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Concrete Utopianism

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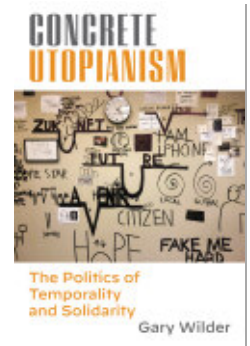
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Intermezzo

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Solidarity

One can give nothing whatever without giving oneself—that is to say, risking oneself.

—JAMES BALDWIN

Politics does not reflect majorities, it constructs them.

—STUART HALL

A Contradictory Concept

The concept of “solidarity” developed simultaneously with the bourgeois social order whose individualist logic it opposed. From the French *solidaire*, it has long signaled the solid bloc of resistance, the forms of association and unity that developed among modernity’s dispossessed. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker use the term to describe the forms of autonomous self-organization and coordinated resistance that developed between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, among sailors, slaves, pirates, dockworkers, peasants, religious radicals, and radical republicans across the Atlantic world.¹ Likewise, Thomas C. Holt uses solidarity to analyze forms of slave resistance and postemancipation revolts in colonial Jamaica.² Historians E. P. Thompson and William Sewell use the idiom of solidarity to trace how, following the French and industrial revolutions, European craftsman and skilled workers mobilized existing forms of collective identification and corporate organization to resist processes of expropriation and proletarianization through mutual aid societies, workers’ associations, and strikes.³ In Europe these resistant solidarity practices slowly crystallized into a political project to reconstitute

society on a nonliberal foundation. The term *solidarité* began to circulate in the milieu of early-nineteenth-century French labor militancy and republican socialism.

The popular current of the 1848 Revolution in France fought to create a social republic that would assume responsibility for citizens' welfare through instituting social rights founded on these same principles of mutuality, reciprocity, cooperation, and collectivity. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the self-taught printer and revolutionary socialist who participated directly in this revolution, explicitly used the concept of solidarity to describe his mutualist program for "socialist democracy" through the self-organization of workers into producers' cooperatives and the creation of a democratic system of banking and credit.⁴ "Equality in exchange," he argued, would serve as "the basis of the equality of labor, of real solidarity."⁵ Likewise, a Bank of the People would "[organize] workers' mutual solidarity" in the service of a democratic socialist republic based on nonexploitive relations of exchange.⁶ Proudhon believed that cooperative labor and democratic credit would allow the "democratic and social creed" to triumph on ever larger scales: from workers' associations to collective ownership of small farms and firms to large-scale property and industry to massive ventures such as mines, canals, and railways.⁷ These would be "handed over to democratically organized workers' associations" that would serve as "the pioneering core of [a] vast federation of companies and societies woven into the common cloth of the democratic and social Republic."⁸ Proudhon remarked that in such an "antigovernmental" society, "the center is everywhere, the circumference nowhere."⁹ Accordingly, he believed that these cooperative practices would create "real solidarity among the nations."¹⁰ He thus viewed mutualism and internationalism as two sides of the same coin; solidarity would guide relations within and across social formations.

Marx's thinking was also inflected by the 1848 Revolution. Despite deep disagreement with Proudhon, he, too, regarded social solidarity as both a means and end of anticapitalist struggle. Between the 1840s and 1870s, Marx critiqued industrial capitalism, liberal democracy, and the bourgeois state from the standpoint of "association," a concept that reverberated with solidarity. In one register, Marx used "association" to describe the forms of sociality, organization, and unity practiced by workers in everyday life, in the workplace, and through labor struggles. *The Communist Manifesto* describes how "the advance of industry . . . replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by the revolutionary combination, due to association."¹¹ Accordingly, workers "club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision . . . for these occasional revolts."¹² Through this "ever-expanding union of the workers" local class conflicts would coalesce into a common political struggle.¹³

