

Between the Wojtyła Theory of Participation and the Confucian Ren 仁: An Anthropological Dialogue*

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Abstract: Despite the fact that Karol Wojtyła, later to be hailed as Pope John Paul II, was preoccupied by Theological and pastoral endeavors during his pontificate, one can still hold true that his philosophical visions remained and served as the underlying element behind all of his papal works. His profound teachings on the human person and its dynamism have its proof in the many areas of human life that it has greatly affected. It is significant to note that we can study him side by side with other thinkers from the East who also thought of the human person, and his relation with the society, particularly that of Chinese philosophy which maintains its humanistic temperament similar to that of Wojtyła. Kong Zi 孔子 or Confucius, one of the most influential Chinese thinkers, developed his philosophy that centered on man's personal and ethical role in the society and one can think also of Wojtyła who also thought of the person and his relation to the community through his theory of participation. In this paper, I shall highlight the similarities and differences between the Confucian concept of Ren 仁 and Wojtyła's theory of participation through a comparative analysis. This study would be limited only in exposing the major similarities and differences of the two concepts, since a more comprehensive one could require another hermeneutical study. Wojtyła stresses that participation has its foundation on intersubjectivity, man as existing and acting *together-with-others* that can imply participation as an act towards the common good of the community. On the other hand, Kong Zi 孔子 succeeded in establishing the concept of Ren 仁 or Benevolence, understood as the *consciousness of human other* in which man has the capacity for personal and moral awakening of his role in the society. Following this line of thought, the paper shall be divided into three sections namely: (1) analysis of Wojtyła's theory of participation, (2) analysis of Kong Zi's 孔子 conception of Ren 仁, and (3) the juxtaposing of Wojtylan participation and Confucian Ren towards a comparative analysis of the two concepts as an end. Hence, the discourse shall be guided by the overarching question: How does Wojtyła and Kong Zi 孔子 enter into an anthropological dialogue?

Keywords: Karol Wojtyła, Kong Zi 孔子, Participation, Ren 仁, Dialogue

I. INTRODUCTION

As human beings, we are conscious enough that we live not as a solitary being, there is the presence of other human beings who live and exist with us. This presence of the other human

being *together-with-others* is a sign that the world is truly a world of persons.¹ As human persons, it is only a truism² that we are conscious enough that we live *together-with-others*, because without this, then the existence of community and societies would be absurd. It is the group of people living and existing *together-with-others* that makes up the community, the society, and the whole wide world. It is therefore a general truth that man is a social person. The Greek philosopher Aristotle claimed that “*Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.*”³ This means that by virtue of becoming human, it is therefore necessary in all of us to recognize and understand that to live with other people and to constitute the society is perhaps the greatest validation that we are living our lives correctly.

This notion of living and existing *together-with-others* is a substantial element in philosophical anthropology. Philosophical Anthropology is completely vivid in the Classical Chinese Philosophy and the philosophy of Karol Wojtyła. This concept of living and existing *together-with-others* is known as intersubjectivity in philosophical anthropology. Wojtyła’s analysis of participation has its foundation on the concept of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity has become his point of departure, and he explains the reality of intersubjectivity in this manner:

“It seems that in the very positing of the problem I – other (soi – autrui) we proceed simultaneously from two cognitive situations. One is the ascertainment of the fact of the existence and activity of a concrete human being, designated by the pronoun I, who exists and acts in common with other human beings. The other is one of them, someone who lives alongside me, and who is both another and one of the others who exists and acts in common with me.”⁴

In a more general sense, intersubjectivity is validated by the presence of the “*other*”, a “*thou*”, or a “*fellowman*”, who all exists also in the world. We experience the presence of parents, siblings, friends, acquaintances, relatives, teachers, classmates, and neighbors, to whom we all relate with. This

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¹ For a comprehensive discussion on the “world of persons”, See: Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979); 276

² When we say that something is a truism, it means that the claim is widely-accepted, obvious, and self-evident, that doubting its truthfulness could be foolish.

³ Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

⁴ Karol Wojtyła, “*Participation or Alienation?*”, in “*Person and Community: Selected Essays*” (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); 198

living together with other people and knowing that we exist not only by our own subject alone is a necessary fact in intersubjectivity.⁵

To further emphasize the inescapable connection between philosophy and man, and to justify that philosophical anthropology is of great importance in the flourishing of philosophy, The Venerable Master, Dr. Alfredo Co has something to say in accordance to such:

“Man is a universal phenomenon. He cogitates, contemplates and interprets the same world and yet he comes up with varied opinions regarding it. History has indeed shown us that the diversity of human experiences has created diversified cultures that have brought about distinct interpretations of the world.”⁶

Classical Chinese Philosophy has an esteemed reflections and ideas on the man who continues to philosophize. For the Chinese, they have developed the end concerning the Knowledge of the Practical Truth or can also be called the Knowledge of the Art of Living.⁷ It is then important for them to always raise the question: “What Am I?”. Alfredo Co explains this truth: “*The Chinese were interested in the discovery of what it meant to be human – what man’s potentialities were and how man could live in self-determination, harmony and cohesiveness with others, in righteousness and propriety, sincerity and wisdom, peace and prosperity, so that he might be able to live in perpetuity,*”⁸. It is clear then that the Chinese mode of thinking has also the very implied notion of man’s social and relational dimension⁹ as it concerns the reality of living together with others in a way that is cohesive and has the goal of harmony in mind. Perfectly, they have the end of making man truly humane.

In light of these arguments, it can be noted that Chinese philosophy and Karol Wojtyła could engage into a form of dialogue, specifically on the human person. On one hand, one of the greatest Chinese Philosophers that had ever lived was *Kong Zi* 孔子¹⁰ or more commonly known in the West as *Confucius*. *Kong Zi* was a sage, a teacher, a philosopher and a known moralist who have a very profound teachings on the human person. *Kong Zi* belongs to the *Ru Jia* School or the *School of the Literati*, in which they give prime importance to the Social and Personal Ethics, Education, and Politics and Government, in which most of *Kong Zi*’s teachings revolves. *Kong Zi*’s philosophy resulted from

⁵ Jove Jim Aguas, *Philosophy: Toward an Understanding and Appreciation of the Human Person*. (Quezon City: Abiva Publishing House, 2017); 86

⁶ Alfredo Co, Introduction - *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009); 1

⁷ Alfredo Co, Introduction - *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co*; 2

⁸ Alfredo Co, Introduction - *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co*; 4

⁹ I opt to use this concept instead of intersubjectivity, since it is a Western term, and I would like to maintain the distinctiveness of concepts from both East and West.

