

Pakikipagkapwa as an Expression of Participation: Musings from Karol Wojtyła†

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Abstract: In this paper, I hinge upon the Filipino value and concept of *pakikipagkapwa* and explicate how it becomes an analogical expression of participation through Karol Wojtyła's philosophy. I expose that in the Filipino society, which, according to Fr. Leonardo Mercado, possesses a hierarchical authoritarian behavior, there must be an investigation as to whether Filipinos can continue exhibiting and practicing the value of *pakikipagkapwa*. *Pakikipagkapwa* plays a vital role in the socialization process of Filipino people since it pivots one towards an altruistic attitude. Although existing literature on *pakikipagkapwa* is primarily explored through linguistics and psychology, I adhere to the fact that other disciplines can elucidate a philosophical foundation in understanding how Filipinos are able to unite themselves towards the other. In this regard, I argue that the concept of *pakikipagkapwa* must also be examined to assess its utility and presence in the Filipino culture. Hereinafter, I turn towards Karol Wojtyła's theory of participation wherein he introduces the authentic attitudes of solidarity and opposition, attitudes which contribute to the societal efforts of communal action centered on truth and goodness. To further understand the foundations of Wojtyła's theory, I revisit other of his key works with the hopes of finding a premise in considering *pakikipagkapwa* as a cultural expression of participation.

Keywords: *Filipino society, Karol Wojtyła, pakikipagkapwa, participation*

Introduction

The Philippines has always been considered a collectivist society. Despite our geographic formation of a community separated by waters, our peninsular nation remains united in many values and identities of what a Filipino *is*. One of the many Filipino values that persist today is the value and concept of *pakikipagkapwa*. A common explanation in finding the deeper meaning of *pakikipagkapwa* is by dissecting it; in doing so, we find the root word *kapwa* (*ka* + *puwang*), which literally translates to “shared space” in English. However, in Virgilio Enriquez's *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, the word *kapwa* is defined as both “fellow being” and “others.”¹ Later studies would consider *kapwa* as a “shared identity,” which becomes the foundation of social interactions among

† An earlier version of this paper was presented in two conferences, namely: at the 4th Union of Societies and Associations of Philosophy in the Philippines (USAPP) Summit held last June 6-8, 2025, Bohol, Philippines, and at the International Ethics Conference held last September 5-6, 2025, at Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan. This paper was likewise awarded as best paper during the 4th USAPP Summit.

¹ Cf. Clemen C. Aquino, “Mula Sa Kinaroroonan: ‘Kapwa, Kapatiran’ and ‘Bayan’ in Philippine Social Science,” in *Asian Journal of Social Science* 32:1 (2004): 108.

Filipinos.² Filipinos are able to experience himself/herself and *others* in this world and treat his/her *kapwa* as an integral part of creation. This is mainly due to the fact that Filipinos have a different grasp of the “person,” or, dare I say, they have a unique understanding of *kapwa*.³ This peculiar understanding of *kapwa* is worthy of exploration, considering that it is one of the many Filipino values that enable the Filipino people to continue thriving.

The manifestations of *pakikipagkapwa* can be associated with Karol Wojtyła’s personalist philosophy, particularly that of his Theory of Participation. For Wojtyła, the definition of participation is not to be taken in the literal sense; instead, participation is “acting together-with-others” in a community through experience. Participation, therefore, is a manifold ability for persons to relate with one another. This Wojtylan notion of participation can also be found in the Filipino psyche. Further, I will also expound as to why it is inaccurate to relate the Filipino term *pakikisama* to Wojtyła’s participation. Through a thorough analysis, we will be able to see the inadequacies and deficiencies in the words *pakikisama* and that *pakikipagkapwa* is the most appropriate term for correlation.

In light of the aforementioned, I now lay down the key points that would steer the discussion of this paper. First, I will analyze the word *pakikipagkapwa* and how it is viewed through the social sciences. Additionally, I will also consult studies from other disciplines to further illuminate this notion. Here, I specifically discuss the role of socialization and the altruistic nature of Filipino society. This leads me to the semantic and linguistic comparison of *pakikipagkapwa* and *pakikisama*, and how the former is considered the core of Filipino values. Further, I will briefly discuss the Filipino’s attitudes with respect to *pakikipagkapwa*. In doing so, I first consult Fr. Leonardo Mercado’s hierarchical sketch of his value ranking (of Filipino Values) and then turn to Jaime Guevara’s phenomenological analysis of *pakikipagkapwa*. Third, I proceed with Karol Wojtyła’s *Theory of Participation* and deploy an exposition as to how he understands the person, community, and participation. What is interesting to note here is how the immediate complementarity and intersections between *pakikipagkapwa* and Wojtyła’s participation can already be observed. Thereafter, I dedicate a portion of the discussion to the inauthentic attitudes of participation—*conformism* and *avoidance*—and how they impede the community in achieving authentic participation. I also briefly mention here the hierarchal authority as posited by Fr. Leonardo Mercado, and how such authority is often, if not most of the time, instrumentalized for their own needs. Finally, I conclude this paper by bridging the Filipino notion of *pakikipagkapwa* and Wojtyła’s *Theory of Participation* as a step towards reassessing and realizing the dynamics at play in our contemporary society.

