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From mechanical to organic solidarity, and back: With Honneth beyond Durkheim

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Abstract

This article focuses on the theory of solidarity presented by Émile Durkheim in *The Division of Labour in Society* ([1893] 1969). Despite its popularity, the distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity has received a lot of criticism. Durkheim allegedly was unable to demonstrate the superior integrating force of modern organic solidarity, while this was his central thesis at the time. A second critique challenges his macrostructural point of view. However, by confronting Durkheim's classical theory with contemporary work, notably Honneth's theory of recognition, we can deduce a reformulated framework that is less vulnerable to the afore-mentioned critiques. On the one hand, we specify mechanical and organic solidarity as a dialectical synthesis of both internalized universalistic principles and particularistic emotional orientations. On the other, we incorporate the foregoing typology in a cyclical model that implies interacting processes of inclusion and individualization.

Keywords

Durkheim, Honneth, recognition, solidarity

Recently we have seen renewed attention to the concept of solidarity (e.g. Turner and Rojek, 2001; Calhoun, 2002; Stjernø, 2004; Brunkhorst, 2005; Wilde, 2007; Juul, 2010). This upsurge of interest is probably related to the fact that solidarity currently faces important challenges such as the retrenchment of social welfare states, the

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resurgence of nationalistic narratives, individualization and globalization. Very often scholars who try to explain why the needy are supported mention the classic distinction between ‘mechanical solidarity’ and ‘organic solidarity’ put forward by Emile Durkheim in *De la division du travail social* in 1893, as well as contemporary theories of solidarity, notably the work on recognition by Axel Honneth (1996, 2002, 2007; Fraser and Honneth, 2003).¹ However, as far as we know, no one has conducted a thorough comparative study of Durkheim’s classic solidarity theory with Honneth’s contemporary work on recognition. This is regrettable because both theories seem to be mutually enforcing.

Illustrative for that matter is that Honneth (2002) himself pointed out, in an interview in this journal, that his conception of social solidarity has gradually become more Durkheimian. He states that similar to Durkheim’s organic solidarity, his conception of social solidarity is also based on ‘reflexive and democratic forms of the division of labour’ (Honneth, 2002: 275). Although this analogy is certainly not spurious, it nevertheless warrants more explanation. First, it is not immediately clear how *reflexive* forms of the division of labour can be reconciled with Durkheim’s alleged structuralism. The solidarity that is related to the division of labour increasingly implies individual reflection and self-consciousness, while, for Durkheim, solidarity is a *fait social* that transcends individual consciences. Second, we might wonder how *democratic* forms of the division of labour can be linked to Durkheim’s organic solidarity. Inspired by Dewey’s theory of democracy, Honneth seems to envision a division of labour that ‘integrates all citizens in a self-organizing community’ (2007: 220). However, this community-based logic seems more akin to mechanical solidarity, which Durkheim in principle situated in pre-modern times. Moreover, by using the term *social solidarity*, Honneth explicitly points to the solidarity that is connected to and bounded by the normative framework of society. This terminology implies that other forms of solidarity can be conceived, which are functioning in other collective normative frameworks that existed before the invention of society in the eighteenth century.

Implicitly, Honneth offers two interesting solutions to the two problematics that have traditionally been linked with Durkheim’s solidarity theory. First, the problematic of the relationship between structural and individual bases of solidarity. Second, the problematic of a social evolutionist conception of solidarity. In the next section we will first explore the common ground between Durkheim and Honneth. Subsequently we will propose a reformulation of Durkheim’s distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity that involves dialectical and cyclical processes.

Where Honneth meets Durkheim

Cursory overviews of Durkheim’s work on solidarity typically stress the structural bases of solidarity as well as its evolution. In the case of mechanical solidarity, the emphasis is on the link between likeness and cohesion. As a member of a close-knit assembly, one cannot but show solidarity. Individual members’ identification with the *conscience collective* compels them to. If differences become apparent that are not legitimated by the existing status hierarchy, group members will feel a moral compulsion to alleviate them. Moreover, the alleviation of differences creates mutual dependencies and through these dependencies individuals will ‘regard themselves as part of a whole, the organ of an organism’ (Durkheim, [1893] 1969: 228).

In the case of organic solidarity, the emphasis is on the diversity that exists between solidary parties. The distinct functions that individuals fulfil in the division of labour make them interesting to each other, not only as trading partners but ultimately also as fellow individuals. The recognition of the value of otherness is essential to successfully integrating individuals into an organic whole. Recognition claims tend to promote group differentiation but also organic solidarity because they also proclaim unity in diversity.

Durkheim subsequently connects his forms of solidarity with successive phases in the history of civilization. While mechanical solidarity, which stems from compulsion, prevailed throughout pre-modernity, in modernity, it increasingly had to make way for a more individualistic form of solidarity, namely organic solidarity, which is fed by complementary differences and interdependence. Durkheim prefers the latter form because of the internal locus of control. 'It does not make us servants of ideal powers of a nature other than our own, which follow their directions without occupying themselves with the interests of men' ([1893] 1969: 407). Paradoxically, however, the structuralist and social evolutionist elements in Durkheim's solidarity typology that receive so much attention actually are the most controversial elements.

