

THE CONCEPT OF SOLIDARITY IN HAUKE BRUNKHORST, ANDREA SANGIOVANNI, AND RAINER FORST

O conceito de solidariedade em Hauke Brunkhorst, Andrea Sangiovanni e Rainer Forst

Francisco Jozivan Guedes de Lima

Universidade Federal do Piauí

Teresina, PI, Brasil

Jozivan2008guedes@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4483-8393> 

A lista completa com informações dos autores está no final do artigo ●

Abstract: Solidarity has long been a neglected concept in philosophical inquiry. From the point of view of the nominal definition, “solidarity” comes from the Latin “solidus” which denotes something solid and support; thus, solidary action means supporting someone in a situation of need. In conceptual terms, this paper presents three approaches to solidarity from Brunkhorst, Sangiovanni, and Forst. Brunkhorst reconstructs the path of the concept of solidarity from ancient Greece through civic friendship in Aristotle, from the tradition of civic nationalism, through the French Revolution until arriving at the idea of global democratic solidarity. Sangiovanni argues solidarity based on the concept of “joint action”, presenting fundamental conditions for the act of solidarity that have in common the mutual commitment aimed at overcoming adversity through a free action, uncoerced action. He reconstructs solidarity in three traditions: socialist, nationalist, Christian. Forst, in turn, agrees with Brunkhorst and follows Sangiovanni's concept of “shared action” and advances the proposal for a normative justification of solidarity through the ethical, moral, legal, and political contexts of the act of solidarity. In the sense, Forst's thesis is that solidarity is a normatively dependent concept because it depends on other normative contexts for its definition. It is not sufficient in itself and does not have a univocal meaning. Forst contends that the community of solidarity cannot be confined to the nation-state, as states are embedded in transnational structures of cooperation. Consequently, solidarity must be extended beyond national borders if global injustices are to be overcome through principles of transnational justice. Despite their differing approaches to solidarity, they have in common the critical-emancipatory perspective of solidarity according to which it is not an essentialist concept, but a practical, liberating, and democratic attitude. The fundamental message of these authors is that it is necessary to rethink a lost concept within Critical Theory, political philosophy, and theories of justice: the concept of solidarity.

Keywords: solidarity; democracy; joint action; contexts of justice; critical theory.

Resumo: A solidariedade tem sido, há muito tempo, um conceito negligenciado na investigação filosófica. Do ponto de vista da definição nominal, “solidariedade” advém do latim “solidus” que denota algo sólido e apoio, de modo que a ação solidária significa apoiar alguém em uma situação de necessidade. Em termos conceituais, este artigo apresenta três abordagens acerca da solidariedade a partir de Brunkhorst, Sangiovanni e Forst. Brunkhorst reconstrói o percurso do conceito de solidariedade desde a Grécia antiga passando pela amizade cívica em Aristóteles, pela tradição do nacionalismo cívico, pela Revolução Francesa até chegar à ideia de solidariedade democrática global. Sangiovanni defende a solidariedade a partir do conceito de ação conjunta (joint action) apresentando condições fundamentais para o ato solidário que têm como ponto em comum o comprometimento mútuo objetivando superar uma adversidade mediante uma ação livre. Ele reconstrói a solidariedade em três tradições: socialista, nacionalista, cristã. Forst, por sua vez, concorda com Brunkhorst, segue o conceito de “ação compartilhada” de Sangiovanni e avança na proposta de uma justificação normativa da solidariedade por meio dos contextos ético, moral, jurídico e político do ato de solidariedade. Nesse sentido, a tese de Forst é a de que a solidariedade é um conceito normativamente dependente, pois depende de outros contextos normativos para sua definição. Ela não é autossuficiente e não possui um significado unívoco. Forst sustenta que a comunidade de solidariedade não pode restringir-se ao Estado-nação, uma vez que os Estados estão inseridos em estruturas transnacionais de cooperação. Consequentemente, a solidariedade deve ser estendida para além das fronteiras nacionais se se pretende superar as injustiças globais por meio de princípios de justiça transnacional. Apesar de suas diferentes abordagens sobre a solidariedade, eles têm em comum a perspectiva crítico-emancipatória da solidariedade segundo o qual a ela não é um conceito essencialista, mas uma atitude prática, libertadora e democrática. A mensagem fundamental desses autores é que é necessário repensar um conceito perdido dentro da Teoria Crítica, da filosofia política e das teorias da justiça: o conceito de solidariedade.

Palavras-chave: solidariedade; democracia; ação conjunta; contextos da justiça; teoria crítica.

Introduction

Of the three pillars of the French Revolution, liberty, equality, and fraternity, much has been said and written about freedom (especially in the liberal and neoliberal sense of individual and economic freedom) and equality (especially in the formal legal plan of isonomy), but little has been said and written about fraternity and solidarity.