Moreover, the integration of Wojtyła’s notion of participation and the Filipino value of *pakikipagkapwa* shall be done through an analogical-personalist analysis instead of utilizing an empirical, historical, or theological frameworks. Thus, the analysis that I will undertake later on mimics Wojtyła’s method, such that I treat both participation and *pakikipagkapwa* on the

² Vladimir Kobayashi, Maria Margarita Lavides, Cristabel Tiangco, Purisima Panlilio, Remi De Leon, and Angela Carreon, *Understanding Pakikipagkapwa Through Analytics: Exploring Filipino Relational Communication in Online Spaces* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Developmental Studies, 2024), 6.

³ Jove Jim Aguas, “The Filipino Value of Pakikipagkapwa-Tao Vis-À-Vis Gabriel Marcel’s Notion of Creative Fidelity and Disponibilité,” in *SCIENTIA: The International Journal on the Liberal Arts* 5:2 (2016): 17-39.

metaphysical-personalistic plane.⁴ This, therefore, entails an anthropological point of view. The analysis shall not be an appropriation of Wojtyła's participation unto *pakikipagkapwa* or vice versa; instead, it shall be an analogous discussion wherein both notions corroborate with each other to bring out their own richness in the context of communal acting. In mimicking Wojtyła's method, I also ought to take into consideration how to better understand the human person.⁵

As a caveat, although this paper aims to contribute to the philosophical understanding of *pakikipagkapwa*, it also aims to expound more on Karol Wojtyła's social philosophy, particularly that of his *Theory of Participation*. While previous studies have examined *pakikipagkapwa* from psychological or sociological perspectives, this paper contributes to the philosophical discourse by situating it within Wojtyła's personalist framework of participation. Thus, the intent of this paper is not to undermine the richness and importance of the Filipino value, rather, it is a way for us to understand *pakikipagkapwa* analogously with Wojtyła's participation through the ontological and ethical foundations concerning communal action. Cultural purists may argue that this Polish-Filipino philosophical juxtaposition obfuscates and disassociates the real meaning and essence of *pakikipagkapwa* from a "pure" Filipino comprehension. However, I remain grounded that one culture can learn from another and that the appropriation of one value, regardless of its cultural origin, is taken as a complement rather than a contradiction. This paper argues that *pakikipagkapwa* functions as a culturally embodied, analogical expression of Karol Wojtyła's theory of participation, particularly through the authentic attitudes of solidarity and opposition. As such, the overarching question of this paper is: How does *pakikipagkapwa* become an analogical expression of participation in Filipino Society?

Understanding *Pakikipagkapwa*

To briefly preface our juxtaposition, we must first have an adequate understanding of *pakikipagkapwa* through existing literature, regardless of discipline. This segment does not intend to reassess or revise the present definition of the word. Rather, it is to supplement the readers' understanding of *pakikipagkapwa*.

In *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* by Virgilio Enriquez, the word *pakikipagkapwa* is founded on its root word, *kapwa*, which means three things: "both," "fellow being," or "other."⁶ In Enriquez's *Kapwa Psychology*, it must be understood that self (*ako*) and other (*ibang-tao*) are the same, but not synonymous. *Pakikipagkapwa* is manifold, and no singular gesture or action can ever encompass what *pakikipagkapwa* is. To support *pakikipagkapwa*'s manifoldness, in Kobayashi et al.'s analytic research, *pakikipagkapwa* is manifested through several acts. They narrate that the use of *po* and *opo* (a way of saying "yes" in Filipino culture), *pagmamahal* (acts of loving), *pagtitiis* (enduring), *pagsasakripisyo*

⁴ An analogical analysis is a thorough examination of locating similarities between two or more subjects; this is neither an assimilation nor a derivation of one towards the other. In this paper, although various Wojtyła scholars classify Wojtyła's method as [1] fundamentally Thomist, [2] descriptive-phenomenologist, and [3] realist phenomenologist, Acosta and Reimers write that the general conclusion of Wojtyła's method is "metaphysical-personalist," which was asserted by Rodrigo Guerra Lopez. See Miguel Acosta and Adrian Reimers, *Understanding Person and Act* (Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 35-37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶ Aquino, "Mula Sa Kinaroroonan," 108.

(sacrificing), and *pagpugpugay* (salute), to name but a few, are values that were manifested because of *pakikipagkapwa*.⁷

In this sense, it is evident that *pakikipagkapwa* plays a significant role in the socialization of Filipinos. Practicing *pakikipagkapwa* then considers the *other* as an equal in humanity and dignity.⁸ Enriquez argues that *pakikipagkapwa* (relating with others) is a step towards *pagpapakatao* (aspiring for humanness).⁹ Further, although *pakikipagkapwa* is not the only Filipino value concerning the *other*, it *is* the core and foundation of all other interpersonal values. Hence, Aguas, albeit through the lens of Gabriel Marcel, is correct in arguing that *pakikipagkapwa* is the core of the interpersonalist Filipino psyche.¹⁰ Filipinos have a shared identity with their own *loob* (interiority) and *labas* (exteriority), yet they remain connected with others, that is to say, other human persons. It is ingrained in the minds of every Filipino that *pakikipagkapwa* or *pakikipagkapwa-tao* would directly implicate sustaining, or even reinforcing, the dignity and respect his/her *kapwa* is entitled to.¹¹ Expanding on this point, I will analyze *pakikipagkapwa*, albeit in a non-extensive manner, from the standpoint of Leonardo Mercado and Jaime Guevara.

