

Work and The Contemporary Human Person In Karol Wojtyła's Theory Of Participation

Kenichi Andreau F. Tigas

Adamson University Senior High School | Kenichi.tigas@yahoo.com

Abstract: The history of human civilization manifests an account of man's striving towards progress in all aspects of human existence. A wide array of disciplines was developed, primarily to satisfy the needs of man for survival, and to pursue his desire to enhance his living with himself and with other men. In describing man's situation in the world, it is necessary for him to be defined as a being in relation to other beings. Such social relations encompass all aspects of human activity, e.g. labor or work, yet also presuppose a more profound reality underlying such interactions; hence an expression of the tendency of man to manifest his social nature through social interactions and activities. However, in his pursuit to develop a progressive global community characterized by the tenets of materialism and worldliness, the human person suffers under reductive forces found in the structures of society, especially in the field of work. Man's living with other workers within labor communities has become the conduit to a world that reduces him to a mere means to an end. Karol Wojtyła, a staunch critic of superstructures that promote the devaluation of the human person, has comprehensively established his philosophy under the influences of his personal experiences, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, and the rigorous intellectual development he received from academic institutions. He did not merely emphasize the irreducible value of the human person in his philosophical expositions. Rather, he also recognized the human person who fulfills himself in acting together with others. Labor, as an activity performed with others, is an avenue for realizing the personhood of the human person – thus his theory of participation. In this light, this research envisions to appropriate the theory of participation of Karol Wojtyła in locating the position of the human worker in the contemporary society. As man reached the zenith of human progress with his standards of modernization, he is challenged by the concrete structures of reality, and is urged to engage in the preservation of his personhood as a human person who works and participates in the contemporary society.

Keywords: Wojtyła, human person, participation, work

Introduction

The philosophical legacy of Karol Wojtyła reverberates through the different intellectual paradigms and had established a fruitful discourse, especially on the concept of man. From the various tragedies which influenced the drama of life of the philosopher Pope, the acumen that he manifested became a fortress of the doctrines of the Catholic Church and importantly, shaped a philosophy that caters to the needs of the morally and intellectually regressive modern world.

The global crisis in the mid-twentieth century brought about by a series of wars and a prevalence of cultural discrimination, primarily in his homeland, led the Polish philosopher to reinstate the position of man in the pedestal of anthropological and ethical discourses. From the variegated economic and political structures to the anthropological defilement of the human person in the history of humanity, Wojtyła attempts to rescue the dignity of the human person from the state of being ‘objectified’ and ‘reified’. Wojtyła’s personalistic movement, as his commentators would label his philosophy of man, rectified the contemporary understanding of the person and developed a renewed emphasis on his dignity.

Moreover, his intellectual effort in improving the identity of man encompassed the different historical periods; he tried to combat a number of philosophical trends and positions which are insufficient in understanding the human person. His predilection to provide a dignified definition of man— not as an animal nor a mere substance who affirms his own existence—became the core of his philosophy which is also intensively generated by the assistance of the Scholasticism of Saint Thomas Aquinas and the phenomenology of Max Scheler. In his ardent pursuit to elevate the human person from the objectifying threats of the world, he initiated the primal step for its realization through the application of his philosophical anthropology to sexual morality, i.e. human persons in the context of the conjugal relationship. The development of his intellectual viewpoint in the morality of sex in relation to the human person intensified his zeal in delving into the most profound interpretations of the human person in his subjectivity and irreducibility.

As he is known as a vanguard of the dignity of the human person, it cannot also be denied that the span of his philosophical literatures underlies a single concept of his intellectual ruminations and comprises the totality of his philosophy – the human person and his dignity.²⁴⁷

Truthfully, the contemporary human person also faces a radical predicament that concerns his social and ontological position as an individual who possesses an irreducible dignity. Man encounters a grave dehumanization in labor or work as one of the primary aspects of his existence and activity. Thus, delving into the world of Wojtyła’s philosophical contemplation and research, this study shall administer the appropriation of the philosophy of Wojtyła in identifying and establishing a philosophical description of the human worker in the contemporary society. With the same kind of social atmosphere to the time of Karol Wojtyła’s life, the present world encounters a kind of ethical and moral regress which involves a multitude of social factors – political, economic, religious and

²⁴⁷ Simpson begins his explication of Wojtyła’s philosophy by emphasizing the central theme of the latter, wherein, as the Polish philosopher’s literature suggests, the human person lie in the fore of his discussions. See also Peter Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyła* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, Inc., 2001), 7.

others – wherein the dignity of the human person is not only set aside but is also threatened to face a conscienceless debasement and adulteration.²⁴⁸

This contemplation on the thoughts of Karol Wojtyła is not merely a repetition of his ponderings nor a narrative of his beliefs and doctrines; this is a reaffirmation of his desire for a universal perspective on the human person as his dignity is not only realized within the domain of sexual ethics, but is and must also be applied to societal affairs, especially in this contemporary age where work and economy underlies every form of human activity.²⁴⁹ In this framework of the human person’s irreducibility—that man as a rational and experiencing being who cannot and must not be reduced to a mere object—which this study tries to interpolate its relevance in this period of time, or even of any epoch. This reaffirms the position of the human person as a ‘somebody’, not merely in the domain of marital copulation and family life, but also in the authentic and concrete activities of man such as labor. From an intellectual synthesis of the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor and Schelerian phenomenology²⁵⁰, the philosophy of Karol Wojtyła shall serve as an indispensable bastion of this age that would not only provide an avenue for philosophical discourses on the human person, but shall find itself significant in the realm of concrete reality and in the underlying structure and value of human work.

