a good is presented to it, is 'shaken' out of its passivity and 'moved,' so to speak, by the perceived good . . . And precisely the act of the faculty of desire (the will), insofar as it is, in the first phase, moved by the good perceived in cognition, insofar as it has been in a certain way internally directed toward the good and 'weighted' toward it, is that act of 'first love' . . . The first act of 'love' is the motive that is the reason of being activity . . ."

⁷ The element or line of determination was already taken up in the analysis of the causation of the end when the formation of the motive of action was discussed.

taken under consideration. However, man's moral conduct is always undetermined and depends completely on man's free will.⁸

In the context of the analysis of exemplar causation, it should be said that it occurs in the intellect that knows. M. A. Krąpiec presents the example of a tree which bears fruit; this best depicts the course of the realization of purposeful action. Each of the phases of the tree's bearing of fruit is ordered, and nothing here happens chaotically. The first phase of action is dependent on the next, and for this reason we can see a certain regularity here. The entire process of action is fulfilled when it occurs in the knowing intellect as that which plans the model for the action. The intellect orders action, which is always determined and directed. To summarize, this determination and directing of action is derived from the intellect's exemplar causation.⁹

The third factor is efficient causation, which indicates the factual character of action. Efficient causation occurs in one way in vegetative nature (plants), in another way in non-rational nature (animals), and in yet another way in rational nature (man). The coming-into-existence of action in the vegetative world can be simply presented on the basis of a plant's development. A plant begins to function, or to realize intense developmental processes, when there are favorable climactic conditions for this. In animals, however, the process of purposeful action depends on external stimuli that set the action in motion. In man, a movement of the will is a necessary element for the coming-into-existence of action; by the will man can perform or not perform certain actions in relation to what "he wants" or "does not want" to do.¹⁰

The analysis of the fact of human action presented above is based on the harmonic action of three major factors: the end, the exemplar, and the agent or efficient cause. Without them, human action would not come into existence and would be unintelligible. Among these three elements, the main role is played by the good, understood as the end that is the motive due to which action has come into existence rather than not. What "throws" man "out of passivity" is described as the end-motive. The motive by necessity always appears as the good.¹¹

⁸ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *U podstaw rozumienia kultury (At the Foundations of the Understanding of Culture)* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1991), 61.

⁹ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Ludzka wolność i jej granice (Human Freedom and its Limits)* (Lublin: PTTA, 2004), 242–243.

¹⁰ See Krąpiec, *U podstaw rozumienia kultury*, 64.

¹¹ See Krąpiec, "The Nature of Human Freedom," 41.

The Good as a Universal Property of Being

The end-motive is identified with the good as the universal property of being that ultimately provides the rational justification for all action. An analysis of the good as a transcendental property of being first requires us to explain what is behind the term “good.” The term “good” corresponds to the Latin word *bonum*, which corresponds to the Greek word *agathós*. The word has many meanings, e.g., well born, noble, nice, manful, valiant, as well as benefit. The good since ancient times has been connected with ethical, aesthetic, economic, and useful values. The most important meaning of the word for our reflections is the nominal form *to agathón*, which means “the good” (and also a whole).¹² We encounter the understanding of the good in various domains of philosophy. We can distinguish between the good in an ethical sense and in an aesthetic sense. Each of the above mentioned ways of understanding the good possesses a certain qualification. The moral qualification of a man’s act (an evaluation of moral conduct) corresponds to the good in an ethical sense, while the act of giving to things a certain value corresponds to the good in an aesthetic sense, e.g., a good picture. However, the conception of the good in the metaphysical sense as a universal property of being performs the fundamental role.¹³

In the question of the analysis of the good as a transcendental property of being, we should show at the outset how this property is discerned. On the basis of the analysis of spontaneous knowledge we see that by spontaneous knowledge we affirm not only the existence of things, but we also experience a sort of contact with the thing that involves love. A thing that is known by man is desired or not desired by man in some way. Then in making this transcendental explicit, we should appeal to the method of metaphysical separation. One consequence of the method of separation is exhibition of the transcendental character of the good, and so, that all really existing beings are bearers of the good.¹⁴

A being is a bearer of the good, that is, a being is from the will of a maker or the Creator. The Absolute creates beings because the Absolute

¹² See *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, (Oxford: University Press, 1996), 6.