¹⁰ I intend to use this name instead of the popular “*Confucius*” in order to maintain its Eastern significance

the things that he experienced and the kind of life that he had lived.¹¹ Such was the importance for him of education and learning, in that he claimed: “*At fifteen, I set my heart on learning.*”¹² Co explained that “*Kong Zi always considered man the center of his philosophy and tried to develop the microcosmic man as the paragon of a perfect family and a perfect society.*”¹³ Kong Zi’s concept of Ren 仁 or commonly translated by scholars as “*Benevolence*”, “*Goodness*”, “*Human-Heartedness*”, “*Compassion*”, “*Pity*”, “*Love*”, “*Virtue*”, “*Virtue of Virtues*”, “*Supreme Goodness*”, and “*consciousness-of-human-others*”¹⁴ is one of the concepts that has the ultimate bearing of man’s social dimension, ethics and morality, in which according to Fr. Richard Ang “*is the key concept of Confucius’ philosophy. Thus, it dominates and guides all his teachings.*”¹⁵ Therefore, being the totality of all of Kong Zi’s teachings, the Ren 仁 can be said as having the roots of morality, ethics, and also the interhuman dimension in the Chinese philosophy of man.

On the other hand, Karol Wojtyła, who is commonly known as Saint Pope John Paul II was also a philosopher of the human person. His personalist philosophy¹⁶ centered on the human person’s dynamism in action and having the consciousness of such. Thus, for Wojtyła the actions of the human person would validate the existence of the human person, and this is contained in his magnum opus entitled “*The Acting Person*”. Considering such personalist philosophy of Karol Wojtyła, this also necessitates the concept of intersubjectivity which is contained in his theory of participation. This theory of participation is highly relative to the concept of common good, and the concept of community. Such concepts are contained in “*The Acting Person*”, and in many of his articles that is

¹¹ Richard Ang, OP, *Between the Confucian Li and Ren: A Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2018); 25

¹² Analects (2:4) (Raymond Dawson Translation)

¹³ Alfredo Co, Introduction - *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co.*; 112

¹⁴ Co was the one who suggested this term that highlights the dimension of the *human-other*. In this paper, most of the time the translation of Ren will be limited into this term in order to underscore the social dimension of Ren and its consequent implications on ethical, moral, and political aspects.

¹⁵ Richard G. Ang, OP, “On Conceiving Ren Towards Birthing *Ru Jia*”, *Philippiniana Sacra* 46 no. 138 (September - December 2011); 535-564

¹⁶ As a philosophical school, personalism was established at the first half of the twentieth century. Personalism as a school gives prime importance to the person as the center of investigation in philosophical, theological, and humanistic studies. Since it [personalism] considers the value of human personhood, it necessarily touches personal subjectivity, the uniqueness and inviolability of the human person, and also the person’s relational and social dimension. More precisely, personalism upholds that the person should be the ontological and epistemological point of departure in terms of philosophical reflection. On the part of Karol Wojtyła, his personalist philosophy was a creative synthesis of his Aristotelian-Thomistic formation and his systematic study of Max Scheler; thus, producing a good complement of Thomistic metaphysics and anthropology and phenomenology. Amid being a Thomist, his approach to philosophy is personalistic, and this can be seen in terms of how he situated his problem and its consequent response both to personalism. Perhaps, his personalist temperament is the middle ground between Thomism and phenomenology; hence, these three aided him in his analysis on how does the action reveals the person in its entirety. See: Thomas Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, “*Personalism*”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/personalism/>>. See also: Jove Jim Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2014); 26

compiled in the work entitled: “Person and Community: Selected Essays”. It is undoubted that this theory of participation pre-conditions the subject of ethics and ethical axiology.

In this paper, the two aforementioned concepts or theories will be discussed in its entirety since the two manifests a dynamic manifestation in philosophical anthropology. It can be somehow exhaustive in the development of the concept of intersubjectivity, morality, and ethics since these are interrelated aspects in terms of the two philosophers. The two then will be compared in a way that it highlights East-West Comparative Philosophy. Entering into dialogue is a great sign of emphasizing the openness to different ideas that philosophy has to offer, and in order that philosophy would continue to flourish. The comparison between the two shall not aim to juxtapose comprehensively the two elements, but only to expose the major similarities and differences of the two aforementioned concepts. The reason being that this paper is a preliminary attempt to analyze how does the thoughts of Wojtyła could enter into a dialogue with the East particularly Kong Zi, such was also the limitation of this paper.

II. WOJTYŁAN THEORY OF PARTICIPATION

Before we embark into Wojtyła’ theory of participation, it is only important to discuss first his notion of the personalistic value of action. Wojtyła introduces the personalistic value of the action as the value that is embedded in man, it is the value that when he does or performs the action, man realizes this personalistic value. 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. The significance of this personalistic value of the action is not only corollary to the person’s performance of the action, but that self-determination and transcendence is innate in the person’s action.¹⁷ In his own words, Wojtyła explains this value:

“We will then notice that the performance itself of an action by the person is a fundamental value, which we may call personalistic – personalistic or personal – value of the action.”¹⁸

In general terms, when the person produces actions brought about by his job, his duties, and responsibilities, then the person realizes that it has a personalistic value in the same way as his personhood has a value. This value or worth that the person has in performing actions aids the truth that actions reveal or manifest the person. It should be noted that even in communal acting that is conditioned by his theory of participation, this personalistic value is not lost but is merely enhanced or supplemented.