Solidarity has become a concept tied to the religious semantics of fraternity focused on the dimension of charity, but little reflected on outside this scope. This concept began to gradually - even if timidly - occupy space in philosophy via Critical Theory. Brunkhorst wrote “*Solidarität*” in 2002, from civic friendship to the global legal community, and more recently Rainer Forst (2021) wrote an article about solidarity, its concept, its conceptions, and its contexts considering his proposal for normative justification.

This article by Forst was the result of a Workshop in Florence on the nature and value of solidarity presented at the European University Institute in 2019. He assumes that solidarity, like justice, is a complex concept that cannot be defined univocally, given its diverse natures such as foundations, contents, purposes, and forms about which we have



the most varied disagreements.

We cannot limit solidarity to a single image, associating it, for example, with socialist tradition and/or social activism, declaring that only there would be an experience of bonds of solidarity. The locus of solidarity is broad, and its reasons can be multiple. When you ask why someone acted in a solidary manner, you can expect a wide range of reasons that include personal, religious, moral, legal, political, and social issues.

Forst draws on Rawls (1993) and his distinction between “concept” and “conceptions”. The concept is more generic and contains the aspects of the different conceptions, and these relate to the variety of aspects of a possible concept. The concept means unity, but the conception is multiplicity. In this sense, “solidarity” is not defined through an empty universal concept but based on characteristics and concrete aspects of the diverse conceptions and worldviews and perspectives that one can have about solidarity.

One must avoid labeling a single concept of solidarity as being the true and immutable one, without any insight into its concrete conceptions. Solidarity therefore has a universal dimension - which is its concept - which is in constant dialogue with the contextual dimension - which are the different conceptions of what a solidary action is.

In this sense, this paper aims to present three proposals for solidarity that have in common the need for its democratic revitalization: for Brunkhorst, this process of making solidarity functional again presupposes overcoming an adverse situation of exclusion and weakening of political participation; for Sangiovanni, it is necessary to reframe the act of solidarity in terms of free joint action with an emancipatory intent, in particular, against oppression and injustice; for Forst, solidarity is a democratic value experienced in concrete contexts of justice and justification.

The concept of democratic solidarity in Brunkhorst

According to Brunkhorst, modern solidarity derives from two sources: (i) the pagan source of harmony (Greek harmony and Roman concord) and republican civic friendship (Aristotle's *philia*, the Roman *amicitia* and political friendship in Cicero); (ii) and the Christian source of brotherhood (fraternity) and brotherly love (*caritas*). Going directly to Brunkhorst's work, one can find the following semantic contextualization of solidarity:

[...] solidarity is “originally a legal concept.” Solidarity is solid. *Solidus* is dense and firm. The Roman legal concept *in solidum* means an obligation for the whole, joint liability [*Gesamthftung*], common debt, solidary obligation: obligation *in solidum* (Brunkhorst, 2005, p. 2).



In broader conceptual and historical terms, solidarity in Brunkhorst is thought of from fundamental stages of development that go through Aristotelian civic friendship, civic nationalism, the French Revolution and its ideal of fraternity, culminating in its evolution towards democratic solidarity, including in global terms.

The ancient civic friendship (*philia*) in Aristotle was thought of not in romantic terms of individual and naturalized friendship of a member of a clan or the domestic environment, but in political terms of free citizens. Those who were not considered free could not exercise political friendship. This is an exclusionary stage in which women, foreigners, slaves, and children were left out of the bonds of solidarity of the civic friendship (Brunkhorst, 2015, p. 13).

The nationalist sense of solidarity is also restrictive. It has two meanings: (i) an ethnic one as the belonging to a given pre-political community that expresses the identification of an individual with a group, (ii) and another one, linked to the nation, that alludes to the way in which the citizen identifies with its State, with its territory, with its people, with its sovereignty and with its homeland (Flynn, 2015, p. ix).

These restrictions on solidarity changed with the normative concept of fraternity as one of the main ideals of the French Revolution in the 18th century. Being solidary was not an act limited to an elite or a specific people, but a value that extended to all human beings, something consummated in a universal declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen in August 1789. According to its first article “all men are born and are free and equal in rights”. Here underlies the liberal ideal of Locke and an entire subsequent universalist tradition that finds its full realization in Kant and his defense of universal freedom and human rights.

With the French Revolution and the rationalist reflections arising from the Renaissance, Humanism and the Enlightenment, solidarity acquired a markedly secular and universal *status*, so that its objective consisted in the establishment of equal political freedom among all. It was an attempt to combine individual freedom and democratic equality. “*Fraternité*, the third concept in the new association of citizens, was then no longer regarded as the realization of the divine commandment to love, however it was understood in socially immanent terms as the realization of the political freedom of all citizens” (Brunkhorst, 2005, p. 59).

