Disorienting Solidarity: Engaging Difference and Developing "Fluidarity"

Matthew Maruggi

Solidarity is an often-invoked political and social virtue in both secular and religious ethics; its definition, however, can be elusive and its practice varied and contested. This article will examine the development of the concept of solidarity in both Western and Eastern religions and critiques of its current use in a globalized world, where it can imply a privileged center setting the agenda for the sake of marginalized others. The article will argue that a new understanding of solidarity can only be developed through disorienting dilemmas, a concept from transformative learning theory, which posits that only when one encounters situations that challenge one's taken-for-granted assumptions about the world can one create new more accurate beliefs to guide one's actions. Disorientation when encountering difference, including religious difference, challenges traditional notions of solidarity, and is better conceptualized as "fluidarity," an attitude and practice that embraces the complexity of engaging the other in a pluralized, diverse, and always changing struggle. In this way, "fluidarity" enlarges solidarity, propelling us to attempt to form alliances and connections from the shaky ground of meeting one another amid difference, while remaining constantly critical of presuming a common struggle and monolithic understanding of truth.

Keywords: Solidarity, Fluidarity, Comparative religions, Transformative learning, Liberation theologies, Interreligious encounter

Introduction

> When it is necessary to drink so much pain
> when a river of anguish drowns us,
> when we have wept many tears
> and they flow like rivers
> from our sad eyes,
> only then
> does the deep hidden sigh of our neighbor
> become our own.[1]

Guatemalan poet Julia Esquivel penned this verse, entitled "The Sigh," in 1985 during the height of the thirty-six-year armed conflict in Guatemala that left more than two hundred thousand people, mostly civilians, dead and drove hundreds of thousands into exile.[2] Esquivel is poetically describing solidarity, a sense of a shared humanity, an often-invoked political and social virtue in both philosophical and religious ethics. It connotes a deep connection to the other, especially the suffering one. What is the meaning of solidarity in the twenty-first century, in a global political environment marked by polarization and sectarianism? As history reveals, close proximity to the other does not automatically breed solidarity; at its worst, living together with difference can devolve into tribalism, often fueled by nationalistic or religious claims.

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[1] Julia Esquivel, *The Certainty of Spring: Poems by a Guatemalan in Exile*, trans. Anne Woehrle (Washington, DC: Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean, 1993).
[2] Greg Grandin, Deborah T. Levenson, and Elizabeth Oglesby, eds., *The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 5.

This article will examine the history of the concept of solidarity and the critiques of its current use by both secular and religious thinkers, especially when it implies a privileged center setting the agenda for the sake of marginalized others. Instead, I will propose that solidarity must be disoriented when encountering difference, including religious difference, and it might be better conceptualized as "fluidarity," a term coined by Diane Nelson to signify an attitude and practice that embraces the complexity of engaging the other in pluralized and ever-changing struggles.[3] This form of deep solidarity must move beyond the conceptual level to action and practice and is especially applicable to the interreligious encounter, where one's own worldview is decentered, relativized, and expanded to see the possibility of the multiplicity of truth.

Solidarity Defined

The word *solidarity* comes from the French *solidarité*, rooted in the Latin *solidus*, meaning solid, and defined as "unity (as a group or class) that produces or is based upon a community of interests, objectives, and standards."[4] Andreas Wildt also links *solidarity*'s meaning to *solidus* but asserts its affective meaning: a feeling of connection or cohesion, a natural feeling of belonging together.[5] Rainer Zoll further delineates old and new forms of solidarity, with the former involving relations between people of the same community with similar social concerns, such as workers' movements. He contends that a new form of solidarity has arisen more recently that focuses on relations with people outside of one's borders who do not necessarily share one's concerns.[6] Giles Gunn believes that solidarity has been, for the last couple of centuries, one of Western culture's most significant secular "god-terms," premised upon the concept of a unitary humanity sharing a bond within and across cultures.[7]

Scholars across religions have attached significance to the concept of solidarity, notably in the development of Catholic social teaching, recorded in documents beginning in the late nineteenth century, that seek to apply Christian scripture and Catholic doctrine to contemporary political, social, economic, and cultural issues. While not specifically using the term *solidarity*, Pope Pius XI speaks about how a just society can only be achieved when "all sections of society have the intimate conviction that they are members of a single family and children of the same Heavenly Father."[8] John Paul II gives the fullest treatment to solidarity in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concern) where he writes:

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[3] Diane M. Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 73.
[4] "Solidarity," *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, last modified February 3, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/solidarity.

