

MARXIST ALIENATION VERSUS WOJTYŁIAN PARTICIPATION: TOWARD A PERSONALISTIC VISION OF LIFE IN SOCIETY

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“[T]he concept of participation consists in securing man’s transcendence in his action together with other people and not—as in Marxism—in presupposing man’s determination by internal or external factors.”



INTRODUCTION IN THE CONTEXT OF ALIENATION

Everyone desires a life among and with others that does not diminish individual freedom and dignity, especially when it concerns their own freedom and dignity. But is such a life possible? Does not the contemporary focus on the individual and his rights undermine the coherence of society and relativize the common good? It seems that the experience of alienation proves this point by demonstrating the estrangement of the individual from the community in which he lives. Undoubtedly, Vatican II also had alienation in mind when it spoke of “the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age” that proliferate in the wake of rapid and

global cultural and social transformations.¹ Karol Wojtyła shows what is fundamentally necessary for overcoming alienation and for a meaningful life in community in any epoch through his concept of participation.

I want to reflect on this concept as found primarily in his masterpiece *Person and Act* (originally published in 1969)² by taking the reality of alienation as the starting point. Because *Person and Act* is—at least in part—Wojtyła’s response to Marxist social thought, I will show that the question of alienation and participation is solved in Marxism by basing social interaction on principles opposed to Wojtyła’s approach. First, I will present the concept of alienation, especially from the Marxist perspective. Then, because alienation is a denial of participation, I will consider three dimensions of participation: personal, interpersonal, and social. This threefold presentation will include the transcendent, ethical, and human character of participation, that is, its relation to self-determination, morality, and love. As to his method, Wojtyła argues that a complete grasp of the problem presupposes a vision of man understood not simply as a rational individual belonging to the species *homo sapiens* (as is the case in Marxist thought) but as a human person—a conscious subject with a heart and conscience whose value is inestimable and whose nature is intrinsically social. In other words, the proper plane of the problem of alienation and participation is personalistic, not merely “human.”³

Although the concept of alienation does not originate in Marxist thought, it is nonetheless where it receives its actual and practical formulation⁴—the form to which Wojtyła relates

1. See, for instance, *Gaudium et spes*, 1–10.

2. I will use here the recent English translation of Karol Wojtyła’s *Person and Act*, namely, *The English Critical Edition of the Works of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II*, vol. 1: *Person and Act and Related Essays*, trans. Grzegorz Ignatik (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021) (hereafter cited as *Person and Act*, unless referring to another work in this volume).

3. See, for instance, Karol Wojtyła, “The Person: Subject and Community,” in *Person and Act*, 489 and 513.

4. Karl Marx critiqued Georg Hegel’s idealistic concept of alienation as any content that limited or determined consciousness. Instead of seeing alienation as a result of a determination (of the content of consciousness) by matter, as the Hegelian idealistic system, Marx saw human alienation in spirituality. Ac-

his vision of participation.⁵ The problem of alienation underscores the significance of participation and at the same time shows how incompatible Marxist thought is with Christianity and with Wojtyła's thought. The Polish thinker himself admitted that *Person and Act*, especially the last chapter on participation, was intended—at least in part—as a polemical response to Marxist thought as it was presented in Adam Schaff's *Marxism and the Human Individual*.⁶ Wojtyła writes,

I wish to add that my book *Person and Act* was an attempt to create an antithesis to the book *Marxism and the Human Individual*. In a certain sense, my book's final chapter, which is really more of a supplement, touches on these matters discussed by the Polish theorist of Marxism.⁷

In his book, Schaff attempted to present the foundations of Marxist anthropology, that is, a philosophical account of the human person by the Marxist system. Ultimately, Wojtyła will judge this attempt to have missed its goal due to Marxism's incapacity to develop an integral anthropology based on its materialistic

according to Marx, alienation was a limitation of the freedom of the real, existing human being by what is not human, by what is not man himself. See Karol Wojtyła, "Refleksje nad książką H. Lefebvre'a 'Marx 1818–1863' (alienacja i byt)," Cardinal Karol Wojtyła Archive of the Metropolitan Curia in Krakow, Poland. This article will be published in English in vol. 3 of the *English Critical Edition of the Works of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II* (= *ECE*), forthcoming from The Catholic University of America Press.