Karol Wojtyła’s discussion on participation can be found in the fourth part of his book entitled “*The Acting Person*”. The first aspect that we must consider in discussing participation is that it is a consequence of man’s existence, of his existing and acting *together-with-others*. Wojtyła wrote: “*The mark*

¹⁷ Jove Jim Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II)* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2014); 117

¹⁸ Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979); 264

of the communal – or – social trait is essentially imprinted on human existence itself”.¹⁹ Thus this becomes the definitive factor on why Wojtyła defined the theory of participation as *acting and existing together-with-others*. It is the person that becomes the fundamental building block of this participation. This social and communal nature of participation is not rooted in the core of participation, but it comes from the core of the person per se, since it is he/she who does the action, and this validates his personhood and subjectivity. It is then true that the person is the one who creates the communal and social core within the community and the society. All forms of participation must lead itself back to person and his action. In terms of the personalistic value of the person’s action that I have discussed above, then it follows that this has a relation to the communal acting of the person *together-with-others*, since the person in his entirety is still involved in this aspect. Wojtyła asserts that this value is not lost when the person performs or participate in communal action, in that way he writes:

“... retaining the personalistic value of the action while sharing in the realization and the results of communal acting.”²⁰

This means that the person, while sharing in the communal level of acting together with others remains a man with a personal inclination, thus realizing and obtaining his personalistic value of action, that is rooted and anchored on his own subjectivity. Following this premise, it is also accurate to say that since in participation, there is the presence of communal acting, it then becomes a determining and definitive factor that generates the personalistic value of all cooperation, a reality that is produced when people engage into cooperation. This is supported by the fact that the person is referencing also from the other person while at the same time, he considers himself as part of that reference since he is also a person in the *world of persons*. In addition, this kind of existing and acting *together-with-others* allows man for his concrete personal development in a way that recognizing and believing in his own development in acting and participating *together-with-others*, since it unfolds the intrinsic development of the human person in his actions.

However, the question still remains on how does ethics and morality is related to this theory participation and its corresponding personalistic value. Thus, it is through the consideration of man’s fulfillment of his actions in view of what is good, and non-fulfillment for what is evil. With this understanding, then the person could eventually attain an integral human development. Wojtyła explains: “*For it is only in the moral good that the person can fulfill himself inasmuch as ‘evil’ means always a ‘non-fulfillment’.*” This suggests that human dimension of fulfilling such actions in view of a good that lies in a certain object of action, and not fulfilling a certain action in view of a certain bad within the certain object of the action. From this assertion, there comes the development of the common good as a complementary concept of ethics and morality in his theory of participation. Wojtyła claims that the common good is actually identified with the goal of the community, as if this should be their primary goal in performing such communal act as rooted in the value of the person’s action. Furthermore, Wojtyła also recognized the significance of individual good²¹ that each person has, this for him contributes to the realization and achievement of the common good that is only proper for the world

¹⁹ Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*; 272

²⁰ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*; 269

²¹ In Thomistic Personalism, it should be noted that this individual good of the person must be respected and not threatened by the common good. It should never devalue the good the person especially his/her freedom of conscience. We should strike a balance between the two, otherwise Wojtyła would warn us of the pitfalls of individualism and totalitarianism. See: Karol Wojtyła, “*Thomistic Personalism*”, in “*Person and Community: Selected Essays*” (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); 173-174

of persons. The common good conditions the individual good of the person, and this can be viewed in terms on how each individual good must eventually lead to the common good. Hence, the common good is superior to the notion of individual good of each person, yet this does not mean that it disrupts the freedom of each individual good but conditions it since the good of individual person is made more fully expressed and actualized when it contributes to the common good.²² Wojtyła continues in explaining the common good:

“owing to the same ability of participation, man expects that in communities founded on the common good, his own actions will serve the community and help to maintain to enrich it.”²³

This *community of acting* necessitates the capacity of participation to have an ethical inclination, and Wojtyła added the concept of *solidarity* and *opposition* – these are the authentic attitudes²⁴ of his theory of participation – as concepts that is distinguished from the common good, but it leads and complements the development of the common good. *Solidarity* in terms of good ends and purposes necessitated by the action and the concept of *opposition*, or even dubbed by Wojtyła as the “*creative opposition*” seeks to participate in a way that it opposes something that is bad and not beneficial to the wide community. However, some might even ascribe a negative sense to opposition because it can be equated to becoming radical but Wojtyła reiterates the need for calling it as a “*creative opposition*”, a form of participation that prevents the evil that might creep in the society. Applying this solidarity and opposition at a general level, it is presumed to benefit the whole and looking beyond his own share within the community. In order to highlight the philosophical underpinnings of the concept of solidarity and opposition, Wojtyła reiterates the certain reality of having its objective parts and subjective mutual complementariness. This refers to the object of good for solidarity and the object of evil for opposition, and thus in the performance of such, then subjective complementariness can be possible by means of leading it both towards the common good.

Another concept that Wojtyła argues in his theory of participation is the notion of neighbor and the commandment of love. To stress this conception of neighbor, Wojtyła highlights the need to decentralize ourselves from individualism, in that he writes:

“he is convinced of being deprived of his prerogatives to be ‘himself’ by the community and thus tries to save it in isolation.”²⁵

In order for the human person to realize this notion of neighbor, which is also a vital part in understanding the intersubjective dimension of participation, man must completely abolish the notion of “himself”, the central concept of individualism since this would impede the development of the humanness or the personhood of the person within the context of participation. Thus, Aguas added:

“Being ‘neighbors’ means recognizing the humanity or the human personhood of the other as more than being a member of a social

²² Karol Wojtyła, “*The Person: Subject and Community*”, in “*Person and Community: Selected Essays*”; 250-251

²³ Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979); 283

²⁴ Wojtyła also conceptualized the existence of non-authentic attitudes in his theory of participation, and these are conformism and non-involvement.