[5] Andreas Wildt, "Solidarity: Its History and Contemporary Definitions," in *Solidarity*, ed. Kurt Bayetz (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1999), 209–20.
[6] Uzochukwu J. Njoku, "Rethinking Solidarity as a Principle in Catholic Social Teaching: Going Beyond *Gadium et Spes* and the Social Encyclicals of John Paul II," *Political Theology* 9 (2008): 525–44.
[7] Giles Gunn, "Human Solidarity and the Problem of Otherness," in *Religion and Cultural Studies,* ed. Susan L. Mizruchi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 80–94.
[8] Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno: After Forty Years" in *Catholic Social Thought: A Documentary Heritage,* ed. David J. Obrien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 74.

> [Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good…. Solidarity helps us to see the 'other'—whether a person, people or nation—not just as some kind of instrument, with a capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as 'neighbor,' a 'helper' to be made a sharer on par with ourselves in the banquet of life which all are equally invited by God.[9]

Solidarity affirms a human interconnectedness while at the same time challenging each person to assume responsibility for the other.

Anselm Min speaks of solidarity as having four interrelated meanings that bridge secular and religious definitions. First, solidarity is an ontological category reflecting the constitutive interdependence of all reality; in other words, solidarity names that all human beings are connected by their very nature. Second, solidarity is a historical process, whereby all nations and aspects of life are becoming increasingly interdependent. Third, it is an ethical concept, where, realizing one's interrelatedness to others as human beings and the historical process that links one in an even greater web of connection, one is drawn to acts of ethical and political solidarity. Finally, solidarity is a theological principle, described in Christian terms as the "communion of saints" in which all humanity is bound together by the Holy Spirit as children of God.[10]

In his book *Who Is Man?* Jewish scholar, activist, and teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel pairs solidarity with the concept of solitude. He writes, "Solitude is a necessary protest to the incursions and false alarms of society's hysteria, a period of cure and recovery."[11] Genuine solitude, however, is a search for genuine solidarity—no person is an island. "For man [sic] *to* be means *to* be *with* other human beings. His existence is coexistence."[12] Furthermore, asserts Heschel, "human solidarity is not the product of being human; being human is the product of human solidarity."[13] In other words, it is in the experience of solidarity that individuals achieve their humanity.

The Qur'an also recognizes the solidarity of a shared humanity: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."[14] This verse provides a foundation for the concept of the *ummah* in the Islamic tradition, a term which, strictly defined, encompasses the whole Muslim community without distinction of race, gender, or national origin. The *ummah*, in modern Islamic thought, is also seen as involving the wider non-Muslim community and carries with it the responsibility to build up the community

[9] John Paul II, "Sollictudo Rei Socialis: On Social Concern" in *Catholic Social Thought: A Documentary Heritage,* ed. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 421–22.
[10] Anselm K. Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology After Postmodernism* (New York: T. T. Clark International, 2004), 140–41.
[11] Abraham J. Heschel, *Who Is Man?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965), 44.
[12] Heschel, *Who Is Man?*, 45.
[13] Heschel, *Who Is Man?*, 45.
[14] Qur'an 49:13

and to prevent all forms of injustice because "an unjust community wherein people suffer…is not worthy of the people of Allah and does not reflect the divine will for human life."[15]

Muslim Liberation theologian Farid Esack sees solidarity in Islam as stemming from the concept of *tawhid,* or the unity of God, which leads to a belief in the unity of humankind. To reject this unity through creating divisions or hierarchies along religious or racial lines is a form of *shirk*, or a neglect of duty. Esack experienced the antithesis to human solidarity while living under apartheid in South Africa, which he saw as a form of idolatry, in opposition to *tawhid* because racial discrimination "sets up race as an alternative object of veneration and divides people along the lines of ethnicity."[16]

While solidarity is rooted in Western thought and discussions of it are dominated by Western thinkers, it does have some corollaries outside of the West. Mohandas Gandhi, who claimed wide influences ranging from classical Hinduism to the New Testament and Leo Tolstoy, provided this talisman for determining whether one has truly achieved a sense of solidarity or love for the other:

> Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest person whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him or her. Will this person gain anything by it? Will it restore them to a control over their own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts…and self melting away.[17]