Wojtyła’s Philosophy of Person: On Intersubjectivity

An analysis of Wojtyła’s concept of man’s subjectivity leads to its full realization in existing and acting ‘together with others’. This is brought about by the existential fact that man, yet a subject, also exists and acts together with other subjects. Thus, Wojtyła is led to generate the latter part of his magnum opus, *The Acting Person*, dedicated to his concept of intersubjectivity, especially his theory of participation.

Nevertheless, the concept of intersubjectivity is not merely a problem that pops out of the mind of the philosopher-Pope. It extends to a more profound predicament that concerns the *I-other* relationship. It roots from the notion that the concrete person and his fact of existence and activity, is designated by the pronoun *I* while simultaneously existing and acting common with other human persons.²⁵¹ The other is denoted as he who lives alongside with the *I*; he is both *another* and *one of the others*.²⁵² These conceptions form part of the fundamental idea of Wojtyła’s notion of

²⁴⁸ Mejos asserts that the contemporary society is characterized by the setting aside of man’s dignity and the priority of trivial matters over those which are truly significant. See Dean Edward Mejos, *The Personalism of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II: Redeeming the Person through Love* (PhL Thesis, University of Santo Tomas, 2009), 56.

²⁴⁹ Wiegel reiterates Wojtyła’s “Law of the Gift” inclined to his ‘self-giving’ which leads to human fulfillment. This concept is laid not merely for the Christians to take as an example, but manifests the catholicity of Wojtyła’s philosophy which establishes a firm ‘universal moral demand’. See also George Wiegel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2005), 136.

²⁵⁰ Correa brands Wojtyła as a “synthesizer” for being able to bridge the notions of Thomism and phenomenology in relation to the human person. Peter M. Correa, “The Philosophical Position of Karol Wojtyła,” *Philippiniana Sacra* 25, no. 74 (1990): 237.

²⁵¹ See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II)*, 159.

²⁵² Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II)*, 159.

intersubjectivity; the *I-other* relationship is firmly based on his concept of subjectivity and grounded on man's concrete and lived experience.

The person's concrete and lived experiences are the fundamentals of the *I-other* relationship. Wojtyla clarifies that such relationship does not arise from a universal understanding of the human person.²⁵³ However, this universal understanding opens the possibility for such relationship. The notion of intersubjectivity is heavily determined by man's lived, interpersonal, unique and unrepeatable experience with the other.

Wojtyla's philosophy of the human person clearly laid out his concept of action as that which serves as the avenue for a proper understanding of the human person.²⁵⁴ However, this understanding of the dynamization of the person and action, likewise leads to an aspect of reality that such actions could also be performed 'together with others'. The basis of intersubjectivity begins from the understanding of the human person as an *I*. The subject fulfills himself in action. On the other hand, he also experiences the *other*. The human person's experience with the *other* is explained by Aguas:

The other lies beyond the *I*'s experience of self-consciousness, self-determination and self-possession, because these experiences are limited to the self. However, the other as another *I* also experiences these essential elements. Hence the other is not just in relation to the *I*; he is also another *I*, related experientially with his own *I*.²⁵⁵

One must embark on the study of the human person's participation with others through the consideration of the *I-other* relationship, primarily of his own experience with the *other*. Through such awareness, one would be able to see, not merely his commonality with the *other*, but also discovers that the *other* is also another *I* who experiences the *other's* own subjectivity.

Participation, in its ordinary sense and definition, means 'having a share or part in something'.²⁵⁶ Such definition may refer to a kind of interaction such as a meeting or discussion. However, such a definition is insufficient in portraying the more profound experience of the human person in acting together with others. Philosophically, the term is associated to nature and refers to the transcendence and integration of the person in action.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ Wojtyla's concept of the human person who exists and acts 'together with others' is not understood through a universal concept which underlies every individual, i.e. through the ontological idea of essence. Instead, he contends that the intersubjective reality in which the person fulfills himself in action is understood through the concrete and lived experience which is unique and unrepeatable. *Ibid.*, 160-161.

²⁵⁴ The previous sections on the discussion on the philosophy of the acting person serves as the foundation of Wojtyla's aspect of intersubjectivity. Prior to the conception of man who exists and acts 'together with others', his subjectivity is first emphasized through the performance of action and the fulfillment of himself in such action. *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁵⁵ Wojtyla stresses the fact that man is a conscious subject, he who determines himself and holds the capacity to possess and govern himself. However, he is also posed with the fact that he exists and acts 'together with others'. In this reality, he also encounters the other as a conscious subject, he who also determines himself, and capable of possessing and governing himself. *Ibid.*, 159-160.

