



European Journal of Social Theory  
16(4) 476–491

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DOI: 10.1177/1368431013479689

est.sagepub.com



# The grounds of solidarity: From liberty to loyalty

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## Abstract

Solidarity can be conceived in multiple ways. This article probes possible underlying ontological and normative assumptions of solidarity. In order to conceptually clarify the notion of solidarity, we distinguish between five types of solidarity. We suggest that solidarity is either grounded in the Enlightenment ideas of liberty, or a category of loyalty and allegiance. If the former is the case, solidarity can be justified on rational grounds. If the latter is the case, it is contingent on narratives of historical continuity and a non-rational sense of belonging. Moreover, we show that different types of solidarity can be derived from Anglo-Saxon and continental thought, which hints at different conceptions of community.

## Keywords

community, Enlightenment, ethics, liberty, nationalism, solidarity

Beginning with Émile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society*, scholarship has brought solidarity to prominence in different guises. Some recent works suggest that it is a necessary underpinning for social welfare regimes (Houtepen and Ter Meulen, 2000), public discourse (Habermas, 1990), or the functioning of democratic institutions (Putnam, 1994). Others propose that solidarity is the precondition for global democracy (Brunkhorst, 2002) or successful European integration (Stevenson, 2006; White, 2011). Still others point to the exclusionary power of solidarity if evoked in terms of allegiance

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to a particular nation, ethnicity or religion (Betz and Johnson, 2004). At the heart of such academic enterprises is the idea that social bonds matter, and that we need to cultivate them in a desirable fashion. At the same time, it seems that solidarity is evoked as a practical concept; a fait social that is widely intelligible and needs little serious theoretical scrutiny. Very rarely do scholars explore the grounds of solidarity.

This is so perhaps because of solidarity's ubiquity in twentieth-century political life. One might first remember the workers' movements in general and Poland's *Solidarność* movement in particular – a trade union movement that paved the road for Poland's democratization during the Cold War. Yet solidarity recurs in political speech throughout the political spectrum. The current financial crisis has proved its persisting significance as a proxy concept for desirable collective action. Recently, German Chancellor Angela Merkel urged European leaders to foster a 'new form of solidarity'<sup>1</sup> by establishing a new fund to finance projects in struggling countries. While the normative orientation of *Solidarność*, which was shaped by the Catholic Church and the secular philosophy of Leszek Kolakowski, is very likely to differ substantially from Merkel's 'solidarity of economic support', what all such conceptions seem to have in common is the premise that solidarity is the 'cement' (Bayertz, 1998: 11), which holds groups of people together. Solidarity, as its etymology indicates, is assumed to solidify social bonds.

These speculations are unsatisfying for the social theorist in as much as the appearance of solidarity in such multiple political and intellectual loci indicates that it may be more than a synonym for merely 'acting with others' (Kolers, 2011: 1). It seems indeed probable that solidarity is always linked with specific ontological and normative assumptions. As a symptom of solidarity's intuitiveness, however, these grounds appear obfuscated. Theoretical and political justifications of solidarity are commonly withheld, while we are at once constantly being assured that more solidarity is desirable. Solidarity, Wilde (2007: 171) suggests, appears to be confined to the 'realm of rhetoric'. This is precisely why we should probe its grounds. After all, if solidarity can fulfill such crucial functions as strengthening democracy, facilitating European integration, and stabilizing Europe in times of crisis, what normative and practical ideals underpin the concept itself? Do we have to presuppose human sociability for a workable ideal of solidarity? And can we think solidarity without the pitfall of excluding those who do not belong to a specified community?

As will become clear, a range of different ways of thinking solidarity can be found. If Brunkhorst's (2002) conceptual history of solidarity is any indication, then solidarity, like other recurrent modern political concepts such as freedom, democracy, sovereignty, etc. can be grounded in at least two distinctively different ways. The first is in terms of solidarity as a self-standing concept which can be justified on rational-philosophical grounds, such as liberal deontological theories (Juul, 2010). Such interpretations of solidarity, argues Brunkhorst, build on the break with religious metaphysics that was initiated in the name of human liberty by the Enlightenment. A second way of thinking about solidarity is heavily corroborated by metaphysics. In line with Schmittean 'Political Theology', all modern concepts are accordingly 'secularized theological concepts' (Schmitt, [1922] 2009: 43). Metaphysics is seen as the 'ethical substance' (*sittliche Substanz*) (Brunkhorst, 2009: 95) from which modern concepts cannot be disconnected.

Brunkhorst, for that matter, makes his case forcefully that solidarity's 'ethical substance' consists of the biblical concepts of brotherhood and *caritas*, which echo a 'sacralization' (Joas, 2011) of collective action that can be extended to nations, ethnicities, or political ideologies.

