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The Concept of Culture in the Lublin Metaphysical School and the Interpretation Thereof in the Thought of Karol Wojtyła

Koncepcja kultury w Lubelskiej Szkole Metafizycznej i jej interpretacja w myśli Karola Wojtyły

Abstract

The concept of culture is not often discussed in the field of metaphysical anthropology. Nonetheless it is of particular importance to the thought of both the Lublin School of Metaphysics and the thought of Karol Wojtyła. This work aims to build a bridge between these two philosophical positions, and thus define the similarities between them and the influence of the former on the position of the latter, specifically with regards to their views concerning culture. Analysis is made of texts which directly reference certain positions regarding culture, with particular terms being analyzed and compared. Of particular note, emphases is given to the place of “interpersonal relations” and “action” generally.

Key words: *Metaphysical Anthropology, Culture, Karol Wojtyła, Mieczysław Krąpiec, The Lublin Metaphysical School, Lublin Thomism.*

Abstrakt

Koncepcja kultury nie należy do często podejmowanych tematów w ramach antropologii metafizycznej. Stanowi jednak kwestię szczególnie istotną dla myśli zarówno Lubelskiej Szkoły Filozofii, jak i filozofii Karola Wojtyły.

Niniejszy artykuł ukazuje podobieństwa między wymienionymi stanowiskami filozoficznymi, a także wpływ Lubelskiej Szkoły Filozofii na myśl Karola Wojtyły, zwłaszcza w kontekście sposobu postrzegania kultury. Analizie poddane zostały teksty, które odnoszą się bezpośrednio do istoty kultury, jak również poszczególne pojęcia z tego zakresu. Nacisk został położony zwłaszcza na kwestię relacji interpersonalnych oraz działania w ogólności.

Słowa kluczowe: *antropologia metafizyczna, kultura, Karol Wojtyła, Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, Lubelska Szkoła Filozofii Metafizycznej, tomizm lubelski.*

Introduction

The concept of culture is of particular importance for the Lublin Metaphysical School. In fact, Lublin Thomism holds culture as a central point of interest for its metaphysical reflection, and does not shy away from applying the principles of metaphysics to analysis of the way human persons form and organize themselves. While this is somewhat well known, there is a certain aspect of this understanding that is under-investigated, this being the significant influence of the Lublin concept on culture upon the philosophy of one of its most famous students, Karol Wojtyła.

This work serves as a general introduction to the place of the Lublin concept of culture in Karol Wojtyła's philosophy of culture. It argues that Karol Wojtyła was well invested in Lublin Thomism, and used this thinking within his own system of philosophy. As such this investigation is split into four succeeding sections: *Culture in the Lublin Metaphysical School, Karol Wojtyła's Concept of Culture, Karol Wojtyła's Concept of Communal Action (Participation), and Communal Action as the Bridge between the Thought of Lublin and Wojtyła*. This division of work serves to summarize the cultural thought of Lublin and Wojtyła, and subsequently bring them together through the use of a concept that is familiar to both parties, communal action (*participation*).

The conclusion of this work provides a brief personal analysis of the aforementioned connection. As such, it provides a place for reflection and the development of an individual view of the presence of Lublin Thomism in the thought of Wojtyła. With this, it also creates a place in which recommendations for further investigation are made and expanded upon. These reflections concern the expansion of such research about Lublin Thomism into other Wojtyła-related fields, as well as possible further academic discussion.

Culture in the Lublin Metaphysical School

Culture as it stands in the Lublin Metaphysical school rests primarily in the thought of Mieczysław Krąpiec who himself wrote at length on this concept. Within his thought culture is seen primarily as “a relation and reflection upon the “I” and the “Thou” wherein the “Thou” is apprehended as another “I” or as a being in itself and for itself – as another person” (Krąpiec, 1983, p. 241). From this we can see that at the onset that there is a fundamental relationship between the individual and the other. This serves as a personalistic starting point wherein the human person, and particularly the other outside of the self, is recognized as “the same kind of personal being, a being in itself and for itself as an “I””. (Krąpiec, 1983, p. 241)

From here it is apparent that culture, in its nature, relates to the inherent relationship found between individual human persons. With this, culture is intrinsically metaphysical and related to man’s most fundamental nature and his necessary relation to other men. What emerges from this relation, even in the practical and sociological sense, ergo must relate to the identity of man as such and positively make this identify manifest.