²⁵ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*; 291

community. Every human person is a neighbor as long as one recognizes his/her humanity or personhood. Every human has in inherent value independent of his/her being a fellow member, and this is his/her value as a person, as a neighbor.”²⁶

Wojtyla adds a statement to justify the role of the neighbor in the concept of participation, in that he explains: “*The ability to share in the humanness itself of every man is the very core of all participation and the condition of the personalistic value of all acting and existing together- with-others.*”²⁷

The core of the notion of neighbor has the very objective of uplifting the humanness of the human person and his dynamic personhood. There is another concept that aids the concept of neighbor, and this is the central concept of the commandment of love. The commandment of love lies in the concluding part of Wojtyla’s discussion of participation, Wojtyla has a preceding concept before he embarks in the discussion of love, and this is realized when there is the juxtaposition of my neighbor with my own ego. This juxtaposition breeds the notion of love for Wojtyla and this has a very concrete role in the development of humanness in the concept of participation. Wojtyla writes: “*the commandment of love is necessary for a community to be truly human.*” With this developing thesis of participation, Wojtyla also presents an antithesis to such and with this, he concretized the concept of alienation²⁸. For Wojtyla, alienation is the very negation of participation, and this is posed as a personalistic problem that gives threats to the human person, most especially in his/her subjectivity.²⁹ In his own words, Wojtyla explains this notion:

“Alienation basically means the negation of participation, for it renders participation difficult or even impossible. It devastates the I-other relationship, weakens the ability to experience another human being as another I, and inhibits the possibility of friendship and the spontaneous powers of community (communio personarum).”³⁰

For Wojtyla, alienation gives us the incapacity to see the human person in the other, this could be one of the foundations why alienation makes participation difficult or even impossible. This limits the capacity of the person to realize himself as an *I*, who is capable of participating in the humanity of others, which then affects the person’s ability to actualize himself in the performance of the action that has its own personalistic value. This has a direct effect in the person’s interpersonal and communal acting since it prohibits him/her to experience a genuine and authentic *I-other* relationship and consequently the *we* relationship.³¹ Such was the evil of alienation that it strips off what is only natural to the person, the natural ability to relate and associate with others, and the experience of becoming a

²⁶ Jove Jim Aguas, *Philosophy: Toward an Understanding and Appreciation of the Human Person*. (Quezon City: Abiva Publishing House, 2017); 111

²⁷ Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979); 291

²⁸ Wojtyla subscribes to the fact that this notion was introduced into philosophy in the 19th century and was easily adopted by Karl Marx. Furthermore, Wojtyla recognized that in terms of Marxist philosophy, alienation happens when human beings are alienated by their economic and political systems, their property, and their work to the point of even including religion. See: Karol Wojtyla, “*Participation or Alienation?*”, in “*Person and Community: Selected Essays*” (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); 205

²⁹ Karol Wojtyla, “*The Person: Subject and Community*”, in “*Person and Community: Selected Essays*”; 257

³⁰ Karol Wojtyla, “*Participation or Alienation?*”, in “*Person and Community: Selected Essays*”; 206

³¹ Wojtyla conceptualized these two concepts as the two dimensions of the community

person. The source of alienation could be the person himself, or the society to which he lives, or even a combination of both.³² It is important to note here that with the fact that society could be a source of alienation, then Wojtyła made sure to assert that with the existence of social systems and structure, then a criterion must be made about whether or not this social system satisfies participation or alienation. In its essence, this concept of alienation prohibits us to speak meaningfully of a community, mainly because as long as the stain of alienation is present, then the person cannot fully experience and actualize himself – *interpersonal and communal* – in his actions and his eventual *self-fulfillment* and *transcendence*. Thus, this could impede the mark of an authentic *community of persons* inasmuch as Wojtyła is concerned.

It is then a truth that the love that the person³³ can produce is an essential factor in the development of a community of person, surrounded by the communal act in participation. The development of the integral human person is but a constitutive element that is supplemented by love per se, and by means of this, we can be assured that there is the upliftment of the humanness of the human person that makes the community a genuine and authentic one. In the general context of Wojtyła's philosophy, it is also significant to assert that the person or the self is a source of fulfillment in terms of action and participation, and this was vivid in *Gaudium Et Spes*:

“Man cannot fulfill himself except through the sincere gift of the self.”³⁴

III. THE CONFUCIAN CONCEPT OF REN 仁

It is said that the concept of Ren 仁 serves as the primary and dominating concept of *Kong Zi's* philosophy. Richard Ang argues that:

“Ren can be identified as Confucius' life ideal: what a person should aspire for and what society should equally strive for to have lasting peace and harmony.”³⁵

Being the primary concept of Confucius, the Ren 仁 is not considered to be abstract, and they convey a practical philosophy of a cultivated person who is aware of his task to have a passionate

³² Dean Edward Mejos, “Against Alienation: Karol Wojtyła's Theory of Participation” *Kritike*, Volume One, Number One (June 2007); 71-85

³³ The profound thoughts of Wojtyła on the human person is not only contained in “*The Acting Person*”, this extends even in the dynamic relation of the person and love, to which the subject of his another principal work “*Love and Responsibility*” is all about. For Wojtyła, the notion of “love is a good peculiar to the world of persons”. Given the rational nature that the person has in relation to the many objects that also exist in the world, the person has the capacity to love and the ability for loving is an exercise of free will. Such was the vision of Wojtyła for love that he identify it as the opposite of “using”, and this has a direct implication for the person. With the love as a good, then the person should see himself and especially the other not as a means to an end, but an end in itself. Furthermore, love being a good must be directed and aimed at the common good, to which Wojtyła asserts that the person should subordinate himself. See: Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*. Translated by H.T. Willets , (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, Inc., 1981); 28.

³⁴ *Gaudium Et Spes* #24

³⁵ Richard Ang, OP, *Between the Confucian Li and Ren: A Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2018); 75

concern for the welfare of his fellow human being. This implies the social bearing of the concept of Ren 仁. Following its etymology, we can infer its various meanings that all leads towards the social dimension of its nature. According to Paul Strathern, “*the character is made up of two components: Ren – man 人 and Ebr – two 二. Man plus two is equal to man to manness. In other words, Ren is not concerned merely with the individual but with social behavior or moral character displayed in a public situation*”.³⁶ Given that part of it involves the notion of man’s social behavior, there is no doubt that the Ren 仁 could lead man’s behavior into the community or society; thus, developing his/her moral character. Furthermore, other scholars have other translations for the word Ren 仁: James Legge translates it as “*Benevolence*” while Arthur Waley has it as *goodness*. Still some other scholars render the term as “*Human heartedness*”, “*Compassion*”, “*Pity*”, “*Love*”, “*Virtue*”, “*Virtue of virtues*”, “*Supreme Goodness*”.³⁷ But the most interesting translation that can highlight its social and relational dimension is that of Alfredo Co, that he would like to suggest that it is the “*Consciousness-of-human-others. – a man becoming morally aware of the fact that he is not alone.*”³⁸ This translation completely highlights Ren 仁 as having the mark and quality of man’s social existence and dimension, and most importantly is the concept of ethics and morality.