Marx treats association as both a method of labor militancy and its aim; it would allow workers to enjoy the kind of cooperative sociality that competitive capitalism had obstructed. In his 1844 manuscripts he writes, “When communist *workmen* gather together, their immediate aim is instruction, propaganda, etc. But at the same time they acquire a new need—the need for society—and what appears as a means has become an end.”¹⁴ He notes, “In the gatherings of French socialist workers . . . [s]moking, eating and drinking, etc. are no longer means of creating links between people. Company, association, conversation, which in its turn has society as its goal, is enough for them. The brotherhood of man is not a hollow phrase, it is a reality.”¹⁵

These forms and practices of worker association became one model for Marx’s vision of a disalienated society. Rejecting any understanding of “society” as an abstract entity that exists “over against the individual,” he argues that “the individual is the *social being*. His vital expression . . . is therefore an expression and confirmation of *social life*.”¹⁶ This formulation was reiterated in his sixth thesis on Feuerbach: “The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.”¹⁷ Accordingly, Marx praises “activity and consumption that express and confirm themselves directly in *real association* with other men.”¹⁸ He characterizes Communism as “activity in direct association with others”¹⁹ and contends that “in a real community . . . individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association.”²⁰ Association thus indexed a form of sociality that would cut across the modern opposition between the individual and society.

The Communist Manifesto envisions a postcapitalist order in which “class distinctions have disappeared, and all production [is] concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation.”²¹ As Marx and Engels famously declared, “We shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”²² Ten years later, in the *Grundrisse*, Marx contrasts capitalism, where individuals produce “for society” a system in which they produce in a “*directly social*” manner as the “offspring of association” in order to “manage” their “common wealth.”²³ Likewise, in the first volume of *Capital* (1867), Marx refers to “directly associated labor” and “production by freely associated men” as his standpoint of critique and emancipatory horizon.²⁴

In 1871, worldly events intersected with Marx’s proleptic social analysis when the Paris Commune attempted to transform land and capital into “mere instruments of free and associated labour.”²⁵ By these means, Marx believed, “united cooperative societies” could “regulate national production upon a common plan” and thereby institute a form of “‘possible’ communism.”²⁶ Through “the reabsorption of state power by society as its own living forces,” he explained, the “popular masses themselves” made the Paris Commune into

“the political form of their social emancipation.”²⁷ The Commune seemed to have realized, however fleetingly, Marx’s earlier hope and call for “human emancipation:

Only when real, individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself and as an individual man has become a *species-being* in his empirical life, his individual work and his individual relationships, only when man has recognized and organized his *forces propres* as *social forces* so that social force is no longer separated from him in the form of *political* force, only then will human emancipation be completed.²⁸

Association thus pointed beyond alienating bourgeois oppositions between public and private, state and society, citizen and human.

Marx also identified in the Paris Commune the germ of a revolutionary internationalism that would be cause and consequence of new solidarity practices. Beyond being the “true representative of . . . French society . . . and . . . the truly national government,” Marx explained, “as a working men’s government, as the bold champion of the emancipation of labor, emphatically international . . . the Commune annexed to France the working people of the world.”²⁹ He praises the Commune for rejecting the nationalist “chauvinism of the bourgeoisie” and argues that “the international cooperation of the working classes” is “the first condition of their emancipation.”³⁰ Marx contends that the revolutionary aim was not only to create an international alliance of struggling workers against bourgeois class rule, but to institute a new epoch of human history where all of “mankind” could be freely associated “through the Communal form of political organization.”³¹ By linking communal self-management and human emancipation on a planetary scale, “association” was a concrete universal that pointed beyond the false distinction between concrete particularity and abstract universality.

Marx, of course, had long been committed to internationalist solidarity. *The Communist Manifesto*, which famously ended with the call “Working men of all countries, unite!,” pledged that “Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things . . . they labor everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.”³² Recall that Marx and Engels were originally commissioned to write the *Manifesto* at the November 1847 convention of the Communist League, which Engels described as an international “workingmen’s association.”³³ Almost twenty years later, in September 1864, they helped to form the International Workingmen’s Association in the wake of the European-wide counterrevolution.

