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On the Metaphysical Cognition.
O poznaniu metafizycznym
by Stanisław Kamiński*

The publication entitled *On the Metaphysical Cognition* was written by Stanisław Kamiński, one of the founders of the Lublin School of Philosophy which referred to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. The volume consists of five selected articles devoted to the specificity of metaphysical cognition and was published in 2020 by the Polish Society of Thomas Aquinas (PTTA) as a bilingual edition (English and Polish) as a part of the The Lublin Philosophical School Series.

The volume begins with the publisher's preface (by Andrzej Maryniarczyk, S.D.B., President of the PTTA), includes a biographical note of Kamiński, as well as information concerning the translator of the entire publishing series (Maciej B. Stępień). It also contains an editorial note, an index and a selected bibliography.

The anthology shows an overview concerning the specific type of metaphysical cognition, the types of human knowledge, the rationalism of cognition, the nature of philosophy as well as the most characteristic features of sapiential cognition. Kamiński holds that it is possible

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to gain irrefutable cognition and he stipulates the truth as the realistic purpose of the cognitive process in relation to various versions of knowledge, emphasizing the methodological aspect as one connected with the coherence of a particular cognitive process.

It should be emphasized that Kamiński's articles have never been published in English in the form of such an anthology, hence the English-speaking reader gains the opportunity to familiarize himself with the thoughts contained in the publication for the first time, although some of the texts were written almost half of century ago.

The collection of articles opens with a text entitled "The Specificity of Metaphysical Cognition," which Kamiński wrote together with Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, O.P. (another founder of the Lublin School of Philosophy). It contains definitional approaches to metaphysics in the context of philosophy as the field of human cognition, in the aspect of the proper object of philosophical inquiry, as well as a description of the features of metaphysical cognition characterized by trueness resulting from the agreement of judgment and trans-subjective experience.¹ Kamiński reveals the key concepts of classical metaphysics, such as the identity of being, the existential judgment, metaphysical separation or metaphysical hypothesis. Among the moments determining the distinctiveness of metaphysical cognition were mentioned the specificity of distinguishing the object of proper cognition, the way of constructing philosophical concepts and the type of justification of a proving process.

In the text entitled "Types of Human Knowledge," the author distinguished knowledge that may be a priori-speculative and empirical-explanatory due to the genesis and the end-purpose of cognition, and with regard to the relationship between cognition and non-cognitive hu-

¹ Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, Andrzej Maryniarczyk, "The Lublin Philosophical School: Founders, Motives, Characteristics," *Studia Gilsoniana* 4, no. 4 (October–December 2015): 417.

man activity, he specified pure, engaged and applied knowledge, and, depending on the subject of cognition, he divided knowledge into multifaceted and specialized. The text contains an overview of the functions and tasks of cognition, and the presentation of the referents of cognition and action as a complement to the knowledge gained through cognition. Cognition is foremost a process as such and only secondarily its result.² Kamiński points out, that: “[M]ental life is characterized by continuity. Experiences remain in the subconscious and can always be used thanks to memory . . . Our knowledge is based on direct cognition with the help of indirect sources.”³ At the same time, Kamiński proved the pertinence of non-limiting philosophical cognition to meta-scientific issues only, because: “[T]hen issues relevant to philosophy will not be solved. And they consist in explaining reality by indicating its ultimate ontic reasons and the meaning of human life and the world.”⁴ The author presents philosophical cognition in the context of views regarding the world and ideology, also in the aspect of acting as a complement to the knowledge, which is the result of cognition.

In the next text, “Rationalism of the Modern Methodology of Sciences and Intellectualism of the Epistemology of Thomas Aquinas,” Kamiński pointed to the position of intellectualism as a feature of metaphysical cognition among contemporary kinds of theoretical cognition and proposed the method of using the achievements of rationalism in the methodology of classical metaphysics.

The author drew attention to its closeness, “as far as the type of issues is concerned,”⁵ to the intellectualism of Thomas Aquinas. After separating the types of rationalism depending on the assessment of acceptance of theoretical points, the search for science, the way of think-

² Kamiński, *On the Metaphysical Cognition*, 100.

³ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

ing, theoretical experience and the function performed in cognition by the theoretical factor, Kamiński presented arguments in favor of critical, hypothetical and model rationalism. Invoking the epistemological intellectualism of St. Thomas allowed the author to show analogies and complementary solutions to the still unsettled problems of rationalism. Kamiński referred to St. Thomas Aquinas, the Aristotelian division into three types of theoretical sciences based on the level of abstraction of their formal object, assigning metaphysics as the most appropriate type of thinking *intellectualiter procedentis*, because

[I]ntellectual cognition is the beginning and the end of discursive thinking. What is more, metaphysical reasoning is very close to intellectual perception, . . . intellectual intuition. It is a direct cognitive apprehension of the existence of something, its peculiar character, or its existence in relation to something else.⁶

The author also presented the features of the intellect as a mental power, abstracting or after abstracting, which directly captures the essential content; mediating and unifying the operations of senses and intellect at the same time, capable of self-control of its own cognition. The intellect understood in such a way participates together with logical and mathematical structures, terminology and scientific tradition in cognition as a theoretical element of an intuitive nature, enabling cognition as directly obvious through self-reflection.

In the next article, “On the Nature of Philosophy,” considerations about the method gave way to inquiries about the position of philosophy among other types of human knowledge, including various disciplines of science. The author mentioned the areas of progress in philosophy comparing it to the possible areas of development in the particular sciences, pointing them in discovering new aspects of reality or becoming aware of the assumptions and conditions as well as the consequences of individual positions. He noticed that in order for philos-

⁶ *Ibid.*, 165–166.

ophy to lay cognitive foundations to culture, philosophical cognition should be autonomous, realistic, specialized, rational, both theoretical and sapiential and necessary, while philosophy itself should be characterized by ontological pluralism, substantiality and dynamism of reality. Additionally theism should be justified by the being consisting of essence and existence. Kamiński showed wisdom as the purpose of philosophy in words: “[T]he fullness of metaphysical cognition is the key building-block of the edifice of wisdom, which, in turn, is supposed to be a model and the end-purpose of philosophizing.”⁷

The last article is a relatively short text on wisdom entitled “Science and Philosophy vis-a-vis Wisdom,” in which, by dividing the general knowledge of man into scientific, metaphysical and mystical genre, the author, as it were, summarized the considerations contained in the entire book.

In the book, the features of metaphysical cognition, its specificity, as well as the understanding of general and particular metaphysics as a type of philosophy, were especially highlighted.

Among the features characteristic for metaphysical cognition in the classical approach, its sapiential character is shown as the most important, because wisdom is the purpose of cognition in the classical approach. It may be achieved by adopting, instead of a restrictive, the universalist theory of science that takes into account classical metaphysical cognition.⁸ Kamiński and Krąpiec draw attention to the observation that searching for answers to the main questions posed by man is really possible only on the basis of classical metaphysics.⁹ Causality, as a feature of metaphysical cognition, concerns pointing as a reason to the thing in its intelligible nature, because “the content-endowment of the thing is not being created by our cognitive apparatus; it all comes

⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

from the thing itself.”¹⁰ Metaphysical cognition, directed at the cause, characterizes “such cognitive acts that express the fact of the world’s existence directly and in the most fundamental, basic manner.”¹¹

Another feature of metaphysical cognition, intellectualism, has been most extensively discussed in reference to the epistemological intellectualism of St. Thomas Aquinas. Intuitionism, recognizing as valid reasoning that refers to intellectual obviousness, complements deductive and inductive reasoning; through the non-hypothetical assertion of the theoretical element in the base of science, it overcomes the hypothetical element with regard to the relations necessary in being; it has the power to correct and supplement critical rationalism.

Intellectualism enables philosophical cognition of an overbearing nature, conditioning the autonomy of classical metaphysics as a branch of knowledge—it attributes the discovery of *principia* as irrevocably true general sentences to the natural efficiency of cognizing them. The peculiarity of inferences in metaphysics is manifested in the observation that, when reasoning based on the principles of formal logic turns out to be insufficient, the intellect itself grasps the relationship between the premises and the conclusion. So, that the universalization of experimental propositions constituting the starting point for explanations in detailed metaphysics is possible. The analogy of metaphysical cognition should be related to the basic principles of being—in consequence, the existence of a being is to be affirmed, its content is to come from the object of cognition, not from the cognizing subject, and its features are to be known “non-simultaneously,” in an analogous way.