Since the concept of Ren 仁 takes the entirety of Confucian philosophy, then it is not surprising that this concept appears more than a hundred times in the *Lun Yü* 论语³⁹ or Analects, Confucius’ primordial work.⁴⁰ Yet, it should be noted that *Kong Zi* did not expose a precise definition of this concept in the Analects, it was through his aphorisms and perplexing statements that *Kong Zi* would allow his disciples to think for themselves and reflect on their human condition. This was the elusiveness of *Kong Zi*; however, it is vivid in the *Lun Yü* that he offered different interpretations of the concept of Ren 仁, despite being indirect. First and foremost, *Kong Zi* interpreted it as a guide or compass in living one’s life, an ideal that should be subscribed in order to have a well-lived life. True enough, in order for man to realize that the Ren 仁 should be an ideal for life, man must first have the conviction for learning and education: “*When it comes to acquiring to perfect virtue (Ren), a man should not defer even to his own teacher.*”⁴¹ This should be made firm in man first before he embarks in a journey with Ren 仁 as his guide. Oftentimes, man must be consistent in following this compass that would lead him to a well-lived life. The Ren 仁 should be seen with constancy, that even in times of great hardship and trials, man must not compromise Ren in exchange of a futile rest which is not virtuous. For *Kong Zi*, the answer is Ren 仁 whenever the question concerning how man should live one’s life perfectly is raised. Trials and difficulties may be inevitable in one’s life journey, but this should lead us to greatness:

“It is man that can make the Way great; not the Way that can make man great.”⁴²

³⁶ Paul Strathern, *The Essential Confucius* (London: Virgin Books Ltd., 2002); 10

³⁷ Alfredo Co, *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009); 112

³⁸ Alfredo Co, *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co*; 112

³⁹ This work contains the primary teachings of Confucius that was written by his disciples and followers

⁴⁰ Joseph Wu, *Great Thinkers of the Eastern World: The Major Thinkers and Philosophical and Religious Classics of China, India, Japan, Korea, and the World of Islam* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995); 5

⁴¹ Analects (15:35) (Arthur Waley’s Translation)

⁴² Analects (15:28) (Arthur Waley’s Translation)

This doctrine of a compass for life is a solid foundation on how *Kong Zi* also interpreted the Ren 仁 as a moral imperative and a basis for a good politics as well. In its ethical/moral interpretation, the existence of the other human being is deemed significant for the development of man's moral character. Ren 仁 should make man conscious that his actions have direct effects and consequences for other human beings. This consciousness for the existence of the human-other should always be coupled with love, benevolence and humanness, since the human-other is also constitutive of humanity in the same way that ourselves make up for that humanity. This humanity that we are part would always be with us: "Is humanity something remote, If I want to be humane, behold, humanity has arrived."⁴³ Man should not feel the burden in being conscious for the existence of the human-other since all men have the task of doing the same, uniting in times of distress and success:

"Without humanity a man cannot long endure adversity, nor can he long enjoy prosperity. The humane rest in humanity; the wise find it beneficial."⁴⁴

Similarly, man as a ruler should be ruled with Ren 仁, in order to govern properly over his jurisdiction. This political dimension of the Ren 仁 has not so much to do in terms of how people should obey the commands and policies of the sovereign, instead it all lies in the ruler himself. The ruler should be virtuous enough to ensure uncompromising command and order. "The Master said: 'He who exercises government by means of virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn toward it.'"⁴⁵ If the ruler sees that the virtue of Ren 仁 is an ideal that allows one to give himself to the human-other through service, then this would constitute a peculiar moral character that would impel his people to follow his government. Indeed, the virtue of being right as emanated from Ren 仁 should always start in the realization of the individual ruler.

"Chi K'ang Tzu asked about government. Kong Zi said: 'To govern (Zheng) is to set things right (Zheng).' If you begin by setting yourself right, who will dare to deviate from the right?"⁴⁶

In addition, Co claimed that this concept of *Kong Zi* has two dimensions, and this is referred to as the universal and particular. The universal dimension is directed as a principle of human action being performed by man himself, to realize his fullest capacities. In its particular sense, it is used as the principle of moral justification, that can be interpreted as the main principle as to which the actions performed are to be hailed as moral justifiers especially in the society.⁴⁷ In connection with this, combining the two shall generate man's first moral awakening⁴⁸. It is in this awakening that man does truly sees himself as a moral individual, realizing his moral capability to shape and sustain morality as part of his integral human development. Now this concept of Ren 仁, in order to be fully concrete

⁴³ Analects (7:29) (Arthur Waley's Translation)

⁴⁴ Analects (4:2) (Arthur Waley's Translation)

⁴⁵ Analects (2:1) (James Legge Translation)

⁴⁶ Analects (12:17) (Arthur Waley's Translation)

⁴⁷ Alfredo Co, *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009); 112

⁴⁸ Alfredo Co, *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co*; 112

must breed two concrete forms that shall justify its underlying unity. This is then referred to as the *Zhong* 忠 and the *Shu* 恕. This has reference to the Golden Rule of *Kong Zi* in which it writes “*Do unto other what you wish others to do unto you and its counterpart Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you.*”⁴⁹ Thus, the *Zhong* represents the positive sense of doing unto others what is deemed to be right and the *Shu* shall represent the negative sense by which Do not do unto others what can be deemed as something evil. In a general sense, the *Zhong* 忠 can be transcribed into moral injunction while the *Shu* 恕 can be transcribed into moral refrain. Therefore, the whole of *Ren* 仁 signifies in its entirety the concept of morality as embedded in man himself, and it is through man that this morality can be achieved, that shall eventually make man realize himself as part of his moral awakening; thus, this shall permeate the whole society.

