Introduction

Kerstin Schmidt & Joost van Loon

Climate change, the destruction of rainforests and biomass, the rapid collapse of biodiversity, the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the many ongoing violent conflicts and wars throughout the world are but a tip of the iceberg when considering the apocalyptic unravelling of planet earth in the 21st century. It is becoming increasingly difficult to provide convincing arguments against the assertion that we are doomed. In the face of this, academic writing on a relatively abstract concept such as "solidarity" may indeed seem somewhat futile. It is as if readers are being asked to completely bracket off the devastating reality of a planetary apocalypse in favour of indulging in comparatively frivolous ruminations about how the world could have been a better place if only …

However, what else can academics do? We are condemned to seek possibilities of linking analyses with speculations about how improvements could be made to human and non-human lives. This is the calling of the sciences and humanities since their inception, not only in the so called Age of Enlightenment in Europe, but long before it, in civilizations such as those of India, China, Egypt, Persia and ancient Greece. This work is a bit like that of the orchestra on the Titanic as it was sinking into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean: a band played on amidst the growing panic and chaos of a realization that the end is coming.

In the face of this planetary apocalyptic damnation, we decided to take a closer look at the concept of solidarity as it seems aptly fit to function as a last beacon of hope. As a concept that appears in both broad public as well as academic discourse, solidarity has been invoked, almost exclusively, to refer to something positive. Regardless of the substance, the act of showing solidarity is considered valuable. In the social sciences, solidarity can also be deployed more technically as a stand-in for "social bond". A well-known example here is the work of Emile Durkheim, who in his *Division of Labour*[1] argued that as industrial society unfolds, societal integration inevitably and increasingly depends on what he referred to as "organic solidarity" to compensate for the intensification of functional differentiation. He distinguished between organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity to contrast modern and pre-

1 Durkheim, Émile: *De la division du travail social*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1893.

modern modes of sociality. Whereas mechanical solidarity derives from "identities" related to similar interests and existential conditions and are therefore highly suitable for small scale kinship-based and tribal life forms, organic solidarity is the ability to abstract from concrete interests, related to immediate experiences, to develop a collective consciousness able to imagine a "greater good" that incorporates different interests and therefore potential conflicts.

However, although apparently more analytical and neutral, Durkheim's sociology does not question the benevolent nature of solidarity. Solidarity is implied as being a prerequisite for the survival of human collectives. In this sense, his use of the concept is very similar to its earlier deployment in the most pivotal text of the modern social teachings of the Catholic Church, *Rerum Novarum*, by the then Pope Leo XIII.[2] Here, the concept of solidarity functions as a political abstraction of the practice of "neighbourly love".[3] The idea of neighbours in an urbanized, industrial society is indeed based on the universal condition of the stranger, as famously deployed by sociologists such as Georg Simmel and later echoed by (among others) Zygmunt Bauman.[4]

When Émile Durkheim commenced his project of establishing Sociology as an independent academic discipline in France, it was exactly during the time that the Catholic Church had opened up the "social question" for an expansion of the Church into the realm of labour relations in industrialized countries. Slavery and colonial exploitation were largely absent from such discussions, as were questions surrounding gender relations. As many contributors to this edited collection have demonstrated (most notably Otoo, Earnshaw, Oldehus, Covi, Marchi and Gibson) those absences have had major repercussions for the way in which leading concepts of solidarity have also functioned as vehicles for securing privileges by means of excluding other voices. A continuously recurrent example of this is the false opposition between solidarity and freedom, which presupposes a notion of a sovereign individual, that by its very historical-material anchoring is the patriarchal bourgeois projection of white masculinity that working class men were invited to aspire to as a means of deflecting broader collective formations.

However, even in this more limited domain of class struggle, the political stakes were extremely high, as in many European countries as well as the USA there was a growing dissatisfaction with the rampant exploitation of the many by the few. Those

2 *Rerum novarum. Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Conditions of Labor*. https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

3 This conception reflects three of the five variants of solidarity as listed by Andreas Wittel and Götz Bachmann in this volume: cohesion, care and concern and directly opposes the two remaining ones: power and struggle.

4 Simmel, George: The stranger. In G. Simmel (Ed.). *On individuality and social forms*. Chicago University Press, 1973, 143–149. Bauman, Zygmunt: 'Modernity and Ambivalence' in M. Featherstone (ed.) *Global Culture*, London, Sage, 1990, 143–169.

adversely affected by socio-economic inequality started to organize themselves in trade unions and activist movements – which in some cases included broader alliances such as those with suffragettes and abolitionists – and posed a real threat to the status quo of bourgeois society as well as the hegemony of the nation state. *Rerum Novarum* should thus be understood as an attempt by the Church to strengthen its function as part of maintaining hegemonic nationalism (which strongly relied on the exploitation of women, children and those with non-white skin) as a new covenant regulating the "separation" of Church and State.

On the one hand, *Rerum Novarum* addressed "the few"; that is, those whose wealth is based on and reproduced by ownership of capital c.q. the means of production. They were confronted with a figure of Jesus Christ who had told a rich man that he should give all his possessions to the poor and follow him, to obtain salvation. Jesus was famously quoted as saying: "It is easier for a camel to crawl through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God".[5] Even if Jesus was actually stressing that it was impossible for a human being to obtain salvation without the grace of God, he was certainly not denying that wealth could become a major obstacle if one becomes attached to it.[6] A rich man had to become poor to become righteous.