In his book *The Filipino Mind: Philippine Philosophical Studies II*, Leonardo Mercado opines that Filipino ethics is by no means identified with revisionist ethics.¹² Rather, it is quite similar to revisionist ethics, taking into consideration the value ranking of either subjects or objects.¹³ Following this, Mercado depicts a hierarchy of Filipino value ranking. Listed subsequently are the value rankings, in order: (1) life, (2) values related to *sakop*, (3) values concerning *relationships*, and (4) all the other values. *Pakikipagkapwa* is located within the third rank (*i.e.*, values concerning relationships) since it concerns the recognition of the *other*—the *kapwa*.¹⁴ Life is placed as the highest rank insofar as Mercado argues “survival counts first...other values become secondary.”¹⁵ Although Mercado places *pakikipagkapwa* within the third rank because values concerning relationships are concerned with “smallgroup” values (*e.g.*, economic security, family honor, prestige), I posit that *pakikipagkapwa* can still permeate all other values within the value-ranking despite its placement.

Thereafter, Guevara opines that one of the definitions of *pakikipagkapwa* is having a “shared identity.” Guevara further explains that Filipinos have an inherent understanding that, in all aspects, whether socially, culturally, or psychologically, he/she is invariably in relation towards other persons. The value of *pakikipagkapwa* neither relinquishes one’s own *self* by taking into consideration his/her

⁷ Kobayashi, et al., *Understanding Pakikipagkapwa Through Analytics*, 34.

⁸ Aquino, “Mula Sa Kinaroroonan,” 109.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Aguas, “The Filipino Value of Pakikipagkapwa-Tao,” 22-23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹² Revisionist ethics is defined by Leonardo Mercado as: “It is focused not on individual acts, but on the totality of one’s fundamental option. It honors the conscience of the people which one must follow in honesty and truth.” See Leonardo Mercado, *The Filipino Mind: Philippine Philosophical Studies II* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 125.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 32; 125-126.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 126. *Nota Bene*: Mercado has given a very short discussion apropos of *pakikipagkapwa*’s role in his value-ranking. Even so, this segment only explores various Filipino scholars’ studies on the said value; arguing for *pakikipagkapwa*’s role in the value-ranking already extends beyond the scope of the paper.

kapwa nor does he/she eradicate his/her *kapwa*'s otherness.¹⁶ This value puts premium on the welfare and dignity of others; it puts premium on caring for others as well, rather than the self alone.¹⁷

Another value, however, seems identical, if not synonymous, with *pakikipagkapwa*—the value of *pakikisama*. Despite the ostensible similarity, the latter is more concerned with everyone's *sameness* (*pagkakapareho*). To clarify, *pakikisama* is not a value *per se*, but it becomes an inherent component for collectivist societies. On one hand, *pakikisama* aims to proclaim uniformity; meanwhile, on the other, *pakikipagkapwa* orients a person towards equality.¹⁸ *Pakikisama* has positive and negative effects. On the negative side, *pakikisama* is linked to the common (colloquial) phrase *makisama ka naman* (try to get along); this exhorts a person to yield to a dominant person or group in a certain setting.¹⁹ On the positive side, yielding to the intention to get along (*makisama*) is done to mitigate and resolve tensions. However, if a person consistently yields against his or her own will, it creates a barrier between the two parties. I therefore coin this phenomenon as *negative pakikisama*. To wit:

Pakikisama is also the 'ability' to get along with others in such a way as to avoid outside signs of conflict. (It) also refers to giving in or yielding to the wish of the leader or the majority, even when at times it contradicts one's ideas or the common good.²⁰

The lack of inclusivity in *negative pakikisama* manifests itself in the actions of those who are in control.²¹ It is focused on the exclusive *kami* instead of the inclusive *tayo*. Although both words have the exact translation as "us" in English, *tayo* imparts a feeling of inclusivity; it may pertain to me *and* all of you. Meanwhile, *kami* also means "us," albeit with the intention of excluding someone; e.g., "*kami lang, hindi ka[yo] kasama*" (only us, excluding you).²² This, therefore, reveals that *pakikisama* can be leveraged by people in power or by a majority group. Hence, it is right to proclaim that *pakikipagkapwa* is not synonymous or interchangeable with *pakikisama*. The former evokes equality while preserving the uniqueness and dignity of each individual, abandoning multiple forms of egoism.²³

Considering the broader context of Guevara's work, *pakikipagkapwa*, therefore, reveals its true essence and meaning: being-with-others, equality, and shared-identity. It is, thus, a plurisignification, whilst affirming the claims of Enriquez and Aguas that *pakikipagkapwa* is the core of Filipino interpersonalist values. With the linguistic and phenomenological foundations and definitions of *pakikipagkapwa* laid down, I now turn towards Karol Wojtyła's philosophy, particularly that of his *theory of participation*.

¹⁶ Jaime Guevara, "Pakikipagkapwa," in *Filipino Cultural Traits: Claro R. Ceniza Lectures Philosophical Studies III*, ed. by Rolando M. Gripaldo (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-17.

¹⁹ Dante Luis P. Leoncini, "A Conceptual Analysis of Pakikisama," in *Filipino Cultural Traits: Claro R. Ceniza Lectures Philosophical Studies III*, ed. by Rolando M. Gripaldo (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), 118.

²⁰ Tomas Andres Quintin Donato, *Understanding the positiveness of Filipino Values* (Manila: Rex Bookstore, 1996), as quoted in Leoncini, "A Conceptual Analysis of Pakikisama," 118.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²² This brief linguistic explanation sets the tone for non-Filipino readers to better understand the meaning of the words "kami" and "tayo." *Ibid.*, 123.

²³ Guevara, "Pakikipagkapwa," 17.

