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# Wojtyła's Category of Participation and the Question of Common Good

**Abstract:** The author presents Wojtyła's views on participation and its connections to the common good. The analysis consists of two parts. The first part outlines the concept of participation (coexistence and action together with other people in relation to the common good) and its various forms (solidarity and opposition, conformism and evasion). The second part presents views of the nature of common good found not only in liberal thought (common good as the expression of deliberation and the rights of the individual), and personalist thought (common good as the development of the person and its natural potentialities), but primarily in the work of Wojtyła himself (common good as personal self-fulfilment through coexistence and cooperation with others in relation to the conscience-discerned truth, elected in a free act). His reference point was also personalism, which stresses the inalienable dignity of the person in both the private and the social spheres of life.

**Keywords:** person, participation, authentic and inauthentic forms, common good, communion

## Introduction

One of the key phenomena in current social life is atomism—a view which regards society as a collection of unattached, isolated, and rationally acting individuals, who enter relations with other individuals in pursuit of their own interests. The consequences of atomism are, *inter alia*, the atrophy of social bonds and a lack of participation in socio-political life.

In contrast, the important role of participation in the fulfilment of personal existence of a human being is brought up by Karol Wojtyła (1920–2005). Before

becoming the bishop of Cracow, Poland, and subsequently pope of the Roman Catholic Church, Wojtyła was a lecturer of ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin. He also pioneered a school of philosophical thought which finds its adherents to this day (e.g., Tadeusz Styczeń and Andrzej Szostek).

Wojtyła's philosophy is known as personalism. Its central value is the good and the development of the human person as a free entity acting in the world. His reflection rests on direct human experience through action, subsuming both anthropological and ethical aspects in its subject matter. A person's direct experience is also a moral experience, connected with the duty of affirming the person due to his or her dignity. Wojtyła analyses this experience, and on this basis he constructs an ontology and an axiology of the human person.<sup>1</sup> Wojtyła's personalism is the antithesis of individualism and collectivism. It is expressed in the axioms of the primacy of spirit over matter, of "to be" over "to have," and of person over thing.<sup>2</sup> There are those who call it ethical personalism, since it combines a phenomenological description of the human person with its metaphysical explanation, which directs the norms of morality regarding the person. It draws inspiration from Max Scheler and Roman Ingarden's realist phenomenology and from Thomas Aquinas's metaphysical realism.<sup>3</sup>

The present paper aims to present Wojtyła's views on participation and its relation to the common good. The analysis consists of two parts: (1) a definition of participation, and (2) the nature of the common good. The main point of reference will be Wojtyła's body of work from the academic period of his life, but also the publications of other personalists, whose views will serve as background to the discussion.

## What Is Participation?

To begin with, it should be stressed that Wojtyła's concept of participation involves the relational concept of the human being, in which he does, nevertheless, assume the substantial character of the person.<sup>4</sup> The human subject is thus

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<sup>1</sup> Wojciech Chudy, "Filozofia personalistyczna Jana Pawła II (Karola Wojtyły)," *Teologia Polityczna* 3 (2005–2006): 233–235.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Skrzypczak, "Personalizm Karola Wojtyły na tle współczesnej myśli polskiej," *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 1 (2011): 68.

<sup>3</sup> Tadeusz Biesaga, "Personalizm etyczny Wojtyły," in *Encyklopedia Filozofii Polskiej*, vol. 2, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2011), 328.

<sup>4</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "Osoba i czyn," in *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, ed. Karol Wojtyła (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), 134; Karol Wojtyła, "Podmiotowość

different in Wojtyła's view, not only from Husserl's transcendental "ego," but also from Buber's dialogical "I," who sees relations as primary. For Wojtyła, the basic and strongest reality is the substantial, personal subject, which secondarily enters relations with others. Such a relation is nevertheless important, since it strengthens, crystallizes, and establishes personal subjectivity.<sup>5</sup> One can say, then, that for Wojtyła the person has two significant dimensions: the metaphysical one (ontic structure) and the moral one (the engagement of the person in relations).<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, it is a static, absolute, synchronic entity, on the other—an entity which is dynamic, changeable, and diachronic.<sup>7</sup>