Solidarity connects one to the other, especially the most marginalized other. Gandhi's expression of solidarity can be traced back to the concept of *atman*, which comes out of the Upanishads, one of the sacred text of Hinduism. *Atman*, which is typically translated as the individual "soul," is the same as Brahman, the essence of divinity. If all people have *atman* then all people are connected with each other and to the divine. Philosopher Kenan Malik frames the matter: "One only comes to know the self, the Upanishads suggest, by becoming the self, and one only becomes the self by recognizing that at some fundamental level the self and the world are one."[18] If one understands one's self and the selves of other beings are one reality, then one would experience universal compassion for all beings who share the same universal self.[19]

Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh does not use the word *solidarity* but instead refers to the development of "interbeing," a term combining "mutual" and "to be," meaning "I am, therefore you are. You are therefore, I am.... We inter-are."[20] Like Gandhi, he believes that one can only develop this sense of interbeing by encountering the marginalized: "Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are

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[15] Mari Rapela Heidt, *Moral Traditions: An Introduction to World Religious Ethics* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2010), 83.
[16] Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation, and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications, 1997), 92.
[17] Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Volume 2* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan, 1958), 65.
[18] Kenan Malik, *The Quest for a Moral Compass: A Global History of Ethics (*New Delhi, India: Atlantic Books, 2014), 81.
[19] Darrell J. Fasching, Dell DeChant, and David M. Lantigua, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach to Global Ethics, 2nd ed.* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 140.
[20] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley, CA: Paralax Press, 1987), 87.

suffering by all means, including personal contact and visits, images, sound."[21] This encounter with the suffering should then lead to acts of solidarity where one should "live simply and share time, energy, and material resources with those in need."[22] Remarkably similar to the concept of interbeing is the Bantu word *Ubuntu.* South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, although a Christian himself, understands this principle to come from indigenous African spirituality and worldview. He describes the principle of *Ubuntu* as the understanding that "my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'A person is a person through other persons.'"[23]

Solidarity Disputed

Critics of the concept and practice of solidarity question its premise in the idea of a unitary humanity and a human bond across cultures. Postmodernist philosophy suggests that solidarity is another grand narrative that subjugates difference and otherness in favor of homogeneity and universality. Postmodernists argue that human beings cannot be understood as possessing a universal nature with a collective ethical order.[24] Jean-François Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives," valuing instead the little narrative, the *petit recit,* which facilitates a complex and mobile fabric of human relations that refines one's sensitivity to differences.[25] The emphasis on otherness and the little narrative can release the voices of subjugated knowledge, "the voices of all those marginalized by the official story."[26] In other words, viewed this way the concept of solidarity further marginalizes those already on the margins, and letting go of this notion can allow those very others to have their own voice.

Following closely in this vein is postcolonial discourse, which is concerned with the cultural and discursive domination of the West on colonial subjects.[27] Solidarity is often linked with Western imperialism and the history of colonization.[28] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asserts that the relationship of Westerners to subalterns, marginalized groups and peoples, even when benevolent, is often reduced to white men speaking on behalf of and saving brown people, especially women.[29] In this way, the colonized become speechless. Grounded in this postcolonial critique, anthropologist Diane Nelson examines solidarity from the insider perspective of one involved in the solidarity movement with the people of Guatemala during their bloody civil war and genocide of indigenous people. Solidarity, she asserts, "may too often assume the humanist stance that we can unproblematically understand each other despite linguistic, cultural, national, and power differentials."[30] Solidarity is too often about self-fashioning or self-definition, leaning on the solid identities of heroes and villains, with benevolent Westerners or gringos, as moral

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[21] Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*, 91.
[22] Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*, 92.
[23] Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 31.
[24] Gunn, "Human Solidarity and the Problem of Otherness," 80–94.
[25] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.
[26] David Tracy, *On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics, and Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 20.
[27] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism: The New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 1998).
[28] Gunn, "Human Solidarity and the Problem of Otherness," 80–94.
[29] Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1988).
[30] Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound,* 54–55.

subjects, against unjust power structures. It does not accept the heterogeneity of "the other"; rather, it tends towards rigidity, relying on solid unchanging identifications.