¹³ See Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *Racjonalność i celowość świata, osób i rzeczy (Rationality and Finality of the World, Persons, and Things)* (Lublin: PTTA, 2007), 84.

¹⁴ See *id.*, 85–86.

“wants to,” and therefore His freedom to create is not limited by anything.¹⁵ As M. A. Krapiec remarks,

If, therefore, beings are derived, they are the work of the Absolute’s free will—its love, since love is the name we give to the will’s inclination toward good. Consequently, just as the intelligibility of being testifies to its ordination to the Intellect of the Absolute, so, too, the real existence of being, i.e., the derivation of being from the Absolute, testifies to the connection of being with the will of the Absolute.¹⁶

One consequence of this connection of being with the will of the Absolute is precisely the transcendental good, and so, the universal good. In understanding the transcendental character of the good, the moment of the contingency of being is worth emphasizing. M. A. Krapiec mentions this in his *Metaphysics*. This contingency is expressed in the fact that man feels that his existence can be lost. Analogically, contingency can be considered in all the beings that in any way surround man. With the help of two metaphysical principles, namely the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of the reason of being, we can assert that the contingent existence of a being is not identical with the essence, since the essence is always necessary. Therefore that existence is from the Absolute, or more precisely, from His will, or wanting. Krapiec calls the act of wanting, thus understood, the love of the Absolute.¹⁷

One more factor concerning the transcendental character of being, which Krapiec mentions, is worth a thorough analysis. That is the psychological factor. In this aspect, man’s acts perform the main role. By various actions, man extends his existence in the world. As mentioned earlier, man as a contingent being perceives the fragility of his existence, and on this account he tries to give reality to this existence. Over time, however, he feels the limited character of his existence. The fact that he experiences limitation causes him to desire various goods, which are for him ends of his action. As a result, man sees himself, his existence, as an object of appetite, that is, as a good, and all other domains of beings that are at the

¹⁵ See Krapiec, *Metaphysics*, 153.

¹⁶ Id.

¹⁷ See id., 153–154.

same time goods become for him an object of appetite on account of man himself.¹⁸

It should be asserted that the good appears as the object of every action. This kind of apprehension of the good commands us to interpret the good as the universally attractive good, and so as the transcendental good. The good remains inseparably connected with the fact as such of action.¹⁹ The transcendental understanding of the good becomes the basis for distinguishing between various domains of goods with regard to their relation to an end. The connection of being with the good consequently leads to the conclusion that the world that surrounds us is a world of goods, that is, beings subordinated to the will of a maker or of the Creator.

The Distinction Between Domains of Goods

From the apprehensions of the good as a transcendental property it follows that everything that exists is good. We live in a world in which various goods surround us. Each of our actions is also directed by a good. Therefore it should be noted that the good as the motive of action is shown through specific functions. In the forefront is the good understood in the context of an end. The good as an end elicits all action, both in beings that possess rational knowledge, and in those that do not possess such knowledge.

M. A. Krąpiec indicates that an end can be understood in the following ways: (1) as the term of action, or *finis qui*, (2) as an activity through which one reaches the good—*finis quo*, (3) as the subject to which the desired good is ordered by the factor that has appetite, or *finis cui*, (4) as the motive due to which action begins—*finis cuius gratia*.²⁰ The distinction between the end as the term of action and the end as the motive of action is of crucial importance for the interpretation of action. The end that is the term is identified only with the conclusion of action, and in connection with this it does not constitute the ultimate reason for the rise and existence of action. Unlike the end-term, the fundamental factor on account of which

¹⁸ See *id.*, 155: “Hence, the most diverse spheres of being—the cognized God, humans and other subsistent animate beings, subsistent inanimate beings, intentional and even purely possible beings—everything becomes an object of my desire. If, therefore, an object of desire is called a good, then whatever is a being is also a good. Everything manifests itself as loved and desired by someone, and even if it is not actually loved, it has in itself the power to be loved by the person cognizing it. In a word, beings are good.”