In his Inaugural Address to this First International, Marx attributes the failures of 1848 to the absence of “solidarity of action between the British and con-

tinental working classes.”³⁴ He warned that “disregard of that bond of brotherhood, which ought to exist between workmen of different countries, and incite them to stand firmly by each other in all their struggles for emancipation, will be chastised by . . . their incoherent efforts.”³⁵ For Marx, international labor solidarity was not merely a matter of abstract morality or disinterested empathy. He insisted that the failure of one fraction of the working class would ensure the failure of the movement as a whole. Because conditions of domination were interrelated, their common future depended on one another. It followed that the “working classes” had a “duty to master . . . the mysteries of international politics” in order to “counteract” the “diplomatic acts of their respective governments.”³⁶ Marx praised English workers for opposing Atlantic slavery and called on European labor movements to defend Poland against Russian imperial conquest. The Provisional Rules of the International held that “the emancipation of labor is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem embracing all the countries in which modern society exists.”³⁷ To this end, the organization pledged that “when immediate practical steps should be needed, as, for instance, in case of international quarrels, the action of the associated societies be simultaneous and uniform.”³⁸ On a more mundane but no less important level, each national association pledged to provide “the fraternal support of the associated workingmen” to any individual member who moved residence from one country to another.³⁹ In matters of solidarity, overarching principles could not be separated from everyday practices.

Marx’s understanding of international solidarity is nicely condensed in his 1870 letter on Irish nationalism to German comrades in the United States. He explains that because England is the world “metropolis of capital,” a social revolution there would be indispensable to the emancipation of labor everywhere.⁴⁰ Next, he observed that English wealth and power depended largely on the colonization of Ireland—that is, the expropriation of land and dispossession of peasants, cheap raw materials and a surplus population to fuel industrialization at home, and religious and nationalist prejudices to keep the metropolitan working class divided. Finally, he noted that revolution in Ireland could be more easily accomplished than in England. Marx therefore concluded that “the decisive blow against the English ruling classes (and it will be decisive for the workers’ movement all over the world) cannot be delivered *in England* but *only in Ireland*.”⁴¹ These are the grounds on which he called on the International to support Irish national liberation. Its “special task” was “to make the English workers realize that *for them* the *national emancipation of Ireland* is not a question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment but the *first condition of their own social emancipation*.”⁴² This last sentence underscores that Marx’s revolutionary internationalism was not a bourgeois humanism.

Marx insisted that international solidarity was both a tactical necessity and a good in itself, declaring that “all societies and individuals adhering to [the International], will acknowledge truth, justice, and morality, as the basis of their conduct towards each other, and towards all men, without regard to color, creed, or nationality; They hold it the duty of a man to claim the rights of a man and a citizen, not only for himself, but for every man who does his duty.”⁴³ This was not a form of post-Enlightenment abstract universalism that would homogenize peoples and standardize differences. Marx does not propose the eventual dissolution of specific worker associations or their amalgamation into a central governing body. On the contrary, he explains that “joining the International Association, will preserve their existent organizations intact.”⁴⁴ He envisions a global federation of self-managing “workingmen’s societies” that would be “united in a perpetual bond of fraternal cooperation.”⁴⁵ For Marx, both local self-management and worldwide internationalism were grounded in solidarity practices. He hoped to conjugate them within a new differential unity. This was a vision of *concrete universalism* rooted in translocal networks of socialist association.

The *belle époque* European order feared precisely the kinds of revolutionary solidarity promoted by Marxism and embodied by the Paris Commune. At roughly the same time, such solidarity was also expressed in the “general strike” of enslaved Blacks during the U.S. Civil War, the 1865 Morant Bay peasant rebellion in Jamaica, the rent strikes and boycotts against landlords and evictions during the Irish Land War (1879–1882), and the coordinated actions of anarchist networks linking Europe, East Asia, and the Caribbean.⁴⁶ National states, colonial administrations, ruling classes, industrial oligarchs, and *ancien régime* autocrats were equally opposed to the prospect of a global federation of self-managing and freely associated producers. Their counterrevolutionary fear, along with the new requirements of mass production, mass politics, and colonial rule set in motion the historic compromise among labor, capital, and the state which led first to social democracy and the Second International, and eventually to Fordist capitalism and Keynesian welfarism. Perversely, this attempt to reform liberal capitalism in order to neutralize Marxism and preempt class war was also articulated in the language of solidarity.