If this reasoning is secure, it seems to follow that solidarity oscillates between Enlightenment ideas of liberty and metaphysical ideas of loyalty. Liberty chimes with freedom from unjustifiable obligations, relations of subordination, and individual reason. Loyalty, by contrast, implies faithfulness, perceived duties, or restraint from questioning certain normative orders. Departing from this basic distinction, it is the purpose of this article to advance a set of ideal-typical conceptions of solidarity. Other than Brunkhorst's historically oriented effort, its focus is theoretical. In what follows, we explore possible sources of solidarity in different intellectual and political traditions of modernity. We suggest that there are two meta-categories of solidarity; namely, (1) Enlightenment solidarity, which is grounded in notions of liberty; and (2) *counter-Enlightenment* solidarity, which constrains liberty in the name of loyalty.

The argument proceeds as follows. Since (1) Enlightenment solidarity is grounded in liberty (Wagner, 2007), it is necessary to begin by specifying conceptions of liberty. Borrowing from Honneth (2011) and Neuhouser (2000), we distinguish between three forms of liberty in different philosophical traditions of the Enlightenment. Negative liberty is most prevalent in liberal-theoretical frameworks of the Anglo-Saxon type; social liberty represents a version of liberty peculiar to a continental tradition of thinking; and reflexive liberty is found in different forms in both of these spheres.

Having established these grounds of Enlightenment solidarity, we go on to propose that four different types of Enlightenment solidarity can be inferred from these notions of liberty. Negative liberty corresponds to: (1) a self-centered solidarity, understood as a mere contractual agreement to secure individual rights on a legal-institutional basis. Reflexive liberty corresponds to reflexive solidarity, which grounds solidarity in either (2) passion or (3) reason; and social liberty entails a concept of a (4) recognitive solidarity with strong intersubjective bonds.

The next section develops the concept of (2) counter-Enlightenment solidarity, understood as loyalty to a specific ethnic, national, religious, etc. group. Unlike Enlightenment solidarity, less, or even no importance at all is ascribed to liberty, or reason. Rather, solidarity as loyalty appeals to primordial allegiances and derives obligations from them. By invoking myths of nationhood, race, or religion, it establishes an us vs. them dichotomy, which in turn guides individual decisions and replaces reflection. Imperatives for action are justified on the ground of a metaphysical sense of belonging.

Finally, we present a double conclusion. First, we argue that there exists a continental divide within Enlightenment types of solidarity, where the former two conceptions (1, and 2) follow a more Anglo-Saxon line of thought, while the latter two (3 and 4) are grounded in philosophical ideas more dominant in continental traditions. Second, we highlight that the established ideal-types of solidarity bear different ideas of community. We suggest that our reading of solidarity provides the means for uncovering underlying normative assumptions in political understandings of community. This is why scrutinizing the grounds of solidarity matters.

## From liberty to an ‘Enlightenment solidarity’

Enlightenment solidarity is based on the idea of liberty. To prepare the ground for the argument to follow, let us begin by considering three different conceptions of liberty in turn, following a three-tier typology we borrow from Honneth (2011) and Neuhauser (2000), consisting of negative, reflexive and social liberty.

We begin with negative liberty, a term coined by Isaiah Berlin in his classic essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* ([1958] 2002). Negative liberty, in its most simple definition, means being free from interference by others. Conceptions of negative liberty emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Most prominently, it is exposed in the thought of Thomas Hobbes. For Hobbes ([1651] 1996: 146), liberty is always liberty from external constraints – liberty to pursue individual interests without external interference. In practice, negative liberty has to be secured by the rule of law, enforced by an absolute sovereign with the threat of coercion. As is well known, every individual becomes by means of a collective agreement – a social contract that is signed in fear of a violent death in Hobbes’s state of nature – part of such sovereign state. This contractual aspect reflects the legal-institutionalized foundation of human coexistence in Hobbes’s political thought. Individual liberty is thus secured by the institution of law.

Historically speaking, the Hobbesian idea of negative liberty emerged at the time of the English Civil War of 1642–1651. Challenging the absolute reign of Charles I, Parliamentarians such as Henry Parker then argued that the Houses of Parliament as representatives of the English people should have supreme legal power. The Royalists, by contrast, insisted on the God-given legitimacy of Charles’s reign (Skinner, 1998: 1–3). Hobbes’s political theory was driven by royalist ambitions: he was convinced that absolutism was the best way of organizing the state (Skinner, 1998, 2008: esp. Chapter 3). Therefore he sought to counteract the republican ambitions of the Parliamentarians with his doctrine of negative liberty which emphasized the individual over the collective. This was a clear statement against collective democratic self-rule, e.g. in the form of partisanship (Ball, 1989). In the same vein, Hobbes also opposed classical notions of civil liberty found in Roman legal and moral thought. Thus, while hanging on to absolutist rule, he also broke decisively with many currents of pre-Enlightenment thought (Skinner, 1998: 10–11). It will become clear below that Hobbes’s idea of liberty leads to a very weak and individual-centered form of solidarity. Perhaps paradoxically, it implies acting with others through acting for oneself.