The concept of *Ren* 仁 being a particular virtue implies that the concept of benevolence and love must be made use in order for man to realize this dynamic dimension, becoming conscious of the other and this concretely translates into the action of love. Thus, Ang reminds us that “*Without the others, the self is incomplete and unfulfilled. Similarly, without the consideration of others, the concept of Ren self-destructs and ceases to exist.*”⁵⁰ On other hand, *Ren* 仁 becoming a general virtue is all encompassing, and this exemplifies its attunement to the highest and most ideal moral principle. It covers all virtuous behaviors, inasmuch as man is conscious enough that his actions towards the human other is deemed to be virtuous.⁵¹

The other implications of *Ren* 仁 could include its being the Innate Moral Principle, and its complementary Ethical Ideal. The concept of *Ren* has the mark of an Innate moral principle, and Ang suggests that:

“Therefore, every person must, in his own nature, look for and nurture his instincts for goodness and place himself in harmony with the *Dao*”⁵²

The innate moral principle in consonance with the *Dao* is a sheer concept in Taoism⁵³, the Confucians however understand it as representing harmony, man’s actions must always lead to the consciousness of the *Dao* as the underlying unity of the world, and thus covers all the dimensions in the natural world. In this way, the *Ren* 仁 cannot just be an interior and personal one, it must exceed and cover the social dimension by the cultivation of the person’s character from without.⁵⁴ This is even complemented by the concept of *Ren* 仁 as an Ethical Ideal. *Ren* 仁 as having the ethical ideal implores the attainment of the *Jun Zi* or in Chinese Philosophy, this is regarded as becoming the

⁴⁹ Alfredo Co, Introduction - *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co*; 113

⁵⁰ Richard Ang, OP, *Between the Confucian Li and Ren: A Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2018); 93

⁵¹ This part of the section attributed to the Confucian *Ren* is condensed from the hermeneutical study of Fr. Richard Ang, OP

⁵² Richard Ang, *Between the Confucian Li and Ren: A Philosophical Hermeneutics*; 99

⁵³ In Taoism, the *Dao* has a metaphysical underpinning

⁵⁴ Leo Sherley-Price, *Confucius and Christ: A Christian Estimate of Confucius* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1951); 135-136

Confucian gentleman. The Ren 仁 must be a continuous search for what is ethical, and this ideal would allow man to perfect himself, and therefore attain the *Jun Zi*. Kong Zi has defined it as such:

“Kong Zi said: ‘The way of the gentleman is threefold. I myself have not been able to attain any of them. Being humane, he has no anxieties; being wise, he has no perplexities; being brave, he has no fear.’ Tzu Kung said: ‘But, Master, that is your own way.’”⁵⁵

David Jones also emphasized that this virtue of becoming a Confucian gentleman is not impossible: “*Becoming a Jun Zi in the moral sense may be a difficult task; nevertheless, it is not impossible. Attaining Ren is a real option for everyone and becoming a Jun Zi is a living option for everybody.*”⁵⁶

To conclude these multifarious facets of the concept of Ren 仁, it is better to end it with the consideration that Ren is a general practice, this part can be seen as a way of sustaining and maintaining the very core of Ren. This general practice is fully embodied through the concept of *Zhong* 忠 or moral injunction and the *Shu* 恕 as the moral refrain. Thus, Richard Ang argues that:

“Zhong and Shu are two sides of the same coin. The practical outcome of both the positive and the negative formulations differ little in importance. Both require that one should out one’s self in the other’s place and vice versa then decide what should be done or not be done. The negative formulation is conceivably to put more focus on putting the other in one’s place than putting one’s self in the other’s place, but the outcome is the same. Both formulations are however prone to be abused, if they are misinterpreted.”⁵⁷

IV. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WOJTYŁAN THEORY OF PARTICIPATION AND THE CONFUCIAN REN 仁⁵⁸

In this section, I shall highlight the main discussion of this paper, a comparative analysis between the elements of Wojtyła and *Kong Zi*, between the Theory of Participation and the Confucian Ren 仁, as two concepts that can eventually lead into an anthropological dialogue. It is not intended that the two elements be integrated, but only that the two be compared and contrasted so that there is an eminent discussion within East-West Comparative Philosophy.

I shall present three similarities and differences between the two concepts that shall aid and facilitate the ongoing dialogue in the entirety of the paper. The summary of the similarities of the two concepts are as follows: (1) Both concepts subscribe to the idea of man being a social being and having a relational dimension with the other, and this is an important concept in philosophical anthropology;

⁵⁵ Analects (14:30) (Arthur Waleys’ Translation)

⁵⁶ David Jones, “Teaching/Learning through Confucius: Navigating our Way through the Analects,” *Education about Asia*, Volume 5, Number 2 (Fall 2000); 5

⁵⁷ Richard Ang, OP, *Between the Confucian Li and Ren: A Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2018); 106

⁵⁸ It is significant to note here that this comparative analysis is only preliminary, a more comprehensive and wide discussion of the two elements could require another study. This is also stated as the limitations of the study

(2) The two elements also have an inherent moral and ethical components; (3) and lastly the two both have the society or the community as their direct ends.