On the other hand, *Rerum Novarum* addressed the many (but not everyone) and called upon them to be reasonable with their demands and loyal to their masters. They should be generally content with their plight and not politicize inequality as injustice. Instead, they should negotiate in good faith, taking into account the heavier burden that was allegedly placed on the shoulders of their masters. It is in this vein, that men and women (even if largely absent from the text) are called to sacrifice their bodies, their health, their autonomy, either in the family, on the cotton fields, the factory or in the army. It is always the many who are asked by representatives of the few to sacrifice their lives for the sake of "their" nation.

Hence, we can see two different modalities in which solidarity is being invoked (or as O'Connor in his contribution to this volume calls it "modal concepts of solidarity"): as a sacrifice of wealth for the sake of justice (either through charity or through taxation) and as a sacrifice of personal autonomy and even well-being for the sake of peace. At that time, this dual casting within *Rerum Novarum* provided the defenders of the national hegemon an excellent opportunity to build a bridge across the class divide where both interest groups[7] (might we still call them classes?) could meet each

5 Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25 and Luke 18:25. Apparently, this was such a remarkable and important event that three of the four gospels referred to it.

6 This is very similar in the teachings of Buddha (the Noble Eightfold Path) and resonates strongly with what Patrick O'Connor in his contribution refers to a "modal concept of solidarity", namely as an intelligible form-of –life.

7 It is again clear that the reduction of the problematic of solidarity to that of class struggle obfuscated issues related to gender and race. That is, the life forms propagated by *Rerum*

other somewhere in middle of that which had been presented as a win-win situation for more justice and more peace.

Durkheim was equally interested in sustaining the national hegemon, which he simply referred to as "society". His concern too was with the fragile order of industrial capitalism and all its undesirable side effects. By reducing (a selection of) the evils of industrial capitalism to mere moral deficiencies, *Rerum Novarum* provided a call to practicing solidarity as a means to obtain salvation. This was recognized by Durkheim while at the same time stripped of its apparent religious ethos. Durkheim forged an alliance between this modern religious doctrine and a series of other popular ideas of the late 19th century, in particular liberal humanism and evolutionary biology. Humanism, world religions and evolutionary biology have all informed these sociological reflections and have enabled Durkheim to develop his discipline as a "science of morals"[8] to become an alternative to the cold-hearted calculations of the homo economicus, the cynical opportunism of the Machiavellian homo politicus (including the sociobiology of Herbert Spencer) and the hysterical romanticism of nihilism. Indeed, solidarity had become the universal societal antidote against everything that threatened the allegedly moral embedding of the social order.

An imminent critique of *Rerum Novarum* starts with that which has been omitted from it, even though these omissions are still part of the very logical premise of the entire exercise. The absence of any sustained analysis of colonialism and patriarchy as part of the social question - that is the reduction of the social question to national issues of labour relations that exclude domestic labour and the labour involved in childbirth as well as the modes of economic exploitation that involved slave labour and forced labour – resulted in a subordination of the teachings of Christ to that of the interests on nationhood, which thus undermined the very catholic appeal of the encyclical.

Although not engaged in a theological analysis of the solidarity, Giovanna Covi – in her contribution to this edited collection – provides us which a more recognizably Christian conception of solidarity. She draws on a concept of mercy that is "cast outside a relationship of sovereignty", which empowers those who are excluded from the luxury of being able to show compassion or pity, as this presupposes the ability to exercise dominion over others. Following Covi, this means that mercy as a mode of solidarity does not reside with the dominant or with domination, but originates from something more universal: motherly love. For Catholics, motherly love is immediately associated with the Marian principles of Christian life forms. By being predominantly concerned with the Petrine principles of the Church, *Rerum*

Novarum under the aegis of solidarity could easily coexist with various other forms of exploitation, for example within families or in colonial settings.

8 Durkheim, Émile: *Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique,* Paris, Payot, 1894.

Novarum cannot conceive of mercy as operating outside of sovereignty and is thus unable to avoid its link with guilt.

It is for this reason that in this volume Anna-Lena Oldehus cites bell hooks in a critique of White Feminism to deploy a universal notion of women's victimhood as the basis for its call for solidarity. Victimization still invokes notions of guilt, not merely in terms of inculpating others, but above all by exculpating the self. By assuming "the standpoint" of "the woman", White Feminism created its own version of the view from nowhere.[9] The comfortable "view from nowhere" which resembles the bourgeois ideal of novel-readership (and which Benedict Anderson explicitly referred to as a key aspect of the formation of nationalism[10]), is being challenged and disrupted (for example through the selective provocation of "white tears") by changes in modes of address, points of view and even the deployment of different languages. Instead of a unified victimhood, which is a white privilege, Oldehus stresses that "speaking through difference" is an asset for solidarity.

Decolonial and Feminist readings thus generate notions of solidarity that do not fit in with those of Durkheim or *Rerum Novarum*. It is no coincidence that such alternative modes of thought stem from literary criticism rather than the social or political sciences. It is one of the main challenges of this edited collection, that we have tried to assemble a truly interdisciplinary bricolage. This is not to dismiss the contributions from the more traditional "disciplines", that have had long track records of wrestling with the intersections between analytical and normative engagements with solidarity. They do have been for more open to engaging with modal concepts of solidarity that do not presuppose a notion of sovereign individuality and a view from nowhere. What all have in common, however, is the predicament that the planet is now at a critical existential limit and we are all in this together; that is, the need for solidarity may have become an actual occasion of existential necessity and therefore an ontological rather than a moral obligation.

It is perhaps wise, therefore, to start from the other side of the fence. One thing that is somewhat remarkable about the generic moral positivity associated with the term solidarity is the fading away of its actual efficacy in the neo liberal world order, especially since the collapse of the welfare state as an organizing principle of late capitalist society. For Neoliberals, solidarity had become too expensive. Being an offspring of the unholy trinity of the cold-hearted homo economicus (which has always been the anchor point of liberalism), the deceitful homo politicus of Machievellian power manipulations and the cynical nihilist of anarcho-fascist death cults,

9 Also see: Haraway, Donna: "Situated Knowledges: The Sciences Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No.3, p. 575–599, 1988.