Unlike negative liberty, which in part signifies the inception of philosophical modernity, reflexive liberty does not constitute such a stark discontinuity with pre-Enlightenment ideas. However, its roots are eminently philosophical and not permeated by religious metaphysics. The principle that freedom is contingent upon making one’s own decisions on the basis of free will in fact emerged in Greek philosophy long before the Enlightenment. Modern thinkers, such as Hume, Rousseau, or Kant, picked up on this understanding of reflexivity. Freedom becomes conceived as the possibility to follow one’s own intentions, which are shaped by emotions and/or reason.

Let us now look more closely at the perspectives of Hume and Kant to illustrate the notion of reflexive liberty, and give an indication of how it connects to solidarity. The key point of reference is the moral philosophy of both authors. Both Kant and Hume

agree that free will is essentially a freedom of action, while the will itself is given. And both authors forcefully argue that moral standards of action cannot be derived from experience (Hume, [1739] 2006: Book II; Kant, [1785] 1968: 7–102). In fact, they hold that passion and/or reason are both necessary elements of any moral consideration, which in turn may guide individual actions.

Hume's and Kant's views diverge here. While for Hume reason can and should inform actions, he grants emotions priority over reason. This is so because he conceives the willingness to let one's actions be guided by reasonable arguments as essentially emotional. Since for Hume passion eventually guides and delimits reason, moral standards may also be validly grounded in emotional conditions. Acting with others, as will be developed below, can thus be acting in sympathy with others.

In Kantian deontology, by contrast, there is little room for emotions as Hume conceives them. Man, Kant argues forcefully, can make autonomous judgments on the grounds of reason, i.e. we have rational wills. This is the kind of break with the 'religious heteronomy' that Brunkhorst (2009: 94) had in mind. We are not slaves to our passions, as Hume suggests, or to the will of others. As a consequence, having rational wills requires that binding moral standards must be rational, too (a categorical imperative). The individual agent, argues Kant, must rationally enquire whether he would wish his maxim of action to become a universal law of nature that binds all rational agents (Kant, [1785] 1968: 7–102). By universalizing the standards of morally permissible action, such a standpoint implies at least acting with others in mind.

The conception of liberty we shall, following Neuhausser (2000: 5ff), call social liberty originates in the thought of G.W.F. Hegel, who in his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* ([1820] 1970: 1–32), unfolds a double critique. First, he reasons that the pitfall of negative liberty is that it ignores whether the content of action is free. While negative liberty guarantees that an agent is able to pursue his rational interests without interference from others, his interests may themselves be but an expression of enslavement. Second, Hegel criticizes reflexive liberty on the grounds that while the content of action might be free, it is confronted with restrictions imposed by a heteronomous objective reality. With the introduction of social liberty, Hegel seeks to complement an 'objective' dimension of liberty secured by laws and institutions, (as in negative liberty) and the 'subjective' dimension of liberty secured by autonomous will (as in reflexive liberty) by proposing an intersubjective form of liberty. He suggests that realizing one's goals requires others to allow one to do so. My liberty depends on others granting me a certain liberty. His imperative is simple, namely, 'be a person and respect others as persons' (Hegel, [1820] 1970: §36). As Axel Honneth's (1992) incisive reading of Hegel has shown, mutual recognition becomes the focal point of liberty. Therefore liberty has an eminently social aspect to it, one that prior conceptions of liberty perhaps discount (Honneth, 2010: 39). Here acting with others, to invoke this metaphor again, is unthinkable without interacting with others.

#### *Four Enlightenment solidarities*

The three types of liberty we have now developed serve as a link to Enlightenment solidarity. To fully understand why this is so, we must examine more closely the types

of solidarity that can be derived from negative, reflexive and social conceptions of liberty. In this section, we develop four types of solidarity as liberty and look at their implications. As already indicated, there are different grounds of solidarity. The grounds of Enlightenment solidarity is liberty in its varieties. We propose that negative liberty is related to the concept of self-centered solidarity, while social liberty bears a strong resemblance to what we call recognitive solidarity. Reflexive liberty in turn leads to reflexive solidarity, which can be found in two different intellectual traditions. Anglo-Saxon reflexive solidarity places a strong emphasis on interpersonal sympathy, while continental reflexive solidarity provides a deontological argument for acting with others. This means that solidarity is normatively contingent upon distinct philosophical traditions: Configuring a continental divide, there are Anglo-Saxon and continental traditions of interpreting solidarity. We will return to this in a later section.