First, after a cursory reading of *Division*, it might indeed seem that solidarity is solely a structural phenomenon. Solidarity is a *fait social*, related to that other French term, *fait accompli*. However, this exclusively structuralist interpretation does not take into account the importance of emotive reactions and symbolic interpersonal exchange in the (later) work of Durkheim (Fisher and Koo Chon, 1989; Gane, 1992; Maffesoli, 1996; Fish, 2002; Kerr, 2008). Each of Durkheim's structurally imposed forms of solidarity can ultimately be linked to subjectively-based emotions and cognitions. 'In establishing the social phenomenon in relation to the individual, Durkheim *counterpoises an objectivity against a subjectivity*' (Gane, 1992: 69). One deplorable consequence of a one-sided structuralist reading of Durkheim's work is that it often leads to the disregard of these subjective counterparts. However, the explicit inclusion of rational reflective, as well as emotive reflexive, counterparts is crucial to understanding how solidarity changes and survives in increasingly individualized and globalized societies. Durkheim quite explicitly mentions feedback processes that link his mechanical solidarity, that is based on collective similarities with charitable motives (Schoenfeld and Meštrović, 1989), and his organic solidarity, that is based on complementary differences with mutual empathy (Maffesoli, 1996).

Interestingly, similar feedback processes between institutionalized recognition principles (structure) and forms of mutual recognition linked to specific attitudes and moral considerations (agency) occupy a central space in the work of Honneth. Honneth defines social solidarity as 'a felt concern for what is individual and particular about the other person' which implies the mutual recognition of 'one another in light of values that allow the abilities and traits of the other to appear significant for shared praxis' (1996: 129). Inspired by Hegel, he frames solidarity as a synthesis of a 'moral dialectic of the general and the particular' whereby general recognition principles are intersubjectively verified (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 152). Moreover, the formation of solidarity is conceived as an agonistic process, in the sense that solidarity arises primarily out of the misrecognition of an individual that activates a struggle for recognition. In this respect Honneth's

approach is quite similar to Fraser's because she uses the concept of the 'collective concrete other' to refer to the process whereby both the absence and the necessity of solidarity are made tangible through a concrete intersubjective encounter with an individual member of a group that is characterized by a culturally specific identity (Fraser, 1986: 428). Moreover, the ethic of solidarity is governed by norms as expressed in shared but non-universal social practices (Fraser, 1986: 428). But although Honneth and Fraser rightfully emphasize the importance of intersubjective recognition, it cannot be isolated from the subjective orientations related to the structurally anchored recognition principles. In this sense, the work of Honneth is clearly complementary to Durkheim's insights. The agonistic intersubjective logic (antithesis) should not be detached from what we would call a *con-gonistic structural logic* (thesis), which manifests itself in an instinctual identification (reflexes) as well as a rational identification (reflections) with the structural principles that mould community.

Second, Durkheim's own decision to abandon his distinction between the two types of solidarity in his later studies is probably related to the fact that he was not really able to demonstrate the superior integrating force of modern organic solidarity, while this was his central thesis at the time (Gane, 1992; Nisbet, 1965; Calhoun, 2002; Crow, 2002; Fish, 2002). Durkheim never identified any source of organic solidarity as powerful as for those forms of mechanical solidarity that still persist. For example, Durkheim's plea for the installation of some kind of neo-corporation, notably in his Preface to the second edition of *Division* (1902), can clearly be interpreted as a mechanical rescue operation for a moribund organic solidarity. Also in his later work, particularly in *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Durkheim primarily stresses the integrative power of group symbols and rituals, which can easily be linked to the *conscience collective* that generates mechanical solidarity (Parsons, [1937] 1968). As a matter of fact, Durkheim therefore explicitly departs from the teleological perspective whereby mechanical solidarity is gradually replaced by organic solidarity. Instead, he seems to envision a feedback process whereby mechanical and organic solidarity are mutually enforcing.

Also in this respect Honneth's work is remarkably similar to Durkheim because both of them are advocates of a 'normative monism', respectively, that of recognition and that of organic solidarity. Additionally, both of them attempt to develop criteria for 'moral progress' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 260). The need to be recognized by others is universal, but depending on the particular sphere of interaction: the primary sphere, the legal sphere and the social sphere, it manifests itself in three different principles: neediness, equality, and merit/achievement (Honneth, 1996: 94; Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 181). Moreover, by identifying the recognition of merit as a form of modern 'social solidarity' and not historically situating the other principles of recognition, does Honneth somehow avoid the social evolutionary problems of Durkheim, but not entirely (Juul, 2010: 260). Fraser, for instance, wonders whether Honneth's recognition perspective does not neglect the old 'politics of redistribution'. Honneth responds that aspects of redistribution are involved in each of his three spheres of recognition. However, he fails to appreciate that while redistribution might entail distinctive needs for respect, the way of alleviating them (the redistributive act) is common to all. Fraser aptly identifies redistribution as a form of solidarity focusing on collective assimilation, while recognition is a form of solidarity involving the recognition of differences (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 7–16). In other words,