Brunkhorst (2005, p. 55) considers that modern democracy inherited two traditions of solidarity: the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman civic. The common background of both is - in the first tradition - the assumption of the equality of all human beings through

religious claims and divine commandments, and - in the second tradition - the assumption of equality based on the cosmopolitan vision of the human being, even if the relationships, in concrete terms, were different due to stratification and divisions of caste, gender, nationality, etc.

As capitalism grew stronger, social relations lost this postulate of solidarity understood in political terms as inclusion and participation of all citizens in democratic life. The elites and beneficiaries of economic progress established limits on participation and segregation and stratified relations in societies once again prevailed. Economic globalization did not mean the globalization of opportunities, inclusion, and solidarity and, on the contrary, an order increasingly opposed to fraternity was established.

The above panorama affected international relations in such a way that after the Second World War the world was divided into two blocks and subsequently ended up generating a new order between center and periphery; consequently, power took the place of the utopia of solidarity. What Brunkhorst (2005, p. 113) calls the “globalization of old problems” occurred, especially social exclusion.

Access to education, health, employment, and rights has been increasingly denied to a significant part of world's population. The law itself played a part in this as it surrendered to capitalism and became an instrument for legalizing exclusions.

Law degenerates into an instrument of power and of those who possess land and capital. [...]. The colonization of law by power and money annuls the logic of functional differentiation. The difference between inclusion and exclusion eclipses the difference between legal and illegal, government and opposition, having and not having property, success, and failure in school, and in the end the boundaries of the systems can no longer be identified (Brunkhorst, 2005, p. 122-123).

Boaventura de Sousa Santos has a diagnosis like Brunkhorst's regarding the role of law in the dissolution of solidarity. For him, in modernity a tension was created between the pillars of regulation and emancipation. The pillar of regulation is aimed at maintaining the *status quo* and, consequently, implies the collapse of emancipation. The emancipatory pillar provides for the liberation of the excluded ones and their integration into the community.

With the strengthening of capitalism, the emancipatory pillar was absorbed by the regulatory pillar, so that law, science, and aesthetics were colonized by the State and by economy (Santos, 2012, p. 36). The law colonized by the State bureaucracy and economic power lost its emancipatory force and was limited to a normative and positivist sphere to the detriment of its social and transformative role.

Once the liberal state assumed a monopoly over the creation and application of law - thereby reducing law to state law - the tension between social regulation and emancipation itself became an object of legal regulation (Santos, 2012, p. 64).

To overcome its regulatory limitations, it is necessary for the law to turn to the excluded ones and, in this way, resume its emancipatory role. For Boaventura Santos, it is necessary to emphasize that the law itself is not emancipatory, but rather the subordinate groups and social movements that fight for inclusion and participation. The law is the instrument that must support these struggles by offering them subsidies for resistance.

It is possible to argue that the question, “Can law be emancipatory?”, is ultimately both useful and misleading. After all, law itself cannot be emancipatory or non-emancipatory. Rather, it is the movements and organizations of subaltern cosmopolitan groups that are emancipatory or non-emancipatory, depending on how they mobilize law to advance their struggles (Santos, 2012, p. 144).

This context calls for a “subaltern cosmopolitanism” in which law is reconceived not as an instrument of the liberal state, but as a resource through which oppressed groups pursue emancipatory struggles: “subaltern cosmopolitanism calls for a conception of the legal field suitable for reconnecting law and politics and reimagining legal institutions from below” (Sousa; Rodríguez-Garavito, 2005, p. 15).

The establishment of the contemporary context of denial of solidarity has consequently weakened democracy and relegated a large part of citizens to the category of weak publics, which are those who can give opinions, but their opinions have no power to decide anything in society. Contrarily, strong publics are commonly in the powers of the State, in parliament, in the courts and their opinions are converted into decisions and even have the force of law.

According to Fraser (1992, p. 134), this gap between weak and strong publics is the result of a bourgeois separation in the way of understanding the public sphere between organizations, civil society, and the State, which ended up relegating the participation of civil society to a level insignificant compared to the decision-making power of the State.

Added to this is the fact that power - especially the power of influence and decision-making exercised through capital - divided society into visible and invisible groups, reinforcing relationships grounded in shared interests rather than in solidarity. Law, economics, religion, and science came to embody a strongly individualistic orientation, largely detached from political and social concerns aimed at promoting social inclusion.

This trajectory of solidarity also reveals a significant rupture with respect to human



rights. Rather than serving exclusively as instruments of emancipation, human rights have at times been deployed ideologically to legitimize expansionist and imperial ambitions, even though bloody wars (Brunkhorst, 2005, p. 150). Habermas likewise offers a forceful warning against the imperialist misuse of human rights:

When human rights policy becomes a mere alibi and vehicle for imposing major power interests, when the superpower flouts the UN Charter and arrogates to itself a right of intervention, and when it conducts an invasion in violation of humanitarian international law and justifies this in the name of universal values, this reinforces the suspicion that the program of human rights consists in its imperialist misuse (Habermas, 2012, p. 97).