10 Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined Communities, Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.

Neoliberalism unapologetically embraces what Albert O Hirschmann referred to as "interest-driven calculations" as opposed to passion-driven loyalty.[11]

Whereas Jörg Althammer, in his contribution, rightly points out that even the most radical notions of "free markets" require mutual trust and a willingness to cooperate, he also makes it clear that an economic ethics of solidarity requires structural, institutional settings that guarantee a symmetrical distribution of bargaining power as well as a reservation wage that is at least equal to "the costs of living". Exactly these two institutional pillars of a functional market economy have been undercut by the neoliberal onslaught.

In their contribution to this volume, Andreas Wittel and Götz Bachmann helpfully list five versions of solidarity, that each highlight a core concept: "cohesion, care (for the weak), power, struggle, and concern. All contributions to this volume – at least implicitly – invoke more than one of these concepts, but with different emphases. Whereas everyone acknowledges that solidarity implies cohesion, almost all also stress the need to consider care in relation to vulnerability as well asymmetrical power relations that establish certain privileges and entitlements as beyond inculpation. It is in relation to those, that the last two elements, struggle and concern, become inevitable. What is clear that struggle and concern make visible that solidarity can only be a genuine possibility, if it does not presuppose a view from nowhere, but instead are bound by interests.

Technologically enhanced by several generations of digital calculation machines, neoliberalism does not need to rely on mobilizing passions to secure its ability to establish a hegemonic world order, even if it often still did so (for example on terms of what Stuart Hall described with reference to the Thatcher governments in the UK as "authoritarian populism").[12] For a neoliberal technocratic hegemony, solidarity is at best a cheap asset and at worst an expensive liability.

We are now forty years into the neoliberal vortex and cracks are beginning to appear. Not only have the invisible costs in terms of ecological destruction become visible and noticeable and also start to have actual financial implications, we also face the mounting costs of collapsing finance systems, the fallout from warfare in terms of refugees as well as lasting global political instability, the costs of having to do politics with organized crime that managed to exploit the lack of regulation and global anarchy deliberately created by the neoliberal movement to increase the escape velocity of capital and – of course – the return of cynical, passionate interests that are directly poised against the universal aspirations of modern enlightenment. It is exactly at this intersection of global crises, that calls for more solidarity

11 Hirschmann, Albert O.: *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2004.

12 Hall, Stuart, Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clark J., and Roberts, B.: *Policing the Crisis, Mugging, the State and Law and Order,* London, McMillan Press, 1978.

are being invoked as the only remaining remedy against all ills we – especially when we identify as the hegemonic global north of western imperialism – have bestowed onto the entire planet. The cooling down of solidarity in the neo liberal world order has reached a point where the order is collapsing and perhaps in need of a great reset, at least this is what is often suggested by those who stir fear for a so-called "Great Reset".[13]

Therefore, in this edited collection, which is partly based on a lecture series under the title of *K-Universale: Zur Frage der Solidarität: Konzepte – Kontroversen – Perspektiven* (on the question of solidarity: concepts – controversies – perspectives) which (predominantly in a digital format) took place at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt between October 2020 and February 2021, we raised the question why in times of crisis (this was in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic before vaccination campaigns had been rolled out), there always seems to be an increased call for "more solidarity"?[14] This calling is often made without any qualification or critical reflection even if it is being offered as the only solution to the crises we currently face.

The objective of this edited collection is to develop a critical, multidisciplinary contextualization of the "big idea" of solidarity, which addresses both past and present controversies, socio-cultural and epistemic-political assumptions, and wider problems that a facile use of the concept of solidarity cannot cover up. It contains contributions from a wide range of academic disciplines and research fields, which makes clear that the concept of solidarity tends to shift shape according to the discursive formation it is being called up.

However, rather than emphasizing that the concept is fluid, we should consider an alternative exercise in social and political thought, including those invoked in cultural practices, namely one that considers solidarity as a *real abstraction*. Here, we are not implying some kind of magical mimesis, resonating with Marx' critique of capitalism, by contrast we would like to create space for the idea that solidarity is a

13 The phrase "the Great Reset" is the title of a programme developed by the World Economic Forum as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme, which is spear headed by Klaus Schwab, aims to establish a global economic recovery and stabilization by means of modes of global governance that are likely to marginalize or completely bypass democratically elected institutions. For this reason, it has been widely referenced as proof of the existence of a globalist conspiracy. See, Schwab, Klaus and Mallaret, Thierry: *Covid-19: The Great Reset*, Davos, World Economic Forum, 2020. It was first, however, coined as the title of a book published in the wake of the global finance crisis of 2007/2008 by Richard Florida: *The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity,* New York,Harper, 2010.

14 As Ellerich-Groppe et al. and Sarropoulos demonstrate in their contributions to this volume, there have also been calls for more "individual freedom", which logically imply "less solidarity" but here the quiet part was more often than not said out loud, which in itself underscores the general thesis.

product of the same real abstraction that Marx referred to as capital, based on the medium of money.[15] That is, rather than treating calls for more solidarity as a kind of antidote against the alleged dark side of modernity (i.e. neoliberalism), we need to maintain, that its link to that which is considered a major medium by which this dark side has reordered the world, is the same as the one that enables solidarity to spread with such relative ease in public as well as academic discourses.