### *Self-centered solidarity*

To begin with, let us recall that Hobbesian political thought brought to the fore a negative conception of liberty, characterized by freedom from interference by others. Methodological individualism and social integration through the institution of law yield a very thin type of solidarity, which we will call self-centered solidarity. First, methodological individualism in its initial form, as found in Hobbes's *De Cive*, renders an atomistic picture of mankind. In fact, Hobbes's contention that men, 'like mushrooms, come to full maturity, without all kind of engagement to each other' (Hobbes, [1642] 1949: 8; see also Lukes, 1968: 119) suggests that individual dispositions can be conceived as pre-social. This paves the way for the axiom that man is inherently rational and self-interested (hence self-centered solidarity). Accordingly, it is rational for individuals to bring about, maintain, or comply with the law of the legitimate state (Christiano, 1994: 23). For only this legal framework allows them to pursue their self-interest, protected against the unwelcome interference of others. Second, from this perspective the role of social integration is conferred upon the formal institution of law and the integrative power of the market. Actors may now contract with one another in relationships of economic cooperation. Interactions between individuals are primarily ones of economic interests and bargain, yet with a reciprocal bent that has integrative power in the social. One may see this idea reflected, for example, in the European Economic Community (EEC), a precursor to the European Union, established in 1957 to bring about economic integration in post-war Europe, or the US Marshall Plan with its aim of stimulating US growth and fostering the recovery of its most important trading partners. Through cooperatively achieved economic growth and prosperity, so the underpinning argument goes, peace and social unity will prevail.

Such a highly rational form of solidarity may, normatively and practically, be the result of a departure from more historically contingent or metaphysical ideas of community. As Foucault (2004) has argued with respect to Germany, in the postwar era, the state was unable to derive legitimacy from an overarching, integrative ideology or narrative. In memory of the totalitarian threat of ideological extremes which have shaped the first half of the twentieth century, and culminated in the Shoah, the state had to employ a more rational and pragmatic narrative, avoiding any positive reference to historical

legacies. Therefore economic growth and stability became the main source of legitimacy, and one may even speculate that the European Union evolved into the highest expression of such a view. According to this logic, solidarity needs the rational ground law and markets can provide.

It follows that in the same way that negative liberty is a ‘sober’ form of liberty (Taylor, 2002: 123) – based on the great influence of an anti-metaphysical, materialist, and scientific mode of thinking in modern Western societies – self-centered solidarity is a rather sober form of solidarity. Its social ontology, the homo economicus or economic man, is incompatible with ethical or moral norms other than calculative and self-interested action. There is no room for reflexivity or empathy in this model. Such traits would add complexity to a meager social ontology and open up non-economic paths to solidarity. Evoking the homo economicus renders non-self-interested forms of solidarity impossible. With its emphasis on mutual economic benefit through the pursuit of rational self-interest, the self-centered type of solidarity could therefore serve best as a foundation for commercial bonds and contractual agreements between the citizens of a given state (or federation of states).

### *Anglo-Saxon reflexive solidarity*<sup>2</sup>

In sharp contrast to the impersonal character of self-centered solidarity, reflexive solidarity is centered on mutual understanding, sympathy, and empathy. Empathy – in a very basic definition understood as the aim to ease the suffering of others – provides a very modest and perhaps intuitive ground for solidarity. This conceptualization is modest insofar as it imposes on solidaristic action very few general restrictions. In the Anglo-Saxon variant of reflexive solidarity this condition alone suffices to establish solidarity as a moral principle. The Humean emphasis on passion as natural condition for social interaction translates into a solidarity of giving in to empathy and its emotional impulse to help one’s fellow men. Consequently, it is highly context-specific. For example, solidaristic action can be affected by social conventions. We may see a number of beggars in the streets every day. We may still pass by because ignoring their suffering is to a certain extent socially accepted.

So conceived, solidarity is primarily a private matter of interpersonal sympathy and responsibility. This conception is compatible with a ‘liberal theoretical framework’, where ‘solidarity is associated with “love” and “friendship” – essentially private matters which individuals should be left to work out for themselves’ (Wilde, 2007: 171). The emphasis on passion provides philosophical grounds for solidarity, but at the same time largely confines it to the private realm. Man is ‘allowed’ to follow his preferences. In contrast to a conception of self-centered solidarity, however, it is not assumed that these preferences are or should be purely rational and opportunistic – at least in the private realm. From this follows what has already been indicated; namely, that self-centered and Anglo-Saxon reflexive notions of solidarity may indeed complement one another when applied to strictly differentiated spheres.

This resembles the vision of Scottish philosopher Adam Smith. In fact, Smith argues in favor of the rational pursuit of self-interest in *The Wealth of Nations* (Smith, [1776] 1991), a book which played a major role in the emergence of the discipline of economics.

However, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* ([1759] 2000), he put great emphasis on the key function of sympathy in creating a cohesive society. From the vantage point of orthodox modern economics, there is, as Tabb (1999: 50f) notes, something ‘schizophrenic’ to Smith’s work. Yet Smith himself would most probably not have seen a contradiction here. As Bronk (2009: 60) has elegantly concluded, ‘Smith’s interest as a moral philosopher was how self-interest can lead to co-operative independence in the parts of social life where the bonds of sympathy (or, indeed, general benevolence) cannot reach.’ The anonymity of the market, so the argument goes, does not provide us with the grounds for sympathetic moral judgment. We cannot, for example, rely on sympathy when buying food in a supermarket. Yet, according to Smith, it is necessary to retain an altogether emphatic and reflexive outlook in social interactions, understood as our faculty to imagine ourselves in someone else’s shoes. It is with respect to morally acceptable action that Smith also conjures up the metaphor of the impartial spectator, whose judgments should be the measure of our actions. Smith regards the pursuit of self-interest and empathy as complementary facets of man, rather than in irreconcilable tension with one another. Indeed, since he avoids the Hobbesian individualist ontology, his position is by no means self-contradicting.

So, while compatibility with a liberal framework is retained, our conception of Anglo-Saxon reflexive solidarity builds on reflexive elements insofar as it concedes the following: first, it acknowledges that although humans are perfectly reasonable, concrete action is often motivated by passion rather than reason. Second, it posits that passion is not necessarily self-centered. As a result, proponents of Anglo-Saxon reflexive solidarity place a strong emphasis on emotions such as interpersonal sympathy or altruism, which drive people to care for each other. Additionally, these emotions are often depicted as important natural instincts and, thus, substantiated in their ascribed role as a ground for moral decisions. The Anglo-Saxon reflexive solidarity ideal-type applies in situations where emotions trigger a supportive response to another person, whereby this response is accompanied by personal (e.g. material) disadvantages. An archetypical case is the charitable gift.

### *Continental reflexive solidarity*

Continental reflexive solidarity shares with its Anglo-Saxon counterpart the acknowledgment of empathy. However, the continental variant subordinates emotional impulses to actions conducted in accordance with universally acceptable rational arguments. The first premise states that the impetus of sympathy alone provides insufficient grounds for solidarity. Quite on the contrary, if solidarity seeks to contain a valid normative standard (a value or even a virtue), it requires a far more general foundation. This argument is based on the idea that individual or collective moral standards have to be justified with respect to the integrity and autonomy of others. Hence they have to be derived from universally acceptable principles.

Consider Kant’s powerful deontology (as outlined in the section on liberty), where clear principles for human coexistence emanate from individual reflection. Its second premise states that only by independently reflecting upon our motivations for action, i.e. asking ‘Would I want my maxim of action to become universal law?’, can we



possibly act freely and be free ourselves. From this premise Kant derives the second formula of the categorical imperative (*Zweckformel*), namely, that one ought to treat another person as an end itself, and never as a means to an end. Treating another person as a means to an end in the course of rational action would contradict the universal law-premise, since an entity which possesses an autonomous free will can never be a mere means (such as a pencil, a lifeless object, is a means to write). Since Kant derives from reflexive liberty rules of action with respect to others, a conception of solidarity is not far afield.

Indeed, we argue that such a conception is already implicit in the categorical imperative, since the Kantian argument speaks to our faculty to understand that others are to be seen, in many respects, as equals of ourselves. In this specific sense, empathy could be regarded as an implicit premise of the categorical imperative. Empathy and the categorical imperative provide a strong foundation for an abstract conception of solidarity: empathy contains the faculty to understand others' plight and to act in their interest, while the categorical imperative introduces the idea of universal equality on mutual grounds: 'If I'm emotionally triggered to help (in whatever way), I would surely hope that others would help me out if I found myself in a comparable situation.' This chimes with Rorty's description of a 'liberal ironist', who thinks that a 'recognition of a common susceptibility to humiliation is the only social bond that is needed' (Rorty, [1989] 1995: 91). By carefully asking what I would expect others to do, it is possible to legitimize acts of solidarity. Provided that solidarity is not imposed authoritatively or violently, but deployed in dialogical form.<sup>3</sup>

We may conclude then that the differences between continental and Anglo-Saxon reflexive conceptions of solidarity are threefold. First, the former emphasizes that maxims of action should be guided by universal, rational moral standards, while the latter regards 'moral sentiments' as normatively acceptable impetus of social (inter)action. Second, the continental type renders solidarity a much more public matter than the Anglo-Saxon one. It has to be justified in a universally acceptable way and is centered on man's rational free will. Third, as opposed to the modesty of the emotion-centered Anglo-Saxon reflexive solidarity, the continental invocation of rational reflexivity indeed provides the required universal grounds for solidarity in a rather sophisticated and ingenious way. Note, however, that both conceptions lack a principle or a clear concept of prioritizing or organizing solidaristic action. They give no clear normative guidelines on when to act in the name of solidarity. As a result, they must rely on relatively unsystematic individual observations as a trigger for solidaristic action.