in order to speak of redistribution, one has to have a certain collective awareness. Honneth somehow disregards this collective awareness insofar that it is common to all forms of recognition. But at the same time he does realize that the principle of collective assimilation involved in redistribution is characterized by different levels because Honneth takes into account 'social inclusion' as a criterion of progress. Progress is characterized by 'an expanding inclusion of subjects into the circle of full members of society' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 185). In other words, due to the processes of individualization and globalization, the recognition of individual distinctiveness becomes important, but at the same time also the communality of distinctiveness should be taken into account. Because this circle of identification has expanded considerably in modernity, the modern order of social integration is conceived as a morally superior recognition order (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 260). The formation of a collective conscience therefore cannot be isolated from the pursuit of recognition. Before members of a group can jointly respond to a situation of misrecognition, they must conceive of themselves as a group.

Durkheim's solidarity theory revisited

In order to bridge the gap between Durkheim's solidarity theory and contemporary approaches such as Honneth's, we will try to do what Durkheim refrained from: specifying and, where necessary, altering his original typology of solidarity based on the useful insights that can be found in his later works and that of his contemporary commentators. In this audacious endeavour we will follow two interrelated pathways. The first pathway consists in re-establishing the subtle interaction between the structural causes and the individual motivations underlying mechanical and organic solidarity. Inspired by Honneth (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 249), we will assert that each of Durkheim's two solidarity types could be conceived of as the product of a dialectic process linking universal structural principles (forces of system integration) with particular intersubjective orientations (forces of social integration). But in contrast to Honneth, who emphasizes the antithetical perspective whereby individuals intersubjectively verify structural recognition principles, we also must give explicit attention to the subjective impact of the structural principles in terms of rational reflections and emotive reflexes. The second pathway consists in a critical re-evaluation of Durkheim's initial social evolutionary perspective that inserts mechanical and organic solidarity respectively at the beginning and the end of a unidirectional solidarity process. While a dynamical conception certainly gives an added value to a typology, the underlying teleological logic (Giddens, 1971; Sirianni 1984) produces some important inconsistencies in *Division*. We will assert that by framing Durkheim's typology in an integrative reciprocal perspective on solidarity, some of these inconsistencies can be resolved.

Both pathways lead us to transform Durkheim's original dichotomous conceptualization into an integrative typology of four solidarity types (Figure 1). On the one hand, we will argue that both mechanical and organic solidarity could be conceived as the result of a dialectic process involving both structural and emotive factors. Mechanical solidarity is the synthesis of subjective identification with group-based communality and intersubjective compassion. Organic solidarity is the synthesis of a similar dialectical process involving subjective motivations related to functional interdependence and intersubjective