²⁵⁶ See also Michael B. Montalbo, Jr., *The Church on Labor and Workers* (Manila: Angelo J. and Aloma M. delos Reyes, 1988), 75. See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)*, 163.

²⁵⁷ See also Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht; Boston; London: D. Reichel Publishing Co., 1979), 269.

Wojtyla's idea of participation is not merely portrayed as the very act of interaction, nor does it merely suggest an ontic property of the human person. Participation requires the consciousness of becoming close to another, and such process roots from the lived experiences of one's own *I*.²⁵⁸ Moreover, the structure of the human person, as indicated by the previous discussions, is not merely revealed through his action or in his interaction with other persons. He is more revealed in participation with others.²⁵⁹

Participating with others indicates the transcendence and integration of man in the action.²⁶⁰ This notion renders the human person as he who maintains his uniqueness and individuality, and at the same time, he engages into the action without being immersed in the social interplay.²⁶¹ Such transcendence and integration is also reaffirmed in participation as he shows in the communal acting and simultaneously brings about the personalistic value of his action.²⁶²

Furthermore, Wojtyla considers participation as a trait of the person acting 'together with others'. He contends that the notion of participation signifies a feature of the person himself "that innermost and homogenous feature which determines that the person is existing and acting together with others does so as a person."²⁶³ The affirmation of Wojtyla upholds the view that in participation, the person exists and acts together with others as a conscious, efficacious and self-determining subject. Also, participation allows the person to realize the authentic personalistic value, i.e. the performance of the action and the fulfillment of himself in the action.²⁶⁴

The notion of participation, as a property of the person that enables him to fulfill his action and importantly himself, is then contrasted with *alienation* as the antithesis. Alienation, as the popular philosophical lexicon of Marx, refers to the estrangement of man from the economic and political systems, property, and work.²⁶⁵ However, as Marx advocated social change, Wojtyla insisted to go to what is essential more than the structures of social and economic existence. Alienation, Wojtyla conjectures, means the negation of participation and effects a twofold negative implications – it renders the impossibility of the *I* to see the *other* as another *I*, and it "inhibits the possibility of

²⁵⁸ Participation in the humanity of others, according to Wojtyla, does not arise from the universal understanding of the human being, but from one's "consciously becoming close to another" which originates from the lived experience of one's own *I*. See also Karol Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation?," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 197-207.

²⁵⁹ Aguas explicates the understanding of revealing one's subjectivity in participation. The transcendence and integration of the person is revealed in participation, while at the same time his fulfillment in the action is achieved through participation. See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)*, 164.

²⁶⁰ Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)*, 164.

²⁶¹ Participation reveals the transcendence and integration of the human person. He transcends the action as he is not absorbed by the social interplay; he integrates himself in the action as a complementary of the former. See also Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 269.

²⁶² The fact of man as existing and acting 'together with others' is not opposed to his being a conscious subject. He maintains the *personalistic value* of his action while simultaneously acting in a community. This precludes to the idea of Wojtyla that "even when acting 'together with others' man can remain outside the community that is constituted by participation." Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 269, 279-280.

²⁶³ Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 269.

²⁶⁴ Wojtyla considers the notion of participation as both an ability and a realization. This notion as the "ability of acting 'together with others' which allows the realization of all that results from communal acting and simultaneously enables the one who is acting to realize thereby the personalistic value of his action." *Ibid.*, 271.

²⁶⁵ See also Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation?," 205.

friendship and the spontaneous powers of community (*communio personarum*).²⁶⁶ This explication on participation and alienation is then culminated by Wojtyla posing the question on the ultimate predicament of mankind, especially of the contemporary age: *participation or alienation?*

Wojtyla's Social Teaching On Human Work

John Paul II begins his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* on the understanding of work as that which is naturally reserved for man, the only creature capable of the former.²⁶⁷ He succinctly provides:

Work means any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances, it means any human activity that can and must be recognized as work, in the midst of all the many activities of which man is capable and to which he is predisposed by his very nature, by virtue of humanity itself... Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth.²⁶⁸

Work does not merely presuppose the reality of the human person as that which characterizes him as a social animal. Such aspect is not merely a kind of social existence which requires the human person to engage himself into. Moreover, despite the significance of work in the formation of man, it is and must always provide a niche for the emphasis on the human person as the purpose, primary basis, and subject of work.²⁶⁹ Hence, in social systems which take the form of political, economic and cultural engagements, the human person remains the priority.

Wojtyla emphasizes that the subjectivity of the human person is not merely anchored on the metaphysical foundation of man as a *suppositum*, but his subjectivity may be clearly justified in his capacity to know that he is the efficient cause of his action.²⁷⁰ In the same light, as the human person gains his personhood not merely from his universal essence shared with other persons but also from his unique and unrepeatable experience so as the same principle must be manifested in human work.

As his magnum opus *The Acting Person* precludes, a human act is the dynamism that would lead to the real source of knowledge of the human person.²⁷¹ So work, as one of the aspects on which man is required to manifest his actions, may serve as an avenue, not only to acquire knowledge of the essence of man, but importantly, to emphasize that in such aspect, man is of primacy and has an irreducible value.