Wojtyła also differentiates participation from acting "together with others." By participation a human being does not merely act "together with others," but also "cooperates," thereby finding fulfillment in the act. This is because the act leaves a mark in the human being, thanks to which he or she fulfils himself/herself as a person. Therefore, acting "together with others" highlights the objective aspect of the act, while participation accentuates its subjective moment.<sup>8</sup>

What, then, is participation? Following Wojtyła's intuition, one could say it is a certain form of human action, taken together with other people, which is the result of earlier co-existence with others. Participation, according to Wojtyła, is important not only due to the fact of joint existence and action, but also because it allows one to realize the personalistic value of one's act, that is, to realize oneself as a person through the integration of oneself and one's action in relation to another human being. Participation is thus an internal property of a human being, which allows him to relate to other persons.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, two perspectives on participation can be discerned. First, it is a property of a human being realized in the ability to give a personal dimension to one's existence and action through existence and action together with others. Second, it consists in a positive relation to another, individual, unique human person.<sup>10</sup>

As noted by Jerzy Gałkowski, a student and promoter of Wojtyła's thought, the concept of participation strongly highlights the requirement for a person's self-fulfillment. The self-fulfillment of a personal entity is crucial, since that entity is primary to the society, which is evident on the metaphysical, moral,

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i 'to, co nieredukowalne' w człowieku," in *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, ed. Karol Wojtyła (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), 441.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Galarowicz, *Imię własne człowieka. Klucz do myśli i nauczania Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II* (Kraków: Papieska Akademia Teologiczna, 1996), 167.

<sup>6</sup> Chudy, "Filozofia personalistyczna Jana Pawła II (Karola Wojtyły)," 238, 240.

<sup>7</sup> Skrzypczak, "Personalizm Karola Wojtyły na tle współczesnej myśli polskiej," 69–70.

<sup>8</sup> Wojtyła, "Osoba i czyn," 301–311, 319.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 301–303, 307–311.

<sup>10</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota," in *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, ed. Karol Wojtyła (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), 406.

and methodological level.<sup>11</sup> In turn, Paweł Tarasiewicz notes that participation results in the life and development of the human as a person. This is because the human being enters the world imbued with potential and develops their natural dispositions through action. Participation allows the human being to develop both in the ontic and moral dimension.<sup>12</sup> This moment of self-fulfillment and development of the human being is important also in the context of the common good, which shall be discussed in due course of this discussion.

Participation can occur in two forms, which can be described by Buber's words "I–you" and "we." The first character is interpersonal, while the second is social. In the first one, a reference to humanity is important, while in the second one, it is the common good that needs emphasis.

Participation, therefore, as the first potentiality of the human being, makes relations with every human being possible. It opens the way to the experience of "another self." Therefore, when the human being participates in the humanity of another, he or she experiences him/her as a person. He maximally approaches what constitutes the other's individual and unique reality.<sup>13</sup> When the experience is reciprocated and the "I–you" relation is established, it results in a revelation of personal subjectivities and their mutual affirmation. "I" affirms the truth of "you" as it refers to possessing personal subjectivity and dignity, while, simultaneously, "you" affirms the truth of "I" for it also holds personal subjectivity and dignity. The relation "I–you" thus becomes an authentic interpersonal communion. If "I" and "you" maintain mutual affirmation of their subjectivity and dignity, which is confirmed by their actions, this establishes a communion of persons—*communio personarum*.<sup>14</sup>

The basic disposition of the human being is thus participation in the humanity of another human person, who appears primarily as a "neighbor." Existing in a communion presupposes the fact of being neighbors, and this concept points to humanity as the value of a person. The expression "member of the communion" refers to the belonging of a human being to the given community. Participation in humanity is therefore the root of all other forms of participation and the condition for the personalistic value of coexistence and action.<sup>15</sup> What is more, participating in the humanity of others is a task which should find itself at the basis of moral order.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Jerzy Gałkowski, "Osoba i wspólnota. Szkic o antropologii kard. Karola Wojtyły," *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych* 8 (1980): 65–66.

<sup>12</sup> Paweł Tarasiewicz, "Uczestnictwo jako podstawa życia społecznego w ujęciu Karola Wojtyły," in *Wokół antropologii Karola Wojtyły*, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, Paulina Sulenta, and Tomasz Duma (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2016), 427–428.