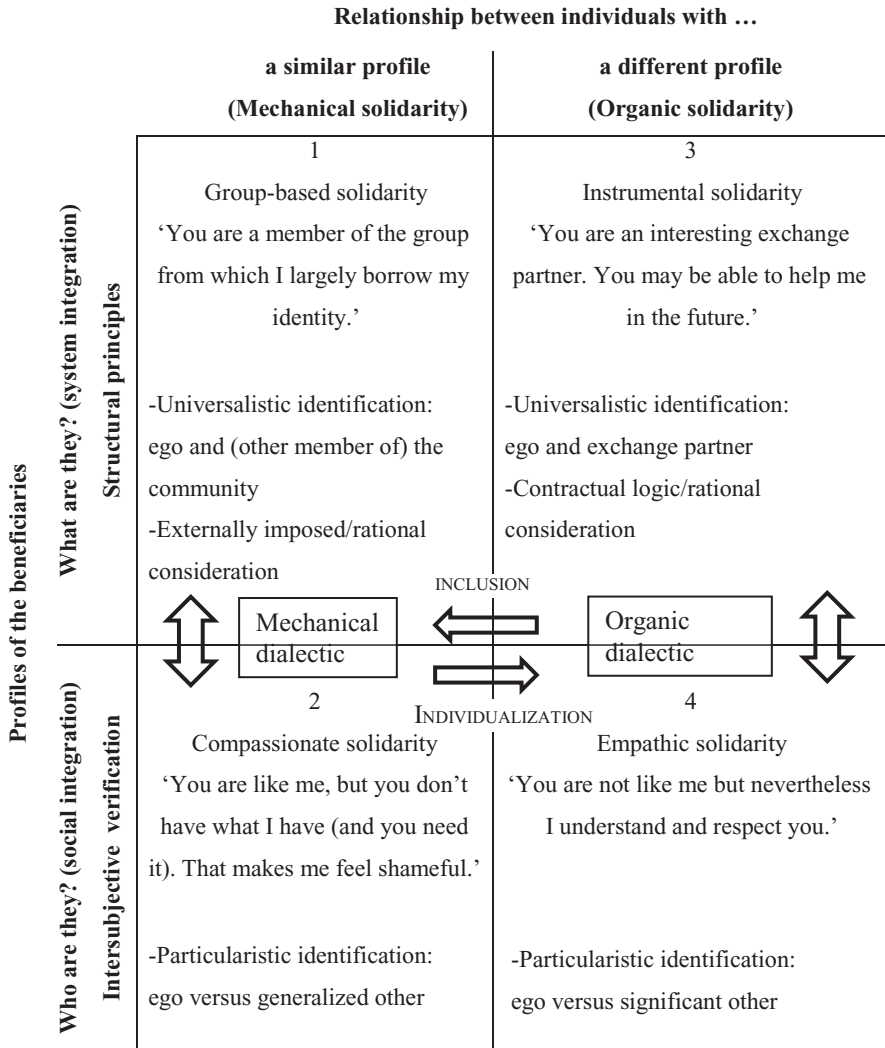


Figure 1. A typology of solidarity

empathy. On the other hand, we will point to the feedback and feed-forward processes that link mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, and vice versa.

The dialectically related counterparts of mechanical solidarity

The thesis of group-based solidarity

According to Durkheim, mechanical solidarity is characteristic of small, undifferentiated tribal communities. The prototypical example is the horde, which is the human variant of

a herd. In a horde, there is hardly any functional differentiation. Everyone performs more or less the same tasks. Therefore, the lives of the group members exhibit a substantial degree of objective similarity. In this sense, there are no individual personalities with an autonomous conscience, as everyone is to a large extent an incorporation of what Durkheim calls the *conscience collective*. We find an example of such a complete overlap of individuality and collectiveness in Ruth Benedict's description of the Zuñi in New Mexico: 'The Zuñi people devote themselves to the constituted forms of their society. They sink individuality in them' (Benedict, 1946: 75). After all, the individual can only survive in a hostile environment if he or she subjects him or herself to the collective. Actions that are contrary to the *conscience collective* are not tolerated and, quite often, are punished harshly. However, as this extreme compulsion is interiorized by the members of the group, they are hardly aware of any external pressure. In the words of Fraser (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 55), pre-modern society is 'ethically monistic'; all its members operate within a single legitimate and uncontested horizon of evaluation. The unconditional identification with the group, which constitutes the very foundation of mechanical solidarity in such pre-modern societies, has very little to do with individual motivations; it is, first and foremost, a matter of instinctive reflexes. In this sense, it is epitomized perfectly by Alexandre Dumas's expression 'One for all, all for one'.

In its purest form, mechanical solidarity is therefore a collective attribute. 'The social molecules . . . can act together only in the measure that they have no actions of their own, as the molecules of inorganic bodies' (Durkheim, [1893] 1969: 130). People are like cogs in a machine. This explains why Durkheim, rather paradoxically, speaks of *mechanical* solidarity in pre-modern society. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether this kind of monolithic human mechanics has ever existed (Sahlins, 1974). As Kemper aptly put it: 'the ineluctable condition of humankind is interdependence and . . . the division of labour could have existed all along' (1972: 741).

Moreover, if we consider 'group pressure' and 'likenesses between group members' to be variables rather than constants, it is possible to identify modern forms of mechanical solidarity. While one can hardly conceive contemporary society as a collection of more or less identical individuals, we see that even today certain *groups* succeed in establishing a similar kind of mechanical solidarity. Invariably in such groups, the group members, through internal or external factors, focus almost exclusively on what appears to set them apart from the outside world. As a result, the group members perceive themselves 'subjectively' as quite equal, while 'objectively' there are usually substantial differences (Turner, 1990). Among many groups, such a perception of oneness, which ultimately could result in an almost unconditional bond, either is lacking or develops gradually. Certainly in the initial phase, where an individual becomes a member of the group, rational considerations usually prevail. Thus, Chai and Hechter (1998: 36) define 'the original impetus for group formation' as 'the prospective member's desire to obtain the group's joint goods'. Hence, *group-based* solidarity is a function of the scope of group obligations, on the one hand, and the extent to which an individual group member is prepared to meet these obligations, on the other. *Free-rider* behaviour, enjoying the benefits of belonging to the group without taking note of the obligations associated with group membership, therefore always presents a potential danger in such a situation. In order to keep group solidarity intact, free-riders must be severely punished and

effectively, especially in larger groups where there is little direct social control (Fararo and Doreian, 1998). Often these collective rights and duties have a legal anchoring. One is obligated to solidarity. In this respect there is an obvious similarity with Honneth's recognition based on legal relations (1996: 118–20). However, the distinguishing characteristic here is not the law but the subjective communality. Solidary behaviour will in any case be more brittle if it is merely imposed externally. Group-based solidarity can therefore not merely be the result of a rational choice (reflection), but should be accompanied by socialization that leads to the internalization of compulsion (reflexion).