Considering these challenges, a fundamental question arises: how can this landscape of opposition to solidarity be transformed? Brunkhorst's proposed solution is to revitalize the democratic public sphere by strengthening spaces for public deliberation and collective decision-making, thereby transforming weak publics into strong ones. This requires broadening and deepening opportunities for citizen participation in deliberations concerning the common good and the governance of shared social life. Aristotelian civic friendship, previously restrictive and exclusionary, in this new context of contemporary democratic societies, gains a new universal configuration.

Only from this new configuration global solidarity can be thought of in democratic terms through the reframing of social ties beyond the empires of legalism, power, and capitalism. In this new framework, the citizen is not a mere recipient of goods and norms, but their co-author. Thus, solidarity is connected to the sense of *demos* and acquires a political aspect strongly focused on social and democratic participation. Without this, the triumph of individualism and capitalist interests will continue to strongly prevail over the ideals and social values of solidarity.

Sangiovanni and solidarity as joint action

In his paper "Solidarity as joint action", Andrea Sangiovanni (2015, p. 340) considers that we must think about why solidarity has been placed as the fundamental focus of the welfare state when thinking about the topic of social justice. In his understanding, this was accomplished by leaving aside central questions such as that surrounding the moral obligation of the act of solidarity - (Why should I act in solidarity with others?) -, and the question regarding the normative implications of solidarity. In addition, his main objective is to articulate solidarity around three social-psychological bases, namely: shared experience, identity, and action. But first we will focus on the historical contextualization made by the



author.

It is possible that, in terms of the European modernity, the concept of solidarity emerged, mainly, within the ideals of the French Revolution in the 18th century. Following the path of a historical reconstruction, Sangiovanni (2015, p. 341) presents three main European ideological traditions that paradigmatically consolidated solidarity: socialism, nationalism, and Christianity.

(i) The *socialist tradition* is based on solidarity thought from the united struggle of the working class that feels exploited by a common enemy: capitalism. “Solidarity is name of the bond between those who recognize one another as the objects of pervasive exploitation” (Sangiovanni, 2015, p. 341). He argues that there are two socio-psychological effects involved here, the shared experience of exploitation and the shared action expressed in the production of the joint action of rebelling against the oppressive system. This socialist tradition has been skeptical and reticent to attempts to pacify workers and to the belief in an internal resolution of the contradictions of capitalism. In this sense, it does not neglect the solidarity contained in the joint action of the labor struggle.

(ii) *The Christian tradition*, especially configured in Catholic social doctrine and in some branches of Protestantism - (the author does not detail what are these branches) - is based on the ideal of fraternity or human companionship considering that each human is the image and likeness of God - *imago Dei* - (Sangiovanni, 2015). Thus, solidarity is a Christian virtue supported by gratuitousness, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Within this Christian perspective, solidarity could be linked to charity (*caritas*). Underlying this is the idea of universal love and the shared experience of common human suffering due to the fall in the face of the narrative of original sin.

(iii) *The nationalist tradition* is based on the idea of solidarity created from the sharing of identity commonly related to ethnic origin, language, and territorial origin as a range of national unifying elements. Depending on how this process is managed, we know that such dynamics can result in jingoism and fascist and totalitarian nationalisms that leave terrible stigmas in history with indelible genocidal stains on the memory, whether individual or collective. “For the Liberal Nationalist, in short, *shared identity* is the basis for the mutual concern and mutual identification central to the life of the nation” (Sangiovanni, 2015, p. 342).

Unlike previous ideological sources of solidarity (socialist and Christian traditions), the nationalist tradition does not “select” its members primarily in view of their social class, religious affiliation, social action, but - as said - based on national identity.



As to the concept of solidarity, Sangiovanni (2015, p. 343) considers that an action is solidary when the subjects, in terms of mutual commitment, share a common objective with a view to overcoming a significant adversity. This is the core of solidarity when talking about joint action. To do so, there are some essential conditions, namely:

(a) Solidarity's starting point is the basic existence of sharing a *common aim* with the additional indispensable point of *jointly overcoming adversities*. "Solidarity requires that our shared goal include the *overcoming of significant adversity*" (Sangiovanni, 2015, p. 345). If soldiers are at war fighting to try to save their lives, this is an instinct, a natural movement, however, if people are fighting against an oppressive regime and in defense of civil rights, this social resistance constitutes an act of solidarity, as it is a joint action with the aim of overcoming a relevant adversity from both an individual and collective point of view.