<sup>13</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "Uczestnictwo czy alienacja?" in *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, ed. Karol Wojtyła (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), 451–452.

<sup>14</sup> Wojtyła, "Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota," 402.

<sup>15</sup> Wojtyła, "Osoba i czyn," 329–333.

<sup>16</sup> Wojtyła, "Uczestnictwo czy alienacja?" 455.

On the other hand, according to Wojtyła, participation in the social aspect and in relation to the common good can take various forms. Some of them are authentic, while others are inauthentic. Let us now discuss both forms, which can appear both in the interpersonal and social dimensions of human life. The second form sheds light on their link to the common good, which is of interest in the present discussion.

Properly understood participation is expressed, according to Wojtyła, primarily in two authentic attitudes—solidarity and opposition. These relate not only to the joint existence and action, but also to the common good. The attitude of solidarity is the natural consequence of human participation. It denotes a constant readiness to accept and discharge the part that is one's share on the account of being a member of the given community. In solidarity, a human being not only fulfils what is his or her to do because of being a member of the community but does so for the common good. An awareness of the common good sometimes makes the human being go beyond what is his or her due. However, taking on a part of the duties which are not one's own, although required under certain circumstances, runs against participation. This is because the actions of one individual complement the activities of other persons in the given community, and thereby that individual finds self-fulfilment.<sup>17</sup>

However, solidarity does not preclude opposition. A person expressing opposition does not abandon participation or the common good but confirms them. Opposition is only aimed at the way common good is defined and pursued. An individual searches for a better definition of the common good in order to better participate in the community, since its good is close to his or her heart. Opposition is thus a function of individual perspective on the community, its good, and the vivid need to participate. It is a constructive disposition, which has the right to exist in any human community. In this context, the common good must be understood in dynamic, not static terms. Interpersonal dialogue may be helpful in defining it, since it enables extracting that which is true and right. Opposition as a stance is, therefore, intrinsically personalistic, as it is expressed in the relation of the human being to the truth, and thereby in the self-fulfillment of the person.<sup>18</sup>

Keeping the above authentic forms of participation in mind, we can reach the conclusion that a person finds fitting conditions for development only in a communion. For a community to be the environment for personal human development, it must become a communion. If it does not become a communion, it cannot provide the requisite conditions. It does, however, remain a community. The difference between a communion and a community consists in first treating the common good at once as having a subjective and objective dimension, while

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<sup>17</sup> Wojtyła, "Osoba i czyn," 322–324.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 324–326.

in the second case common good has only objective character.<sup>19</sup> Hence, a member of a communion aims not only for the attainment of certain goods, which are defined in interpersonal dialogue but, above all, for the realization of his or her humanity and self-fulfillment as a person. What constitutes such fulfilment? This will be characterized in more detail as we discuss Wojtyła's take on the nature of the common good. The hallmark of a society which lacks the character of a communion are inauthentic forms of participation, among which are conformism and evasion. Conformism consists in becoming similar to others, while simultaneously lacking both solidarity and opposition. The similarity to others is exclusively external and perfunctory, lacking internal conviction, determination, or choice. It makes the human being a mere subject of "happening" instead of being the author of his or her actions. Such an individual no longer co-creates a communion, but only submits to the community and therefore does not fulfil himself/herself as a person, making only a show of participation without the necessary dedication. Furthermore, this makes a person become indifferent to the common good and, instead, start to treat the community as a threat. Evasion, on the other hand, consists in avoiding conformism. It is a backing out of the communion and the common good. Occasionally, it can be consciously chosen and thus gain a personalistic character. Nevertheless, the rationale justifying evasion is a form of indictment of the community and its poor organization. The human gives up on self-fulfillment in cooperation with others, believing that the community robs him or her of himself/herself. In response, he or she tries to take himself/herself away from the community and, thereby, participation as a way of fulfilling oneself through being and acting with others is extinguished.<sup>20</sup>

According to the ethicist Zdzisław Pawlak, inauthentic attitudes stand in denial of human participation in a communion. They are merely an external pretense of affirmation and acceptance towards other persons and the common good. They lack commitment and responsibility, but are instead a form of escape, a deceptive mask to hide under and retreat. Since an individual does not wish to engage with another person in the form of dialogue or confrontation, at their base inauthentic attitudes rest on falsehood.<sup>21</sup>

The consequence of inauthentic dispositions is human alienation. When discussing it, it is worth considering the personal subject, as well as two dimensions of communion: "I-you" and "we." In both of these dimensions, the participation of the subject is tied to the transcendence of the human being and his or her self-fulfillment in interpersonal relations (the "I" experiencing the

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<sup>19</sup> Tarasiewicz, "Uczestnictwo jako podstawa życia społecznego w ujęciu Karola Wojtyły," 428–429.