Moreover, the important aspect on which such knowledge of the structure of the human person is acquired is through the moment of efficacy. This philosophical concept discloses the fact that man does not only exist and act but he is also the cause of his own action. Thus, the knowledge on the personhood of the worker, as a human person and subject of work, could be acquired from

²⁶⁶ As the previous discussion reveals, participation is seeing the *very humanity of the other*, the consideration of the *other* as another *I*. On the other hand, *communio personarum* refers to a more authentic human community which imbibes the notion of participation in its social and interpersonal dimensions. *Ibid.*, 206.

²⁶⁷ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (Pasay: Paulines Publishing House, 1997), 3-4.

²⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 3-4.

²⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 18, 20, 22-23.

²⁷⁰ On the question of who is the human person as a subject, Wojtyla identifies him as man having the experience of himself while at the same time, having the experience of himself as the "actor". See also Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 71.

²⁷¹ See also Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 27. See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II)*, 69-70.

the fact that he is the author and cause of his own actions. On one hand, Montalbo affirms work as an *actus personae* and states that, "...the one who carries it [work] out is a person, a conscious and free subject, that is a subject that decides about himself."²⁷²

John Paul II, on the other hand, declares in his encyclical that "as a person, he works, he performs various actions belonging to the whole process; independently of their objective content, these actions must all serve to realize his humanity, to fulfill the calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity."²⁷³

The principle of efficacy finds its significance as the worker, as a human person, not merely knows that he does the action proper to work, i.e. he works. More importantly, he is the cause of his own work, and not that work is the cause of his dignity as a person.²⁷⁴ This is reaffirmed in *Laborem Exercens*, as John Paul II firmly declares that despite man's vocation for work, the worker must remember that "work is 'for man' and not man 'for work'."²⁷⁵

In *Laborem Exercens*, John Paul II classifies two dimensions of work – objective and subjective. The former refers to the material aspect of work such as technology, whereas the latter corresponds to the person as having the capacity to act in a "planned and rational way."²⁷⁶ These distinctions affirm that in the realm of work, the human person stands more significant being the subject of work above its objective dimensions.²⁷⁷

The centrality of the person stated by the Pope in the encyclical is upheld by Montalbo. The latter regards the human person as the "primary reference point of the production process."²⁷⁸ Man's position in the economic scenario not only accounts for just compensation through wages, but by being able to be fully recognized as a subject of work – all processes are made for him and are aimed for his full human development and not as a mere form of subsistence, working like a cog in a huge machine.²⁷⁹ The beauty of man's subjectivity is also expressed in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* as

²⁷² The thoughts of Montalbo in this paragraph reveal implicitly that the capacity of the worker to decide about himself implies self-possession and self-governance which are pertinent and significant in shaping the philosophy of Karol Wojtyła. Montalbo, *The Church on Labor and Workers*, 98. Moreover, Wojtyła, in explaining efficacy and self-determination, prioritized the use of *actus personae* instead of *actus humanus*, as the former is truly appropriate in referring to the capacity of the human person for the element of efficacy. See also Karol Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 228.

²⁷³ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 20.

²⁷⁴ The element of efficacy stresses the concept that an external object depends on its cause, an outside effect depending on its authoring subject. Moreover, John Paul II highlighted the concept of human activities as "transitive" in character, which he also mentioned in *Laborem Exercens* that work is of "transitive character" wherein work is directed towards an external object, thus affirming a form of "dominion" over the earth. See also Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," 229.

²⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 22, 25.

²⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 16-23.

²⁷⁷ The disparity between the objective and subjective dimensions of work preclude the position of Wojtyła in emphasizing the value of the human person as unquantifiable and not defined in terms of materialism and economics. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 22.

²⁷⁸ The succeeding discussions are inspired by the same personalistic tenet, that in every process of production and aspect of labor, the human person is situated in the core of experiences, making him the priority and end of all activities. Montalbo, *The Church on Labor and Workers*, 102.

²⁷⁹ Although the provision of remuneration belongs to one of the concrete manifestations of the society's respect for the personhood of man, the concept of just wage as the criterion for human development also poses the

Pope John Paul II declares that, yet man obtained some rights from his work, he also owns some rights which already preexist because of his “essential dignity as a person.”²⁸⁰

In the same context of man’s dignity as worker, independent of economic influence, John Paul II argues that what lies prior to the science of exchange and trade of goods is a “something” which lies in man “because he is a man.”²⁸¹

Wojtyla realized that the problematic of intersubjectivity lies inherently in the fact that the *I* and the *other* are not merely personal subjectivities who exists and acts, but they are also subjected to an analysis as they are also capable of sharing their lived experiences – they are not merely existing and acting subjects, they also exist and act with each other.²⁸²

The human person as a worker is also faced with this reality. In the social realm in which he belongs, he is also a personal subject who exists and acts –conscious of himself, capable for self-determination, and fulfills the self in the action. On the other hand, he is also existing and acting inevitably together with others; hence, working with others and not merely with and for himself. This is succinctly realized in *Centesimus Annus* as John Paul II states that “more than ever, work is *work with others* and *work for others*, it is a matter of doing for someone else.”²⁸³

However, the fact of existence and action with others challenges the notion of subjectivity. Thus, the question arises on how the latter would be preserved while maintaining the former. Likewise, the worker is posed with the same question on how he would maintain his subjectivity as a human person while inevitably encountering the other. The bias in each side of this ontological reality, either on the individual or on the collective, may lead to a form of dehumanization or instances of alienation.²⁸⁴

Thus, Wojtyla suggested that in order for the human person to exercise both dimensions which constitute his personhood, he must exist and act with others while affirming his personal

tendency of tacit dehumanization as such presupposes the equivalent of an action produced by the human person is quantifiable. Hence, yet wages are necessary for human living, the former is insufficient to understand the development of the human person and explain the reality of human condition. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 56.