Solidarisme, as elaborated by Léon Bourgeois, famously became a state ideology in Third Republic France.⁴⁷ At the same time, the new field of academic sociology, dominated by Émile Durkheim and his circle, elevated social solidarity into an object of analysis, a normative ideal, and a reformist desire.⁴⁸ Republican politicians and scholars began to question classical liberal assumptions about society by conceptualizing individuals as intrinsically social beings, born into webs of interdependence. In contrast to contract theory, they

reconceptualized society as founded upon reciprocity, mutuality, and shared risk.⁴⁹ In this story, individuals assumed responsibility for their neighbors, employers for their workers, and the state for the welfare of its citizens. This new discourse of solidarity appropriated—in order to domesticate—workerist, socialist, and Marxist critiques of liberal capitalism. Its aim was to ensure social integration and public order, not to realize social justice and public freedom. Accordingly, it naturalized solidarity as a social fact rather than recognize it as a political practice. The new politics of solidarity may have blurred the categorical distinction between state and society that Marx regarded as a source of alienation. But it also helped to consolidate a more powerful form of capitalism, to further expand the scale and scope of national state power, and to ground new strategies of imperial rule.⁵⁰

Of course, social democrats, liberal sociologists, welfare states, and colonial administrators were never able to fully recuperate radical solidarity struggles and imaginaries. Marcel Mauss's reflections on the contemporary importance of "archaic" forms of exchange associated with "the gift," for example, indicate how the transformative implications of solidarity practices could point beyond even scholars' own reformist intentions.⁵¹ More broadly, the legacy and spirit of solidarity politics were equally present in popular cooperative movements from the 1880s through the mid-twentieth century among workers and peasants in Europe, the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, West Africa, and South Asia.⁵² The solidarity ethos also infused the mutual aid societies, multiracial labor unions, and mass movements for colonial emancipation among colonized workers and students living in European metropolises between the world wars.⁵³

A different example of the enduring legacy of solidarity politics is offered by Antonio Gramsci. He participated in the Turin factory occupation and council movement that culminated in the 1920 General Strike. These insurgent interventions depended on effective solidarity relations between urban and rural actors in order to link factories, cities, and the region in a broad movement for workers democracy.⁵⁴ In his subsequent analysis of "the Southern question," Gramsci also engaged the challenge and necessity of revolutionary solidarity. Contending that capitalism, rather than cultural backwardness, was the reason for uneven development in twentieth-century Italy, Gramsci argued for a new alliance between northern workers and southern peasants.⁵⁵ The point was not to recruit peasants to orthodox Marxism but to have workers assume peasant struggles as their own. Gramsci's later prison reflections on relations of force, political blocs, and socialist hegemony were also engagements with the problem of solidarity.⁵⁶

Gramsci may be usefully related to W. E. B. Du Bois, his American con-

temporary, who inherited a legacy of solidarity practices from the Black radical tradition which he related to his specific historical situation. During the 1930s Great Depression Du Bois elaborated a program for Black self-management through consumer cooperatives that would serve as both model and catalyst for transforming liberal democracy in the United States into a new “cooperative commonwealth.”⁵⁷ For Du Bois, solidarity worked in multiple registers. It was a tactic for community survival under conditions of severe deprivation and persecution. It was also part of a long-term strategy of cross-group alliance for a broad movement to transform American society into a multiracial socialist democracy composed of federated cooperatives. Solidarity was also implied by the mutualist principle of sociality that would be practiced within Black cooperative associations and, eventually, the larger society.⁵⁸

Both Gramsci and Du Bois were heterodox Marxists who confronted the challenge of human emancipation in relation to historically specific political situations within unevenly developed and culturally divided societies. Their respective commitments to solidarity struggles and associative politics were inspired, even enabled, by the Russian Revolution. Yet they embraced and extended solidarity traditions in ways that diverged sharply from the authoritarian centralism favored by Soviet state socialism and the Moscow-led Third International. The latter purported to extend the tradition of Marxist internationalism by creating a worldwide network of revolutionary anticapitalist and anti-imperial organizations (whose infrastructure was formed by various national Communist Parties). But given its preoccupation with ideological orthodoxy, its universalist assumptions about history, revolution, and Communism, and its embrace of bureaucratic statism and opposition to democratic self-management, the Third International may be seen as another instance through which the radical legacy of solidarity practices and politics were instrumentalized and domesticated.