<sup>20</sup> Wojtyła, "Osoba i czyn," 327–329.

<sup>21</sup> Zdzisław Pawlak, "Formy uczestnictwa człowieka we wspólnocie według Karola Wojtyły," *Studia Włocławskie* 9 (2006): 57–58.

personal subjectivity of “you,” expressed through acts of self-determination and transcendence) and in social relations (i.e., existing and acting together with other people in relation to the common good—“we”). Interpersonal and social relations intersect and mutually condition each other. They also both involve opening up to other people and to the common good. Alienation would involve an inability for human self-fulfillment in interpersonal or social communion. The human being cannot realize his or her nature while cut off from another “you,” whose subjectivity and personal value is indiscernible. He or she cannot also fulfill himself/herself in the social dimension, since they do not perceive themselves as a subject of social life, which goes on, so to say, beyond them.<sup>22</sup>

As the communion, that is, the social bond and unity consciously perceived and experienced by individual subjects, undergoes deterioration, the social relations in the given society can devolve into a source of alienation because communion is something essential from the perspective of personal subjectivity of all the society's members.<sup>23</sup>

Alienation can thus be said to be the weakening or questioning of the possibility to experience another individual as a personal subject, or the lack of human self-fulfillment in a social structure in which a human exists and acts with others. The consequences of alienation are, in turn, the destruction of both interpersonal and social relations. According to Wojtyła, its sources can be found in individualism, as well as totalism.<sup>24</sup>

Individualism and totalism rely on a lack of participation stemming either from the person or from the society's laws. Individualism highlights the good of the individual, to which society is subordinated. The person becomes isolated from the community as an individual focused exclusively on his/her own good, which is isolated from the good of other people and from the common good as well. Existing and acting with others in such conditions becomes a necessity which must be satisfied, rather than something which carries any positive value. The task of the community is only to secure the good of the given individual. In totalism, on the other hand, the individual is subordinated to the society, which seeks to secure itself against the individual as a threat to the community and the common good. Common good is thus created by limiting the good of the individual, so it cannot be autonomously desired and chosen by the individual. Its accomplishment is rather enforced from the individual by various means. Both individualism and totalism are, in Wojtyła's view, anti-personalistic, since they eliminate the conviction of a person's intrinsic ability to participate, which deserves actualization, shaping, and education.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Wojtyła, “Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota,” 391–413.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

<sup>24</sup> Wojtyła, “Uczestnictwo czy alienacja?” 451–460.

<sup>25</sup> Wojtyła, “Osoba i czyn,” 311–315.

So far, the concept of the common good has been mentioned numerous times in this discussion. It was used as a reference point in describing both participation itself and its authentic and inauthentic forms, as well as their consequence in the form of alienation. The proper time has come, then, to take a closer look at the question of common good in Wojtyła's philosophy. For this purpose, an understanding of the common good in contemporary liberal and personalistic thought will be outlined first, followed by Wojtyła's view.

## The Problem of Common Good

It seems that the dominant state system is currently liberal democracy. It highlights the role of the individual and accentuates its good, its rights, and its interests. Society is often reduced to the role of the guardian for the rights of individuals.<sup>26</sup> Liberal democracy is often accused of indifference or negation of the common good. However, classical liberals had no doubt that the common good exists, yet they subscribe it to its broader definition.<sup>27</sup> Contemporary liberals treat the common good as something dangerous, but its rejection threatens the sustainability of the state's democratic system. It results in people being separated from the community, while the life of the state begins to lose its cohesion. Procedural liberal democracy is insufficient for the creation of an authentic communion, since that necessitates acceptance of non-economic values. The convergence of economic interests, on which liberalism rests, is not a sufficient foundation for the state.<sup>28</sup>