Karol Wojtyła's Theory of Participation

To briefly preface, we must first understand the disposition of Wojtyła with regard to his thoughts about the community and society. Grzegorz Holub notes that Wojtyła's personalism is hinged on ethics and anthropology.²⁴ The human person is not to be taken or perceived as an "object" in society. Instead, the person is considered to be the initiator of relationships in a uniquely human way.²⁵ The theory of participation is neither just an anthropological study nor an ethical theory. Wojtyła's theory of participation is a personalist convergence of a metaphysical, anthropological, and ethical study of society.

Personalistic Value of Action

To fully grasp his theory, we must first understand his personalistic value of action, which is also foundational knowledge for his general personalist philosophy. The personal value of action is not sourced by a person from external parties. Suazo explains, "this value of the action *per se* is rooted in the value of the person, inasmuch as the person's actions are personal and so the value that inheres is also personal."²⁶ This inherently personal value is what makes a person—and his actions—personal. Consequently, it also allows a person to attain self-determination, self-possession, self-governance, and self-fulfillment.²⁷ Every action, therefore, is essentially assisted by this value, which also reveals the person.

Through the Thomistic adage, *operari sequitur esse* (action follows being), Wojtyła wishes to express that the true profile of a person is revealed through his/her actions. However, it should also be noted that the personal value should not be interchanged or synonymized with moral values. For an action—one that is bound by morals—to occur or be performed, a person must first exist. In Wojtyła's ontological plane of discussion, the personal value affirms the existence of a person through acting (action); whereas the moral values unclothe a person's true character. To pose an example, we may use the sentence: a student diligently writes their term paper. Here, an ontological structure exists—and so does the person him/herself—as a consequence of the personal value of action. The student exists through their action, *i.e.*, writing the term paper. Further, the indicator "diligently" is proof that the student performs their scholarly duties extraordinarily well. Thus, revealing to us their moral character not just as a diligent student, but as a person as well.

Hence, the personal value of action speaks to the fact that every action should always be done in consideration of the person and their own dignity; but even if the personal and moral values are not one and the same, they must not be separated. Acosta and Reimers wit:

²⁴ Grzegorz Holub, et al. (Eds.), "The Personalistic Concept of Community and Society in the Thought of Karol Wojtyła," in *Karol Wojtyła* (Krakow: Ignatium University Press, 2019), 73. Accessed through <<https://biesaga.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Wojtyla-EN.pdf>>. Hereafter cited as "The Personalistic Concept of Community and Society."

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁶ Christian Zeus Suazo, "Between the Wojtylan Theory of Participation and the Confucian Ren 仁: An Anthropological Dialogue," in *TALISIK: An Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy*, 7:3 (2020): 30.

²⁷ Jove Jim Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II)* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2014), 117-118. See also Suazo, *Between the Wojtylan Theory of Participation and Confucian Ren*, 30.

They [the personal and moral values] *cannot* be radically separate, though, since every personalistic value points to the self-realization of the person, which in essence means acting morally and avoiding the evil that prevents one's non-realization.²⁸

This follows that actions are a vital aspect in understanding the human person since it reveals the truth about a person.²⁹ Karol Wojtyła notes that there is a dynamic co-relation of the human person and his/her actions, which also affirms the fundamental reality for a person's interpersonal character within his/her community. Further, Wojtyła asserts that the rationale of including a discussion on participation is necessary and indispensable, simply because man always acts together-with-others.³⁰ The acting of a person in a communal setting does not, in any way, disparage their personal value. Due to the personalistic value of action, the actions of members in a community are manifested in a way that does not make themselves superior or inferior to each other. The meaning of communal acting is "not simply a trait of man's acting together with others; [but] equally important is the fact that it is an experience by which the very structure of the person engaged in the acting with others is revealed."³¹ Participation, therefore, can be considered as: 1.) acting-with-others and 2.) an action that reveals a person's structure. It also entails that participation is indispensable for a person's self-realization and self-fulfillment, that is, doing the good and avoiding evil.³²

Authentic Participation

In participation, Wojtyła notes two attitudes: *authentic* and *inauthentic*. The authentic attitudes of participation refer to the attitudes of *solidarity* and *opposition*. Solidarity pertains to the "constant readiness to accept and realize the share that falls to each due to the fact that he is a member of a given community."³³ It ascertains that every member of the community would have a share in every part to reach the goal, that is, the common good of the community. Although solidarity ensures that everyone has a role to play, Wojtyła warns that an excess or a lack of duty for other members would contradict the dynamic structure of the community and participation. To wit:

Appropriating the part of the obligation that *does not belong to oneself is fundamentally contradictory to community and participation...* In such cases, keeping only to one's part would be proof of a lack of solidarity. This indirectly demonstrates that in the attitude of solidarity the relation to the common good must be constantly kept alive...³⁴

Alongside solidarity, we have the attitude of *opposition*. Despite the negative connotation of the word "opposition," we must refrain from understanding the word in its dictionary definition. Opposition, as used by Wojtyła, is a fundamental aspect for the development of a community. A person's opinion does not become a hindrance to the development of the community when they express dissent. It is a fundamental aspect for the development of a community. It becomes a "way of understanding and, above all, of realizing the common good, especially regarding the possibility of participation."³⁵ Should a person merely conform to what is asked or demanded of them, then it

²⁸ Acosta and Reimers, *Understanding Person and Act*, 226. Emphasis supplied.

²⁹ Dean Edward Mejos, "Against Alienation: Karol Wojtyła's Theory of Participation," in *Kritike* 1:1 (2007), 73.

³⁰ Wojtyła, *The Theory of Participation*, 377-378.