### *Recognitive solidarity*

We have seen so far that solidarity is always pitched at the level of the individual. Reflexive types of solidarity are centered on individual empathy or moral judgments, and the self-centered type is defined by social integration through individuals' rational pursuit of self-interest. By contrast, recognitive solidarity introduces in addition to liberty, on which all forms of Enlightenment solidarity are based, reciprocity as a condition for solidaristic action. Since reciprocity requires, however, at least two agents interacting, recognitive solidarity can be understood as a pronounced normative shift from social

action to social interaction; from subjectivity to intersubjectivity. It thereby stands diametrically opposed to the atomistic conception of Hobbesian methodological individualism. As Van den Brink and Owen (2007: 3) have put it, human beings have according to cognitive theories a 'constitutive dependency on non-instrumental social relations for the many aspects of their identities and agency that touch upon their integrity as moral subjects and agents'. Recognition is best summarized in the already mentioned Hegelian dictum 'be a person and respect others as person' (Hegel, [1820] 1970: §36). Its implications are double, namely: (1) being a person (an expression of liberty) is connected to respecting others as a person; and (2) being respected by others as a person (an expression of reciprocity) (see Honneth, 2010: 43f).

The premise here is that self-realization is contingent upon others. As outlined in Hegel's treatment of self-consciousness in *Phenomenology of the Spirit* ([1807] 1986: Chapter 4), the formation of the 'I' is a social process. From early infancy onwards, human beings develop their personality by gradually relating the actions of their partners of interaction to their own experience (Honneth, 2010: 265). Thereby, a conception of the self evolves, which is tied to interaction and (mutual) recognition. Without the 'we', there is no way an 'I' could develop. In other words, the 'I' is constituted through the 'we'. As Axel Honneth has demonstrated in his reading of Hegel, this argument of recognition can also be connected to the political realm. Since man becomes a social being only by way of recognition, political struggles are inevitably struggles for recognition. For example, the labor movement (where the notion of solidarity figures prominently) can be interpreted as a workers' struggle for empowerment and recognition as (socially and politically) equal human beings. They are struggles for liberation from different forms of domination, or, in other words, 'progress, conscious of liberty' (Brunkhorst, 2002: 95). So conceived, a lack of recognition provides incentives for solidaristic action.

In fact, cognitive solidarity emphasizes the reflexive requirement to acknowledge one's own dependence on others' recognition, and its ethical consequences. It presupposes that human life has an eminently social character. Groups and social bonds are regarded as civilizing and subject-empowering (and not as anti-individualistic or regressive) (Honneth, 2010: 262f). Gaining recognition is empowering, since by being recognized as part of the 'we', the 'I' gains a stronger sense of selfhood, too. For example, an immigrant is successfully integrated into his host society when cultural differences are mutually recognized to an extent that neither the immigrant's cultural identity, nor the sense of community within the host society, is endangered.

Note, however, that recognition is distinct from toleration. A frequent appeal in Western societies is to be more tolerant towards culturally different 'others'. Toleration is commonly related to the idea of passively accepting what we disapprove of. Therefore it has a strong exclusionary bent. Recognition through mutual engagement and interaction is very different from mere toleration (see Forst, 2011: 157). In fact, it includes 'others' into a social order by recognizing them as part of this social order, not external to it.

Compared with the other forms of Enlightenment solidarity discussed, cognitive solidarity is a thicker type of solidarity since its evocation of reciprocity is based on intersubjectivity. Moreover, cognitive solidarity implicitly allows for a prioritization of solidaristic action by taking social recognition as crucial measure for relative deprivation. In widening recognition to large collectives, it also avoids the exclusionary aspect

that becomes so problematic when solidarity is limited, e.g. to specific social, ethnic or religious groups. In the next section, we will turn to such limited conceptions of solidarity, and demonstrate how they challenge the underpinning idea of liberty in Enlightenment thought.