In *Intellectual and Manual Labour* Alfred Sohn-Rethel proposes the outrageous thesis that western philosophy, and in particular German idealism, was enabled by the process of real abstraction set into motion by the capitalist mode of production.[16] The critical response to this swiftly pointed out the anachronism, that western philosophy is derived from Plato and was not completely reinvented by Kant.[17] However, Richard Seaford, among others, delivered a thoroughly historical account of the introduction of coinage in Greece, India and China, and the development of "talking about thinking" as a profession, which we now call philosophy.[18]

The late David Graeber provided an incredibly detailed analysis of debt, which both he and Seaford understand to be the foundation for the existence of money.[19] Debt – which is a reminder of the gift that was not really given as a gift[20] – is thus understood as the base of continued prehensions between entities that can never cancel each other out and are thus doomed to continue a seemingly endless sequence of actions and reactions that we can call "history". Money is the medium of all real abstraction, as it enables a comparison of values between entities that appear to be of completely different qualities. It also enabled philosophers to talk about (moral) values in the same way that economists talk about economic values.

In this volume, Giovanna Covi also makes a clear link between solidariy and debt by pointing out that solidarity is itself split in terms of *soldo* (money) and *soldato* (soldier, which references robustness) The phrase *in solidum obligari* means the obligation to pay one's debt in full. Here fullness as a quantity or measure and fullness as resistant matter fold onto each other. Hence, if we accept this premise, then we also must concur that when a concept of solidarity is invoked it can always be traced back

15 Marx, K.: *Das Kapital. Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie.* Erster Band, Hamburg 1867.

16 Sohn-Rethel, Alfred, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, Historical Materialism Book Series, volume 224, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2021, 22.

17 Engster, Frank and **S**chröder, Andreas: "Alfred Sohn-Rethel's große Idee und ihr Problem: Das Maß als blinder Fleck der Kapitalismuskritik", in Schlaudt, Oliver and Willman, Françoise Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899–1990). Controverses autour d'un philosophe matérialiste, *Recherches Germanique HS15, 2020, S.*157–176.

18 Seaford, Richard, Money and the Early Greek Mind: Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; Seaford, Richard, *The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India: A Historical Comparison*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

19 Graeber, David, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years,* New York, Melvillehouse, 2011.

20 Cf. Derrida, Jacques, *Given Time 1: Counterfeit Money* Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1991.

to some kind of debt. Implying both deficiency as well as guilt, debt is the invocation of accountability. Logically speaking, one can only declare solidarity if one is being held accountable for a debt already incurred. The mere fact that an act of solidarity is, by contrast, more often treated as an initial act, as a gift that is not a repayment, an expression of moral value rather than monetary value, this testifies to the necessity of denying that it is derived from real abstraction. We can see these tensions in relation to the legal obligation to pay taxes. To refer to paying taxes as an act of solidarity defies the idea of solidarity being a moral obligation, as tax evasion is a crime (unless you are very wealthy, then it is an option). However, referring to paying taxes as being held accountable to debt that has already been incurred, would not be widely considered as an act of solidarity either, although most people throughout history and across cultures do recognize the moral obligation to pay off debts. Real abstraction transforms debt into guilt and thereby opens the door to moral impositions.

Hence, by linking solidarity back to debt, we can also understand a bit better, why the term itself is being stretched between normativity in which solidarity is treated as substantial referent (for example in ideological, philosophical or theological discourses), and performativity in which solidarity is treated as a sign operating in various discursive practices which at the same time is demonstrated and enacted in concrete deeds. If we take Christianity as an example: Solidarity as one of the pillars of the social teachings of the Catholic Church (*Rerum Novarum*)[21] and can be linked to the notion of unconditional Love as *Agape* (*Deus Caritas Est*).[22] It figures as a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ. A concrete practice (that is, the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) becomes a concept that can then be deployed by someone else (for example in trade unions; civil rights movements; or as part of practices of intersectionality etc.) and retain its original value (that of the originary gift). As the suffering and crucifixion of Christ cannot be phrased as an act of solidarity, because there was no debt to pay off, we are all held accountable. It is from this accountability that solidarity emerges. Hence solidarity is real abstraction because it is generated as a value from concrete practices that were already framed as being derived from debt.

It is only by forgetting debt, that solidarity can be rephrased as sacrifice. For example, when during demonstrations of Black Lives Matter protests in Portland Oregon in 2020, African American protestors were being subjected to police brutality, white (mostly young) people joined them in acts of solidarity, often being at the front lines in attempts to reduce police violence. By putting their bodies on the line, one could say, they offered to sacrifice themselves, risking injuries and arrests for

21 Op. Cit.

22 *Deus Caritas Est. Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on Christian Love.* https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

the sake of the human rights of non-white Americans. When they too got beaten, many mothers joined the front lines, dressed in bright yellow t-shirts, forming another line of defence. When the police started to use tear gas to disperse the mothers, the husbands came to the front line, armed with leaf blowers to disperse the tear gas. These can all be referred to as acts of solidarity. However, without considering the initial debt, these acts then become themselves instigators of debt, as BLM protestors would now be in debt themselves to these white people who were protecting their rights to protest. It is for this reason that Sharon Dodua Otoo in her contribution, warns us against conceiving solidarity as a gift. It is not a primary act of sacrifice, but a secondary act of being held accountable for a debt already incurred. In the case of the BLM protests in Portland, this means that we have to understand all the acts of solidarity in the broader context of slavery and systemic racism.