¹⁹ See *id.*, 161.

²⁰ See *id.*, 438–439.

action has come into existence rather than not is called the motive. Hence, the end as motive is the rational explanation of all action. Krąpiec notes that from a human perspective this motive designates the acquisition of an “inclination” toward a good apprehended as the object of our actions. This good is a prelude to the will’s act of appetite, also called “first love,” which is expressed in the aiming at a known good. In this aspect, first love becomes the motor of action in relation to a recognized good.²¹

In connection with this, man as a rational being is in a position to recognize what good are more or less suited (or beneficial) for him. Each good has the power to attract one toward itself. Thus everything that attracts us is a good. In connection with this we can distinguish between various kinds of goods. In the scope of the metaphysical understanding of the good, three areas of the good are discerned, namely the useful good (*bonum utile*), then the pleasant good (*bonum delectabile*), and the real good, which is called the honest or authentic good in the philosophical tradition (*bonum honestum*).²² The above division of goods was made with respect to the motive of appetite (the end).²³

The object of appetite, which is a good for its own sake, is the motive for the appetite for the honest good. The person is such a good. Man desires another person not on account of something else, but for the sake of that person himself. The good of the person is the end-motive for the acting subject, and is not a means.²⁴ There are also goods that are performed by man for the sake of performance (e.g., the act itself of eating apples causes pleasure). We are dealing with pleasure when the good is realized for the sake of the activity itself. To consider this in a different way, the action as such, and not the subject is the end. This description applies to the pleasant good. The useful good is another kind of good. It is desired as a means to acquire another good, that is, it is subordinated to another end (e.g., eating is desired in order to satisfy hunger).²⁵

²¹ See *id.*, 441.

²² We encounter the above division of goods in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*. St. Thomas also borrowed that division from St. Ambrose’s work *De officiis* (see Étienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1960), 140).

²³ See Krąpiec, *Metaphysics*, 191.

²⁴ See Edmund Morawiec, Paweł Mazanka, *Metafizyka klasyczna wersji egzystencjalnej. Podstawowe zagadnienia z metafizyki (Classical Metaphysics of the Existential Version. Fundamental Questions from Metaphysics)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2006), 205.

²⁵ See Krąpiec, *U podstaw rozumienia kultury*, 76.

In the three types of goods listed (the honest, pleasant, and useful), the accent was put on the object and on the mode of appetite. M. A. Krąpiec in his *Metaphysics* also indicates another division where the subject who desires and the mode of the subject's action plays the main role. We can indicate various kinds of appetites and goods also in this respect. In this way, "natural desire," or the natural good, is discerned. Each existing being possesses a necessary natural inclination due to which it longs to preserve (or also to pass on) its existence. Love is the next desire or appetite. Hence M. A. Krąpiec distinguishes between sensory desire, otherwise called sensory love, which is a consequence of sensory cognitive forms, and intellectual desire (the will), which is spiritual love, the result of which are intellectual cognitive forms.²⁶

With regard to intellectual appetite, we should indicate one more important problem, namely moral appetite or desire (the moral good). The moral good appears when an elicited act (a conscious and voluntary act) is in agreement with the conscience (or in disagreement) as with the rule of morality. Besides the natural and moral good, the ontic good (the good of being) plays an important role in metaphysics, and it is a property of the object. The ontic good by its essence is the transcendental relation where being is ordered to the will of a maker or of the Creator.²⁷ The Creator through His love created man and the entire world that surrounds him. As Krąpiec remarks, "For if a being exists because the Absolute desires, wills, that it exist, and if the measure of its being is the Absolute's love, then in the being itself there appears a necessary connection with this love."²⁸

All the domains of goods discussed above motivate man's actions. The good that affirms man's value and is worthy only of man we call the honest or authentic good, because, as M. A. Krąpiec remarks, it preserves the rational order of things.²⁹ In any case, this does not mean that the other goods, that is, pleasant and useful goods, are in some sense evil, but on the contrary, they are good under the condition that they do not squander the fundamental end of the honest good, which is the human person. According to Krąpiec, the honest good, which is the good of the human person, is the main motive of action.³⁰

²⁶ See Krąpiec, *Metaphysics*, 165–166.