### **Counter-Enlightenment solidarity: loyalty denying liberty**

In the Introduction to this article, we have proposed that there exist other forms of solidarity, which are distinct from the philosophical-rational ones we have developed thus far, ones which call into question the value of liberty. They are grounded in a metaphysical and non-rational 'ethical substance' (Brunkhorst, 2009: 95) that results in a 'sacralization' (Joas, 2011) of collective action in the name of specific particularities. This is what we will call counter-Enlightenment solidarity: a type of solidarity based on a notion of origin and belonging. Similar to what Bayertz (1998) has conceptualized as community solidarity, it is constituted by reference to certain traits such as nationality, ethnicity, political preferences, familial relationships, religious confession, etc. It negates Enlightenment ideas of liberty, free will and self-responsibility – which transcend these primordial categories – replacing them with a notion of loyalty. While Enlightenment solidarity (1) demands autonomous decision-making instead of mere compliance, and (2) draws on rationality, passion or the need for recognition, solidarity as loyalty constructs universal norms based on a particular signifier, creating universality out of particularity (see Finlayson, 1998: 103). By neglecting Enlightenment forms of liberty and solidarity, counter-Enlightenment solidarity also withstands the continental divide.

Solidarity as loyalty draws on group-specific particularities. Max Weber illustrates this point in his work on ethnic group relations. He argues that '[a]lmost any kind of similarity and contrast of habitus and habits can become the cause of the subjective belief that affinity or disaffinity exists between groups that attract or repel each other' (Weber, [1922] 2010: 306). Feelings of belonging (or, conversely, extraneousness), can arise from various common traits, as well as from historical, social and political experience or memory. The implications resulting from such an understanding of solidarity are context-specific in a double way. First, they depend on the constitutive traits or significant particularities of different groups. Second, they depend on the constellation of these signifiers and the associated group-affiliations in a specific situation. For example, whether the suffering of others is to be eased, ignored, or intensified, can be contingent on the group affiliation of those who suffer with respect to those who observe the suffering. If the others belong to the same group, their suffering ought to be eased (helping your 'own' people). If they belong to an antagonistic group, their suffering is likely to be fully accepted without further action. They are not granted the rights and benefits of the in-group, since they are considered as hostile.

Perhaps the most common variant of counter-Enlightenment solidarity is nationalism, famously defined by Ernest Gellner as the 'principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (Gellner, 1983: 1). To this definition, Brubaker (2010: 63) adds two further principles, namely, that 'polity and culture' and 'state territory and citizenry should be congruent'. This tripartite conceptualization, however, provides not only a viable definition of nationalism, but also serves as an idealized model

of the modern nation-state as it was elaborated in the nineteenth and the first two thirds of the twentieth century. While it is clear that the modern nation-state as imagined at the time of the French Revolution was not a counter-Enlightenment project per se, the nation-state as 'locus of belonging' (Brubaker, 2010: 64) bears in itself a primordial notion of belonging. This is because belonging is a 'bifocal concept' (Berezin, 2009: 52ff). It has: (1) a formal dimension of being identified as a citizen of one specific country (possessing a passport); and (2) an ontological or emotional dimension of identifying with a specific nation or people. While the first dimension chimes with the Enlightenment ideas of legal rationality, the second dimension refers to what one may call an irrational or 'imagined' (Anderson, 2002) type of belonging to a specific community. This irrational type of belonging can also take racial, ethnic or religious forms, as an abundance of studies of ethnic and religious violence that emerged in recent years have demonstrated (e.g. Brubaker and Laitin, 1998; Tilly, 2003).

Yet one caveat is necessary. While counter-Enlightenment solidarity is indeed independent of intellectual traditions in as much as ontological belonging prevails, it is dependent on the shared cultural horizon of a specific community, however defined. As a case in point, nationalism dwells on culturally contingent values and narratives.

In summary, then, counter-Enlightenment solidarity points to the paradox that solidarity can be at the same time a vehicle for social inclusion as well as a source of exclusionary practices based on the deepening of existing social ruptures and conflicts (Wilde, 2007: 173). As with perhaps all thick communitarian ideas, the exclusionary potential of solidarity looms as a threat to its more egalitarian interpretations. In the remainder of this article, we expand on this argument to discuss how different conceptualizations of community open a divide between Anglo-Saxon and continental forms of solidarity.

## Concluding disambiguations

Before we conclude, let us discuss what we believe are a number of key points of the above exploration of the grounds of solidarity. First, there is a continental divide between the Anglo-Saxon and continental understanding of solidarity. A case in point for this divide is the different treatment of the public and the private sphere. In Anglo-Saxon thought, the former is supposed to be rationally organized chiming with the idea of mutually beneficial agreement in the spirit of self-centered solidarity, while the latter allows for a realization of self-imposed moral standards in line with Anglo-Saxon reflexive solidarity. As a result, both variants are not only complementary. They are also compatible with a liberal theoretical framework. Continental ideas of solidarity, by contrast, are primarily relational and less individualistic. They emphasize the mutuality of moral norms (continental reflexive solidarity) and the sociability of human existence in general (recognitive solidarity). This emphasis on mutual equality and reciprocity in turn leads to a less atomistic and more 'systemic' conception of solidarity. It calls into question the separation of a private and a public realm, since in both continental conceptions the same rules and arguments hold for these allegedly distinct spheres.