Continuing in this trend, Krąpiec asserts that the aforementioned relationship rests on two specific aspects of man. The first being those moments which emerge “in the personal “I,” those moments that stand at the basis of interpersonal, as well as of general-communal relations, in the broadest sense of the word”. (Krąpiec, 1983, p. 239) Personal experience from this view opens the individual up to the other, and is the basis for the “manifestation of our psychic-personal living” (Krąpiec, 1983, p. 239) through the experience of other persons.

The second aspect upon which we can find the origins of this position on culture is the dynamism of the human person as that which “is the basis for collective living...which determine its social character and can become a foundation for establishing the relation of “person-community””. (Krąpiec, 1983, p. 248) This dynamism recognizes man as a “contingent being” (Krąpiec, 1983, p. 248) who possess a nearly infinite number of potentialities, with the actualization of his nature and of these potentialities resting both in man’s own action as well as “through the cooperation and help of other people”. (Krąpiec, 1983, p. 248) What can be seen from this inherent metaphysical dynamism is that culture, as the grounds for the communal acts of man, serves as the place in which one can fully develop and perfect their own personal life. (Krąpiec, 2012, pp. 89-90)

Krąpiec's *Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy* approaches culture from a different angle. This magnum opus states that "the intellectualization of nature is the essential feature of culture" (Krąpiec, 2005, p. 136)¹ within the context of the personal forms of human action which man uses to interiorize the world-reality which he finds himself placed in. Simply put, culture is the grounds in which man brings reality into himself and therefore transcends it through acts of love and knowledge as enabled by cultural practice. One can see that from this perspective, culture becomes the basis from which man acts to perfect himself and rise above the reality which he is placed in while not excluding, but rather including and relying upon, communal action with his fellow persons.

Culture stands in the Lublin metaphysical view as the grounds in which man determines his mode of communal action towards the other and himself for the actualization of his own internal potentialities and perfection of the self. In this way culture becomes the means by which man actualizes, and therefore transcends, himself and the world through action, both his own and those undertaken with other persons. Following this, it can be clearly defined that culture concerns the actions that man undertakes both himself individually, as well as those done through co-action with other persons. Culture is the action of one and the action of many, being the highest point by which the identity of the person emerges. Given that culture is of such primary importance in metaphysical anthropology, it should come as no surprise that Krąpiec was concerned with the investigation thereof, and that Wojtyła, himself concerned with the nature of man, would then look to this position for his own philosophical investigation. This is especially the case given that Wojtyła studied under Krąpiec during his formative years at the Catholic University of Lublin.

Karol Wojtyła's Concept of Culture

Continuing from the starting point of the Lublin Metaphysical School's view of culture, one can easily proceed to the concept of culture as presented in the thought of Karol Wojtyła, with his position reflecting that of Krąpiec. Generally, it can be said that the central point of Wojtyła's concept of culture is different from that of Krąpiec, but nonetheless reiterates many points posited by the former, and is itself concerned with the ultimate nature of man and his actualization and transcendence in the world. This is particularly the case with Wojtyła's placing of culture in the context of the *I-Thou*

¹"Stąd intelektualizacja natury stanowi istotną cechę k [kultury]." Translation my own.

relation and the position of cultural acts when discussing the relationship between the human soul and creative acts.