5. Nonetheless, Wojtyła notes that the plethora of statements on alienation in Marxist writings does not sufficiently explain the essence of alienation. See Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," 512.

6. See Adam Schaff, *Marxism and the Human Individual*, ed. Robert S. Cohen, trans. Olgierd Wojtasiewicz (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970). Wojtyła used the original Polish edition: Adam Schaff, *Marksizm a jednostka ludzka. Przyczynek do marksistowskiej filozofii człowieka* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1965). The question of whether and in what way Wojtyła influenced the Marxists is outside the scope of this article. Certainly, such an influence must have existed in particular cases. However, because Marxism did not recognize a third way between itself and capitalism, it would have either to reject Wojtyła's principles and conclusions or to demonstrate that they were present in Marxism's socialist thought from the beginning.

7. Karol Wojtyła, "Sytuacja moralna AD 1971," Cardinal Karol Wojtyła Archive of the Metropolitan Curia in Krakow, Poland. This article will be published in English in vol. 3 of the *ECE*.

and utilitarian presuppositions. In other words, the reason for the failure of Marxism to solve the problem of alienation was the system's nonpersonalistic or even antipersonalistic character. The Marxist system fails to understand man as a personal subject who acts with conscious efficacy to attain his true fulfillment in love.⁸ Let me now explain this nonpersonalistic character of the Marxist grasp of alienation.

THE ESSENCE OF ALIENATION

According to Marx, the problem of alienation emerges on the substratum of the relation between man and the world, that is, between the human individual, other individuals, and the products of his and their actions. Alienation (*Entfremdung*) in the Marxist sense denotes the loss of man's governance over the world that he formed himself.⁹ The various products of man "objectify" or "reify" themselves, taking on autonomous being and—consequently—subordinating man, their maker, to themselves. This alienation of products shifts onto man, who—in light of this loss and, consequently, his new relationship to the fruits of his labor—becomes "separated" from himself, that is, *dehumanized*. With full irony, we can say that man as maker becomes lost in this impersonal, inhuman world that he himself has formed. In practice, Marx sees the source of alienation in capitalism because there the private ownership of the means of production subordinates man to itself. Therefore, the economic problem in the anthropological dimension is the central area where one should seek the means for overcoming alienation. This overcoming is achieved by modifying existing social relations and institutions.¹⁰ Thus, the fight against alienation is the fight against the spontaneity of development and the fight for a development planned by man and subordinated to his will. In other words, this is the struggle for the freedom of man—in order for man to "consciously forge his destiny."¹¹

8. See, for instance, Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," 489–90.

9. See Schaff, *Marxism and the Human Individual*, 10, 25, 103, and 106.

10. *Ibid.*, 31.

11. *Ibid.*, 107.

Clearly, Marxism attempts to solve the problem of the human person's dehumanization by changing external conditions. In his article "Participation or Alienation," Wojtyła notes,

According to Marxist philosophy, man is alienated in a sense by his own products: economic and political systems, property, work, and power. Marxist philosophy also includes religion in these products. Hence a conclusion emerges that one can transform the human world on the plane of these products, change economic and political systems, take up the fight with religion—and the age of alienation will cease, and the "kingdom of freedom," that is, of the full autorealization of each and all, will come.¹²

Despite the attempts to portray Marxism as a humanistic system concentrated on the happiness of the human individual, this system did not develop a deeper or adequately human principle of interpersonal interaction in society. According to Wojtyła, the gist of the problem is that Marxism possesses neither a personalistic norm nor a personalistic attitude toward the human person and interpersonal relations.¹³ The most personalistic principle that it articulated was that the human individual improves his well-being only by way of improving the situation of everyone in society.¹⁴ In other words, to ensure his own benefit, the goal of every individual is to align consciously this benefit with the social benefit. Schaff writes,

12. Karol Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation," in *Person and Act*, 529–30.

13. A detailed description of Wojtyła's personalism and the personalistic norm is beyond the scope of this article. However, it suffices to mention that this personalism is a particular appreciation of the human person in theory and practice as the highest value in the visible world. In his book *Considerations on the Essence of Man* [Rozważania o istocie człowieka], Wojtyła writes, "Personalism means the understanding and solving of various human questions and matters in accordance with this premise: that man is a person, an unrepeatable value that does not pass away" (trans. John Grondelski [Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2016], 159). As formulated by Wojtyła, the personalistic norm mandates that a human person may not be used as a mere means to an end but should always be loved. See Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. Grzegorz Ignatik (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2013), 11 and 24–28. See also Grzegorz Ignatik, *Communicating Life: Karol Wojtyła and Humanae vitae* (Washington DC: Humanum Academic Press, 2024), 13–14.