Nevertheless, the Third International did facilitate and extend networks of anti-imperial internationalists across Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, North America, and the Caribbean.⁵⁹ Such transversal connections proved invaluable to struggles for decolonization and often promoted forms of political association and associative politics that transgressed the bureaucratic statism and Cold War geopolitics that sponsored them. The solidarity politics of anticolonial internationalism linked struggles within and across regions and empires. Examples, among others, include the Pan-African mobilization against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, Frantz Fanon joining the anticolonial revolution in Algeria, C. L. R. James organizing Black revolutionaries in the United States, and Cuban fighters and aid workers joining their comrades in the Congo and Angola. The African American civil rights

struggle identified and allied explicitly with anticolonial national liberation movements (and vice versa). The Bandung Conference was organized under the rubric of “Afro-Asian solidarity.” The more radical Tricontinental Congress created in Havana in 1966 gave birth to the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

A proper history of solidarity politics would link the legacies of the Paris Commune and anticolonial liberation struggles to the events surrounding May 1968 in France. Many of the militant groups that were active during May 1968 were organized around mutualist principles of association. The larger insurrection depended on and promoted unprecedented solidarity practices between students, factory workers, intellectuals, and technocrats; between the capital, provincial cities, and the countryside; and between white and colonized subalterns.⁶⁰ Moreover, this insurrection was part of a global wave of antisystemic rebellion that linked Paris to places like Prague, Mexico City, and Dakar.⁶¹ Solidarity politics have been central to both the internal organization and international support networks mobilized by Sandinistas, Zapatistas, and the current anti-Zionist Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) coalition. Solidarity politics subtended the global antiapartheid struggle and the Central American sanctuary movement; the alterglobalization movement and World Social Forum; and recent antiautocracy, antiausterity, and Occupy movements in the Middle East, Turkey, Europe, and the United States.

In our current conjuncture, however, when solidarity politics have never been more urgent, the concept has again been instrumentalized and domesticated. This is not only by the statist, populist, and popular forms of nationalism, nativism, and racism that are resolutely identitarian and internal looking. Solidarity today has also been co-opted by proponents of liberal internationalism. Western states, international agencies and institutions (like the International Criminal Court), and the forces of “global governance” regularly justify imperial military interventions through solidaristic doctrines of human rights, humanitarianism, Just War, and the Responsibility to Protect.⁶² The internet has allowed solidarity to be further diluted, if not depoliticized, through individuals’ immediate capacity to express digital likes, hearts, and thumbs-up. International social media displaces, by perversely mimicking, socialist internationalism.

A Critical Political Concept

Like all concepts, solidarity developed in relation to worldly processes from which it emerged and to which it spoke. Historian Reinhart Koselleck contends that concepts “register” historical experiences, contradictions, and tran-

sition.⁶³ For Mikhail Bakhtin, linguistic artifacts are “heteroglot unities” that condense diverse, competing, and interrelated socio-ideological forces within a given social field and across historical periods.⁶⁴ Étienne Balibar suggests that an “essential element of uncertainty” characterizes concepts.⁶⁵ Rather than grasping the world as it really is or settling questions, he suggests that a concept “exhibits dilemmas” by pointing to a “conflictual horizon.”⁶⁶ Solidarity is just such an ambiguous, contradictory, and contested concept. It has been conscripted for and, in turn, soaked up a range of often incompatible political orientations and projects. It continues to reverberate with and mark a conflictual horizon that includes political challenges posed by translocal entanglement, interdependence, and shared risk. It condenses the enduring dilemma raised by the antinomy of popular sovereignty and planetary politics identified by Kant and Arendt (discussed above).