Religious thinkers from the Christian tradition have also found the prevailing conceptualizations of solidarity lacking at best or oppressive at worst. Uzochukwu Jude Njoku delineates how Catholic social teaching has based its call for solidarity on the idea that humanity is one big family under God, but can overlook "the fact that the family can also be a scene of rivalry and competition, autocracy and patriarchy, violence and betrayal."[31] Mark Lewis Taylor posits that the solidarity may be unsustainable as a term for those who work with the marginalized because it often implies "too sanguine a knowledge of the other, too pretentious an identifying with their plight, too presumptuous a connection to shared struggle with them."[32] Anselm Min asserts that Christian theology's quest to name the universal can be insensitive to the particular. The human person is then reduced to a single category or identity, and solidarity "with" others implies a privileged center where one sets the agenda on others' behalf.[33] From this perspective solidarity becomes a tool for one's own liberation and identity development and the other is relevant only for this purpose.

African-American Buddhist teacher angel Kyodo williams notes the breakdown of solidarity across racial and religious lines during the civil rights era, where it devolved into "piteous empathy" with the powerful bestowing fairness upon the powerless.[34] She finds that little has changed in the modern era, where the approach focuses on what one can do for "others," which ultimately ends up "othering" rather than creating solidarity. She finds this especially true when it comes to racial reconciliation, where the conventional wisdom holds that there is healing that has to be done but "that healing is to be done on *behalf* of people of color."[35] The question that remains for her is, "how do we allow people to be deeply in touch with themselves, and allow them to become deeply in touch with others?"[36] In other words, how can genuine solidarity be achieved?

The common theme in each of these critiques is the tendency of ideas about solidarity to create hierarchies: center and margins, powerful and powerless, and servant and served. These distinctions ultimately valorize the bestower of solidarity and "otherize" and disempower the receivers of solidarity, who already have the least amount of power. Solidarity becomes a caricature of itself—an image of all people holding hands in peaceful harmony, while never interrogating why some hands possess enabling power and others do not.

Solidarity Disoriented and Reoriented

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[31] Njoku, "Rethinking Solidarity as a Principle in Catholic Social Teaching," 535.

[32] Mark L. Taylor, "Subalternity and Advocacy as *Kairos* in Theology," in *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology,* ed. Joerg Rieger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 35.

[33] Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, 2.

[34] angel Kyodo williams, Rod Owens, and Jasmine Syedullah, *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2016), xiii.

[35] williams et al., *Radical Dharma*, 157.

[36] williams et al., *Radical Dharma,* 98.

While solidarity can be problematic in its conceptualizations and practices, so can a position that does not recognize that a globalized world draws people into interdependence, compelling them to confront one another in all of their difference. What is needed, then, is collaboration to produce a social system that "honors differences while developing a minimum sense of solidarity to make cooperation possible."[37] Anselm Min defines this kind of solidarity in contrast to solidarity *with* others, as solidarity *of* others, which rejects the centrality of any one group, requiring one to decenter the concern of one's own group and recenter on solidarity of all in their needs. In this way, solidarity connotes double resistance—challenging the individual to reject the allegiance to only one's own "tribe," while at the same time affirming the particularity of individual experience. Furthermore, Min wants to ensure that solidarity of others pays attention to "differences in suffering and preferential solidarity with those who suffer more, not reduction of all to abstract equality."[38]

The idea of preferential solidarity is grounded in Latin American liberation theology. Gustavo Gutierrez links solidarity with the preferential option for the poor, asserting that "solidarity is not with 'the poor' in the abstract but with human beings in the flesh and bone. Without love and affection, without—why not say it?—tenderness, there can be no true gesture of solidarity…. True love exists only among equals."[39]

Theologian Dean Brackley, S.J. and philosopher Paul Ricoeur posit similar ideas. Brackley affirms that decentering the privileged position is important to achieve solidarity, which he, along with numerous liberation theologians, refers to as a "view from below." This view, from the perspective of those experiencing poverty and injustice, is not necessarily superior but affirms the particularity and value of the view that is not at the center. It avoids the usual perspective of the privileged subject bumping into the disadvantaged object and instead allows for the *com-penetration* of knower and known.[40] Ricoeur argues that the other is like me, although he (or she) is not me; we are different but often share similar concerns, which can cause our lives to intersect. While ethics should start with the affirmation that at the core of a common humanity is an individual's right to and desire for freedom, he cautions that "the actualization of my freedom through your freedom and of your freedom through my freedom has a specific history of slavery, of inequality, and of war."[41] In other words, while at the heart of every person runs a deep desire for emancipation, this dynamic exists alongside the power differentials that mean some are freer than others. At the core of ethics, then, is the obligation to "make the freedom of the other person come to pass as similar to my own."[42]

Along these same lines, angel Kyodo williams utilizes her Buddhist practice to call for a *radical dharma* drawing together Black, brown, white, Buddhist, non-Buddhist, queer, margins,

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[37] Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World,* 2.
[38] Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, 142.
[39] Paul Farmer and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *In the Company of the Poor Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez*, eds. Michael Griffin and Jennie Weiss Block (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 81.