14. See Schaff, *Marxism and the Human Individual*, 42 and 201–02.

The point is that they should act in the conviction that their best interests always require that they respect the interests of others, and so of society, and that the mentality so formed should frame a code of conduct reflecting standards of “decency” in the common meaning of the word.¹⁵

This, then, is the Marxist way to overcome egoism, which is the striving to grow wealthy at any cost, a striving that crept into human life through capitalism. Wojtyła criticizes this solution by noting that antiegoism as an ethical norm of socialism is not equivalent to the love of one person by another. Rather, he sees this ethical and normative concept as the traditional “calculus of utility” professed by utilitarians, with the sole difference being that what they called “pleasure,” Schaff calls “interests.”¹⁶ In other words, the utilitarian principle of social interaction in Marxism does not overcome egoism in members of society. By being founded on man’s subjective good, utilitarianism ultimately destroys the sphere of rationality and self-determination based on man’s transcendence and is incapable of ensuring the individual’s orientation to the objective common good.¹⁷

Wojtyła does not deny the fact of alienation that occurs in the personal, ideological, social, economic, or political dimensions. Man suffers dehumanization in all these spheres as he loses his awareness and experience of the relations that bind him to others. After all, from the beginning of her existence, the Church herself recognized various forms of dehumanization:

The social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person if the disposition of affairs is to be subordinate to the personal realm and not contrariwise, as the Lord indicated when He said that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.¹⁸

15. *Ibid.*, 202.

16. Wojtyła, “Sytuacja moralna AD 1971.”

17. See, for instance, Karol Wojtyła, *Man in the Field of Responsibility*, trans. Kenneth W. Kemp and Zuzanna Maślanka Kieroń (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011), 38–41; and Karol Wojtyła, *The Lublin Lectures and Works on Max Scheler*, vol. 2 of *ECE*, trans. Grzegorz Ignatik (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2023), 195ff.

18. *Gaudium et spes*, 26.

However, while acknowledging the reality of alienation, Wojtyła disagrees with the Marxists as to the causes of alienation and the ways of overcoming it in man and in various dimensions of human life, whether in the individual, interpersonal, or social dimensions.¹⁹ It is precisely in these three aspects that we will consider the category of participation developed by Karol Wojtyła. It is precisely this path that will clarify the criterion for solving the problem of alienation. Perhaps the best way to answer the question about the causes of alienation and how to overcome it will be the theory of participation that Wojtyła offers as the foundation of order in a society of persons, that is, as an antithesis of alienation in a community. He posits the matter clearly: “*For alienation denotes nothing else but the denial of participation.*”²⁰ From this negative grasp of participation (that is, alienation), let us turn to its positive vision.

THE INDIVIDUAL OR PERSONAL DIMENSION OF PARTICIPATION

Wojtyła describes participation in the context of his study on persons and their acts; that is, he sees participation as a reality that proceeds from the fact of the person’s being and acting.²¹ This means that everything that he says on the topic of participation is grounded in his understanding of the dynamic relation between the person and his acts. Due to space limitations, I will forego an extensive analysis of this relation, which is presented in the first six chapters of *Person and Act*. I will only make one fundamental point: according to Wojtyła, by performing acts in freedom (that is, by acting in his most proper way), the human person realizes himself, his own humanity. The Polish thinker calls this realization self-determination. The point here is that man is not only the subject but also the object of his actions. That is, precisely

19. The root of this disagreement lies in different visions of man and his freedom in the world. However, a comparison of Wojtyła’s anthropology with that of Marx in a comprehensive and systematic manner is outside the scope of this article.

20. Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” 525 (emphasis original).

21. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 378.

by his own acts man becomes morally good or morally evil—good or evil *as* man and not under some other aspect.²² However, again, in order to act morally, man must perform human acts with personal efficacy and freedom.

There is one more point worth noting. It is not difficult to observe that even the very title of Wojtyła's work, *Person and Act*, places it in opposition to the Marxist grasp of the human individual and labor. Marxism reduced man and his actions to nature (biology), society, and history.²³ Wojtyła does not deny that human action is influenced or even conditioned by man's biological makeup, social factors, and historical development; he simply does not reduce human action to these elements. Instead, the Polish thinker claims that it is through his act and the lived-experience of this act (whether in the moment of efficacy, the moment of freedom, or the moments of duty or responsibility) that man reveals himself as a person—as one who determines himself. In this sense, man exercises superiority with respect to himself and his own psychosomatic dynamism: he *actualizes and manifests his transcendence* (he also integrates what is immanent in him into this transcendence). Wojtyła builds the category of participation precisely on the truth that man confirms his transcendence through his actions. Therefore, the concept of participation consists in securing man's transcendence in his action together with other people and not—as in Marxism—in presupposing man's determination by internal or external factors. (According to Marx, freedom is the understanding of necessity and taking advantage of the laws governing nature for one's own ends.)²⁴ Therefore, when explaining the concept of participation, Wojtyła confirms that “by ‘participation’ we understand that which corresponds to the transcendence of the person in the act when this act is performed ‘together with others,’ in various

22. See Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 172; and “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” in *Person and Act*, 462, where Wojtyła refers to St. Thomas Aquinas and his *Summa theologiae* (= *ST*) I-II, q. 56, a. 3.

23. See, for instance, Schaff, *Marxism and the Human Individual*, 69 and 73.

24. See Henri Lefebvre, *Marx et la Liberté* (Genève: Éditions des Trois Colines, 1947). (The Polish edition referenced by Wojtyła is *Marks a idea wolności*, trans. Leszek Kołakowski [Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1949]).

social or inter-human relations.”²⁵ The point is to see that man’s being and acting in a community—that is, as a member of a society—per se does not destroy or undermine the person’s transcendence in his act. Rather, Wojtyła aims to show that acting together with others is an effect of self-determination (to which transcendence is linked) and proceeds from it.

Nonetheless, Wojtyła states that this relation could be reversed so that participation could be seen as an action (together with others) thanks to which the human person not only preserves but also develops his transcendence through self-determination.²⁶ In this respect, participation becomes a task to be fulfilled, a duty for man, thereby taking on a normative feature.²⁷ In other words, we can say that without participation the person cannot live in a fully personal way and fulfill himself as a person. If someone wishes to fulfill himself in a community, he must participate in it in the sense proposed by Wojtyła. This holds true not only for individuals but also for entire communities—for societies, nations, and families. It is the community that should create conditions conducive to participation, that is, for man to have the fundamental possibility to realize the authentic personalistic value of his acts—to perform human acts. To put it differently, a particular society should never destroy or diminish a person’s transcendence. A person who lives in a society should always be able to perform acts without relinquishing his decision and choice, thus failing to act either 1) by yielding to pressures of the collective (this is the phenomenon of conformism, where man in a sense “allows himself to be carried” by the collective), or 2) by yielding to the pressures of his own egoism (this is the phenomenon of individualism).²⁸

25. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 385. For this reason, I cannot agree with Fr. Leszek Kuc that Wojtyła’s concept of participation contradicts his own personalistic presupposition of transcendence and integration in the person and his actions. Wojtyła’s point is that we should not understand participation without this presupposition. It is precisely by participating in humanity that the Wojtylian personalistic presuppositions are preserved. See Leszek Kuc, “Uczestnictwo w człowieczeństwie ‘innych?’” *Analecta Cracoviensia* 5–6 (1973–74): 188–89.

26. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 385.

27. *Ibid.*, 388–89.

28. *Ibid.*, 405.