But the concept’s contradictory genealogy does not undermine its potential as a critical political concept. “Solidarity” does not only crystallize persistent dilemmas. It illuminates them in ways that may point beyond some of the limiting frameworks and false oppositions that continue to overdetermine political thinking today. The aim of my genealogy is not to criticize the way discourses of solidarity serve to normalize power relations. Rather, it is to suggest that a tradition of radical solidarity politics may be usefully reactivated today. To this end, I would like to distill from my historical sketch a set of provisional propositions about this concept for our times.

We might usefully distinguish three types or aspects of solidarity. First is solidarity as a principle of struggle whereby actors recognize shared or related conditions of domination and coordinate collective responses. Second is solidarity as a principle of sociality whereby actors pursue self-organization in the spirit of interdependent reciprocity, mutual responsibility, shared risks, and common futures. Third, and related, is solidarity as a principle of cosmopolitan or international linkage across collectivities.

Solidarity is never a given. In contrast to how it is understood by Durkheimian sociology and certain currents of orthodox Marxism, solidarity is a political act, not a social fact. It does not flow naturally from primordial social groupings (whether figured as kinship, community, ethnicity, nationality, or class). Nor should it be conflated with the fiction of self-interested individuals entering social compacts to guarantee security and maximize material welfare. Solidarity presupposes and produces social subjects. Social groups are as much the effect of solidarity as its source. The concept points beyond the conventional opposition between natural communities (supposed to precede politics) and transhistorical individuals (supposed to precede society).

Solidarity is a practice, not a sentiment. The different motives that fuel

solidarity practices are less important than the political, social, and ethical work that they pursue.

Solidarity requires risk. In contrast to feelings of compassion or acts of charity from a safe distance, solidarity is a standing-with where something is at stake. It means renouncing safety and sharing risk, putting oneself on the line by propelling oneself over the line that is supposed to mark an outside. Relations of solidarity are forged in shared or common struggle.

Solidarity starts from entanglement. The non-indifferent commitment to “stand with” flows from the fact of mutual implication, from actors’ recognition that they are already involved in each other’s situations, that they share a common world, and their future prospects are somehow bound together. They may be subject to similar conditions of oppression, recognize a common enemy, or be linked through a broader system of intersecting domination. Alternatively, members of socially dominant groups may recognize their own implication in and responsibility for others’ domination, whether near or far. In both cases, solidarity starts from the fact that in a common world, forms of domination create relations of mutual responsibility whereby the fate of each depends on all, and all on each.

Radical solidarity politics contrast with the kind of logic that underlies something like the liberal international “Responsibility to Protect” whereby atomized individuals delegate their social power to alien agencies (such as states) that act, often violently, to “protect” suffering individuals, figured as absolute others, in the name of humanity. But solidarity also differs from Emmanuel Levinas’s and Jacques Derrida’s ideas about infinite responsibility for the absolute other, which situate self and other on different ontological and ethical planes.⁶⁷ Solidarity is the response to a call, not the obligation to a face. It figures horizontal relationships among social individuals within and across struggling collectives who are already concretely implicated in each other’s history and fate. But it does not assume that privileged majorities and dominated minorities are equally responsible to one another.

Solidarity is a practice of identification that cuts across conventional oppositions between identity and difference. It calls into question categorical divisions between insiders and outsiders, the threatened and the protected, the implicated and the indifferent, those who must take sides and spectators or commentators who can afford to stay off the field. But this does not mean that solidarity presupposes sameness, levels differences, or assimilates heterogeneity into a singular identity or undifferentiated totality. Nor does it expect consensus. It is an uneven, messy, and risky enterprise, ever incomplete, that reveals systemic contradictions, acknowledges power differentials, and generates real conflicts.