²⁸⁰ This proposes the understanding of the primacy of man’s personhood over his social nature. In some instances where he faces the danger of dehumanization, one must first understand that such form of danger not only poses against his social position, e.g. as a worker, but cuts into the more profound aspect of his existence, i.e. his dignity as a human person. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (Pasay: Daughters of Saint Paul, 1996), 24.

²⁸¹ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 67. Furthermore, as mentioned, work supposes a “transitive character” because of its being oriented to an external object from its authoring subject. However, human activities such as work are also in possession of a “non-transitive character” which Wojtyla termed as “inwardness” or “in-selfness”. Yet human actions take the form of this inwardness, Wojtyla emphasizes that their non-transitivity and “virtualness” must be unraveled. Henceforth, the human being is considered in the lens of his lived experience. See also Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 227. On the other hand, the “something” being referred to in this context is not the non-transitivity of human action, but the human person’s subjectivity, i.e. his capacity for reflexive self-consciousness, self-determination and self-fulfillment.

²⁸² See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)*, 159.

²⁸³ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 61.

²⁸⁴ This reality, however, is being experienced today in the forms of totalism and individualism. The former refers to the primacy of the common good and the society without taking into consideration the good of the human subject. The latter, on the other hand, pertains to the superiority of the individual good over the common good. This shall be dealt with in the next paragraphs.

subjectivity.²⁸⁵ This is his theory of participation. The worker, therefore, could maintain his subjectivity as a human person without failing to recognize and share in the subjectivity of his co-worker. Work, then, is not merely a work with and for others, but becomes an important social aspect to share in the humanity of others while affirming the self at the same time. John Paul II adds, “work becomes ever more fruitful and productive to the extent that people become more knowledgeable of the productive potentialities of the earth and more profoundly cognizant of the needs of those for whom their work is done.”²⁸⁶

Indeed their symbiosis presents the firm relationship of the society and the human person – first, the progress of the society which helps the transformation and fulfilment of the worker, and the contribution of the worker for the progress of the society on the one hand. The theory of participation elevates the worker from the lure of traditional conception of personhood. Participation enables the workers, not only to share in the fruits of their labor, but in their very humanity.²⁸⁷ This intersubjective theory paves the way for the worker to realize and fulfill himself even working together with others.²⁸⁸

Participation, according to Wojtyla, is also a property both of the person and action.²⁸⁹ The former corresponds to the tendency of the human person to remain himself in a social community.²⁹⁰ On the other hand, the latter refers to the positive relation of sharing in the very humanity of others, thus forming the sense of a community.²⁹¹ Applied in the context of human work, John Paul II states in *Laborem Exercens*:

When man works, using all the means of production, he also wishes the fruit of this work to be used by himself and others, and he wishes to be able to take part in the very work process as a sharer in responsibility and creativity at the workbench to which he applies himself.²⁹²

The concepts of creativity and responsibility brings about the idea of participation as a property both of the person and action. The worker, through participation and sharing in the humanity of others, fulfills himself, thus he is a human person capable of creativity. On the other hand, as the human person works, he does not merely do such for himself but he is also responsible for working “for” and “with” others.²⁹³

As participation stands at the core of Wojtyla’s concept of intersubjectivity, this theory is instrumental in establishing a community that develops the human person and provides him access towards self-fulfillment. This, then, leads to the value of participation as a form of experience geared

²⁸⁵ Wojtyla declares that in order for participation to thrive, man must have the capability of retaining the personalistic value of his action while at the same time, sharing in the “realization and results of communal acting.” See also Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 269.

²⁸⁶ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 61.

²⁸⁷ See also Montalbo, *The Church on Labor and Workers*, 124.

²⁸⁸ Montalbo, *The Church on Labor and Workers*, 124.

²⁸⁹ See Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 237.

²⁹⁰ Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 255.

²⁹¹ See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)*, 167-169.

²⁹² John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 56.