[40] Dean Brackley, S.J., "Theology and Solidarity: Learning from Sobrino's Method," in *Hope in Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology,* ed. Stephen J. Pope (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 3–15.
[41] Paul Ricoeur. "The Problem of the Foundation of Moral Philosophy," in *The Foundation and Application of Moral Philosophy: Ricoeur's Ethical Order,* ed. Hans J. Opdebeeck (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 15.
[42] Ricoeur, "The Problem of the Foundation of Moral Philosophy," 14.

and mainstream into a whole for the purpose of liberation from suffering. She defines *radical dharma* as "insurgence rooted in love, and all that love of self and others implies. It takes liberation to its necessary end by moving beyond personal transformation to transcend dominant social norms and deliver us into collective freedom."[43]

How does this form of solidarity develop when it instead seems that political, cultural, and religious tribalism is on the rise? It is nurtured and grown by the process of transformative learning, which according to adult educator Jack Mezirow is when one transforms one's taken-for-granted assumptions and perceptions, making them more inclusive and reflective so that one may create new, more accurate beliefs to guide one's actions. This kind of learning is usually through a series of disorienting dilemmas.[44] Similarities can be drawn between this notion and concept of *critically transitive consciousness,* from the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, which is characterized by "highly permeable, interrogative, restless, and dialogic forms of life—in contrast to silence and inaction."[45]

Specifically, the awakening of critical awareness or "conscientization" involves learning to perceive the contradictions in social, economic, and political realities and to take action against them.[46] Robert Kegan distinguishes transformative learning from informative learning, noting that, while both types of learning are valuable, the former is closer to the meaning of *edu*cation (leading out). Informative learning involves leading in or filling in the form, while trans-*form*-ative learning puts the form itself at risk of change. In this way, transformative learning is always about epistemological change, or a change in one's way of knowing, both in meaning-forming, shaping a coherent meaning out of the raw material of experience, and in reforming meaning-forming, changing the very form by which one makes meaning.[47] Mezirow finds that the transformation of habits of mind may be *epochal*, occurring through sudden, dramatic reorienting insight or *incremental*, in a progressive series of transformations that culminate in a larger shift in perspective. He argues that for most people transformative learning occurs in the latter manner, in subtly disorienting opportunities for exploring and clarifying past experiences that leads to a reorienting of habits of mind.[48]

angel Kyodo williams notes that spiritual enlightenment requires discomfort, not at all times, but that one should be "meaningfully uncomfortable frequently" in order to be on the path to liberation. Radical dharma, discovering the fundamental nature of universal truth, comes in a "pregnant moment" where one can "pull back one little layer of that lead vest" that prevents one from truly seeing oneself and the other without projection.[49] She is describing a form of incremental learning through disorienting dilemmas that leads one to enlightenment, the goal of Buddhism.

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[43] williams et al., *Radical Dharma*, xi.
[44] Jack Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult," in *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress,* ed. Jack Mezirow (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 3–34.
[45] Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, [1974] 2005), 14.
[46] Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness,* 14.
[47] Robert Kegan, "What 'Form' Transforms? A Constructive-Developmental Approach to Transformative Learning," in *Learning as Transformation*, 35–69.
[48] Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult."
[49] williams et al., *Radical Dharma,* 126.

James Fredericks describes how a meaningful encounter with the religious other is always a destabilizing experience.

> The "other" has the power to call into question the sovereignty of our own worldview. In the encounter with the "other" we are confronted with another way of imaging the world that may not be easily assimilated into our worldview or reconciled with it. The encounter with the 'other' brings with it a potential for expanding the narrowness of our world and appreciating it anew by seeing it from the vantage point of another.[50]

The other person/worldview is neither banished nor domesticated to conform to one's own but rather is seen as a teacher and as the basis for a relationship of mutual enrichment. Again, this process can only be achieved through some form of disorientation or destabilization.