The concept of decolonialism can equally be understood as an attempt to retrace historically, the real abstraction of solidarity, for example in relation to concepts such as "economic development", "civilization" or even "progress". Acts of solidarity with people who are still paying for the destruction of their livelihoods, for the appropriation of their agricultural lands, their rivers, their forests, their crops, their natural resources and so on, that do not acknowledge the debt that they are to be held accountable for, that refuse their accountability, are not acts of solidarity at all, but mere payments with counterfeit money. Therefore, the first step of decolonialization is being held accountable.

With this move, we can also readdress Hirschmann's opposition between passions and interests. Conceiving solidarity primarily in terms of passions (for European philosophy ultimately perhaps being modelled on the passion of Christ), for example as acts of loyalty or recognition, as modes of forging communal ties between groups that have been affected by similar forces (e.g. threats or misfortunes), as means to put the common good before individual desires, often invokes notions of kinship, for example brotherhood or sisterhood. Deleuze and Guattari referred to a major mode of sociality within the nomadic war machine as "agnatic solidarity". It is easy to see how this works in, for example, fraternities such as the Proud Boys or the Oath Keepers and their role in the failed coup d'état in the USA on January 6th 2021. They were expressing solidarity with the commander in chief, Donald Trump, as the adopted father of their tribes. They were even willing to lay down their lives for him or – as it turns out – spend long prison sentences on his behalf.

However, if we understand solidarity as being held accountable for a debt already incurred, then the opposition between passions and interests is not so clear cut. Loyalty and disloyalty both have a price. Passions have costs and benefits and can be invoked to serve particular interests. Debts can be invoked to demand acts of solidarity, both through bribery and through blackmail. All of a sudden, Hirschmann's

vocabulary[23] used to explain why corporations increasingly deploy financial incentives to retain their most valuable employees rather than rely on their loyalty, can be ripped from its reactionary ecology. Instead of talking about passions versus interests, we should follow Gabriel Tarde and deploy the concept of "passionate interests" as a central concern not just for political economy but also for cultural studies.[24] That is, if we consider, for example, the emphasis placed by Stuart Hall[25] on referring to Thatcherism as "authoritarian populism" it should not be separated from referring to Thatcherism as a "regime of accumulation".[26] Invoking passionate interests as a unifying concept for understanding political, economic, social and cultural practices also helps us understand why the treatment of neoliberalism (aka the Great Reset) and global fascism (aka the Great Awakening) as binary opposites is completely false.[27] Neoliberalism and Fascism have very similar genealogies.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze laid down the challenge to not use exclusive categories for analytical simplicity, but to treat them as modalitities that are not separated from intensities.[28] This should also be applied to the divide between passions and interests and that is exactly what the language of hot/cold is supposed to do. The intensity of the passions could be referred to as heat and this clearly can be seen in solidarity movements such as those of nationalism or religious fundamentalism. The intensity of interests is referred to as cold, in the sense of being able to shrug off any emotional attachment that does not directly serve the interests at stake, for example, assassins needs to be cold at heart to do their job. This is a major reason why drones are so brutally "effective" when it comes down to killing off their targets with large amounts of collateral damage (for example, family members of the target). Drones do not care; they have no emotional attachment to anything.

Despite being able to distinguish between hot and cold associations, the spectrum itself is that of "passionate interests". Solidarity should not be reduced to loyalty. Agnatic solidarity may be considered highly passionate because it invokes a sense of loyalty as a commitment beyond a reasonable threshold, for example in terms of a sacrifice of life and limbs, however, it does not preclude a sense of reciprocity that the other might do the same for you. Hence, once again, solidarity is best understood as a response to being held accountable for a debt already incurred.

---

23 Hirschmann, Albert O.: op cit.

24 Latour, Bruno, and Lépinay, Vinent Antonin, *The Science of Passionate Interests. An Introduction to Gabriel Tarde's Economic Anthropology.* Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2009.

25 Hall, Stuart: Op. cit.

26 Bonnett, Kevin, Bronley, Simon, Jessop, Bob, and Ling, Tom: Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations and Thatcherism, *New Left Review 147, P. 32–60, 1984.*

27 See Dugin, Alexander: *The Great Awakening versus the Great Reset*, Budapest, Arktos Media, 2021.This book has been hailed as the philosophical-anthropological justification for Putin's imperialism and interests in undermining western democracy.

28 Deleuze, Gilles: *Difference and Repetition*, London, Athlone, 1994.

Solidarity, however, can be more or less passion-driven and more or less interest-driven. It is for this reason that the concept of solidarity follows exactly the same trajectory as that of value: both are real abstractions of passionate interests.

This differentiation is necessary when considering the contributions to this edited collection. The contributions should not be read in terms of normative questions about what good (versus bad) solidarity looks like, but instead to the question of what solidarity may look like in different settings. Different disciplines focus on particular discursive practices; this causes conceptual discussions of solidarity to shift, inviting more abstraction to enable translations. The epistemological risk here is a fallacy of misplaced concreteness: treating an abstract, substantively normative notion of solidarity as if it were embodied in concrete uses of the term. Instead, we should reverse our approach: starting from concrete, material and embodied practices of solidarity to their real abstraction in ideological, religious, ethical and moral discursive formations. Solidarity as engaged in processes of real abstraction should still be scrutinized and explained.

Opening this volume, Sharon Dodua Otoo engages with both highly personal, autobiographical reflections and extracts from her own writings to invoke a concept of solidarity in relation to encounters across racial and ethnic boundaries, which are fundamentally structured by the tight intersections between (post-)colonialism and (industrial) capitalism, and how these have played out in concrete, everyday experiences. Far from being innocent and pure, these experiences testify to aforementioned issues of debt and renumeration. Being paid for writing about experiences of the marginalized is thus at the same time an affirmation of solidarity as being held accountable for a debt already incurred. This highlights that solidarity is inherently relational.