THE RELATION OF PARTICIPATION
TO THE ETHICAL SPHERE

At this point, it is fitting to note the relation of participation to morality. According to Wojtyła, participation is a property of the person thanks to which the man who acts together with others realizes the authentic personalistic value of his acts (and, thereby, the authentic value of his own person).²⁹ Wojtyła explains that the personalistic or personal value of the act is not an ethical value but denotes the fact that man acts in a way proper to him, that is, that he determines himself through the act. Ethical values (moral good or evil) grow on the substratum of the personalistic value, but without being identified with it. Therefore, the author of *Person and Act* states that, before we ascribe moral merit or fault to man, “we must begin from ascertaining *whether a given man-person really performed the act.*”³⁰ We can conclude from this that, at its most fundamental level, participation is a premoral or pre-ethical reality³¹—that it is a social foundation or, rather, an ethical criterion of a community. The judgment of the morality of a given social action will depend on whether this action together with others preserves and promotes participation or not.

However, by distinguishing participation from morality, Wojtyła does not wish to separate human acts from the morality of these acts. Man’s own experience of morality attests to the impossibility of such a separation. Morality and its experience belong to humanity in an essential way. They touch something essentially human, something utterly personal—something that is indispensable for self-realization and the authentic encounter with the other. Therefore, thanks to morality “we are able to more deeply understand man precisely as a person.”³² If we understand participation as having to do with the humanity of each person (as we will see shortly), participation takes on a moral character in virtue of morality’s existential aspect in man. For

29. Ibid., 387.

30. Ibid., 382 (emphasis original); see also 383 and 400.

31. See Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” 522; *Person and Act*, 400.

32. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 105. In fact, Wojtyła is able to say that the emergence of the moral value in man “*reveals the person to us even more deeply and thoroughly than the act itself*” (ibid., emphasis original).

this reason—for the reason of this existential union between humanity and morality—the implementation of participation can be accomplished only by moral goodness. Conversely, alienation in Wojtyła's understanding would ultimately be caused by moral evil, or—to use personalistic language—by treating oneself and others in a manner antithetical to their personal dignity.³³

THE INTERPERSONAL DIMENSION OF PARTICIPATION

When I mentioned the duty of a community toward an individual, my reflections already entered the perspective of participation concerning the relation between persons and also between the person and his community. First, let us consider the interpersonal aspect. In this aspect, Wojtyła considers participation in relation not only to “a member of a community,” but also to “a neighbor” as a reality more fundamental than a member of a community.³⁴ The concept of “neighbor” “is connected with man as such and with the very value of the person *regardless of any relation to this or that community or society.*”³⁵ This concept of “neighbor” is based on two things: 1) the very humanity of the person, which any man possesses, and 2) on the unique and unrepeatable value that is every person. Therefore, Wojtyła states that “all participation in the community is based on [participation in the very humanity of others] and at the same time *finds its personal sense through this capacity for participating in the humanity of every man.*”³⁶ This capacity is the root of all participation.

In his articles “Participation or Alienation” and “The Person: Subject and Community,” Wojtyła clarifies what he understands by participation in humanity.³⁷ There, he speaks of two meanings of participation (and alienation): one based on the relation “I-the other” (which he calls interpersonal) and

33. See Wojtyła, “Refleksje nad książką H. Lefebvre’a ‘Marx 1818–1863’ (alienacja i byt).”

34. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 409–10.

35. *Ibid.*, 409 (emphasis original).

36. *Ibid.*, 409–10 (emphasis original).

37. See Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” 514–31; and “The Person: Subject and Community,” 467–513.

the other based on the relation “we” (which he calls social). Although participation is grounded on the ontic structure “I-the other,” that is, on the fact that both I and this other are individuals who participate in humanity and who can understand this participation, Wojtyła’s point is not just the awareness that what unites us is the sameness of human nature. He also considers the consciousness of personal distinctness: the point is that I can understand and have consciousness that this “other” is an unrepeatable value, that he is “an other ‘I.’” In Wojtyła’s opinion, precisely this twofold consciousness “determines a capacity to participate in the very humanity of other people and initiates this participation.”³⁸

On the ontic foundation of rational nature, the Polish thinker shows the proper concept of participation in the aspect of lived-experience. To participate in humanity means to experience concretely that this other man is “an other ‘I,’” analogously to the fact of experiencing my own “I.”³⁹ Participation is the lived-experience of this other *as a person*. What is accomplished in this lived-experience of mine (in participation) is a transference of my conscious “I” outside myself onto this concrete “other” man. Wojtyła distinguishes two directions of this “participation”: the original “transference” is accompanied by a “reception” of the other man in oneself as “an other ‘I.’”⁴⁰ This situation denotes a fundamentally personal drawing near to another person who becomes a true neighbor in this closeness.⁴¹

38. Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” 519.

39. Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” 520. In *Person and Act*, Wojtyła writes, “Other people do not remain for me merely some ‘outwardness’ opposite my own ‘inwardness,’ but in the totality of cognition these aspects complement and equalize each other; also, experience itself in its two forms, that is, as interior and exterior, works toward this complementing and equalizing, not against it” (99, emphasis original).

40. Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” 520.

41. Of course, the psychosomatic reactions and emotions can and should support this nearness built on consciousness and lived-experience. Consider Wojtyła’s concept of integration in truthfulness. However, these reactions and emotions could also close off one person from another.

PARTICIPATION AS LOVE

My reflections thus far reveal a close proximity between participation and love. It is impossible to provide here a satisfactory overview of Wojtyła's teaching on love, especially in its close connection to human life.⁴² At this point, I simply want to stress the interpersonal aspect of love, as this aspect contains a profound reference to participation. In particular, I wish to underline the Wojtylian grasp of love as a perichoresis (from the Greek περιχώρησις and the Latin *circumincessio*), a sort of mutual interpenetration of persons.⁴³ Wojtyła often presented love as perichoresis. In his ethical study *Love and Responsibility*, he sees love as the belonging of one person to another, in which persons mutually interpenetrate so that they can reciprocally live in and by each other.⁴⁴ In his mystical drama *Radiation of Fatherhood*, he beautifully presents the love between Adam and Monica as a reciprocal embracing and finding the other (the beloved) in oneself—as the consciousness of this other as “mine.”⁴⁵ In his Wednesday catecheses on love (his theology of the body), John Paul II clearly understands that love makes the “I” of the other, so to speak, one's own “I.” He writes, “Love not only unites the two subjects, but allows them to interpenetrate each other, belonging spiritually to one another. . . . The ‘I’ becomes in some way the ‘you,’

42. Wojtyła presents his philosophical reflections on human love in *Love and Responsibility* and his theological understanding in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). See also Ignatik, *Communicating Life*, 169–73.

43. I refer to the terminology of the Holy Trinity, because here is the ultimate substantiation of participation. See, for instance, a description of perichoresis in Thomas's *Summa theologiae* I, q. 42, a. 5.

44. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 113: “For man is always, above all, himself (a “person”), so in order that he can not only be with the other but, what is more, live by and for the other, he must in some way constantly find himself in the other and the other in himself. Love is impossible for beings that are impenetrable to each other; only spirituality, together with the persons' ‘inwardness’ linked to it, creates conditions of reciprocal permeation so that the persons can live in and by each other.”

45. See Karol Wojtyła, *Radiation of Fatherhood*, in *The Collected Works and Writings on Theatre*, trans. Bolesław Taborski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 352–59.

and the ‘you’ the ‘I.’”⁴⁶ If in its interpersonal structure love is this inner interpenetration of persons, then participation—as Wojtyła understands it—provides a firm foundation for love in its social aspect. Of course, I compare participation to love analogously here. To participate in a community through a job, for instance, does not mean to love one’s coworkers or customers in a lifelong, fully mature spousal love (as a mutually exclusive gift of self for the sake of this other person). Rather, it is an experiential foundation of love as realized in (and realizing) a community. Due to the intrinsic link between love and justice,⁴⁷ we could also speak here of participation as a requirement of justice (of what persons owe to one another) in society.

When grasping participation at the foundation of love (and justice), we must note its experiential moment. In this moment, the basis for love-perichoresis is the consciousness and acknowledgment of the value of the other person. Wojtyła understands love as the only proper relation of one person to another due to the fact that this other is also a person. Love means an affirmation of the value of the person as such, as we read in *Love and Responsibility*.⁴⁸ Therefore, Wojtyła declares that “the reason for love is man as a particular value.”⁴⁹ Participation implicates this recognition of the personal value of the other person. We can understand participation as a kind of proper response to the value of the other person, and therefore as a responsibility for this person. Here we are faced with the truth that participation constitutes solidarity among members of a community or society, because solidarity is a certain kind of responsibility for the other in my community. This responsibility prevents me from taking on his obligations but also makes me ready to help others in my

46. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 92:7.