Solidarity emerges from and creates differential unities. It is not based on the concrete particular identity of primordial communities that naturally stick together or act in unison. Nor is it based on the abstract universal identity of generic humans who supposedly share a common essence (e.g., reason, will, compassion, pain). Solidarity recognizes the existence of differences that need to be provisionally coordinated. Yet, at every scale, solidarity also calls into question categorical separations by recognizing or creating knots and networks of interdependent singularities. It establishes forms of heterogeneous commonality and concrete universality that displace false oppositions between the abstract universal and the concrete particular, totality and plurality, the shared and the singular. Solidarity refers to mutuality and reciprocity *within and across* heterogeneous formations. It explodes commonsense divisions between us and them, inside and outside, here and there, proximity and distance.

Solidarity practices work to create new subjects for a different kind of social order and to create new social arrangements for a different kind of social subjectivity. It is both a means and an end in itself, an instrument of politics and a political good, an ethical practice and a practical ethics, a strategy that enacts the relations it hopes to institute. It refers to both a historical legacy and a future aspiration. If solidarity indicates a political practice and envisions a set of social arrangements, it also signals a political challenge—the very challenge of politics—to which there can be no definitive solution. In contrast to pragmatic realism and regulative idealism, solidarity is a real practice that has no intrinsic limits.

Solidarity is as much a temporal as a spatial concept. Just as it seeks to connect diverse groups geographically, solidarity may also link different generations across seemingly separate historical epochs. We can think of traditions and legacies as forms of *temporal* solidarity that invite actors to assume responsibility for past and future generations. Recall Kant's claim that humans "cannot be indifferent even to the most remote epoch which may eventually affect our species," and of Benjamin's "secret agreement between past generations and the present one" that endows predecessors with moral claims on existing actors.⁶⁸

Solidarity reworks conventional assumptions about the grounds of political association. It contends that emancipation struggles should create solid blocs and dense networks in order to overcome multiple and intersecting forms of domination. It also suggests that the aim of such struggles is to create a social world and form of life based on principles of reciprocity, mutuality, and collectivity that are prefigured by forms of struggle. In other words, *solidarity anticipates futures; it calls for in order to call forth.* It displaces conventional oppositions between doing and waiting, the actual and the possible, realism

and utopianism. Solidarity practices are always *taking place* and *stretching time*. Propelled by the dialectics of distinction and connection, multiplication and unification, its work can never reach a boundary or come to a stop.

Solidarity conveys a vision of democratic sociality in an interdependent world. By emphasizing association *within and across* social groups, the concept simultaneously affirms and calls into question determinate social communities and the boundaries of polities.

The global swerve toward national populism and authoritarian statism compels all those who can to stand with the many precarious communities targeted by forms of violent nationalism, nativism, and white supremacy. Any number of contemporary political situations call for solidarity politics: the war in Syria, the Mediterranean refugee crisis, the policies of Fortress Europe, the occupation of Palestine, violent imperial interventions perpetrated under US-UN auspices, sovereign debt crises among small nations, and global climate change among them.

More generally and fundamentally, the life prospects of most of the world's peoples and populations are increasingly determined by systemic forces and distant deciders beyond the reach of any state's sovereign power. Demographic, economic, geopolitical, and environmental entanglement and interdependence have never been denser. Processes of structural violence are creating impossible situations for greater numbers of people, a growing proportion of whom are permanently displaced. Like translation and internationalism, solidarity politics always risk slipping into paternalism and reproducing hierarchies. But under current global conditions, the need to coordinate struggles, assume responsibility, and share risks across spurious divisions has never been greater. Equally urgent is the imperative to envision and enact postnational democratic social orders based on principles of reciprocity, mutuality, and collective self-management. Only then might we have any chance of overcoming the rule of capital, the sovereignty of reified states, and social hierarchies based on invidious ontological distinctions among humans.

The concept of solidarity refers to both a method of struggle (in concert) and a principle of sociality (in common) for which the struggle is waged. It indexes forms of unity *within and across* social groups and formations. It conjures nonliberal forms of concrete universality and differential unity founded upon interconnected singularities and federated associations.

Solidarity seeks to transform imperial wars into civil wars.

Solidarity *anticipates a world we wish to see.*