The book under discussion also presents the specificity of metaphysical objective justification based on the real causes for a fact under study. It shows the stages of the proving process, starting from the iso-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

lation of the proper object of philosophy, through the formulation and specification of the supreme principles and the realization of their content (which means the content of being), and culminating in metaphysical justification using specific methods, among which a prominent place is taken by indirect (negative) proving by *contradictio in adiecto*, then not contradicting the common interpretation, as well as proving the falsehood of the negative thesis in relation to the proclaimed thesis based on the principle of being-ness, amounting to the statement that being-ness is justified either in those beings themselves or outside them.¹² The elenctic proofs and the proofs relating to the system coherence arguments were also mentioned as additional.

Kamiński also referred to the issue of understanding metaphysics in terms of the unity of knowledge. While questioning the purposefulness of striving for the unity of all human knowledge as the superior purpose,¹³ he pointed to the type of unification that characterizes the classical concept of human knowledge. The author granted the philosophy of being independence from other sciences, because it “points out the most profound reasons and meaning of all that exists, regardless of the mode of that existence. Science, on the other hand, is unable to determine the existential position of the human being in the universe (A. Einstein).”¹⁴ The author also presented positions concerning the function of philosophy in relation to other sciences, criticizing its approach as a generalization of the results of particular sciences. He showed the partition of philosophy into sub-disciplines with regard to the purpose of study, proposing a division into theoretical and practical philosophy, and, by recognizing philosophy as a rational cognition of the world that explains it in the existential order, he applied the division into metaphilosophical disciplines and the theory of being composed of general and

¹² *Ibid.*, 57–61.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 187.

specific metaphysics as the highest degree endowed with the property of unification and at the same time close to the classical concept of philosophy.

After reading the entire volume, the reader gains a comprehensive overview of the cognitive standpoint of classical metaphysics, as well as may receive precise indications concerning the application of methodology appropriate to the disciplines of philosophy, although the term “discipline” is now used to denote the whole of philosophy,¹⁵ when its types are assigned the name of sub-disciplines.

It is worth mentioning that in all the years that have passed since the first edition of Kamiński’s texts presented in the book, the methodology of sciences has slightly changed its face. On the other hand, since these changes seem to be moving away from searching for the truth,¹⁶ Kamiński’s observations do not lose their relevance.

The sequence of the texts is also worth noting, because it gives the reader the opportunity to trace the development of thought from its introduction to metaphysics by placing it among the types of human knowledge, through extracting the characteristic trait given to classical philosophy by the legacy of St. Thomas Aquinas, and ending with pointing to the place of the particular sciences in relation to wisdom which is the goal of all knowledge acquisition.

Summarizing, the publication under discussion, as part of the achievements of the Lublin School of Philosophy, is a unique contribution to the understanding of human cognition especially in classical metaphysics. Undoubtedly, it can also be a valuable reading proposal in the general methodology of sciences and philosophy in didactic or research aspects.

¹⁵ Roger Scruton, *Modern philosophy: An Introduction and Survey* (London, et al.: Bloomsbury Reader, 1994), 19.

¹⁶ Cf. Kamiński, *On the Metaphysical Cognition*, 176.

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SUMMARY

This paper is a review of the book *On the Metaphysical Cognition* by Stanisław Kamiński, one of the founders of the Lublin School of Philosophy (Poland) which refers to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. The book consists of a selection of Kamiński's five articles devoted to the specificity of metaphysical cognition. According to the author, Kamiński's book is not only a unique contribution to the understanding of cognition in classical metaphysics, but also a valuable reading suggestion for all interested in the general methodology of sciences and philosophy.

KEYWORDS

Stanisław Kamiński, metaphysics, cognition, Lublin School of Philosophy, metaphysical cognition, methodology of philosophy.

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