However, according to the Polish political philosopher Andrzej Szahaj, there is no contradiction between liberalism and the common good. The problem is only how we define that good and who has the right to define what it is. This is because the common good is not evident in itself. In a liberal democracy, anybody can join the process of defining and interpreting the common good. It should be guarded by the state and its laws. Defining the common good, on the other hand, is, in Szahaj's view, entrusted to the civil society and to the private sphere of human life. In contrast, the state itself does not grant absolute status to any idea of good which exists in the life of the civil society, since that would

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<sup>26</sup> Pawlak, "Formy uczestnictwa człowieka we wspólnocie według Karola Wojtyły," 51.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Holmes, *Anatomia antyliberalizmu*, trans. Jerzy Szacki (Kraków: Znak, 1998), 268–271.

<sup>28</sup> Stanisław Kowalczyk, *Zarys filozofii polityki* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 2008), 138.

lead to the use of violence in order to cause others to adopt it.<sup>29</sup> The common good should thus be the result of deliberation conducted in civil society and consensus among its participants. In this take, the common good is also changeable, depending on the specific historical, social, and economic situation.

American political scientist, philosopher, and theologian Michael Novak points out that the liberal tradition carries its own take on the common good, which it views as the rights and duties of the individual, as well as its safety.<sup>30</sup> Canadian political philosopher Will Kymlicka adds that in a liberal society the common good conforms to the structure of individual preferences and concepts of good. Liberals define this good in terms of political and economic processes which allow individual preferences to be realized.<sup>31</sup> It seems, therefore, that common good in liberal democracy is identified as the rights and good of the individual. All state structures and institutions are supposed to serve their protection.

The question of the common good is regarded slightly differently in the personalistic concept of the state community, at whose foundation lies the idea of not so much the individual, but the human person. We will look below at the three main representatives of Polish personalism, which includes Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, Stanisław Kowalczyk, and Karol Wojtyła. A common feature of their work is a reference to the thought of Thomas Aquinas. However, they differ in the way it is interpreted and inspired by the views of other thinkers (e.g., Augustine of Hippo, Max Scheler, Roman Ingarden). Their common feature is also the recognition of the human person's value and the desire to affirm it.

In Wojtyła's philosophy, a person denotes a particular fullness of existence. For this reason, it should always be the purpose of action and no one is entitled to use it as a means for some other purpose. A human being is, in essence, always "someone," who makes him or her exceptional among other entities, which are in essence "something." Consequently, according to Wojtyła, the human being has dignity which constitutes a personalistic moral norm and determines the proper behavior towards him or her. This behavior rests on love as the only proper and fully worthy relationship. Only through love can the value of the human person be affirmed as more-than-a-thing and requiring more than consumption.<sup>32</sup>

In this perspective, according to the Polish philosopher Innocenty Bocheński, the state community is a collection of persons with a common goal, which is

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<sup>29</sup> Andrzej Szahaj, "O fundamentalizmie i nie tylko," *Etyka* 31 (1998): 71–72.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Novak, *Wolne osoby i dobro wspólne*, trans. Grzegorz Łuczkiwicz (Kraków: Znak, 1998), 11.

<sup>31</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Współczesna filozofia polityczna*, trans. Andrzej Pawelec (Kraków: Znak, 1998), 230.

<sup>32</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2001), 22, 24, 29–30, 43.

the common good. These persons are bound together by real relations. Each of them, as an individual spiritual substance, is a social being on account of its spiritual nature. It cannot live and develop outside of society. It is connected to its given community and to coexistence and cooperation with other people.<sup>33</sup>

However, a human being is not just an individual gaining value only in communion, but is a person, that is, someone who has value in oneself, in one's rational and free nature. Personalism thus subscribes to the primacy of the value and dignity of the person. A correctly formed society is not merely a collection of individuals, but a communion of persons. Its beginning is a consciously and freely accepted common good.<sup>34</sup> The foundation of the personalist vision is thus the distinction between a person and an individual. A personal entity's innate dignity, the spiritual and transcendent dimension of its existence, and the character exceeding that of mere things and usefulness are accentuated in this philosophy. The individual is thus regarded in the horizontal dimension of various social relationship networks and economic conditions.