³¹ Aguas, *Person, Action and Love*, 164.

³² Acosta and Reimers, *Understanding Person and Act*, 226.

³³ Wojtyła, *The Theory of Participation*, 401.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Emphasis supplied.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 402.

contradicts the *esse* of participation. The attitude of opposition allows persons to find their place in the community and find a way to participate in it wholly and effectively.³⁶

Thus, it is necessary to have an opposition in a community, provided that the persons involved are concerned for the common good. The absence of opposition does not guarantee a smooth and developing society; instead, the absence of such would further deprive the community of its development. For example, if a non-philosophy faculty member—perhaps a Fine Arts major—was contracted by the dean of the college to teach a comprehensive course on the history of philosophy despite having no background knowledge about the course, the faculty member then has the right to *oppose* and even decline the contract. In the provided scenario, the faculty member rightfully invoked the attitude of opposition. Their dissent (or “opposition”) also indirectly paves the way for solidarity. Thus, it follows that the attitudes of *solidarity* and *opposition* corroborate with each other and even unite the persons in a community to achieve authentic participation.

Inauthentic Participation

Abstaining from such attitudes would give way for the *inauthentic attitudes* of participation to permeate, namely, *conformism* and *avoidance*. Conformism is the devolution of solidarity and opposition. The integrity and dignity of the persons in a community are diminished merely to submit and be carried out by the will of the collective majority.³⁷ In this attitude, there exists a deficiency of a personalist approach towards the *other*. To recall, participation is acting “together-with-others” with each person’s uniqueness and subjectiveness—participation is acting in unity. What is highlighted and propagated with the attitude of conformism is *uniformity*. Wojtyła condemns this form of uniformity through conformism since people inauthentically participate in society by merely going with the flow of the majority even when it goes against their will.

The second inauthentic attitude of participation is *avoidance* or *non-participation*. Although avoidance is more authentic or genuine than conformism, it also poses a threat to the community. The attitude of avoidance, according to Wojtyła, “is merely a withdrawal, perhaps as a sign of protest, though without an attempt at taking up. Hence, avoidance is a lack of participation; it is an *absence in the community*.”³⁸ At times, it may be understandable when persons settle with the attitude of avoidance. Yet, if that is the case, then it implies that the community itself already has a lack of a common good. Such deficiency has forced its members to choose avoidance as the sole option—or “lesser evil” so to speak—for coping with whatever they are facing.³⁹ Simply put, both *conformism* and *avoidance* are manifested when a person yields his/her ability to participate together-with-others genuinely.

Integrating Participation into Filipino Social Philosophy

In lieu of what has been presented, I restate the main question: *how does pakikipagkapwa become an analogical expression of participation?* At face value, it is easily noticeable that both *pakikipagkapwa* and participation observe a positive attitude in communal acting. Then again, Wojtyła alone cannot

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 405.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 406. Emphasis supplied.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 406-407.

provide us with an answer to the question posed above. The Filipino psyche is unique in itself, and only Filipinos can provide us with answers. I contend that *pakikipagkapwa* becomes the inner drive of Filipinos to participate with his/her *kapwa*. To avoid miscomprehension, this “inner drive” is not an obscure impulse, but a habitual orientation—a *habitus communionalis*—of the will towards the value of the other.⁴⁰ *Pakikipagkapwa* manifests the truth-oriented fulfillment of the moral norms in a communal horizon; just as freedom to participate grounds the possibility of communal action, *pakikipagkapwa* expresses the participative structure in a culturally embodied form. In this case, it is the fulfillment of all Filipino values as seen through other values such as *pagpapakatao* (aspiring for humanness), *paggalang* (respect), or *pagtititiis* (sacrificing), to name but a few.

I must note that, for Wojtyła, the theory of participation and its authentic attitudes are pre-ethical notions. It is “pre-ethical” in a sense that it forms the ontological foundation of the ethical capacity of human action (*actus humanus in fieri*), rather than an implication of a moral indifference.⁴¹ It is important as well to distinguish *actus humanus in fieri* and *actus humanus in facto esse*. The former denotes human actions that are in the process of *becoming*, whereas the latter refers to an act that is done or already completed.⁴² While the person’s action remains to be *in fieri*, it should be noted that the person does not stand as a neutral or indifferent being to what he or she is facing. As far as Wojtyła is concerned, “[clearly], this entire reflection can easily be changed into an ethical analysis by assuming that the very performance of the act, in light of its immanent value, is a good that obligates. This, in fact, is beyond doubt. The *very performance of the act is a good that obligates* both the one who performs this act as well as others.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Although this is already an interjection of Karol Wojtyła’s notion of *self-determination*, it is worth noting how *self-determination* plays an integral role with *participation*. Wojtyła defines participation as a structure of the person’s acting in community, rooted in the person’s self-determination (*autodeterminatio*), freedom, and transcendence. For this reason, Wojtyła’s theory of participation as used in this paper is a moral disposition or readiness (*habitus communionalis*)—a habitual openness towards the value of the other rather than a mere metaphysical principle. To save time and space, however, such a discussion necessitates a paper dedicated to the topics mentioned. For a more thorough understanding of the aforementioned, see Karol Wojtyła, “Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” in *Person and Act and Related Essays* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 207–209; 393. See also Jove Jim Aguas, “The Perfection of Powers and Integration of the Person: St. Thomas Aquinas and Karol Wojtyła on Virtue,” in *Wojtyła Studies* 2:2 (2025): 63–64.