1. In the first similarity, it is emphasized and considered a truism that the concept of Ren 仁 and the Theory of Participation has both the elements of man's relational and social dimension⁵⁹, since for the Theory of Participation, it is the consequence of the "existing and acting together-with-others"⁶⁰, and the concept of Ren 仁 highlights the "consciousness of the human others"⁶¹. Both have the presence of the "other", the "other" is a central concept of the social or relational dimension of man. The Theory of Participation and the Concept of Ren 仁, have its source in the social and relational aspects of the human person, and sees the other as having the oneness with the man or the "I", the I's relation to the Thou or the other, and the Thou that reflects also the I.
2. The second similarity is the inherent moral and ethical ideal of the two elements. On one hand, The Theory of Participation presupposes that communal acting could lead the *world of persons* towards the common good, since the good acts that is performed by the individual is a sign of fulfillment towards the common good. Although Wojtyła's analysis of participation stands at a pre-ethical level, its corollary concept of the common good and "neighbor" implies a moral and ethical disposition. On the other hand, the concept of Ren 仁 has the moral injunction and the moral refrain, represented by the *Zhong* 忠 and the *Shu* 恕. It is within these underlying elements that the concept of Ren is fully realized since the person must be awakened morally and ethically, and these two ideals is nothing but a central creed in the *Ru Jia* School, highlighting a high regard for personal and social ethics.
3. The third similarity which is both present in the two elements were the inescapable ends of the community and the society. The two concepts are undoubtedly being affected by the community or the society and thus, it effects the society and community. However, it should be noted that the community and the society are not the main sources of subjectivity or humanness, it is still the human person or man that should be the core. On one hand, the theory of Participation has this communal acting, that is the effect of participation acted upon by different persons. Thus, while sharing in the community of acting, the person still retains the personalistic value of the human action. On the other hand, the Confucian Ren 仁 is originally directed to the social sphere since man and the society must share in the oneness of striving for the betterment of humanity's social sphere; thus, attaining harmony and peace. In addition, this is a direct implication of the Chinese mode of thinking regarding the "Knowledge of the Practical Truth", the community or the society as practical basis to which the concept of Ren 仁 should direct itself and solidify the reality between man and the society.

However, despite the fact that the two have shared commonalities, it is also a truism that the two can be compared squarely, since both of them have varied distinctions and differences that still makes them unique in their certain locus. It is then argued that there are three main differences that

⁵⁹ For Wojtyła, this relational dimension of man is the concept of intersubjectivity for the West. While for Kong Zi, the humanness to the humanity can be considered as such

⁶⁰ Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979); 291

⁶¹ Alfredo Co, *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China – Across the Philosophical Silk Road. A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009); 112

can be found between the Confucian *Ren* 仁 and the Wojtylan Theory of Participation. The three corresponding differences are as follows: (1) The Theory of Participation have some mark of the Christian Vision of the Church towards the Human Person or even a mark of Catholic Philosophy⁶², while the Confucian *Ren* 仁 is a more civil or secular way of viewing the human being; (2) Some of the ethical ideals of the Theory of Participation are mostly pre-ethical or a condition before achieving the totality of ethicality while the Confucian *Ren* 仁 is already the actual phase where the moment you perform such things, you are already awakened morally and ethically that it is attuned to the highest moral standards; (3) Lastly, the two differ in terms of the source and the goals themselves, since at some point the Confucian *Ren* has its source in man's moral awakening while the Theory of Participation has its source in the personalistic value of the action. The goals of such are different as well, the Theory of Participation often leads to the common good, while the Confucian *Ren* has its end in 'becoming of the *Jun Zi*'⁶³ or the Confucian gentleman.

1. The first difference implies that the theory of participation of Wojtyla on the one hand, has some marks of the Christian Vision of the Church towards the Human Person, being influenced by the Aristotelian-Thomistic Tradition and being a cardinal, it is undeniable that his theory were influenced by such. Also, this theory of Wojtyla could be said to have the mark of Catholic Philosophy mainly because of his training and influences. On the other hand, the Confucian *Ren*, although conceived as a religion, maintains its civil or secular temperament especially on the *Ren* 仁. Its concept is highly focused on the civil or secular state, no tinge of religious inclinations or doctrinal manifestation that is imbued. In addition, *Kong Zi's* vision for the state to achieve perfect harmony is believed by many as the creed of the Confucian cult that many governments should follow.
2. The second difference has something to do with the potentiality and the actuality of ethicality. On one hand, Karol Wojtyla's Theory of Participation has to develop attitudes of fulfillment and these includes the authentic attitudes of solidarity and opposition or *creative opposition*. These two authentic attitudes as suggested by Wojtyla was a pre-ethical disposition before the actual ethicality per se. ⁶⁴ This means that what's more important first is to recognize the concept of solidarity and opposition as authentic attitudes before embarking into the performance of such attitude; thus, highlighting such potentiality. This can be anchored on the fact that man must know that he must exist first before performing such actions or discernment before the actual ethicality. On the other hand, the Confucian *Ren* has conviction in practicing the practical truth, this already emphasize the actuality of the ethical act, the *Ren* as manifested in the *Zhong* 忠 and *Shu* 恕 doesn't have any pre-ethical analysis, but it continues to proceed to ethicality inasmuch as there is moral awakening. This actuality of the concept of *Ren* is a justification that the philosophy of Kong Zi subscribes to the very idea of pure ethics, particularly Virtue Ethics.