The antithesis of compassionate solidarity

Although mechanical solidarity is essentially a product of the *conscience collective*, Durkheim has always been aware of the socio-psychological phenomena that accompany social structures. '[T]he members of the group are individually attracted to one another because they resemble one another' ([1893] 1969: 105). While this mutual attraction initially could be regarded as a concomitant phenomenon of mechanical solidarity, it certainly gained a more prominent place later in the work of Durkheim. For instance, in his essay, *Individual and Collective Representations*, he clearly pointed out that the link between objective resemblances and subjective attraction was neither automatic nor unconditional. The objective similarities between members of a group conducive to mechanical solidarity will decrease when the group size increases and the division of labour expands. In this respect the mechanical solidarity can only be preserved when the communalities are induced internally and externally. In *Division*, Durkheim emphasized the latter factor insofar that the repressive sanctions of penal law could function as a structural antidote. However, he realized that while the existence of effective legal sanctions might be a necessary condition for mechanical solidarity, it is clearly not a sufficient condition. In *Suicide*, he wrote, for instance:

[T]his discipline can be useful only if considered just by the peoples subject to it. When it is maintained only by custom and force, peace and harmony are illusory; the spirit of unrest and discontent are latent: appetites superficially restrained are ready to revolt. (2005: 212)

In this respect, it comes as no surprise that in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* Durkheim explicitly focuses on the mutual attraction of individuals who share a common symbolic universe. 'It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to some object that they become and feel themselves to be in unison' (1961: 262). While this is sometimes regarded as a fundamental shift in the thinking of Durkheim, there is also continuity. Actually, in the Preface to the second edition of *Division*, he was already pleading for the restoration of the medieval corporations in modern societies where similarities were disappearing. These neo-corporations would generate 'a warmth which animates its members, making them intensely human, destroying their egotisms' ([1893] 1969: 26). In this respect it certainly was no coincidence that the existent institutions most closely resembling Durkheim's neo-corporations were known by the name of 'Friendly Societies'. They share a subjective communality, a notion of common fate that breeds compassion and charity (Schoenfeld

and Meštrović, 1989: 115). In a debate with Parodi on the notion of social equality, Durkheim further elaborates this emotional basis: 'The moral demand that we should be treated as though we are equal could only become operative if powerful emotions were allowed to transfigure existent human differences' (Durkheim, 1979: 72).

A crucial continuity in Durkheim's oeuvre is that even this compassionate solidarity ultimately is always produced by an external source, a collective representation (Gane, 1992: 81). But another element in his work is equally important, namely the attention he gives to feedback processes. In this kind of process, the outcome of a causal sequence determines the subsequent flow of sequences (Turner, 1990: 1092). Here for instance, Durkheim defines a mutually reinforcing process between the structural cause (group pressure and cohesion) and its emotive correlate (compassion). But inspired by the recent work by Honneth, we can be more precise and specify that this feedback process conforms to a dialectical structure. On the one hand, we have the structural principle, stating that group homology generates solidarity (thesis). Objective similarity and group pressure result in rational-reflective and instinctual-reflexive solidarity. But Durkheim himself observes ([1893] 1969: 287), that as groups become larger, the common conscience is obliged to rise above all diversities and consequently becomes more abstract and feeble. The chances that a concrete intersubjective encounter will reveal antithetical heterogeneities that conflict with the group-based homological structure will rise considerably. Consequently, the individual might feel shame which stimulates compassionate solidarity and charity. As Redbone sang: 'We are all wounded at Wounded Knee, you and me.' While the group-based solidarity ('We') was certainly triggered by structural elements, such as the presence of a common enemy, over time, intersubjective proximity and encounters ('You and me') become more and more important. The subjective common denominator, the 'compassionator', blurs all the apparent differences and binds individuals. 'The infraction committed arouses in those who have evidence of it or who learn of its existence the same indignation' and 'It brings together upright consciences and concentrates them' (Durkheim, [1893] 1969: 102).

Although group-based solidarity may occur in practice towards a particular individual, the identity of that individual plays little or no role in this process. The individual is merely an incorporation or representation of the group. What is important is 'what he is' rather than 'who he is' (Figure 1). Therefore, group-based solidarity is, in principle, always a universal and multilateral attribute, as it concerns an attitude regarding the manner in which distinct group members should relate to one another, while compassionate solidarity is a particular and bilateral attribute. Group-based solidarity implicates relationship to a generalized 'third', while compassionate solidarity involves a relationship with a concrete individual person (Honneth, 2007: 115). In the former situation, the one is the other, in the latter situation, the other is the one.

The dialectically related counterparts of organic solidarity

The thesis of instrumental solidarity

'Opposites attract.' Durkheim qualifies this saying by arguing that not all opposites attract equally strongly. Individuals tend to look for functional differences, more

specifically, differences that are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In contemporary society that is characterized by a pronounced social division of labour, such complementary differences are abundantly present. Quite illustrative in this respect is the proliferation of contractual commitments.