²⁹³ The philosopher-Pope also considers the right of work as a form of vocation to service and cooperation with others, and as a duty for the growth of the society. See also John Paul II, “Labor Has Primacy Over Capital (Catechesis of Pope John Paul II on the Dignity of Human Work),” *The Pope Speaks* 42, No. 5 (1997): 290. See also John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 59, on the idea of work as a moral obligation.

towards the creation of *communio personarum*, a community of human persons who recognize the dignity of other human persons. Such community necessitates that the human person belonging to such community must not only espouse their own individual goods, but aim for the realization of the common good, adopting the latter as constitutive of the individual good. Wojtyla emphasizes the correlation of the common good and man's subjectivity in *The Acting Person* as he states, "it is impossible to define the common good without simultaneously taking into account the subjective moment, that is, the moment of acting in relation to the acting persons."²⁹⁴

The correlation of participation and the common good in the subjective sense fortifies the community as a true "dynamic unity" despite the plurality of subjects. The philosopher-Pope marks in his encyclical on human work:

All of this brings it about that man combines his deepest human identity with membership of a nation, and intends his work also to increase the common good developed together with his compatriots, thus realizing that in this way work serves to add to the heritage of the whole human family, of all the people living in the world.²⁹⁵

The people's realization of work serves as an aspect in which the community upholds the attainment of the common good. As the subjective sense of the common good proves to be the "principle of correct participation,"²⁹⁶ the human person who attempts to attain his individual good in accordance with the common good is ensured that in his actions, he fulfills and realizes himself.²⁹⁷

The significance of the common good in a community of persons could manifest participation in the encounter of different personal subjectivities. Further, the concept of community is not merely explicated in terms of the common good but also in its ontological structure, the relation of the *I* and the *other*. Wojtyla postulated two dimensions of community – the interpersonal (interhuman) and the social.

The interpersonal dimension, characterized by the *I-thou* relationship, presupposes a dialogue between two persons yet directed towards all other human beings.²⁹⁸ This dimension of community also entails a reflexivity that the *I* must consider the *other* as another *I*. Hence, the fullness of participation is disclosed in the reciprocity of the relationship as in such relationships, the *I* experiences himself, the other and the relation between him and the *other*.²⁹⁹

On the other hand, the social dimension of the community, represented by the *we*, refers to the multiplicity of persons and termed by Wojtyla as "communitas."³⁰⁰ The persons within the

²⁹⁴ Moreover, the subjective dimension of the common good allows the person to perform authentic actions and to fulfill himself in these actions. Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 281-283.

²⁹⁵ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 35-36.

²⁹⁶ See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)*, 170.

²⁹⁷ The relation of the common good in participation reveals that through the former, the human *I* gains the possibility of fulfilling himself while belonging in a human *we*. See also Wojtyla, "The Person: Subject and Community," 250.

²⁹⁸ Wojtyla, "The Person: Subject and Community," 174.

²⁹⁹ Wojtyla, "The Person: Subject and Community," 173-178.

³⁰⁰ Wojtyla, "The Person: Subject and Community," 179.

community, from the lenses of the social dimension, are related not by the uniformity of their actions, but because of their being driven towards a single value – the common good.³⁰¹

These two dimensions of human community constitute Wojtyla’s notion of intersubjectivity which affirms the personal subjectivity of the human person and its compatibility with the community. The field of work must also possess the same attitudes in order to further the relationship between the human person and the community.

The interpersonal dimension of the community suggests that the worker must consider the other worker as having the same personal subjectivity that he has; the worker must be able to comprehend the other as a concrete human person, a unique and unrepeatable subject who is rational and free.³⁰² Moreover, the social dimension views the worker who is situated in a community with other workers and they strive towards the common good characterized by truth.³⁰³

These communities are reflections of the relationship between the human persons belonging to such communities. Participation in these communities are not only conditioned by the relationship of the persons, but is also determined by the attitudes to which the people adhere to. The authentic attitudes are solidarity and opposition, whereas the inauthentic attitudes are conformism and non-involvement.

As work environments are also composed by communities of work, participation is also determined by the kind of attitude the workers adhere to. The encyclicals provide concrete circumstances which are constitutive of the attitudes of participation. The authentic attitude of solidarity is manifested in the workers’ *right of association*³⁰⁴ or the establishment of “labor or trade unions”, as such are advocates of the fulfillment of the self while complementing others.³⁰⁵ He does not merely consider his personal share to the community but also accepts the share of others. Nevertheless, the same workers’ right to association³⁰⁶ may be understood as a form of the authentic attitude of opposition which, according to Wojtyla, the former serves as a “mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice” yet not a “struggle against others.”³⁰⁷ As opposition confirms the common good³⁰⁸, labor unions are instrumental in upholding the “just rights” of the workers, forming a community of

³⁰¹ Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 179-180.

³⁰² The interpersonal dimension consists of the fact that the *other* is another *I* different from my one’s *I*, a relation which proceeds from the *I*, but also returns to the *I*. Ibid., 173. See also Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 241.

³⁰³ Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 181.

³⁰⁴ See also John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 72.

³⁰⁵ See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)*, 187.

³⁰⁶ Aside from the idea of an association, Wojtyla terms this union as the “workers’ movement.” This movement, as a concrete appropriation of the authentic attitude of opposition serves as a “moral conscience to unjust and harmful situations”; hence, defending the rights of the workers as persons in possession of human dignity. See also John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 33.

³⁰⁷ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 73. Also, the metaphor “mouthpiece” was also used by Wojtyla in *The Acting Person*, referring to the authentic attitude of opposition as being the voiced out and not signifying withdrawal from the community. See also Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 286.

³⁰⁸ See also Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)*, 187.

solidarity and preserving participation in relationships through the opposition and struggle against social injustice.