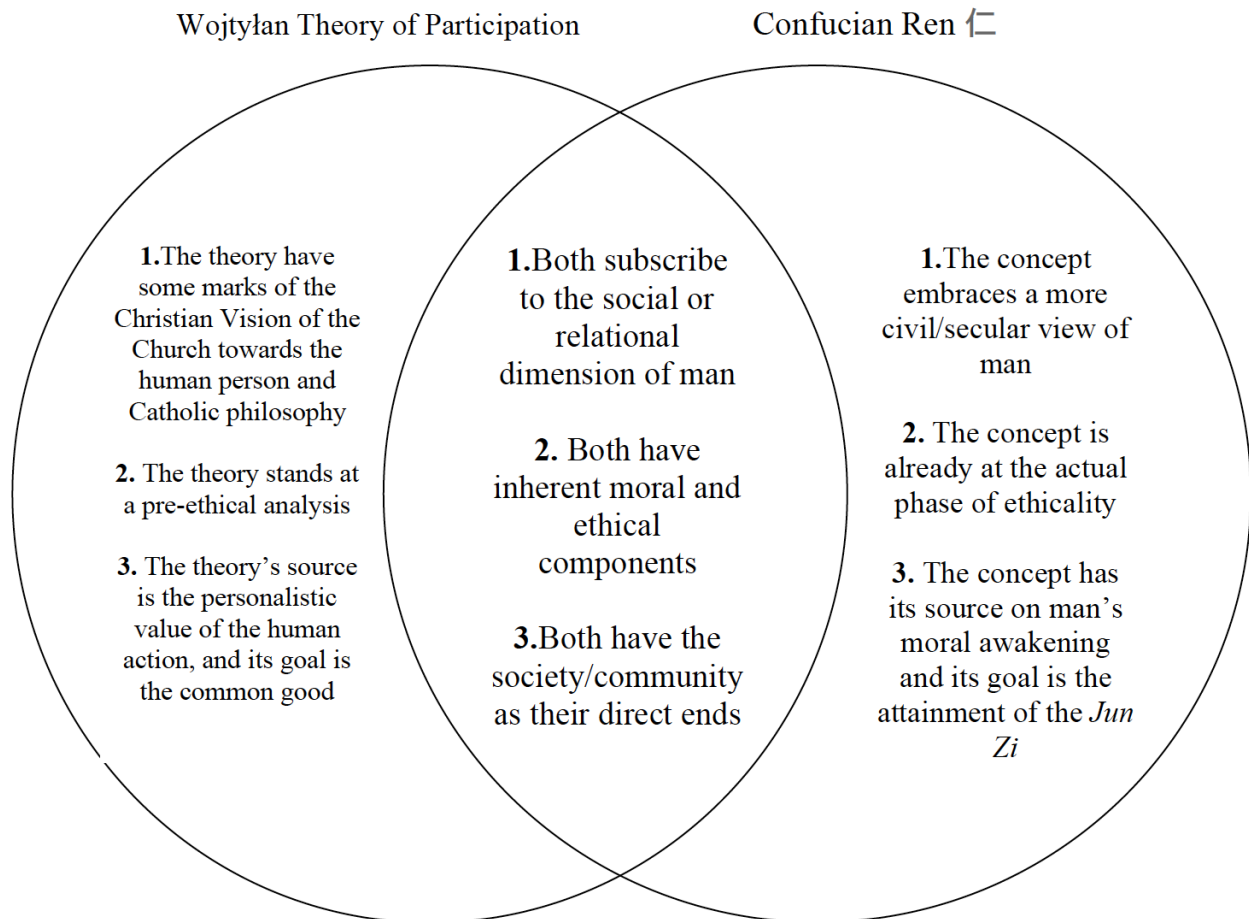
⁶² I do not propose here that the concept of Wojtyla is for Christians alone, what I intend to say is that some of the corollary aspects that constitutes his theory has Christian underpinnings (e.g. evangelical commandment of love, the concept of neighbor, etc.)

⁶³ David Jones, "Teaching/Learning through Confucius: Navigating our Way through the Analects," *Education about Asia*, Volume 5, Number 2 (Fall 2000); 5

⁶⁴ Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979); 283-284

3. The last difference is centered on the sources and goals of the two concepts. On one hand, Wojtyła's theory of participation has the personalistic value of the human action as its source and core and it is directed to the common good. This can mean also that participation is tantamount with human actions that also has its personalistic value, in which man realizes in performing such action. Given that this has its tendency on the Christian Vision of the Human Person and Catholic Philosophy, it is undoubtedly directed to the common good. On the other hand, although the Confucian thought is said to have the tinge of Christianity mainly because of its teachings of the *Zhong* 忠 and the *Shu* 恕 which also implies the Golden Mean, its sources solely rest on man's moral awakening to render *Ren* 仁 in its most perfect and fitting way. Accordingly, this moral awakening would eventually lead the person to the attainment of the *Jun Zi* or the Confucian gentleman. Hence, if the goal of participation is the common good in order to realize the personalistic value of the human action, the *Ren*'s goal is directed towards the attainment of the *Jun Zi*, to realize his becoming a genuine Confucian gentleman.

Below is a diagram highlighting the similarities and differences of the two elements:



V. CONCLUSION

Although the two concepts may have its own distinctiveness as peculiar to East and West, its implications could still give us some practical applications. The subject matter of love will always remain significant when discussing the two vital elements. For Wojtyła's participation, it has its evangelical commandment to love, a substantial notion in order for us to realize more of our task. In fact, Wojtyła would assert that participation in relation to other human being arises before each of us as a task.⁶⁵ Thus, this love in relation to participation should be viewed as a task that the person must undertake in response to the humanity of the other. For *Kong Zi*, love is also entailed in one of its translations, and since it is the embodiment of Confucian philosophy, then it should also embody the virtue of Yi 义 or duty. The concept of Ren especially when it is interpreted in terms of love must be man's duty to emulate at all times, in order to uplift this humanness towards the other.

In short, love as implied in both of the elements impels us to take on the duty or task of practicing it in our daily life. Participation moves us to unite with other people for a common cause, since we are motivated by love. Participation also gives us reasons to oppose something that would degrade our personhood, since we have love for ourselves. Becoming conscious of the human-other brings us to empathize and be of service to those at the peripheries, those being oppressed, and those who are greatly affected by pandemics, wars and natural disasters. This consciousness of the human-other should even go beyond by uplifting humanity in every step that man takes or even in decisions that man makes, since this process also permits man to awaken himself into moral excellence. Love, then is key in awakening ourselves that humanity will always be beside us or even in most unusual situations, and it should condition our actions in the realization that it is always aimed at the common good or that we embody a true and authentic man as a paragon of virtues.

In the case of Karol Wojtyła and *Kong Zi*, each of the distinctive concepts shall remain as the central core; personalistic value and moral awakening, but in a similar sense it is important to highlight the dialogue of task or duty that is completely relevant in philosophical anthropology. If love is to be treated as a form of task and duty, then in moments of triumphs and tribulations, humanity will always flourish in reference to Wojtyła and *Kong Zi*. Having this in mind, substantial ideas can be drawn from its encounter that would imply that the greatness of a person's reflection would eventually lead to ideas or views about himself in a general sense. One must understand that in the two horizons, there is only creation and not totally integration, which can be deemed irrelevant to the dialogue of task, duty and love between the two.

⁶⁵ Karol Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation?", in "Person and Community: Selected Essays" (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); 202-203

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