As for the basis of the place in which culture fits in the Wojtyłaan conception, we can refer back to Krapiec's *I-Thou* relation elaborated on previously in this work. Wojtyła takes this central point and reinterprets it, stating that culture reflects a fundamental *I-You* relationship which emerges from how "The tendency to fulfill one's self shows the self to be incomplete" (Wojtyła, 1979b, p. 284) and how "the personal subjectivity of man does not constitute a closed structure". (Wojtyła, 1979b, pp. 284-285) As such, it can be seen that cultural activity, while resting on the individual, is impossible in the strict context of the individual, and plays into how the nature of man necessitates action with others. This *I-You* communal and cultural activity engenders a specific new kind of relation which Wojtyła identifies, going beyond Krapiec's *I-Thou*, as the *We*. (Wojtyła, 1979b, p. 291)

The *We* as systematized by Wojtyła is not some sort of apotheosis of the *I-You* relation, but rather signifies the emergence of a "new social dimension" (Wojtyła, 1979b, p. 298) which identifies the plurality of individual persons acting together, "while pointing only indirectly to the persons belonging to that plurality". (Wojtyła, 1979b, p. 297) This *We*, in its recognition of the plurality of persons within a relation while not directly identifying them, provides a certain grounds for transcendence of the individual, and ergo a place wherein cultural acts which promote the higher value of an individual person may emerge. Naturally, Wojtyła identifies this as a social dimension, and while rejecting the strictly, individual-act based view of culture (a part of Krapiec's conception), stresses how the *We* relation is enriched by individual persons, necessitated by them and their acts, and thus endowed with cultural activity. Illustrating this, Wojtyła states that in marriage, an act of upmost inter-personal and cultural significance in the context of the common good of both the community and family which emerges from the marriage, the concerned partners are "not merely "one plus one," though they do not stop being "I" and "you" " (Wojtyła, 1979b, p. 298), and in fact the plural *We* of the marriage is strengthened by the *I-You* of the individual persons of the couple. This ultimately plays into the ultimate goals of cultural-social acts which "The ultimate and mature fruit of their realization is that the life of full value under the aspect of morality should become the lot of each society: a great society, such as a state, or a small one, such as a family". (Wojtyła, 2017, p. 187) To summarize, the foundation from which culture emerges is found in a community that ultimately reflects "a specific unity of the multiplicity". (Słomka, 2017, p. 55)

Continuing in this trend it is important to highlight that Wojtyła's emphasis that culture, in its direct and immediate manifestations, stems from man's inherent creativity, a creativity that comes from the "the contribution of human mind and will" (Wojtyła, 2016, p. 41) wherein one discovers "an external expression of the separateness of the human spirit, of the human essence, from the world of inferior beings, e.g., animals". (Wojtyła, 2016, p. 41) It can be seen then that this creative, culture producing aspect of man, no matter where it emerges from, is an inherently metaphysical and anthropological identity, with man's mind and will separating him from the rest of creation. As such man's transcendence and activity rely on this nature, making man a truly unique being in the world.

As can be seen, in many ways Wojtyła emulates the thought of Krąpiec on culture but brings it into new vistas and perspectives. For this philosopher-pope, issues regarding the multiplicity of persons in unity stand in greater importance than the direct relation of individuals found in the *I-Thou* position, and the acts which produce culture are inherently and intimately connected to the nature and identity of man as such. Nonetheless, we can see from where Wojtyła developed his conception, as the relations of persons are fundamental, transcendental, and bring about a certain mode of acting that enables the uniqueness of human culture. In a style typical of the philosophy found at the Catholic University of Lublin, disagreement disguises a more fundamental agreement. But here one can identify a missing and crucial part of this investigation: What exactly does Karol Wojtyła mean when stresses the term "action" in the discussion of culture?