In personalism the goal of society is the common good, which creates conditions for development of every person. It is tied to the spiritual and material good of each human person. The purpose of society is thus providing each of its members the best possible conditions for life and development. The human person is its main focus. The society can demand cooperation or even sacrifice for its benefit, but certain areas of life exist where the human being supercedes the society and is independent of it (e.g., protection of life, freedom of conscience).<sup>35</sup> A human being is subject to the state, but not in all aspects of life. In the realm of personal good the human remains free and not in service to the state, but rather being served by it. Subjection to the state exists only in the realm of material good.<sup>36</sup>

Polish tomist Mieczysław A. Krąpiec points out that personalism adopts a finalistic conception of good as the goal of action. Action is primarily the realization of inclinations defined by the natural way of being of the given entity. Goodness is the object of inclination and the rationale for pursuing it. The existence of an entity is understood as the final actualization of all the potentialities of that entity which belong to its nature. The human seeks to develop his or her biological and rational aspects. The good of the human being is an ever-fuller actualization of his or her potentialities, to which natural inclinations drive him, which can be achieved through acts of intellect and will, proportionally for every human being. Such a good is thus fit to become the common good, analo-

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<sup>33</sup> Innocenty Bocheński, *ABC tomizmu* (Londyn: Katolicki Ośrodek Wydawniczy „Veritas,” 1950), 67–69.

<sup>34</sup> Pawlak, “Formy uczestnictwa człowieka we wspólnocie według Karola Wojtyły,” 51.

<sup>35</sup> Bocheński, *ABC tomizmu*, 69–71.

<sup>36</sup> Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, *Człowiek i prawo naturalne* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1975), 190–191.

gously realized. Krąpiec stresses that an increase of the good of a given person is always an increase of the whole society's good. Actualizing the personal good also requires material goods as means to achieve the goal.<sup>37</sup>

As the Polish ethicist and personalist Wojciech Chudy points out, the common good is therefore tied to two essential qualities of the personal entity: contingency and potentiality. A human being is not a complete entity, for he or she enters the world as a potential being, whose life can be viewed as a process of actualizing traits whose seeds he or she is endowed with to develop from the moment of conception and birth.<sup>38</sup>

Elsewhere, Krąpiec differentiates the personalistic and the objective common good. The personalistic common good is about human self-improvement, realization of basic natural inclinations, and actualization of one's own potentialities in the areas of cognition, freedom and love. Personal development is thus the rationale for the community's existence. Only a good defined in these terms can become the common property of all people. No material goods can be considered a common good in the proper sense, nor can they be understood as a sufficient rationale for establishing a social order. Material goods can only be regarded as means connected with an essential human good. Objective common goods, on the other hand, are the objects of personal actions, for example, truth, goodness, and beauty. In their personal life, human beings are supposed to discern truth, goodness, and beauty and subsequently realize them according to their best understanding. The common good, thus understood, is the goal of human activity and a motivation for action.<sup>39</sup>

Polish personalist Stanisław Kowalczyk distinguishes two essential dimensions of the common good: the internal and the external one. The first one is ontological and axiological in character and it consists in the development of the human person in relation to a set of indispensable values (vital, material, cognitive, moral, aesthetic, religious). The other, which is social and institutional, relates to certain structures, institutions, economic and social conditions (law, government, education, organization of labor). It is worth noting that those structures and institutions have only an instrumental character relative to the personalistic common good. A community should thus cooperate in favor of the common good, which should be understood dynamically. It should primarily pursue the development of human persons as such, that is, their achievement of a fuller humanity. Second, the common good is the development of economic conditions and social structures. Furthermore, the common good as an attitude of a human communion can be understood, according to Kowalczyk, in its ob-

<sup>37</sup> Krąpiec, *Człowiek i prawo naturalne*, 180–186.

<sup>38</sup> Chudy, "Filozofia personalistyczna Jana Pawła II (Karola Wojtyły)," 249.