Wolfgang Benz pursues the question of solidarity not in terms of its conceptual anchoring, but instead in terms of its historical significance in relation to (responses to) practices of antisemitism endorsed by National Socialism during the time of the Third Reich. What is most remarkable in this detailed historical account is the way in which many more Germans joined and encouraged anti-Semitic practices, compared to the few that took a stance against them. That is to say, expressions of solidarity were framed in identity-political terms in an antagonistic relationship between "us" and "them". That is, the Christian foundation of solidarity as "love thy neighbour" as an acknowledgement of a common humanity, had been swept aside with a much more barbaric form of agnatic solidarity. This also shows the generic superficial quality of culturally entrenched "Christian values" in concrete practices of everyday life during times of crisis. Instead, we should focus on the actual performative aspects of solidarity: that is, solidarity is a practice.

Based on a cultural Marxist approach, Sarah Earnshaw considers two different documentaries dealing with aspects of intersections between gender and class, focusing on performative practices of solidarity in the face of systemic exploitation.

Deploying the concept of suture, she invites us to associate practices of solidarity with stitching together different "textures" which we might perhaps also consider in terms of "interests". By focusing on the central role of personal experiences of both practices of exploitation and of organizing resistance, we are enabled to understand in much greater detail the work involved in suture, and thus in making realizing solidarity. What stands out here is not an ideological grounding of practices of solidarity, but performative associations that are modulated by precarity and necessity.

Conceiving solidarity as "an activity premised on upholding and forsaking different priorities", Patrick O'Connor stresses its modal qualities as being "intelligible as a type of dispositional attitude" and necessarily contingent and thus at risk of failure. Focusing on three films by the Belgian Dardennes brothers, he explores different dimensions of "politics in ruins" in the margins of society. As with Sarah Earnshaw's concept of suture to highlight interdependency under conditions of gendered proletarianization, the precarity of existence has eroded any notion of broader political implications as all notions of the political have been subsumed by transactional relations of market forces. However solidarity beyond idealism is still possible; namely as "an expansion of the scope of mutual obligation, which requires a recognition of the modal being of character". One could perhaps simplify this modal concept of solidarity as the recognition that others are equally afflicted by the burdens of having to make decisions that are always-already indebted to the burden of possibility: "a recognition that the struggles to survive belong to everyone".

Whereas O'Connor focuses on cinematic modes of working through possibilities of practicing solidarity, Nicole Schneider provides an analysis of still images as potential modes of engaging solidarity. Her concrete orientation is on the role of different photographic images of the Black Lives Matter protests in the USA before 2020. By stressing the inevitable connections between photography and narrative practices, the imagery of protests "negotiate solidarity as they position their spectators in relation to the scenes depicted". Looking at and forming images is always-already a practice of (dis)engaging with others. For Schneider, the key issue is fixation as an issue of entanglement. The real challenge is whether this entanglement can become an enactment of solidarity and thereby unsettle "the visual dimensions of political structures in society".

From the previous chapters, we can already deduce that the focus on practices of solidarity inevitably draws our attention to their relationality and performativity. However, it becomes equally clear that such practices *take place* in concrete, actual occurrences. That is, they are always situated. In his contribution, Christian Preidel considers the spatial dimensions of practicing solidarity in relation to community building. Drawing on the German sociologist Martina Löw, he understands practices of solidarity as the social spatialization in terms of place-taking, place-making and building. Neighbourhoods are relatively concrete places of community building and the development of ethnic enclaves has clearly been detrimental to the forma-

tion of multi-ethnic sociabilities. Notions such as "communities of care" and "communities that care to listen" – which resonate with initiatives developed across the world within parishes and faith-related settings – may sound somewhat idealistic, Preidel argues however that they can be concretized through actual projects such as "urban gardening" as well as developing shared myths.

At first sight, this notion of community building may seem to completely contradict Jörg Althammer's emphasis on the role of market transactions in the development of solidarity. However, as soon as we strip the concept of solidarity from its idealist sugarcoating, we can see that Althammer understands it as an existential necessity. At the same time, by refusing to adopt the naïve position that an interests-driven *homo economicus* would by "himself" come to the rational conclusion that to act in solidarity provides the best results in terms of costs and benefits, Althammer stresses that there remains a need for an ethical-institutional embedding of market transactions and economic operations in terms of securing mutual trust and the willingness to cooperate.

Alongside geography and economics, sociology too has a specific interest in researching practices of solidarity. In their contribution, Niklas Ellerich-Groppe, Larissa Pfaller and Mark Schweda focus on the discursive constellations surrounding the asymmetrical distribution of risks and responsibilities during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in particular in relation to the practices of lockdown and quarantine that define this time as a "state of exception". As we have already seen, the Christian notion of neighbourly love is often invoked to justify the call for solidarity as an unconditional moral appeal. However, the state of exception during the Covid-19 Pandemic made it clear that such a notion does not prevent conflicting moral appeals. Liberal and communitarian notions of morality have quite different understandings of the importance of individual responsibility and the role of the state as the guardian of public interests. Therefore, the authors refer to transactions between duties and responsibilities in relation to different generational interests as a "moral economy", and refrain from imposing an all-encompassing conception of solidarity in favour of a modal, relational, performative and situated one.