(b) Another essential condition is *commitment*. If the act is motivated by payment or reward, this action may be mercenary or of another type, however, never a solidary one. Furthermore, the reason why an individual joins another in solidarity action cannot be coercion. Solidarity is an act fruit of free awareness. (Sangiovanni, 2015, p. 346).

(c) The next condition for solidary action is the *absence of common knowledge*. This means that the subjects come together around an objective intending to overcome adversity and do so spontaneously, but they do not necessarily have knowledge about what the other thinks and executes in sympathetic action. It is a relationship of trust. In this sense, joint action as the basis of solidary action can imply the participation of subjects who do not know each other and from different parts of the world, but who have the same objective. Solidarity can be global, without limits of people, race, religion, and territory.

(d) Solidary action is also shaped by the motives behind it, that is, the reasons why one chooses to act in solidarity. If, for example, a Christian group carries out an act of solidarity in relation to a given community, it must be observed whether the reason for this joint action is the people who receive the charity or the group that does it with a view to fulfilling some precept, or the expectation of salvation, etc. In this sense, solidarity has a deontological character that does not require the exchange of interests and negotiations.

(e) Another fundamental condition for solidary action concerns *shared identity*. This must not degenerate into jingoism or ethnocentrism. From a nationalist perspective, shared identity was central for a people to oppose colonialism or oppressive globalization (or conversely, to impose oppression); however, if this does not have a relevant social aim that effectively combats injustices, it will be a merely nationalist action emptied of solidary action (Sangiovanni, 2015, p. 351).

This implies that a shared action does not correspond to a solidarity action. The touchstone, that is, the fundamental criterion of solidarity, is free joint action that aims to resist oppression. In this way, a solidarity action has an eminently social and emancipatory feature.

The concept of solidarity in Forst and its normative dependence

Etymologically, “solidarity” comes from the Latin “solidus” which means something solid, consistent, and we can define it as “to give support”. Being in solidarity means supporting someone who is in need. “The general concept of solidarity refers to a particular practical attitude of a person toward others” (Forst, 2021, p. 3). Following Sangiovanni, Forst refers to a “particular normative bond with others” constituted by two fundamental dimensions that can be through a “common cause” and/or a “shared identity”.

We should note that “common cause” and “shared identity” are not necessarily antithetical or synthetic. This varies according to the context in which solidary action is carried out. It may happen that a solidary action may have a “common cause” as its fundamental reason and a “shared identity” is ruled out. Forst didn't explain the details of these combinations, but I will try to explain as from three scenarios.

In a first possible scenario, people can come together and make efforts for a cause that is common to them without necessarily sharing the same identity horizons. That is, an identity fusion does not necessarily occur. For example, I can fight world hunger as my cause and join with individuals and groups that even I do not know their specific identities. People with different religious segments and beliefs or even an atheist can, despite their constitutive differences on an ethical-cultural plane, speak the same language when the subject is, in this case in question, the fight against world hunger.

A brief parenthesis: a single example that Forst (2021, p. 4) gives about the possibilities of mergers on “common cause” and “shared identity” is related to the working class:

Still, sometimes, such as in the case of working-class solidarity, the common cause determines the commonality more than a particular social situation or identity marker (for example, you do not need to be a worker to be solidary with the cause of the working class).

In short: in a second scenario, a solidary action can be motivated by a sharing of identity that can subsequently lead to a common cause, but not necessarily. For instance: an individual can join others to fight for a cause that they initially never thought of helping or

being solidary of, but such adherence was motivated by the sharing of identity within a certain group, be it religious, political etc. It is also possible to show solidarity in relation to something without necessarily engaging in the fight. This is common in donations when someone electronically allocates a given amount to a distant cause on another continent, driven merely by a religious stimulus with no real intention of engaging in the cause.

A third scenario involves the symbiosis and convergence of a “common cause” and a “shared identity.” In this case, an individual embraces a common cause while also sharing the same horizon of meaning as the other members of the solidarity group. Conversely, a shared identity may lead the individual to commit to a common cause in solidarity with others.

Regardless of these possibilities, Forst, relying on Andrea Sangiovanni (2015), makes it clear that solidarity is a practical attitude constituted by these two dimensions: “common cause” and/or “shared identity”.

Solidarity expresses a willingness to act with and for the sake of others based on the motive of affirming the collective bond, i.e. of furthering the common cause or the shared identity, when this is required, or both. Solidarity as a practical attitude exists as long as this bond is perceived to be important and binding, and it materializes when corresponding action is felt to be required, especially in the face of threats or particular challenges. [...]. Solidary action is voluntary and based on inner conviction because it springs from the motive of the common bond as felt and perceived by those who act (which does not exclude motivational forces that in your view leave you with no alternative other than to be solidary, especially if connected with strong social expectations to act loyally) (Forst, 2021, p. 4).