In contrast to the group-based solidarity that springs from internalized societal obligations, organic solidarity is more explicitly the result of the free will of an autonomous person. While mechanical solidarity is based first and foremost on a thoughtless dutiful identification, organic solidarity involves a rational act on the part of self-conscious subjects: 'I'll scratch your back, if you scratch mine.' It therefore is self-evident that adherents of the rational choice approach will be attracted primarily by this *instrumental notion of solidarity*. It would certainly appear to tie in perfectly with the so-called investment theory of solidarity. Coleman (1990: 309) uses this theory to explain why rational actors exhibit solidarity. He argues that this solidarity is, in fact, an investment in the future. By helping someone, the provider implicitly accumulates credit from the recipient. Significantly, at the time that assistance is given, the support is generally more important to the receiver than the provider. Some time in the future, the situation may be reversed, though, so that the initial provider of support is in turn assisted by the initial receiver. In such instances, solidary behaviour gives rise to a win-win situation. Crucially important in this theory is the fact that the actors should meet each other repeatedly. Similarly, Durkheim states:

[E]ven where society relies most completely upon the division of labour, it does not become a jumble of juxtaposed atoms, between which it can establish only external, transient contacts. Rather the members are united by ties which extend deeper and far beyond the short moments during which the exchange is made. ([1893] 1969: 227)

Instrumental solidarity therefore essentially also has a structural basis. According to Durkheim, the contractual basis of the instrumental solidarity is a sacred collective product in itself that is invoked by the contracting individuals but exists independently of them.

The antithesis of empathic solidarity

Early in *Division*, Durkheim points out that the individualizing process that produces modern organic solidarity implies 'a person to be an autonomous source of action' ([1893] 1969: 403). At first sight, Durkheim's definition of organic solidarity appears to be similar to Adam Smith's adage of the invisible hand. Organic solidarity is characterized by 'a co-operation which is *automatically* produced through the pursuit by each individual of his own interests' ([1893] 1969: 200; emphasis added). The fact that rational individuals can freely pursue different but complementary functions is the basis for prosperity, unity and order. But the similarity is only apparent because from the very beginning of *Division*, Durkheim harshly criticizes all those who define modernity solely as a result of the interaction between individuals pursuing their private interests. '[T]he economic services that it [the division of labour] can render are picayune compared to the moral effect that it produces, and its true function is to create in two or more persons a feeling of solidarity' ([1893] 1969: 56). Durkheim also did not believe the Spencerian insurance logic that linked utilitarian individuals together to be conducive to enduring solidarity:

For where interest is the only ruling force each individual finds himself in a state of war with every other since nothing comes to mollify the egos, and any truce in this eternal antagonism would not be of long duration. ([1893] 1969: 204)

A crucial moral component is missing, which he called the belief in the dignity of the individual. It is not difficult to see the similarity to Honneth's concept of recognition as social solidarity, which is based on the principle of mutual and unconditional respect (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 188). Similarly, Durkheim also predicted that the solidarity of the autonomous individual would gradually be more and more the result of humanistic emotions rather than instrumental considerations: '[C]ommon morality very severely condemns every kind of leonine contract wherein one of the parties is exploited by the other because he is too weak to receive the just reward of his services' ([1893] 1969: 386). Here also the source of the morality is externally attributed but individually felt.

Durkheim starts from a simple thesis: complementary differences breed solidarity. But while people often tend to focus exclusively on this thesis, it actually is no more than the point of departure for an intricate process. Based on the work of Honneth, we can again discern a dialectical structure. The exchange relationships that are driven by instrumental considerations may initially produce a robust quasi-automated solidarity. But after a while, people will observe that if reciprocal exchange relationships are left unchecked, some people end up being individuals without socially desirable qualities. Durkheim aims more specifically at a society with a coerced division of labour and a bad education where the distribution of positions does not correspond to the distribution of individual talents. In this situation some people will be confined to menial jobs although they are suitable for other more interesting functions. While the thesis of instrumental solidarity is based on the recognition principle proclaiming the utility of differences, the antithesis of emphatic solidarity is based on the intersubjective verification of that principle, in terms of misrecognized differences. Even instrumental encounters imply intersubjective contact which is usually a fruitful breeding ground for mutual empathy, the recognition of singularity. The thesis that instrumental solidarity basically is a product of complementary differences is linked implicitly to the antithesis that the intersubjective encounters create empathy that leads to the detection of misrecognized differences. 'It is only to the degree to which I actively bear responsibility for another person's ability to develop qualities that are not my own that our shared goals can be realized' (Honneth, 2007: 261). The dialectical reversal is crucial to realizing that organic solidarity must be understood as synthesis of both instrumental and empathic solidarity. 'Solidarity constitutes a necessary counterpoint to the principle of justice inasmuch as it furnishes the affective impulses of reciprocal recognition in a particularistic manner' (Honneth, 2007: 125).