<sup>39</sup> Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, "Dobro wspólne," in *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, vol. 2, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2001), 631–633.

jective or subjective aspect. The earliest one, although it is insufficient, often identifies the common good with a goal being pursued by the given community. The latter one understands it as that which conditions and inspires participation in the cooperating persons. The good in the subjective sense is thus participation itself, understood as a property of a person who, by coexistence and cooperation with other people, fulfils himself/herself.<sup>40</sup>

Kowalczyk's subjective take on the common good leads us to Wojtyła's concept, for whom the common good is the good of the communion. It can be identified with the goal which that communion is pursuing, but, according to Wojtyła, such an identification is superficial, since the goal of cooperation defined objectively does not constitute the fullness of the common good. What is needed is the foregrounding of the subjective aspect. The common good is therefore not only the goal of cooperation but, above all, that which conditions and inspires participation among the cooperating persons. Subjective meaning is connected to cooperation as a characteristic of the person. The common good is the principle of correct participation, which lets the person act authentically and thereby fulfil himself/herself in cooperation with others. The common good reaches not so much into the realm of action, but rather into coexistence with others. Its goal is thus personal self-fulfillment.<sup>41</sup>

In Wojtyła's view, personal self-fulfillment is accomplished through authentic action performed by the person. What is authentic action? It is an action which is morally good, through which the person becomes morally good. A fundamental role in this view is played by conscience, which reveals dependence on truth. The structure of an act is therefore teleological, since the human being sets out towards truth. This in turn reveals transcendence of the person and accentuates its subjectivity. Human self-fulfillment is therefore accomplished in obedience to the truth in one's conscience and in freely choosing it. Wojtyła especially strongly accentuates the role of conscience, which serves to discern true good and to shape proper obligation towards it. For Wojtyła, conscience is the norm of action and the condition of personal self-fulfillment in it. Still, it must be noted that conscience is not the lawgiver, as it does not create norms by itself but finds them in the objective order of morality. What happens in conscience is the experience of a given norm's truth, the conviction of its rightfulness and of the obligation to act.<sup>42</sup> Wojtyła powerfully stresses, once more, that human self-fulfillment is possible only through relating to truth in conscience.<sup>43</sup>

Wojtyła notes that thanks to conscience the human being experiences also his or her own transcendence in the act. It manifests itself in acts of cognizing the

<sup>40</sup> Stanisław Kowalczyk, *Człowiek a społeczność. Zarys filozofii społecznej* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 2005), 234–237, 258.

<sup>41</sup> Wojtyła, "Osoba i czyn," 319–322.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 181, 194–210; Wojtyła, "Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota," 385.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 181, 185; Wojtyła, "Podmiotowość i „to, co nieredukowalne” w człowieku," 441.

truth and experiencing freedom. Freedom is identical with acts of self-determination. It is expressed in agency which, in turn, entails responsibility. The sense of responsibility also reveals subjection to truth and human dependence on it.<sup>44</sup> Of course, the nature of this truth remains an open question. It may seem to be merely subjective truth. Wojtyła, however, as mentioned above, is a cognitive optimist. Following Aquinas, he posits that in conscience the human being has access to the objective moral order and may thereby learn objective and ontic truth not only about himself/herself, but also all of reality. On the other hand, Wojtyła emphasizes that when we discover truth in conscience, we approach it in stages. Therefore, truth has also an approximate character in the aspect of knowledge.

In the context of common good, Wojtyła, like Krapiec, stresses that his concept is analogical, since it differs depending on the subject and on the kind of community. However, it always entails development and self-fulfillment of the human person and the transcendence of existence as foundational to the creation of a communion.<sup>45</sup>

It seems that the analogical concept of the common good stems from individual human conscience. This is because the self-fulfillment of a given person depends on free action consistent with truth discerned in the conscience, in its specific existential situation. The consequence of discerning truth is the experience of obligation to act. Individual persons fulfill themselves not only through performing the given act but, most importantly, through coexisting with other people in relation to the truth discerned.

It can therefore be said that the common good is a value which conditions and inspires personal participation, understood as the ability to realize, through acting, the personalistic value which contributes to the building of oneself and other persons. A great role is played by freedom directed by truth, which enables human self-determination. Human discernment of truth as the objective norm of moral law enables the realization of freedom, and thereby human self-fulfillment as a person.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

The discussion presented above was an attempt to present Wojtyła's views on participation and its connections to the common good. The analysis consisted of two parts. The first one outlined the concept of participation and its various

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 188, 222–223; Ibid., 440.

<sup>45</sup> Wojtyła, "Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota," 406.