47. For several instances where Wojtyła considers the relation between love and justice, see his *Ethics Primer/Elementarz etyczny*, trans. Hugh McDonald (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2017), 195–205; *Love and Responsibility*, 26–27, 210, 232, and 236.

48. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 26–27, and 103–07.

49. Karol Wojtyła, “The Anthropological Vision of *Humanae vitae*,” *Nova et vetera* 7, no. 3 (2009): 737 (my translation from the Polish original). The English translation from Italian (namely, “the meaning of love is for man a most peculiar value”) completely misses the original meaning.

community by taking on something more than my particular social duties.⁵⁰ In the attitude of solidarity, Wojtyła sees a fundamental expression of participation as a property of the person. Again, we see here a reference to love as a gift of self. Wojtyła writes that “in virtue of this attitude [of solidarity], man finds his own fulfillment in complementing others.”⁵¹

It is then not surprising that Wojtyła closely links participation with keeping the evangelical commandment to love one’s neighbor. Participation simply means a fundamental fulfillment of this commandment in the context of a community by cobeing and coacting (being and acting together with others). In other words, we can say that the commandment to love is “a call to participation”—that is, it is a call to become aware of the great value of the other person, to experience this other as another “I,” and to realize this lived-experience in interpersonal and social acts.⁵² The point here is that this other is not an obstacle in my realization of transcendence by self-determination. Rather, this other helps me to explicate some possibilities that would otherwise not be discovered and brought out, that would not enrich me. (It suffices to recall the parable of the good Samaritan, who is enriched by showing mercy to another person; this enrichment in itself is a fascinating topic.)⁵³

PARTICIPATION IN THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

At this point, it is fitting to describe—at least in general—the social aspect of participation, namely, participation based on the system “we.” If in the interpersonal dimension participation is

50. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 401–02.

51. *Ibid.*, 402. See *Gaudium et spes*, 24.

52. Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” 522.

53. In his encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, 14, John Paul II states that “in reciprocal relationships between persons merciful love is never a unilateral act or process.” He says this on the basis of the Scripture passage “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7). We see that Wojtyła rejects the position of Sartre, who saw a limitation of personal freedom in relations to (in determination of) the other. According to Wojtyła, transcendence does not lie in an escape from things and ends, but rather in taking them on the basis of the truth about the good.

based on action *with respect to* the other person or persons, in the social dimension participation is based on the action *together* with others (in common), in which persons are united in this action through their relation to the common good of the community in which they act. Within the social dimension, Wojtyła presents a personalistic concept of the common good. In accordance with the traditional understanding of the good as the end of the will, the author of *Person and Act* acknowledges the common good as that which binds or unites people—members of a community—and their action by a common end. However, according to him, the common good is not only the objective end for which the particular community strives in action but also and primarily the personal fulfillment of every member of this community.⁵⁴ Wojtyła writes that “*it is not number or even quantitative totality but thoroughness [gruntowność] that determines the proper character of the common good.*”⁵⁵ I believe that this “thoroughness” here means a penetration into man’s personal depth, a penetration into his subjectivity. The point is for man not only to serve his community by enriching it with his acts but also and primarily for his acts in this service to fulfill, that is, perfect, his own person. The whole point here is for man to experience himself as an “I” in relation to other “I’s” and the “we” of the community.⁵⁶ This lived-experience of oneself in this “we” results from the truth about the common good of a community, the truth properly made conscious (experienced) and accepted (loved). In this sense, the good of a community becomes my own good that I consciously choose—though this good must be capable of becoming mine in the first place.

We see here how much the “I” and the “we” of man—that is, the individual person and the community (or society)—

54. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 398. This personalistic concept of the common good agrees with that understood by the Church. In the constitution *Gaudium et spes* (26), we read that the common good is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.” The council refers here to the understanding of the common good found in John XXIII’s encyclical *Mater et magistra* (see, for instance, 65). See also Karol Wojtyła, *Katolicka etyka społeczna* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018), 78ff.

55. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 399 (emphasis original).