⁴¹ Wojtyła, *Theory of Participation*, 400. To access a more in-depth and phenomenological view of Wojtyła’s discussion on the value of lived-experiences, See also Karol Wojtyła, “Ethical Act and Lived-Experience,” in *The Lublin Lectures and Works on Max Scheler* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2021).

⁴² It is pertinent to note that Wojtyła utilized the “*fieri*” as a way to highlight the dynamism of a person’s actions and, concurrently, distinguish *pre-ethical* from *ethical*, as well as *passivity* and *activity*. Wojtyła’s notion of *becoming* (*in fieri*) can be located in his discussion on the notions of *efficacy* and *actualization*. “The concept of *actus*—this is what we can call it for short, knowing what sort of correlativity it entails—has above all an existential sense. The two terms essential for this conception (potency and act) do not merely indicate two different states of being to which correspond two different kinds of existence (*existentia*). For the transition from potency to act, that is, the so-called actualization, is also a transition in the order of existence; it indicates a certain *fieri*, that is, a becoming—not in the absolute sense, for such belongs only to the *fieri*-becoming out of nothing, but in the relative sense, namely, that of the *fieri* relying on a being that already exists, the *fieri* within a being’s own internal structure. A being’s dynamism is joined with its very existence and at the same time constitutes the basis and source of all structures that we can find in this being.” See Karol Wojtyła, “The Analysis of Efficacy in Relation to the Dynamism of Man,” in *Person and Act and Related Essays* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 166. For a side-by-side companion to *Person and Act*, see also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love*, 69–120.

⁴³ Here, Wojtyła is trying to explain to his readers why the Authentic Attitudes in his Theory of Participation is pre-ethical; he differentiates the respective qualifications between performance of the act (*actus*

In light of this, *pakikipagkapwa*, thus, functions as the anthropological substratum from which moral action emerges when integrated by truth and freedom. We recall that *pakikipagkapwa* is the inner drive and core of the interpersonalist Filipino psyche. Similarly, Wojtyła's method in his philosophical anthropology is centered upon an analysis of the human person "from the inside," rather than just "from the outside."⁴⁴ The analysis below seeks to flesh out the parallelisms between the intrinsic value of *pakikipagkapwa* and the ontic value of Wojtyła's framework of participation. Further, instead of relying on historical and theological sources, the integration of both notions remains on the ontological plane in order to bring forth the arguments imbedded in the succeeding segments.

Pakikipagkapwa and the Filipino Social Behavior

What is unique about *pakikipagkapwa* is that despite the person having their own individual *loob* (inner self) or *sarili*, the person is able to have a shared-identity with others. Thus, we can act according to this shared-identity without jeopardizing our own *self* or *loob*. In every activity, a Filipino is never alone because he or she prefers to have a companion (*kasama*). This is, again, caused by the Filipinos' group-oriented psyche, as Fr. Leonardo Mercado would put it.⁴⁵ However, Fr. Mercado would also postulate that Filipinos, most especially Filipino children or those with an "inferior position" in political or corporate settings, are often expected to behave in a conformist way. Otherwise, he or she would be considered a "non-conformist" or "anti-social" and is later on branded as a *pilosopo* (philosopher).⁴⁶

The family behavior, Mercado opines, is the source of the Filipino's social behavior. This is because of the immanent hierarchical authority of the Filipino society. Hence, as far as Mercado is concerned, it is absolutely normal for a child (inferior) to keep his or her silence when reprimanded by their parents or guardian (superior) as part of the so-called "Filipino etiquette."⁴⁷ Further, Mercado's exposition of the Filipino's hierarchical authority corroborates with Prospero Covar's historical approach in studying hierarchy and authority. Covar specifically identifies regions or groups that are highly organized by a common denominator: hierarchy. To condense Covar's long list:

[1] The *Tasaday* is found in Northern Cotabato. It consists of individuals that are grouped into families ... I consider the social structure of the *Tasaday* as a family band ... [2] The *Kalinga* of the Cordilleras and the [3] *Maranao* of Lanao typify chiefdom. The authority of the chief extends beyond kindred. It is territorially-based. Authority is centralized. Communal rites and rituals intensify community integration ... The [4] *Tausug* and [5] *Maguindanao* have a hierarchy of organization, *i.e.*, the

humanus in fieri) and performed act (*actus humanus in facto esse*): "For our point is to sketch the very structures of human action and, consequently, to emphasize the value of the very performance of the act and not the value of the performed act, which results from its relation to an ethical norm." See Wojtyła, *Theory of Participation*, 400. Further, Wojtyła also justifies why a person's disposition, prior to the completion of the act (*i.e.*, *actus humanus in facto esse*), is chained towards "a good that obligates." See also Wojtyła, *Theory of Participation*, 400.

⁴⁴ Tadeusz Styczeń, "The Philosophical Anthropology Method in Cardinal Karol Wojtyła's *Person and Act*," trans. by Sydney Sadowski, in *Wojtyła Studies* 2 (2025): 7.

⁴⁵ Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1976), 96.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

sultanate. On top of the hierarchy is the sultan. Below him are a number of *datus*. Under each *datu* are several *panglima*...⁴⁸

This highlights, therefore, that Mercado was not the only one who has shed light on the Filipinos' seemingly intrinsic value for hierarchy and authority. Even so, how does this behavior and etiquette of submitting to this authoritarian system (*i.e.*, hierarchical authority) manifest *pakikipagkapwa*? Merely submitting to the hierarchical authoritarianism for the sake of unity and harmony with the group majority does not create an "inauthentic *pakikipagkapwa*." Rather, what occurs here is that *pakikipagkapwa* devolves to *negative pakikisama*.⁴⁹ In Fr. Mercado's words, *pakikisama* is defined as "sacrificing one's interest for the sake of the group (such as attending a party)..."⁵⁰ but we may take Donato's definition of *pakikisama* as well, as discussed above.