<sup>46</sup> Chudy, "Filozofia personalistyczna Jana Pawła II (Karola Wojtyły)," 237, 247.

forms. The second endeavored to present views on the nature of common good found not only in liberal thought, but primarily in the work of Wojtyła himself. His reference point was also personalism, which stresses the inalienable dignity of the person in both the private and the social sphere of life.

In Wojtyła's view, the ability to participate is a crucial aspect of the person's participation, which involves coexistence and cooperation with other unique personal entities. The reciprocation of these relations leads to the creation of a communion of persons. Participation can take authentic or inauthentic forms. Their expression is, on the one hand, solidarity with the life of the communion and the common good it realizes, as well as opposition which regards the definition and realization of that good. On the other hand, conformism tends to express itself in superficial adaptation to it and uses evasion as rejection of the communion and of the realization of its common good. What is the common good? For personalists, it is the development of the person and its natural potentialities. For Wojtyła, it is the fulfilment of the human being through coexisting and acting according to conscience-discerned truth, which is subsequently chosen and realized in a free act. Coexistence and acting are always done in communion with other persons, who are not self-contained monads, but entities living in various relations and communions (participation). It should be noted that for each person, before the common good becomes action consistent with the truth, it should first become being in truth. Therefore, its main character is subjective, not objective. Man, however, may have a different relation to the common good: to commit himself/herself to the fulfilment of his or her being (solidarity) or to seek a new form of its implementation (opposition), superficial inclusion in self-fulfillment (conformism) or complete resignation from fulfilling himself/herself in action together with others (evasion). It is worth stressing that common good is always realized proportionally to the abilities of the given person. In turn, the goal of the state community, for which the common good is the foundation, should be the creation of such conditions in which the human being is capable of discerning and choosing truth as well as living and acting in accordance with it, in communion with others, and thereby has the chance for self-fulfillment as a person.

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Karol Jasiński

## Categoria di partecipazione di Wojtyła e questione del bene comune

### Sommario

L'autore presenta le opinioni di Wojtyła sulla partecipazione e sul suo rapporto con il bene comune. Le analisi consistono di due parti. Nella prima parte si presenta la concezione della

partecipazione (coesistenza e attività insieme ad altre persone in relazione al bene comune) e anche le sue varie forme (solidarietà e obiezione, conformismo ed evitamento). Nella seconda parte, l'autore si concentra sulla questione del bene comune, concetto che appare non solo nel pensiero liberale (bene comune in quanto espressione della deliberazione e dei diritti di un individuo) e nel pensiero personalista (bene comune in quanto lo sviluppo di un individuo e delle sue possibilità naturali), ma soprattutto nel lavoro stesso di Wojtyła (bene comune in quanto forma di auto-realizzazione personale attraverso la convivenza e la cooperazione con gli altri in relazione alla verità riconosciuta dalla coscienza, scelta in un atto gratuito). Il punto di riferimento di Wojtyła era anche il personalismo, con cui si sottolinea la dignità inerente della persona sia nella sfera privata che sociale.

Parole chiave: Persona, partecipazione, forme autentiche e non autentiche di partecipazione, bene comune, comunità

Karol Jasiński

## La catégorie de participation de Wojtyła et la question du bien commun

### Résumé

L'auteur présente le point de vue de Wojtyła sur la participation et sa relation avec le bien commun. Les analyses se composent de deux parties. La première partie présente la conception de la participation (coexistence et activité avec d'autres personnes en relation avec le bien commun) ainsi que ses différentes formes (solidarité et objection, conformité et évitement). Dans la seconde partie, l'auteur s'intéresse à la question du bien commun, dont la notion n'apparaît pas seulement dans la pensée libérale (le bien commun comme expression de la délibération et des droits d'un individu) et dans la pensée personaliste (le bien commune comme développement d'un individu et de ses possibilités naturelles), mais surtout dans l'œuvre même de Wojtyła (le bien commun comme forme d'autoréalisation personnelle par la coexistence et la coopération avec les autres en rapport avec la vérité reconnue par la conscience, choisie dans un acte gratuit). Le point de repère de Wojtyła était également le personalisme, qui met l'accent sur la dignité inhérente de la personne dans les sphères privées et sociales.

Mots-clés : Personne, participation, formes de participation authentiques et non authentiques, bien commun, communauté