From mechanical to organic solidarity, and back

The social evolutionist perspective inherent in Durkheim's typology brings with it the fact that the emphasis lies on changes in the structural and the intersubjective underpinnings of solidarity. He asserts that solidarity comes closer to justice during the course of social evolution because it is more and more a product of the individual will. Hence, he

seems to envision a teleological evolution from mechanical to organic solidarity. Consequently, one could state that both forms are antipodal. Mechanical solidarity manifests itself in its purest form in a pre-modern tribal society, while organic solidarity is the ultimate integrating force in modern societies. Nevertheless, he argued that 'mechanical solidarity persists even in the most elevated societies' ([1893] 1969: 186). Additionally, many commentators have pointed out that organic solidarity also existed in the most primitive societies (Sahlins, 1974; Adair, 2008). The replacement of mechanical solidarity by organic solidarity can therefore not be complete. In other words, while Durkheim juxtaposes mechanical and organic solidarity, they are not mutually exclusive.

Moreover, Durkheim was only able to demonstrate the superior integrating force of organic solidarity by implicitly fusing it with some of the constitutive elements of mechanical solidarity (Gane, 1992; Calhoun, 2002; Crow, 2002; Fish, 2002). Two paradoxical comments are very illustrative in this respect. First, Durkheim stressed that his organic solidarity may not be confused with the notion of *contractual solidarity* of Spencer. Organic solidarity is only a superior integrative force insofar that the complementary interchanges are embedded in moral rules. However, this morality is similar to the *conscience collective* that produces mechanical solidarity. Second, Durkheim also pointed to the importance of professional groups and the state as integrative vehicles in individualized societies essentially because of the 'imagined' similarity of its members (Anderson, 1983).

Some authors therefore concluded that organic solidarity is not a distinct solidarity type and therefore is no longer useful (Pope and Johnson, 1983). While we agree with the former observation, we do not agree with the latter. We would rather state that he rightfully points to the intricate connection between both solidarity dialectics. It is not because organic solidarity is not independent of mechanical solidarity that it is not appropriate to include it in a solidarity theory. One only has to get rid of the unidirectional quasi-teleological path towards it. This is possible if we replace it with a historical cyclical model that links mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, and vice versa.

In this respect, Durkheim stresses two force fields: scientification and education, on the one hand, and institutionalization and juridification, on the other. Similarly, Honneth develops individualization and inclusion as criteria of moral progress 'which are to emerge internally from the structure form of social integration' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 206). People should learn from childhood that society requires us to be respectful and just to other individuals, even if they are substantially different. Education and scientification, and the moral individualism that they engender, can activate a feedback process from mechanical to organic solidarity, because it may strengthen the moral authority of individual rights. However, Durkheim also takes into account the weakness of the flesh and adds that it should be helped by governmental and professional institutions. States should monopolize enough power to prevent professional groups from becoming self-centred and becoming alienated from each other. In this respect, institutionalization and juridification may activate a feedback process from organic to mechanical solidarity, because the state may create an inclusive context that will compel citizens through 'gentle compulsion' to exhibit solidarity that transcends the bilateral *do ut des* (Durkheim, [1893] 1969: 358). With the emergence of monopolized state power, the price of compassion has gone down so much that almost anyone can afford it. In this respect

state-building and nation-building are the specific social dynamics that have activated a first cycle in a modernization process linking organic to mechanical solidarity, and back.

But, at the same time, Durkheim realized that nation-states also have a tendency to become self-centred and overly pervasive. However, this tendency can be countered by supranational integration ([1893] 1969: 405–6) and a dense web of professional morality of the neo-corporations ([1893] 1969: 26). In other words, Durkheim turns out to be an advocate of glocalization – globalization from within and without – *avant la lettre*. Both at the macro and the micro level, group boundaries are gradually stretched:

Common practices of the occupational group thus become more general and more abstract, as those which are common to all society, and, accordingly, they leave more free space for individual differences. Indeed, the greater independence enjoyed by new generations in comparison with the older cannot fail to weaken traditionalism in the occupation. This leaves the individual even more free to make innovations. ([1893] 1969: 303)

Hence, we might say that, for Durkheim, glocalization activates a second cycle in a modernization process linking mechanical to organic solidarity, and back.

Drawing inspiration from Marshall Sahlins (1974), the historical cyclical process that links the mechanical and the organic solidarity dialectics could be described as ‘identification in expanding circles’. If one throws a stone into a pond, expanding concentric circles will appear around the point of impact. As the circles move further out, they become larger and more inclusive. Indeed, we see, for example, that small corporatist insurance funds in many industrialized Western countries have developed into mature welfare states. Similarly, Honneth uses the term social solidarity to emphasize that ‘the point of reference for esteeming each individual is the evaluative framework accepted by the entire community’ (1996: xviii). Although he remains vague on the meaning of the entire community, his ideas are again very similar to Durkheim who argues that if society develops into a self-conscious organism, it needs a ‘head’ that embodies and reconciles the instrumental interests and moral aims of the *conscience collective*. ‘All members of society are from now on to be equally included in the network of recognition relations by which society as a whole is integrated’ (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 260).