Equally closely connected to the Covid-19 pandemic is the contribution by Andreas Sarropoulos, which concerns a medical-ethical analysis of solidarity in relation to issues surrounding organ transplantations and vaccinations. Starting from the accurate observation that in public discourse, calls for solidarity are often pitched against a respect for individual autonomy and personal self-determination, Sarropoulos invokes concepts such as duty, personal responsibility and social justice. His first example is that of organ donorship for medical transplantations. The central question here is how to balance the needs of potential donors – whose bodily autonomy cannot simply be overruled by an external necessity – and those of people for whom an organ transplantation is a matter of life and death, for whom a framework of a collective imposition of solidarity might be more beneficial. He

pleads for a specific moral invocation of obligation: namely the duty to collectively consider the issue of "minimal obligation" regarding the embedding of decisions regarding to making-available of organs for transplantation.[29] This also requires considering that necessity of protecting the right to bodily autonomy, hence the need to insist on a voluntary engagement as the inevitable foundation of practices of solidarity. In his second example, he considers moral implications of compulsory vaccinations against Corona viruses. Whereas this controversy is most often conceived as one between collective imposition and individual freedom, the alternative of voluntary vaccinations also implies a dilemma: in terms of risk-taking: vaccination-risks versus infection-risks. Sarropoulos, however, reminds us, that the bigger issue regarding collective responsibility involves the entire public health system, which be default implies everyone. During the pandemic, the public health systems around the world were on the brink of collapsing. Again, Sarropoulos is not advocating for a compromise between personal autonomy and collective responsibility. For him, solidarity – as a selfless act without expecting anything in return – clearly favours the recognition that a debt has already occurred. However, it still requires a personal recognition of that debt.

Debt also plays a significant role in Anna-Lena Oldehus' contribution to this volume. Focusing on Junot Diaz' widely acclaimed novel, *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, she echoes bell hooks' sustained attack on "white Feminism" which especially during the 1970s and 1980s had failed to acknowledge "the enemy within". By failing to acknowledge both racism and the political-economic forms of exploitation under capitalism, the feminist project of a unified sisterhood based on female solidarity was doomed to fail. Oldehus turns to Junot Diaz' writings to show what it means to expose whiteness, which she stresses is the first necessary step to lay the foundations of a more sustainable form of inclusive solidarity. She invokes the concept of white fragility to highlight that whiteness is often protected because it is made invisible, for example in terms of the anticipated readership of novels. By being able to assume the universal position of the anonymous, all knowing spectator, whose view from nowhere allows her to see and know everything without being held accountable, the call to solidarity becomes void and meaningless. Oldehus demonstrates how Diaz makes *whiteness* visible, both by means of the modes of address and content of the literary work as well as by challenging the bourgeois notions of the novel in terms of invoking stylistic disruptions. By mixing up narrator positions, modes of address, languages and writing styles, Diaz is constantly challenging

29 This "minimal obligation" echoes Isabelle Stenger's cosmopolitical maxim: "decisions must take place somehow in the presence of those who will bear their consequences", cited in Haraway, Donna: *Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin In The Cthulucene*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016, p.12.

the reader to question herself and thereby nurtures "a self-reflective capacity to talk *about* those differences".

There are close connections between these observations and Giovanna Covi's chapter on the poetics of merciful solidarity. Like other contributors, she takes on the false opposition between solidarity and freedom. This opposition is deeply embedded in both a liberal ideological assumption that pitches the individual against the collective as well as the patriarchal notion of sovereignty, from which compassion and pity are derived: an act of compassion or pity always presupposes a privileged entitlement of authority. Following Emmanuela Zurli, Covi anchors solidarity not in the sovereign individual act of endowment but instead in motherly love. She couples this with Bryan Stevenson's question that we should ask in the face of a call of mercy: "do we deserve to kill"? Covi thereby develops a concept of mercy that delivers a promise that a non-violent future is possible. This leads her to Judith Butler's concept of vulnerability as "relational and necessary for thinking resistance", which favours a notion of self-organization on the basis of reciprocal dependency. Deploying Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise: A Novel of Mary Ellen Pleasant*, Covi shows how these ideas might actual be through of more practically through the biography of a frontier African-American woman who became a capitalist-abolitionist and the mother of the civil rights movement in California.

Often invoked as a means to establish a "common sense of we", Lisa Marchi posits that solidarity should never be taken for granted, even in extreme cases such as opposing armed conflicts. She provides three examples of anti-war poetry (from Denise Lavertov, June Jordan and Etal Adnan) that by mobilizing "images, affects, grammars and a syntax" attempt to "defy the linguistic erosion produced by war but also give the readers and 'imagination of peace'". Here, solidarity is enabled to shows itself as a shared, entangled precariousness in a receptive, rather than spectatorial, perspective, as the latter implies a view form nowhere that bears no responsibility and cannot be held accountable for the debt that had already been incurred. This expresses the possibility enabled by poetic encounters, to move beyond grief allowing a longing for solidarity to emerge from a burst of imagination, interrupting the otherwise continuous flows of hatred-filled war propaganda.

Andreas Wittel and Götz-Bachmann explore the question whether new forms of solidarity are emerging in the digital economy? In order to do so, they focus on the much-hyped possibilities for developing a digital commons that could provide an alternative socio-economic infrastructure to the one controlled by neoliberal capitalism.[30] Through two examples of emergent digital commons – software commons

30 Yanis Varoufakis argues that to deploy the term capitalism to describe the political-economics of in the digital age is deceptive. As an alternative, he suggests that it is more accurate to describe the digital mode of production as "technofeudalism". See: Varoufakis, Yanis, 'Technofeudalism', *Yanis Varoufakis* (blog), accessed 2 August 2022, https://www.yanisv

(e.g. Open Source) and knowledge commons (e.g. Open Access) – they explore the extent to which these forms can foster sustainable modalities of solidarity. Their findings do not provide grounds for optimism. Instead of fostering any kind of broader common solidarity, the software commons, for example, merely promotes a protective solidarity of a particular profession: that of the programmers who are engaged in a struggle over securing favourable working conditions for themselves. Likewise, the knowledge commons has been flirting with various notions of solidarity in the face of corporate hegemony but has not been able to bypass the myths of accessing knowledge as liberating, without being able to provide any critical edge to what alternative this knowledge is supposed to offer. Rather than enabling modal forms of solidarity that could establish a viable alternative to neoliberal technofeudalism, actually existing initiatives to establish a digital commons are too entrenched in libertarian notions of post-political individual freedom.