In a similar fashion, Jeorg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan espouse the practice of "deep solidarity," which they describe as "solidarity in support of others who are different yet experience similar predicaments."[51] They also apply this idea of solidarity to the interfaith encounter, where one must be disoriented in their understanding of their own truth in favor of diversity. They write:

> Truth is not something we possess; rather, it is to be discovered in dialogues with one another and in working together in deep solidarity. Some theologians have begun to develop the notion of *polydoxy*, which implies many paths to truth, to describe both the internal diversity within the Christian tradition and the plurality of the religious traditions of humankind.[52]

The movement from orthodoxy to *polydoxy* involves a disorientation to one's own singular notion of truth to a reorientation to the multiplicity of truth.

Diane Nelson, although critical of the solidarity she practiced as an activist, also admits that solidarity moved her towards "making self-conscious alliances, of trying to be aware and respectful of differences while striving to find common ground as the basis for radical politics."[53] She incorporates this aspect of solidarity into a new concept—*fluidarity*—which she describes as a "practice not a recipe."[54] Fluidarity does not lean on the solid, but rather invokes partial knowledge, placing value on being incomplete, vulnerable, and never totally fixed. It propels one to work closely with others yet to be constantly critical of one's presuppositions and motives. Fluidarity pushes one to embrace complexity, providing a vehicle to ethically articulate and live the complex web of relationships in a wounded and bleeding world and allowing oneself to be constituted by those very connections.[55]

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[50] James L. Frederick, *Buddhist and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 113.
[51] Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 29.
[52] Rieger and Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 118.
[53] Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound,* 50.
[54] Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound,* 73.
[55] Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound,* 349.

Mark Lewis Taylor builds on Nelson's concept, proposing one's relationship to others, especially marginalized others, as

> [a] kind of matrix in which selves and others might now be together in a pluralized, diverse, and always changing struggle, to explore, if not a new solidarity, then some 'fluidarity' wherein some real sharing evolves from the shaky ground of meeting one another amid differences.[56]

Fluidarity, then, honors the particularity of experience, avoiding the homogenization of differences and the leveling of oppression. Fluidarity provides a space for entitled advocacy with those who are unentitled. Taylor defines entitled ones as "those who usually by some group affiliation (class, ethnic identity, gender, educational experience, political position) or because of some combination of these affiliations, have access to enabling power that others do not."[57] These affiliations can shift who is entitled and who is not, depending upon where one finds oneself. Entitled advocates understand that to work with and for the marginalized involves a recognition of one's interconnection with them as well as theirs and one's own multiplicity. In Taylor's words, "the other is also *in* us, as well as *outside* us."[58]

Conclusion

Scholars from across religions, as well as secular thinkers, compellingly question how solidarity can be employed to homogenize all of humanity into one family where differences are ignored and oppression goes unrecognized. The "deep hidden sigh of our neighbor" does not truly become one's own because it remains a fleeting and "piteous empathy" that does not lead to action. As this research reveals, what is needed is a more refined sense of solidarity, born from disorienting dilemmas. This more complex notion, whether it is named as solidarity *with* others, deep solidarity, *com-penetration*, *radical dharma,* or fluidarity, puts into creative tension that the other is like us, but is not us and in us as well as outside of us. This kind of solidarity is "a practice not a recipe;" it requires constant attention to how one authentically meets the other on the shaky ground of differences while finding common ground for the purpose of spurring radical action on behalf of justice for all. This movement grounds one first in the self-transcending "spiritual" connection to the other as one who shares a common humanity. The process does not stop there, but rather this bond prompts one to recognize real differences with the other, especially in power differentials, and identifies those moments when one can be an entitled advocate and can use one's enabling power on behalf of those who are *in* us, as well as *outside* of us. This continual practice of disorientation and reorientation is required in the interreligious encounter, especially between the dominant religion and marginalized worldviews. Fluidarity in this context relativizes one's notion of truth, allowing one to explore the possibility of the multiplicity of truth.

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[56] Taylor, "Subalternity and Advocacy as *Kairos* in Theology," 39.
[57] Taylor, "Subalternity and Advocacy as *Kairos* in Theology," 24.
[58] Taylor, "Subalternity and Advocacy as *Kairos* in Theology," 37.

vocation, ethics, liberation theologies, community engaged pedagogies, and interfaith studies and action. Maruggi directs the Interfaith Scholars Seminar, a curricular and cocurricular program that promotes interfaith dialogue and community engagement with students from a variety of traditions and core commitments.

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