Solidarity, far from being generic and an abstract concept, is a practical and voluntary attitude. It is linked to the contexts and reasons through which individuals are led to act in solidarity. Here Forst evokes what Andrea Sangiovanni (2015) in “Solidarity as Joint Action” called “reciprocal solidarity”. An individual engaged in a common cause is solidary of the cause and his action returns to the benefit of the whole as it implies the improvement of society.

Another aspect of this “reciprocal solidarity” is its asymmetry, in the sense that, as I pointed out in the first scenario, I engage in a fight for a common good while being in a different position from those who fight with me (diverse identities and social situations etc.).

Solidary reciprocity can take imagined and yet real, highly asymmetrical forms. This also includes solidary support for people struggling for human rights in a way and as a cause by which I feel bound, even though I may not know them personally or they may be in a position where they could not possibly reciprocate what I do. Nevertheless, we share a cause for which we



act together, each doing their share (Forst, 2021, p. 5).

As Rainer Forst rightly emphasizes, reciprocity in relationships of solidarity does not imply the expectation of a direct return. Rather, one commits to a common cause without expecting anything in exchange, since solidarity often operates through asymmetrical relationships in which those in subordinate positions are unable to reciprocate. Radically speaking, the sense of solidary reciprocity lies precisely in the fact of this asymmetry, that is, it is about giving oneself without expecting a return.

In my view, solidarity reciprocity refutes Forst's own claim (2021, p. 5) according to which it is somewhat mistaken to say that solidarity is more due to the weakest members of society, as it applies to the collective.

It is often said that solidarity is owed most to the weakest member of a collective, but this is only half of the truth: It is owed to the collective and its general cause and common good, but it may materialize in the shape of a particular concern for those who are weakest, depending on the specific nature of the common bond.

In fact, I agree that there are no borders to solidarity and that it has a comprehensive and collective nature, but it is not wrong to think that it especially assists people in situations of suffering and need. Going in a different direction from Forst, I think that solidarity has an imminent social role and that it is born, especially, in deplorable contexts of poverty and abandonment. Here, I am thinking of social solidarity as the most necessary form of solidarity in current relationships.

I owe an answer on the following point: why is solidarity, for Forst, a normatively dependent concept? Without further ado, it is normatively dependent because it does not subsist in itself. Let us remember the distinction between concept and conceptions. Solidarity is not an essentialist concept, but it is a practical attitude inserted in multiple contexts of justification. In this sense, the concept of solidarity is understood from its effective contexts of accomplishment, intending to understand what an act of solidarity is and the reasons why the act was implemented.

Forst (2021, p. 5) rightly argues that it is necessary to strip solidarity of its moralizing garb, as if it were an intrinsically good moral virtue. Against this, he mentions nationalist movements that use solidarity and its language as a moral virtue for ulterior motives that result in violent domination and oppressive regimes.

And nationalist movements have historically used the language of solidarity quite effectively for many purposes, including aggressive ones. Hence, in general, solidarity, like courage, is a morally neutral virtue, and it can be used



for good or bad purposes.

It is noteworthy that Forst does this not only in relation to solidarity, but also in relation to power when he speaks of a cognitive or neutral understanding of power, in the sense of stating that power itself is neutral and its goodness or badness depends on its effectiveness, that is, it depends on its use in relationships; hence the relationship he establishes between legitimate power (*Macht*) and arbitrary, oppressive, violent power (*Gewalt*) (Forst, 2014).

So, it is necessary to clarify that solidarity is a normatively dependent concept because it depends on other normative contexts for its definition. It is not sufficient in itself and does not have a univocal meaning. Solidarity, according to the author, is a “promiscuous concept” in the sense that it can serve many different ends – it has no particular end in itself (I will call this “escape from essentialism”). The concept of solidarity depends on a set of conceptions of solidarity. As Forst himself explains (2021, p. 5-6):

The concept itself is thus a normatively dependent one, which means that normative conceptions of solidarity are in need of interpretive supplementation by other normative principles (such as justice) or values (such as national welfare or serving God’s honor). The concept of solidarity is contextually and normatively promiscuous – it can serve many ends and does not contain any particular ends in itself, whether moral or political.

Asking about the concept of solidarity means questioning the reasons through which the action is taken, implemented. Thus, solidarity can take ethical, religious, moral, political, social forms, etc. The concept of solidarity holds both the general and the particular; it is intended to be general but depends on the values underlying the solidary action. This is expressed above all in religious and philosophical motivations aimed at solidarity action which, on the one hand, has a concrete engagement, but on the other hand, the founding motivation of the action and the aspiration are universal (as is the case with human rights).

Normative contexts of solidarity in Forst

Previously, I tried to demonstrate that for Forst, solidarity is a concept normatively dependent on the different conceptions and worldviews regarding what an act of solidarity is in concrete terms of ordinary life. This concept does not come from a verticalization that says from top to bottom what “the” solidarity is hegemonically, but, on the contrary, its definition is constructed from horizontalized praxis through the varied ways in which people think about it and embody it in their social relationships.