In the final chapter in this volume, Helen Gibson provides a radical conception of solidarity based on the practice of midwifery during enslavement in the USA. Her starting point is the commodification of African women's bodies as the pinnacle of the slave trade and the US slavery system. Reproductive labour is thus to be understood as a practice of extraction and of value creation. This provides a necessary counterpart to analyses of slave capitalism that focus on commodification and productive labour performed African male bodies. Yet, at the same time, the focus on writing stories – which she calls "orienting stories" – around the figure of the "Granny Midwife" provides another angle that has a direct bearing on understanding the pivotal function of solidarity as a means of organizing resistance against the dehumanizing forces of colonial capitalism. Invoking the notion of self-care as a cornerstone of what Gibson refers to as "a Womanist practice of divinely inspired knowledge" and stands in direct opposition to the practices of commodification of African women's bodies as it enables these women to "endure the burdensome and bear what is unbearable". Here solidarity is understood as being a modality (Spirit) of caring that is more than love of self and love of community, disrupting both theological and eschatological accounts of justification. "In recognizing Spirit, granny midwives have always planted the seeds of love and of community".

Despite their vast interdisciplinary and thematic diversity, these contributions show that critically thinking through the concept of solidarity points to crucial weaknesses in most of the widely held assumptions that feed into it: (1) Solidarity is not the opposite of individual freedom. (2) Solidarity does not stem from the entitlement of a sovereign entity, but instead from being held accountable for a debt that

---

aroufakis.eu/category/technofeudalism/ and Varoufakis, Yanis and Morozov, Evgeny; 'Discussing Crypto, the Left & Technofeudalism with Evgeny Morozov', *Yanis Varoufakis* (blog), 23 April 2022, https://www.yanisvaroufakis.eu/2022/04/23/discussing-crypto-the-left-technofeudalism-with-evgeny-morozov-crypto-syllabus-long-interview/.

had already been incurred. (3) Solidarity is relational. (4) Solidarity is not a state of mind but a modality of dispositional praxis and thus performative. (5) Solidarity is situated and embodied and does not stem from a view from nowhere.

Cited Works

Anderson, Benedict: Imagined Communities, Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, London, Verso, 1983.

Bonnett, Kevin, Bronley, Simon, Jessop, Bob, and Ling, Tom: Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations and Thatcherism, New Left Review 147, P. 32–60, 1984.

Deleuze, Gilles: Difference and Repetition, London, Athlone, 1994.

Derrida, Jacques: Given Time 1: Counterfeit Money Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1991.

Deus Caritas Est. Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on Christian Love. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

Dugin, Alexander: The Great Awakening versus the Great Reset, Budapest, Arktos Media, 2021.

Durkheim, Émile: De la division du travail social, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1893.

Durkheim, Émile: Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique, Paris, Payot, 1894.

Engster, Frank and Schröder, Andreas: "Alfred Sohn-Rethel's große Idee und ihr Problem: Das Maß als blinder Fleck der Kapitalismuskritik", in Schlaudt, Oliver and Willman, Françoise: Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899–1990). Controverses autour d'un philosophe matérialiste, *Recherches Germanique HS15, 2020, S.*157–176.

Florida, Richard: The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity, New York, Harper, 2010.

Graeber, David: Debt: The First 5,000 Years, New York, Melvillehouse, 2011.

Hall, Stuart, Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clark J., and Roberts, B.: Policing the Crisis, Mugging, the State and Law and Order, London, McMillan Press, 1978.

Haraway, Donna: "Situated Knowledges: The Sciences Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", Feminist Studies, Vol. 14, No.3, p. 575–599, 1988.

Haraway, Donna: Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin In The Cthulucene, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016.

Hirschmann, Albert O.: Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2004.

Latour, Bruno, and Lépinay, Vinent Antonin: The Science of Passionate Interests. An Introduction to Gabriel Tarde's Economic Anthropology. Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2009.

Marx, Karl: Das Kapital. Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band, Hamburg 1867.

Rerum novarum. Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Conditions of Labor. https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

Schwab, Klaus and Mallaret, Thierry: Covid-19: The Great Reset, Davos, World Economic Forum, 2020.

Seaford, Richard: Money and the Early Greek Mind: Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Seaford, Richard: The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India: A Historical Comparison, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Simmel, George: The stranger. In G. Simmel (Ed.). *On individuality and social forms*. Chicago University Press, 1973, 143–149. Bauman, Zygmunt: 'Modernity and Ambivalence' in M. Featherstone (ed.) Global Culture, London, Sage, 1990, 143–169.

Sohn-Rethel, Alfred: Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology, Historical Materialism Book Series, volume 224, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2021.

Varoufakis, Yanis and Morozov, Evgeny: 'Discussing Crypto, the Left & Technofeudalism with Evgeny Morozov', Yanis Varoufakis (blog), 23 April 2022, https://www.yanisvaroufakis.eu/2022/04/23/discussing-crypto-the-left-technofeudalism-with-evgeny-morozov-crypto-syllabus-long-interview/.

Varoufakis, Yanis: 'Technofeudalism', Yanis Varoufakis (blog), accessed 2 August 2022, https://www.yanisvaroufakis.eu/category/technofeudalism/.