²⁷ See id., 166.

²⁸ Id.

²⁹ See Krąpiec, *U podstaw rozumienia kultury*, 76.

³⁰ See id., 76–77.

In the context of the discernment of the domains of goods, the above mentioned ontic good, or the transcendental property of being, performs the most important role in metaphysics. On this account also we can indicate three main aspects of the good. The first aspect concerns the good apprehended as a perfection of being (the harmony of a being with the will of the Creator). This perfection of being is dependent on what sort of good man makes an end of action for himself. The next aspect is the good apprehended in the formal dimension, that is, the necessary and transcendental ordering of being to the will of the Creator. According to M. A. Krapiec, "This ordination is necessary and transcendental and permeates the whole of being, such that it cannot really be 'detached' from being without annihilating being itself."³¹ The third and final aspect concerns the good as the end of appetite by man and other beings.³² As emphasized already in an earlier part of the article, man on account of his limited character desires various goods, which are for him ends of appetite. He also perceives his existence as an object of appetite, that is, as a good. In an analogical way, all other kinds of beings that are for man goods and ends become objects of appetite.

Conclusions

By the reception of the known world as a world of goods, a fuller reading is made of reality and of action, which implies the acceptance of specific attitudes in the cognitive sphere. The good of being is the exemplar, cause, end of existence, action, and perfection of being. This is connected with specific implications. The good that in each instance becomes the end of human action influences the perfection of man's personal life. Hence the good is the end of action in each instance; the proof of this is the fact of the causative action of the end. Although the end and the good, on account of different functions of causation, are apprehended in different ways, they remain identical to each other. The fact of the causation of the end is expressed by the act of "first love" with respect to the known good, being directed to the known good, and the desire to be united with it. The act of "first love" is the foundation of each action. The good makes the dynamic order of reality and at the same time constitutes part of the fabric of all human acts, and moreover it is the motive of all action. This recep-

³¹ Krapiec, *Metaphysics*, 167.

³² See *id.*, 166–167.

tion of the good as presented by M. A. Krąpiec makes it possible to apprehend more fully the existence and action of beings, accenting the question of the good as the reason for the purposefulness of the world and the motive of all human action. The negation of this fact takes on a dehumanizing dimension, leads to the instrumentalization of man, and takes away subjectivity from man. In connection with this, reflection on the problematic of the good constitutes in philosophy a question that is constantly relevant and fundamental. Therefore we should also ask about the good, about the nature of the good, and about its necessary connection with reality.

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SUMMARY

In this article the authoress has presented the understanding of the good as the motive for human action on the basis of the position of M. A. Krąpiec. At the beginning, the authoress has concentrated on an analysis of the fact of action, which includes three major factors: the end, the exemplar, and the efficient cause. The good-end here performs the most essential function. The good-end is the motive due to which action has come into existence rather than not. That “which throws” man “out of passivity” to action is described as the motive that appears as the good. In the next part of the article, the good is presented as a fundamental transcendental property of being. The connection of being with the good shows that the world that surrounds us is a world of goods, that is, of beings ordered to the will of a maker or of the Creator. The transcendental good thus understood constitutes the foundation for all action. In the final part of the article, an analysis is made of the functions that are shown by the good that constitutes the motive for action. The first of these functions is the cognitive apprehension of the good understood in the context of the end—the motive of action. At the end, the domains of goods are listed, in which the ontic good, which is a transcendental property of being, plays the most important role.

KEYWORDS: metaphysics, good, action, motive, Mieczysław A. Krąpiec.