Arguing that the concept of solidarity depends on different contexts and conceptions of solidarity does not imply, according to Forst (2021, p. 7), relativism, but it does mean that

important practical aspects such as “common bond”, “shared identity” and “common cause” are taken seriously. Conceptions of solidarity imply the values, principles, and motivations through which agents carry out their acts of solidarity.

Despite not quoting Honneth's theory of recognition, Forst (2021, p. 7) states that a normative context of solidarity is a context of justification that determines the relevant reasons for solidarity action which, in turn, is “a context of normatively binding social relations of mutual recognition”.

In other words, it is in the context of recognition that individuals exercise their acts of solidarity. Solidarity is never a radically monological or atomized act. That said, following the normative justification contexts of Contexts of Justice (1994; 2002), Forst applies solidarity to ethical, legal, political, and moral contexts.

(i) *Ethical context of solidarity*. In this context, solidary actions occur based on the relationship between private and shared conceptions of good. There is a presumed fusion between personal identity and shared identity. The fundamental question is how I practice acts of solidarity within an ethical community permeated by values, principles, motivations, and worldviews that are peculiar to it. For a given ethical community, an act of solidarity occurs due to motivation X, in another due to motivation Y.

In an ethical context, solidarity is generated within values from family relationships and in the expansion of this intimate circle to the community. Here, in my point of view there is no strong difference between Honneth and Forst, considering Honneth from the loving and affective sphere of intersubjective patterns of recognition.

(ii) *Legal context of solidarity* [institutionalized solidarity/juridification of solidarity]. If, on the one hand, solidarity is a voluntary action and, on the other, the law is the sphere of coercion, how can solidarity be effective within the legal context? Forst (2021, p. 8) states that Durkheim and Hegel already insisted on the need for legally institutionalized solidary social systems. These systems would be the consequence of the increase of complexity in modern social relations, especially considering the legal mediation of contractual bonds between individuals in contexts of the social division of labor.

Durkheim considers that Comte would have been the first to reframe the division of labor in terms of solidarity, rethinking it beyond merely economic and productive market issues. Market relations demand solidary bonds with a view to entering and fulfilling contracts and agreements. Durkheim calls this “organic solidarity” as an alternative to “mechanical solidarity”. The mechanical pattern is pre-modern, tribal, family, affective, community, and is based on a sharing of identity; the organic pattern is modern, the product

of the increase in complexity of social relations, it is not spontaneous, but bureaucratic.

It is important to highlight that this type of modern solidarity tied to the social relations of the world of labor and the market is still an initial step towards a strong democratic solidarity because it is based on the satisfaction of individual needs and, therefore, does not yet reach the universality of an ethical community (Hegel, 1991, § 204). Durkheim (1984, p. 72-73) also considers *organic solidarity* to be still insufficient because it bonds things to people, but it is flawed as it does not create direct bonds between people (intersubjective deficit). It is still an abstract and negative solidarity that regulates individual will in relation to the object under the measurement of a contract.

Within the legal context of solidarity, one can also speak of “solidarity communities” (*Solidargemeinschaften, Communities of Solidarity*). In Forst's view (2021, p. 9), Leibniz was the pioneer of “institutionalized solidarity”, in the sense that he would have argued in favor of a security scheme through the contribution of the community against fires and floods. Leibniz would have compared society to a ship whose well-being was everyone's duty.

Cases such as public health systems legally maintained by public taxes are examples of “institutionalized solidarity”. After Leibniz, Kant also thought this in his *Rechtslehre* (1797) when he claimed that the State, for public reasons, has the right to oblige the richest to provide the means of preservation for the poorest (MS, AA 06: 326).

From a Kantian contractualism view, entering the *conditio iuris publica* entails assuming, as a citizen, civic responsibilities, including duties of solidarity toward others under the rule of law. It is therefore difficult to understand why Rainer Forst, despite his Kantian commitments, does not engage with this line of argument, in which the institutionalization and juridification of solidarity are clearly articulated.

Forst highlights that libertarians consider the civic binding and institutionalized solidarity to be undue coercion that harms individual freedom. In this sense, it would be illegal and arbitrary for the State to legally force individuals, for example, to participate in income transfer programs contributing to the poorest through taxation. Forst does not quote, however, it is worth highlighting Nozick's libertarian criticism of Rawls.

Nozick (1974) says that after Mill, *A Theory of Justice* by Rawls is the most vigorous, deep, subtle, broad, and systematic work we have, and that “Political philosophers now must either work within Rawls' theory or explain why not.” However, his main divergence concerns the theme of social cooperation defended by Rawls. Let us remember that just like Kant, Rawls (1993) asserts that the State, for reasons of distributive justice, has the role of aiding the most disadvantaged.