John Paul II upholds that “each person collaborates in the work of others and for their good... he collaborates in the work of his fellow employees, as well as in the work of suppliers and in the customer’s use of goods, in a progressively expanding chain of solidarity.”³⁰⁹

The inauthentic attitudes also reflect the contemporary condition of work communities. Workers who feel that he is just a cog in a machine or a mere production instrument³¹⁰ are persons who experience conformism and are hampered in realizing participation. Nevertheless, a concrete circumstance of the non-authentic attitude of non-involvement may be the real predicament of *unemployment*. This social reality remains very evident and prevents the realization of participation as the person makes himself absent from the community of work in which he must belong to, as man who has the natural leaning for work.³¹¹ The unemployment of the worker implies his withdrawal from the community of work. Hence such characterizes the nonauthentic attitude of non-involvement.

These attitudes determine the presence of participation in a community. But in some instances where the human person conforms his ideals to the society and ceases to be a personal subject, he falls into the dilemma of alienation. This problem was also provided a substantial amount of consideration for discussion in John Paul II’s encyclical *Centesimus Annus* and affirms its presence, even in the work community. He explains:

Alienation is found also in work, when it is organized so as to ensure maximum returns and profits with no concern whether the worker, through his own labor, grows or diminishes as a person, either through increased isolation in a maze of relationships marked by destructive competitiveness and estrangement in which he is considered only a means and not an end.³¹²

On the one hand, the concept of alienation was heavily problematized by Karl Marx who devoted a section of one of his early writings to alienated labor. On the other hand, Wojtyła is more concerned with the profound truth of the human person in his personal subjectivity, the predicament of alienation exists as a problem that demands not merely within the bounds of economic principles, but importantly, anthropologically and consequently, ethically.

Wojtyła considers alienation as the opposite of participation. As it was defined as the phase of isolation, its contrary must be a form of coexistence with the other yet it goes beyond such coexistence. Thus the human laborer is not merely a subject who works in isolation nor merely exists for himself

³⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 84. Moreover, the collaboration and solidarity of the workers in a particular labor community, according to Montalbo, implies not merely their sharing in the “ownership, profit and management of the business enterprise” but entails the experience of personal subjectivity in the concrete intersubjective community, i.e. the “mega-process of production.” See also Montalbo, *The Church on Labor and Workers*, 130-131.

³¹⁰ See also John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 56.

³¹¹ This idea of *unemployment* as an inauthentic attitude of non-involvement and hinders the occurrence of participation does not imply that the human person has no longer opportunities for participation in other areas of existence. However, as a human being, he is naturally predisposed for work, even attested that at least a huge portion of his life is devoted entirely to work. Hence, as work is definitive of a great portion of his experience, work also poses the greatest, if not the supreme influence on his transformation as a human person.

³¹² John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 79.

despite acting together with others. The worker, as far as he lives in participation with others, tends to work in being with others.

Montalbo affirms the philosophical analysis of the theory of participation of John Paul II in understanding the latter's papal encyclicals and adds that "...it is participation that allows each personal 'I' to experience his subjectivity and fulfill himself and through his action – precisely in his acting together with others."³¹³

The significance of participation is manifested in the appropriation of this theory to concrete realities such as human labor. The primacy of the human person over labor ensures the position of the former, that in relationships concerning the human person as a worker, no other economic process or system could cause the human person to be dehumanized or devalued.

The two impersonalistic systems of totalism and individualism are also contrary to participation, thus limiting the human person to realize himself in acting and existing together with others, or sharing in the very humanity of others.³¹⁴ The former may find its concrete application in the collective context of socialism which Wojtyla thinks is not in accord with the affirmation of the human person as a subject.³¹⁵ Individualism, however, is characterized by the human person's tendency of rejecting the common good and merely patronizing his individual good. This is perhaps reflective of the contemporary situation and predilection of capitalism as that which merely concerns the favor on one individual, compromising the subjectivity and the good of the society.

Conclusion

The advent of contemporary work-related adversaries paved way for the discourse on human person. Work not only serves as a means for man's sustenance. It also shapes the community, and influences the family and other social institutions, up to the nation.³¹⁶ Despite the predilection of Wojtyla's philosophy to the Catholic tradition, he was able to establish a philosophy which reaches a universal audience. Such philosophy affirms the dignity of the human person universally as it appeals to all races, cultures and countries. Indeed, his is a "voice in the world that is threatened by depersonalization."³¹⁷ The appropriation of Wojtyla's philosophical anthropology to the reality of work reveals the capacity of philosophy as an avenue for critique which explicates all other realities, especially those which pose the danger of depersonalization to the human person. Thus, on the question of how shall the contemporary human worker realize his personhood in the society, Wojtyla provided the answer – the theory of participation.

Wojtyla's theory of participation opens the possibility of living in the world without falling in the predicament of dehumanization and while remaining to be a personal subject – a conscious, free and self-determining human person. This concept of intersubjectivity allows the human person to maintain his personhood while being in a contemporary society, especially in the realm of work. It engages the

³¹³ Montalbo, *The Church on Labor and Workers*, 131.