From this follows that continental conceptions of solidarity are more demanding than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. The latter rely on moral preferences at the individual level, while the former provide very general guiding principles. Continental variants of solidarity do not offer a mere ground of possibility for solidaristic action. They demand such behavior.

This is so perhaps because conceptualizations of community differ in Anglo-Saxon and continental varieties of Enlightenment solidarity. First, as has been noted, the Anglo-Saxon models always retain compatibility with a liberal separation of social spheres (such as a separation of the economic and the political sphere). As we have shown by the example of Adam Smith, normative outlooks on how to act can take very different forms with respect to different spheres. While, according to Smith, the rational pursuit of self-interest is normatively desirable in the economic realm, social action still should be guided by empathy. Such interpretations of society are never 'holistic'. Analogous to the division of labor in modern societies, we find a division of normative requirements.

Second, continental thought conceives of community in holistic-universalist terms. Rather than dividing spheres, thinkers such as Hegel sought to develop theories of all-encompassing integration and cohesion of the social. Third, as has often been noted with respect to negative and positive liberty (Taylor, 1992: 118–44; Crowder, 2006), these different conceptualizations of community bear to a different extent totalitarian potential. The Anglo-Saxon take on community has little totalitarian potential. Individualism is regarded as preferable in some spheres of society (Smith, Hume), or even as logical consequence of the ontology of man (Hobbes). The continental take on community, just as it has often been argued with respect to notions of positive liberty, may pave the road for totalitarian and counter-Enlightenment interpretations. Particularly with Hegel's thought, such interpretations seem inviting. The 'dark side' of recognitive solidarity would then be the total subjugation of the individual to the collective, suggesting an infinite dependency of the 'I' on the 'we', rather than their co-dependency.

It is clear that while in Anglo-Saxon conceptions of solidarity community is to be seen as nothing more than the sum of its parts, continental conceptions of solidarity, as well as counter-Enlightenment solidarity, present a much more cohesive perspective on community. In continental reflexive solidarity, a common bond is established in an abstract way, based on the premise of equality through reason and individual freedom. In recognitive solidarity, the dependency of the individual on its social surroundings figures most prominently and proves to be constitutive for community. Finally, in counter-Enlightenment solidarity, the cohesiveness of the 'we' is grounded in, as one may want to put it, 'primordial' allegiances. So, while these three approaches to solidarity strongly focus on community, they do so in remarkably different ways.

Above we offered a toolkit for understanding how solidarity can be framed and justified. The ideal-types we have normatively reconstructed provide a framework for future research on the topic in different contexts. We hold that interpreting solidarity is crucial for understanding political dynamics. Consider, for example, the question of how solidarity can be conceived in contemporary Europe after European Integration, or, what form of solidarity underlies the nationalist or extreme right discourse. As argued in the Introduction to this article, it is possible to shed light on the very foundation of

political projects by interpretatively uncovering the manifold meanings solidarity may have. Most political arguments can be reduced to ontologies of community, or social cohesion, of an 'I' as well as a 'we'. While a conservative may be more inclined to see human beings as self-interested and hence prefer an economic form of social integration, a social democrat would perhaps stress that because of man's social nature, anonymous economic forces have to be tamed with collective organized action (e.g. unions). As we have demonstrated, lines of division have developed alongside notions of liberty, and alongside an Enlightenment take on social action vs. a counter-Enlightenment notion of primordial belonging. This provides us with the means for normative reflection, showing which types of solidarity may be desirable in, say, a particular polity, and analyze interpretatively existing social bonds or prevailing discourses on community. We hold that neglecting the multiple meanings of solidarity, or its persisting political relevance, means turning a blind eye on a concept that figures prominently, albeit often subtly, in modern politics, since the way we conceive solidarity is always strongly connected to our ideas of liberty and community. Rendering solidarity conceptually tangible is the first step towards a more nuanced understanding of politics in general as well as the role of community in political arguments in particular.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Volker Gadenne, Georg Hubmann, Charlotte Lazare, Evelyn Schuster, and the two anonymous referees for incisive comments on earlier versions of this article.

### Notes

1. Cited in *Die Zeit*, available at: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2012-10/merkel-regierungserklaerung-bruessel> (accessed 18 October 2012).
2. Note that Dean (1995) uses the term 'reflective solidarity' to describe a Habermasian communication-centered form of solidarity.
3. Contemporary democratic theorists have inherited the Kantian moral universalism which is the foundation of continental reflexive solidarity. Echoing Kant, it is argued in deliberative theories of democracy (e.g. Habermas, Rawls) that a consensus on rules of action is possible on the grounds of a dialogical form of practical reason.

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