But according to Honneth, this increasingly inclusive context is only beneficial for solidarity if it is complemented by an appropriate ‘recognition order’. Durkheim similarly insists that a self-conscious society not only needs a head but also a heart. A heartless state can only generate the rational and instinctive identification associated with group-based solidarity. ‘To the degree that societies become larger, and embody broader territorial areas, traditions and practices must necessarily exist in a state of plasticity and ambiguity which no longer offers as much resistance to individual differences’ (Durkheim, 1996: 14). In modern times, exclusively instinctive mechanical identification can only lead to pathological nationalism. The hostility towards out-groups, that often goes hand in hand with the solidarity within a nationalist group, was a price Durkheim was not willing to pay. In this sense, like William James (1906), Durkheim was looking for the ‘moral equivalent of war’. But unlike James, Durkheim was rather optimistic in this respect. The solution to this question resided in the presence of a heart that constrains the unbridled intrusion of the state. The heart of the state is embodied by a

network of interrelated intermediate corporations, operating at the micro level as well as globally. Only these intermediate entities are able to generate empathic solidarity because they enable intersubjective verification of organic principles. They function as the necessary antidote against the imminent danger of the crowding out effect of institutionalization and the possible dehumanization of solidarity. 'Let us use them to soften the functioning of the social machine, still so harsh to individuals' (Durkheim, 1996: 14). Similarly, Honneth's struggle for recognition is at one and the same time also a struggle for community. In the words of Yar: 'a morally motivated social conflict that seeks to communalise subjects self-understandings' (2003: 123).

All in all, both Durkheim and Honneth have some affinities with the communitarian position (Stjernø, 2004: 297–8). One could even claim that the Durkheimian-Honnethian synthesis is a corrective to one-sided communitarianism because the normative function of the (supra-)national state goes hand in hand with the moral responsibility implied by intersubjective empathy in intermediate groups. Ultimately, this social evolutionary theory of solidarity can even be reconciled with the post-individualist work of the French sociologist Maffesoli: 'Contrary to historical "ex-tension", which is built upon vast and increasingly impersonal structures, nature favours "in-tension" (*in-tendere*), with all the commitment, enthusiasm and warmth that it supposes' (1996: 35). According to Maffesoli, the 'in-tension' in a multitude of tribes leads to an increasing empathy with the dissimilar. In this sense, 'there is a solid organicity at work that can serve as the basis of new forms of solidarity' (1996: 147). From mechanical to organic solidarity, and back.

Conclusion

In this article, we have focused on two problems that are traditionally raised in relation to Durkheim's solidarity theory. First, because of the one-sided focus on structural factors that are conducive to system integration, Durkheim seems to disregard the importance of (inter-)subjective orientations, that stimulate social integration. Second, he locates mechanical and organic solidarity respectively at the beginning and at the end of a teleological process. However, as modernization progresses, Durkheim reincorporates mechanical elements in his notion of organic solidarity. Moral individualism originates in the socialization in the lap of the state and civil society.

By combining a careful rereading of Durkheim's work with conceptual reformulations that are made possible by recent scholarship, notably Honneth's recognition theory, we have nevertheless shown that there are some fruitful solutions for these problems. Based on his work, mechanical and organic solidarity are both interpreted as syntheses of two dialectically related solidarity forms, more specifically dialectics of the general and the particular. First, mechanical solidarity is conceived of as a synthesis of both group-based and compassionate considerations. Group-based solidarity originates from a universalistic identification with a *conscience collective*, which is ideal-typically a matter of instinct, but initially is often also an exponent of a utilitarian calculus. Compassionate solidarity originates from a particular experience of a person recognizing his neediness in an intersubjective encounter with another group member. On an aggregate level, this intersubjective agonistic process results in redistribution, which strengthens the attractiveness and the cohesion of the group. Second, organic solidarity is conceived

of as a synthesis of both instrumental and empathic considerations. Instrumental solidarity results from a universalistic identification of others as useful exchange partners. Emphatic solidarity results from a particularistic identification with the singularity of another individual and the perceived misrecognition of his qualities and needs. On an aggregate level, this intersubjective agonistic process may activate a struggle for recognition, that ultimately leads to a strengthening of the instrumental solidarity based on the division of labour.

With respect to the process of moral progress, both Durkheim and Honneth mention the principles of moral individualism and inclusion, which may also function as catalysts for our two solidarity dialectics. State-induced moral individualism might stimulate organic solidarity to the extent that individuals will become more and more aware of their own individuality and will therefore be inclined to question the essentialism of group memberships. However, the development of the organic solidarity dialectic will also activate new struggles for community, notably struggles for more inclusive communities. This globalization from within will in its turn challenge the community-based underpinnings of the mechanical solidarity dialectic. In short, while we agree with Durkheim and Honneth that the context of recognition created by organic solidarity is the key to social inclusion, the road to progress definitely is not a one-way street from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity.

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Note

1. Because Axel Honneth has further elaborated his social theory of recognition in a dialogue with Nancy Fraser, we will also give due attention to her work (Fraser, 1986; Fraser and Honneth, 2003).

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