Karol Wojtyła's Concept of Communal Action (Participation)

Of fundamental interest to Wojtyła's conception of culture are the participatory acts of man, with man's ability to participate and act *together with others* being the platform from which cultural actions emerge. This is natural as "The mark of the communal – or social – trait is essentially imprinted on human existence itself". (Wojtyła, 1979a, p. 262) For Wojtyła, it is impossible for any cultural, or any other act involving others, to escape this as,

"the dynamic correlation of the notion of "action" with that of "person" is also the basic and fundamental reality in all the multifarious actings that have a social, communal, or interhuman character. Actions, which man performs in all his different social involvements and as a member of different social groups or

communities, are essentially the actions of the person". (Wojtyła, 1979a, p. 263)

This is the case not only because cultural actions in the thought of Wojtyła are only possible in acts that are done with others towards the transcendence of the self and aimed at higher values, but also because the need for cultural acts within man is itself placed closely to the inherent need to act with others, thereby bringing man's identity and nature to the fore. It should come as no surprise that Wojtyła labels this as *participation*, and sees it as inherently essential to any proper description of man's relationship to culture or greater metaphysical anthropology.

But hiding behind all this, and in a way similar to positions presented earlier in this work, this *participation* does not take away from the value of the individual. In fact, *participation* and the cultural acts that it enables show that when man acts with others he "retains in this acting the **personalistic value of his own action** and at the same time shares in the realization and the results of communal acting". (Wojtyła, 1979a, p. 269)² *Participation*, with this being closely linked to cultural acts in the mind of Wojtyła, is not opposed to the person or subsume him into some sort of greater conglomerate, but rather promotes him in his deepest essence.

Communal Action as the Bridge Between the thought of Lublin and Wojtyła

From here it is easy to see the deep similarities between Mieczysław Krąpiec and Karol Wojtyła. This stems from their inherent interest in the action conducted between persons, and how this promotes the nature of individual persons. From this one can understand how the *I-Thou* of Krąpiec became the *I-You* of Wojtyła, with both philosophers stressing communal action and the necessity thereof in human life. For these thinkers, communal action serves as the mode by which human culture emerges, although how, in what way, the technical aspects of how this emergence is ordered, and the effects man can identify present some disagreement. Nonetheless culture is transcendent and essential in the moral and active development of man, as well as being arguably ordered towards the perfection of the individual person in both cases.

Ergo, this concept of *communal action* serves as the bridge between the thought of the philosophical school of Lublin and Wojtyła, particularly

²Emphasis my own.

within the discussion of culture. Without this, no comparison can be made and in fact culture becomes all but impossible, with human action becoming restricted and restrained to only the realm of the individual. But, and perhaps most importantly, in such a situation both philosophers would agree that an individual person ceases to truly be an individual person if he in no way relates or acts with other persons, with culture, to both reiterate and stress, again becoming impossible.

Conclusion

The place of culture in the philosophical thought of both the Lublin Philosophical School and that of Karol Wojtyła is of utmost importance for contemporary investigations into metaphysical anthropology. Culture is intimately connected to participation and inter-personal action and without such efforts, any investigation will fail to provide a complete picture of the nature of man. This focus would also allow for metaphysical investigations to begin to leave the confines of the individual person and begin investigation into the metaphysical relations of groups, communities, and their interpersonal actions, a metaphysical sociology if you will. This would also allow for more metaphysical investigations in other Wojtyła fields, including a metaphysical analysis of Wojtyła's system of ethics and *Theology of the Body*. Although, it should be noted that while metaphysical investigation of these and other fields is possible, investigating the connection of Wojtyła's thought to other disciplines may prove more intellectually fruitful than a strict investigation into his metaphysical background. While metaphysics is the root of this unique form of thought, we must not ignore the branches and fruit that have germinated.

The thought of both the Lublin Philosophical School and Karol Wojtyła, in their similarity and interconnectedness, will nonetheless prove invaluable in this undertaking, and provide a foundation from which later work can begin. As contemporary society continues to further itself from any *realistic* presentation of the human person, such discussion will become all the more valuable in confronting anthropological mistakes made in the "culture" at large. Realistic philosophers, and beyond this Christian philosophers, need to embrace such a realistic perspective of both the human person and culture in order to confront this and promote a true, complete, and effective image of man and who he is at the most fundamental of levels.

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