³¹⁴ These systems or trends serve as limitations to participation which either isolate the person from others (individualism) or be coerced to realize the common good (totalism). These systems are considered "impersonalistic" or "antipersonalistic". See also Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 271-276.

³¹⁵ See also John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 54.

³¹⁶ Jozef Glemp, "Human Work in the Teaching of John Paul II," in *Unitas* 62, nos. 1-2 (1989): 57.

³¹⁷ Rolyn B. Francisco, *Karol Wojtyla's (Pope John Paul II) Theory of Participation Based on his Christian Personalism* (Makati: St. Pauls, 1995), 112.

human person to share in the very humanity of others – that human persons existing and acting together within a particular social group do not merely create a society, but a *communio personarum*, an authentic community which celebrates the joy of being with each other and respecting the dignity of each human person.

The quandaries related to and brought about by social, political and economic forces relegate the position of the contemporary human person to the manipulation of these structures. Nevertheless, Karol Wojtyła's theory of participation links the chasm between these aspects of human existence. The theory of participation guarantees the preservation of personhood in the community and in the experience of the *other*.

Labor, as a significant human activity, enables the possibility for an encounter of the *other* who also envisions to perfect himself at work. Also, this activity engages man to realize his personhood in the consideration of the “end for the sake of which the work is done,”³¹⁸ i.e. the human subject, and not only through the production of goods.

The rise of various work-related predicaments not only convey a superficial disorder in the realm of economic and social affairs. These dilemmas stand on profound realities, especially on the way the contemporary society looks at the human worker. Hence, this contemporary condition and perspective on labor must be augmented. Instead, it must be regarded as an activity that espouses the fulfillment of man.

Work must be celebrated as an encounter of the human person with himself and other persons; it must be both a gift to be grateful for and a responsibility to be fulfilled. As such, labor becomes a gift to humanity as an essential locus for the satisfaction of man's needs, an opportunity for man to improve his physical life, and as a common vocation that unifies all men. Also as a responsibility, labor is presented as a vital activity for the preservation of the community and the state. The significance of work is not merely understood within the context of employment percentages or in the amount of output produced by the labor force. More importantly, the principle which binds labor as a vital existential aspect and activity of humankind is its emphasis of the human person as the center of its purpose.

Moreover, it must open more opportunities for man to develop his personality and improve social connection which leads to greater fulfillment of humanity. In considering this significance, work then must be designated with a special position in the heart of the society as the manifestation of the people's striving towards the enhancement of their way of life and as the only social activity by which they would be able to express the unity of a single human family.

As an activity that is only administrable by the human person and no other creature, work is an inevitable reality that man must not fear or consider as a burden or suffering. It must be a personalistic act that is enjoyed, valued and done for its own sake and for a more noble purpose – the fulfillment of man – as man becomes more of a human being through work. The nobility of labor is brought by the fact that it is an activity by the human person. Indeed, work is a sublime act that is

³¹⁸ Indeed the ultimate vocation of man must not only concern the development of his skills, but of his whole humanity. De Torre uses the work of the carpenter: man must not only be a better carpenter; more necessarily, the carpenter must be a better man. Joseph M. de Torre, *Christian Philosophy* (Manila: Sinag-tala Publishers, 1980), 199.

integrated within and performed by the concrete human person yet it also transcends the physical movement of hands and the processes of the human mind. It is a supreme aspect of human reality that must be cherished by the person but is also shared by persons – a gift that is both given and received by the human person to himself and to other people as one human community.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Books

Wojtyła, Karol. 1979. *The Acting Person*. Dordrecht; Boston; London: D. Reidel Publishing Co.

Encyclicals

John Paul II. 1996. *Centesimus Annus*. Pasay: Daughters of Saint Paul.

—. 1997. *Laborem Exercens*. Pasay: Paulines Publishing House.

Articles

Wojtyła, Karol. 1993. "Participation or Alienation?" In *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, by Andrew N. Woznicki, 197-207. New York: Peter Lang.

—. 1993. "The Person: Subject and Community." In *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, by Andrew N. Woznicki, 219-261. New York: Peter Lang.

Secondary Sources

Books

Aguas, Jove Jim S. 2014. *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II)*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.

de Torre, Joseph M. 1980. *Christian Philosophy*. Manila: Sinag-tala Publishers.

Francisco, Rolyn B. 1995. *Karol Wojtyła's (Pope John Paul II) Theory of Participation Based on his Christian Personalism*. Makati: St Pauls.

Montalbo, Jr., Melchor B. 1988. *The Church on Labor and Workers*. Manila: Angelo J. and Aloma M. delos Reyes.

Simpson, Peter. 2001. *On Karol Wojtyła*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, Inc.

Wiegel, George. 2005. *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Journal Articles

Correa, Peter M. 1990. "The Philosophical Position of Karol Wojtyła." *Philippiniana Sacra Vol. 25, No. 74* 233-239.

Glemp, Jozef. 1989. "Human Work in the Teaching of John Paul II." *Unitas Vol. 62, Nos. 1-2* 47-65.

Thesis

Mejos, Dean Edward. 2009. *The Personalism of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II: Redeeming the Person through Love*. PhL Thesis: University of Santo Tomas.