This behavior, the submission to hierarchical authority for the sake of harmony, often disrupts or disorients the true essence of *pakikipagkapwa* in action. *Pakikipagkapwa* must disregard all variables when acting with and towards the other. Variables such as sex, gender, social stature, and most especially age must be put aside momentarily so as to breach the layer of *negative pakikisama* and reach the core of all Filipino values, that is, *pakikipagkapwa*.

Overcoming Hierarchical Authority Through Authentic Participation

As a rebuttal to the argument that Wojtyła's writings are disconnected from the Filipino context,⁵¹ I posit that Wojtyła's theory of participation remains to be relevant to all cultures, especially for nations with collectivist attitudes like the Philippines. Again, Wojtyła notes that solidarity becomes a reflexive attitude to a person.⁵² There is no need for debate when a community with a collectivist attitude has the willingness to share and be conscious of the goals that will benefit their common good. Besides, a community that wills itself to share the tasks with its members adopts an attitude that is "in conformity with the principle of participation, for participation taken objectively and 'materially' indicates certain parts in the communal structure of human action and

⁴⁸ As much as I wish to abstain from making too much historical and anthropological justifications, it is worth noting that F.Landa Jocano asserts that pre-Philippine society is grounded upon a "base culture." For more information about Covar and Jocano, see Prospero R. Covar, *Larangan: Seminal Essays on Philippine Culture* (Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 1998), 75-76. Original italics retained.

⁴⁹ The reader should take into mind that *negative pakikisama* is also an inauthentic mode of participation—specifically that of *conformism*—and not just a moral failure. Further, aside from conformism, *negative pakikisama* can also be analogically understood with Wojtyła's system of *totalism* (or often written as *anti-individualism*). Totalism, Wojtyła defines, "...is the need for protection against the individual, who is basically considered an enemy of the community and of the common good. Because it is presupposed that in the individual there is only the striving for his own good and no disposition to fulfill himself in acting and existing 'together with others'—no property of participation—the common good can be achieved only by limiting the individual." For a more thorough reading, see Wojtyła, *Theory of Participation*, 391-395. See also, Karol Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," in *Person and Act and Related Essays* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 467-513.

⁵⁰ Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, 97.

⁵¹ I acknowledge that some readers may raise their eyebrows on some points of this paper, especially when I seem to impose a Polish philosopher's views on a Filipino value. Then again, as I have stated earlier, one culture may learn from another, and this discussion is directed towards a complementarity of two cultures rather than a "benevolent assimilation" or contradiction.

⁵² Wojtyła claims, "[The] attitude of *solidarity* is a 'natural' consequence of the fact that man exists and acts together with others." See Wojtyła, *The Theory of Participation*, 401.

existence.”⁵³ Hence, for Wojtyła, recognizing one’s obligation towards the other becomes solidarity, and therefore, participates with one another. Further, the attitude of opposition must be understood in the way Wojtyła meant it to be— opposition does not contradict solidarity. Since opposition requires a sense of receptivity from others, then such is indeed essential and fundamental for other members to find their place in the community. It also follows that opposition must be rooted in right conscience and adherence to the truth.⁵⁴ Hence, in this paper’s context, opposition should reject conformity not out of resentment but out of fidelity to the truth.

In most contexts, if Filipinos continue to disregard the opinion, humanness, or dignity of another, then we can claim that *pakikipagkapwa* no longer has a place in the Filipino society.⁵⁵ Historically observable facts show that what governs the social attitude of the Filipinos is a rigid hierarchical authority that masquerades itself as a unifying symbol that controls others to agree with the “big men” on top for the sake of harmony. That is why, in most, if not all, societies, *pakikipagkapwa* will follow through when we take into mind the authentic attitudes of participation, especially when embarking on actions that requires consideration for the irreducible dignity of the human person.

Wojtyła Beyond Western Contexts

The Filipino value of *pakikipagkapwa* enriches Wojtyła’s framework of participation inasmuch as both compliments each other. It must be taken into consideration that the latter is not restricted to the confines of a European perspective. Wojtyła crafted his theory without placing prejudice on non-European or non-Polish societies. Moreover, the personalist framework attributed to his theory of participation assures that a line for dialogue or complementarity remains open with other philosophies or theories, regardless of their origin.⁵⁶ Wojtyła’s main concern in his philosophy in general is to better understand the human person *per se*, hence, a “personalist” philosophical anthropology.⁵⁷

Due to the lack of studies on *pakikipagkapwa* anchored from a strictly philosophical perspective, I cannot comment extensively on its metaphysical foundation vis-à-vis participation. However, there is a positive ethical implication. In the Filipino context, at least, *pakikipagkapwa* contributes to the enrichment of how a person does not objectify others in society. To reiterate Holub’s averment, Wojtyła focuses on how a person reveals himself through action and what his action implies in the practical and ethical order.⁵⁸ At this point, we can take Wojtyła’s I-Thou attitude as a point of juxtaposition when integrated in the Filipino context. Just as *pakikipagkapwa* entails altruism and responsibility towards the other (*kapwa*), participation also necessitates that the

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Blaise Ringor, “The Attitude of Opposition as a Service to the Truth in Karol Wojtyła’s Philosophy of Community,” in *Education in an Age of Lies and Fake News: Regaining a Love of Truth*, ed. by Jānis Tālisvaldis Ozoliņš (New York: Routledge, 2022), 163.