56. See Wojtyła, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 500–01.

are complementary: one does not diminish or distort the other, but one mutually serves the other. It is precisely the participation understood in the Wojtyłaian sense that makes possible this mutually advantageous relation between the individual and the community, thereby preventing the alienation by which man is deprived of the possibility of fulfilling himself in a community.⁵⁷ Wojtyła portrays two extreme and antipersonalistic orientations, where the individual-community relation is incorrect and in which participation is limited. They are individualism and anti-individualism, which Wojtyła calls “totalism” (some commentators see it as “totalitarianism” or “collectivism”).⁵⁸ In individualism, the good of an individual (which we could reduce to his rights) is considered as the supreme good, to which the good of the community should be subordinated. On the flip side, in totalism the individual and his good are completely subordinated to the community and society.⁵⁹ Based on his reflections on the correct and incorrect relationship between person and community, Wojtyła analyzes the authentic and inauthentic attitudes of acting and being together with others: the authentic are solidarity and opposition, whereas the inauthentic are conformism and avoidance.

I do not intend to analyze these attitudes here. I only want to note that the inauthentic attitudes develop in both individualism and totalism, that is, both in the liberal countries based on free-market economy and in countries where socialism put down its roots. Therefore, when considering the Wojtyłaian concept of participation in the context of alienation, I do not wish to claim that this concept, as presented in *Person and Act*, is limited in its scope to communist (or postcommunist) countries and does not apply to the liberal countries of the West—and vice versa. Both sides experience alienation, as John Paul II himself states, for instance, in his encyclical *Centesimus annus* (41). This matter is complicated and lies outside the scope of this essay. I will only

57. Wojtyła, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 511.

58. See, for instance, Mariusz Sztaba, “Kategoria uczestnictwa w odniesieniu do rodziny w świetle myśli Karola Wojtyły i bł. Jana Pawła II,” *Rocznik Naukowy Kujawsko-Pomorskiej Szkoły Wyższej w Bydgoszczy* 6 (2011): 39–52; Wojciech Wojtyła, “Od osoby do społeczności. Teoria uczestnictwa w ujęciu Karola Wojtyły,” *Archiwum Filozofii Prawa i Filozofii Społecznej* 4 (2020): 103–117.

59. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 390.

mention that we can speak here of the so-called sublimation of Marxism (as the Italian thinker Augusto Del Noce suggests), in which the aspects of historical materialism and a reform of Hegelian dialectics are accepted and manifest themselves as relativism in the countries of capitalist traditions.⁶⁰ Marxism, or rather materialism in various forms, is still a relevant matter today.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of this essay I observed that participation is the opposite of alienation—that alienation is a lack or negation of participation. It is not the case, as the Marxists state, that the source of alienation lies outside of man and only then is imposed upon man, estranging him. In fact, Wojtyła does not deny that the external world can condition or strengthen a person's alienation. It suffices to recall the so-called “structures of sin,” of which our beloved Holy Father spoke in his encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (12 and 59). However, his central principle is that “*at the root of all alienation resulting from systems of reference based in things is an alienation resulting from man himself.*”⁶¹ In other words, the criterion for solving the problem of alienation is personalistic and not merely economic, political, or sociological.⁶² Wojtyła's grasp of the category of participation in its individual, interpersonal, and social dimensions examined here confirms precisely this truth.

Participation denotes an experiential recognition of the person's transcendence, hence the coexistence and coaction with another person in conformity with his objective value. Participation thus understood prevents any utilitarianism in social relations. The postulate of participation is simply Wojtyła's attempt to introduce justice built on love (or mercy, if we consider the presence of evil in the world) into interpersonal and social relations. By participation, the human person does not dehumanize (alienate) himself but rather fulfills himself and serves others in their self-fulfillment. Only such participation ensures the

60. See Augusto Del Noce, *The Crisis of Modernity*, ed. and trans. Carlo Lancellotti (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 125–28.

61. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 413 (emphasis original).

62. Wojtyła, “Participation or Alienation,” 529.

truly personal union of persons and, therefore, a “more human” existence,⁶³ which is, after all, the point in interpersonal and social relationships. In other words, participation is an indispensable element of any authentic communion of persons. □

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63. See *Gaudium et spes*, 53 and 57.