

WOJTYŁA
A COMMUNITY OF PERSONS

Arguably, Rorty would agree with Karol Wojtyła's view that participation in a community comes down to this feature of the human person thanks to which—by existing and acting “together with others” in a wide range of interpersonal and social relations—he is able to be himself and to fulfil himself.

However, in Wojtyła's opinion, human social life takes the form of a community which realises the common good not only in the objective dimension but primarily in the subjective dimension. Man as a person is a specific subject of social life, and his spiritual development requires a communal form of this life. Rorty would probably argue with this point, claiming that a community itself is a fundamental value and that we are unable to decide whether any spiritual basis for an individual's development exists at all.

In Rorty's opinion, an individual's development takes place in the dimension of the relation between "We" and "I." The "I" identifies itself with the "We" and shapes its ideas regarding the aims of its existence on the basis of the models of survival developed within a historical community.

Wojtyła, however, notices two basic meanings of participation in society based on interpersonal relations: "I"—"you" and "I"—"we."²² The first meaning is related to "participation in the humanity of other people."²³ Humanity is not an abstract idea of man but a unique personal "I," which most closely corresponds to the idea of a "neighbour." It is "humanity itself which is possessed by every 'other' man just as 'I' myself possess it."²⁴ Participation in "the humanity of every man" determines "the personalistic value in the community of being and acting."²⁵ Participation here means essential personalisation of man's relation to the other. When someone experiences the other as a person, he comes as close as possible to what constitutes his personal "I" as a unique and unrepeatable reality.²⁶

Such participation reveals man's capacity for spontaneous and positive opening towards others. However, the existence and action of a particular man together with others is a task which, as Wojtyła observes, needs a certain impulse. This impulse can arise from the evangelical commandment of love, from which directly follows that "participation in the very humanity of every man is the core of all participation."²⁷ According to Wojtyła, the commandment of love allows a community to be fully human, moreover, "if any human community impairs this system of reference, it dooms itself to a disappearance of the fullness of participation, to an abyss between person and community."²⁸ It can be noticed that both Wojtyła and Rorty emphasize the essential value

²² Karol Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation," in Wojtyła, *Person and Act and Related Essays*, trans. Grzegorz Ignatik (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 514–31.

²³ *Ibidem*, 520.

²⁴ Karol Wojtyła, "An Outline of the Theory of Participation," in Wojtyła, *Person and Act and Related Essays*, 409.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation," 521.

²⁷ Wojtyła, "An Outline of the Theory of Participation," 410.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 414.

of sensitivity to the other in the process of participation in a community and in its development, however, Wojtyła's considerations in this area seem more profound than Rorty's.

Participation, according to Wojtyła, is a disposition that makes a human being a person. However, man can renounce this disposition. He can act "together with others" without necessarily co-participating. As Wojtyła points out, by participating, man "co-acts" while performing some acts and realising himself in them. There are two dimensions of participation: an interpersonal one and a social one. Rorty's thought misses the former, although participation in the humanity of one's neighbour ("I"—"you") seems close to the notion of empathy and to the building of a community through emotional bonds. Yet, even though community is a fundamental category for Rorty, the idea of the participation in the common good ("we") is absent from his considerations.

Wojtyła emphasizes that participation is a specific constitutivum, an essential property of community, thanks to which a person and a community "adhere" to one another. Although man is a member of various communities within which he lives and acts with others, membership in these communities is not the same as participation. From the point of view of a person and his act, it is not only an "objective community of acting" that is important (he acts with others although he remains outside this community, he does not identify with its aims, he does not fulfil himself in common action), but also a "subjective community of acting" which is linked to the choice taken.

Wojtyła, with whom Rorty would certainly agree, states: "Man chooses what others choose or even when he chooses because others choose, seeing in this object of choice the value that is in some way homogeneous and his own. Self-determination is linked to this—and in the case of acting 'together with others,' self-determination includes and expresses participation."³¹ Here we can see the pragmatic sources of communal thinking shared by both philosophers.