⁵⁵ I recognize the fact that the Philippines is an archipelagic country and that there would be a huge dissimilarity in qualifications and standards when the so-called hierarchical authority becomes just or unjust across regions, generations, and even institutions. Even so, an in-depth analysis between regions or institutions on hierarchy merits further studies.

⁵⁶ Or cultural value(s) as in the case of this paper.

⁵⁷ Acosta and Reimers, *Understanding Person and Act*, 111.

⁵⁸ Holub, *The Personalistic Concept of Community and Society*, 73.

“I” consider the “thou” as “another I.”⁵⁹ Eventually, this I-Thou attitude transcends into what Wojtyła calls the “We”-community. The word “We” in this context would also denote multiple “I”s, and thus, many subjects as well.⁶⁰

This *We*-community can be analogously understood with the Filipino concept of *tayo* as attributed with *pakikipagkapwa*. The inclusive (*tayo*) versus exclusive (*kami*) pronouns best demonstrate an understanding of Wojtyła’s *We*-community. The former evokes an intrinsic openness to equality that underwrites solidarity and justifies opposition. Clearly, in this juxtaposition, *pakikipagkapwa* does not jeopardize the framework of participation, and instead compliments—and even augments—it further for a richer understanding of Wojtyła’s thoughts through the Filipino mind. Such is also a way of how Wojtyła’s philosophy can be understood beyond the Western understanding or perspective.

Concluding Remark

The juxtaposition between *pakikipagkapwa* and participation demonstrates that they both analogically express the personal structure of participation as articulated by Wojtyła, thus, revealing a culturally embodied way of being-with-others ordered to the common good. His brand of personalism and philosophical anthropology best complements the *other*-orientedness of Filipinos as elucidated through the value of *pakikipagkapwa*. I reiterate that *pakikipagkapwa* is not reserved for one action alone, it is manifold—the foundation and a plurisignification of all the other interpersonalist Filipino values. *Pakikipagkapwa* must not be confused with *pakikisama* despite its affinity; the former evokes equality, while the latter mandates uniformity. However, through the Filipino behavior and acknowledgement of a hierarchical authority, *negative pakikisama* often prevails while *pakikipagkapwa* becomes distorted. To overcome this distortion, Wojtyła’s theory of participation, particularly through his attitudes of solidarity and opposition, may be utilized to preserve the integrity and beauty of *pakikipagkapwa*. Through the attitude of solidarity, *pakikipagkapwa* becomes richer and more felt among the community since everyone is working towards the common good. Moreover, opposition openly invites diverse ideas and opinions that would benefit the community since it encourages receptivity among those who are in a higher position. It allows every person to speak and act on the same level without fear of premature judgment or dismissal despite the hierarchical authority that lingers within. Filipino society can thrive by adopting these authentic attitudes that highlight the irreducibility of the human person.

However, despite the rigor of research done in this article, there are limitations that require further research. First, Wojtyła’s attitude of opposition may be challenged insofar as Filipino society is highly hierarchic. Such hierarchic attitude could become a hindrance to achieving authentic participation; thus, further study about the interplay of opposition and Filipino hierarchy must be pursued. Second, studies on *pakikipagkapwa* as discussed from a strictly philosophical standpoint

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶⁰ Wojtyła puts it in this way: “When we say that the ‘we’ denotes many human ‘I’s, we grasp this plurality and try to understand it though action, similar to our attempt to understand the ‘I.’ The ‘we’ means many people, many subjects, who in some way exist and act together.” See Karol Wojtyła, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 501. To save time and space, I will refrain from expounding more on the interplay between the *I-Thou* and *We*-relations since it merits further discussion. To gain a thorough understanding of Wojtyła’s *I-Thou* and *We*-relations, see also Grzegorz Holub, *Understanding the Person: Essays on the Personalism of Karol Wojtyła* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021).

remain at a deficit; further exploration of the same through a metaphysical, ontological, or epistemological point of view should be considered by future researchers. Other than that, scholars may consider exploring *pakikipagkapwa* in dialogue with other phenomenologists or communitarian thinkers such as Max Scheler, Emmanuel Levinas or Martin Buber. Finally, what is written in this paper is only a small effort in bringing forth a philosophical discourse about Filipino philosophy through the lenses of Wojtyła. This also shows how Wojtyła's brand of personalism may perhaps be considered "universal," regardless of philosophical school or culture. Conversely, a revitalized contribution could be a philosophical-cultural comparative study. For instance, Leonardo Mercado argues, albeit briefly and substantially underdeveloped, that Filipino social behavior is similar to that of Chinese philosophy. Thus, a comparative study between Filipino and Chinese societies and philosophical thoughts would be a great contribution to *pakikipagkapwa* studies and Filipino philosophy in general.

In parting, the Filipino value of *pakikipagkapwa* can be considered as a cultural expression of Karol Wojtyła's theory of participation. Such a demonstration becomes an analogical correspondence instead of an ontological derivation. Taking up the salient points of the theory of participation, the authentic attitudes' pre-ethicality does not connote neutrality or indifference. Wojtyła remains grounded in the fact that persons are disposed towards what is good. Hence, it follows that a society that does not immediately dismiss the *kapwa* on the basis of secondary criteria or by invoking hierarchy will surely be a society that manifests *pakikipagkapwa* and participates for the common good.

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