In Nozick's (1974) libertarian vision in defense of the minimal State and meritocracy, "social cooperation introduces a muddying of the waters that makes it unclear or indeterminate who is entitled to what". And he adds: "In the social noncooperation situation, it might be said, each individual deserves what he gets unaided by his own efforts; or rather, no one else can make a claim of justice against this holding".

In my opinion, Forst's (2021, p. 9) response to this Libertarian individualist doctrine is very accurate and vehement:

Institutionalizing a system of social solidarity can therefore be seen as an act of solidarity, and upholding it, too; dismantling it in a neoliberal spirit can rightly be criticized as an act of de-solidarization.

This statement is important not only because it combats currents contrary to solidarity, but also because it presents another aspect of Forst's conception of justice beyond its proceduralist view in the following sense: justice is not something just related to the fulfillment of certain procedures (generality and reciprocity), but it also concerns solidarity practices, therefore, it is something substantial immersed in people's concrete lives.

Political context of solidarity. In this context, Forst suggests two basic conceptions of solidarity: ethical-political and political-social. The first concerns national ties and a shared history within a given ethnicity is signified in political terms. "Thus, a communitarian view puts priority on virtues like patriotism or solidarity that directly express one's commitment to a particular community" (Forst, 2012, p. 167).

In this ethical-political perspective, solidarity occurs in terms of nationalism, whether beneficial or harmful. Forst (2021, p. 10) speaks of nationalism as a "normative source of solidary practical motivation". Of course, this can result in jingoism and dictatorial regimes, hence the need for constant reflection and criticism regarding the reasons through which presumed relations of solidarity are established.

Horror can come disguised as solidarity. And there are explicit arbitrary cases in which people, groups or nations, come together in solidarity networks to commit evil. In this sense, solidarity is a diffuse and, at times, obscure concept, depending on who exercises it and for what purposes.

Under the political-social perspective, solidarity does not occur around a nation or an ethical community, but around a cause and a project that motivates people to show solidarity, such as, for example, ecological cause, the feminist one, anti-racism etc. "Political-social solidarity often aims at establishing a just society, as in movements for



gender and racial equality or for overcoming class and caste exploitation as grave forms of injustice” (Forst, 2021, p. 10).

In this sense, while the ethical-political form of solidarity is nationalist, the political-social form is activist and has as its main agenda the establishment of a just society through common social struggle. The first ones, the nationalists, are conservative; the second ones, the activists, are transformative, progressive. They believe in solidary action as a means of overcoming transnational injustices. In my analysis, Forst's affiliation with the political-social form of solidarity is sharp.

The community of solidarity with respect to social and political justice must be broader than the nation state, because states are part of transnational schemes of cooperation and, most importantly, of enforced and asymmetrical cooperation that include relations of political, social and economic exploitation which ought to be overcome by institutions of transnational justice. From a comprehensive perspective of justice, national solidarity must not be realized at the price of a lack of solidarity with others who are exploited and dominated (Forst, 2021, p. 11).

Therefore, there are two fundamental points here: solidarity must go beyond the borders of the nation-state. This is directly compatible with Brunkhorst's defense of a transnational democratic community as an expansion of civic friendship; solidarity can never be compatible with regimes of domination.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion suggests that there is no single, universal, and abstract concept of solidarity. Rather, solidarity is a concept whose meaning is shaped by diverse conceptions rooted in the concrete experiences and social realities of individuals and communities.

As Forst said, solidarity is a normatively dependent concept, so it cannot be said that it is essentially this or that; It is necessary for him to consider the ethical conceptions and the different worldviews of solidarity to extract a viable concept from there. In other words, solidarity is a concept embodied in concrete ethical conceptions of life. It is not an abstraction or an *a priori*, but a practical concept.

The act of solidarity requires a “joint action” in which individuals act freely and without expecting any return or payment; it is not a coercive act, but one arising from free social awareness, as Sangiovanni highlighted. Sangiovanni's thesis considers that an action is solidary when the subjects, in terms of mutual commitment, share a common objective with a view to overcoming a significant adversity.



Solidarity may be expressed through religious communities, patriotism, or both nationalist and socialist movements. However, as Hauke Brunkhorst rightly argues, its highest expression lies in an inclusive and global democratic practice. By contrast, when solidarity is confined to religious, patriotic, or nationalist frameworks, it can readily give rise to exclusion and therefore undermine its own normative aspirations.

Therefore, we can conclude following Forst's claim that the community of solidarity cannot be confined to the nation-state, as states are embedded in transnational structures of cooperation. Consequently, solidarity must be extended beyond national borders if global injustices are to be overcome through principles of transnational justice. In this sense, despite their differences, the three authors' approaches contribute significantly to the renewal of the concept of solidarity - a concept almost forgotten in philosophy.

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