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Book Review: DuFord, Rochelle. *Solidarity in Conflict: A Democratic Theory*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2022, 216 pp.

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In *Solidarity in Conflict A Democratic Theory* Rochelle Du Ford sets out to formulate a non-ideal democratic theory that centers on the concept of solidarity, and on non-pathological solidarity organizations. The book is densely argued, based on a well digested learnedness, but also original, particularly in its way of delineating the political role of solidarity.

Avoiding ideal theory is claimed to be significant. The text has the admirable ambition of avoiding common traps of positive ideal theory accounts, primarily John Rawls's alleged (inadvertent) idealization of the circumstances of white men, and Jürgen Habermas´s politically "useless", yes, it is called useless, account of an ideal speech situation.

Allegedly, the lived practices of concrete (non-ideal) solidarity organizations harbor the solution. They namely provide both pro-democracy motivation and orientation. DuFord writes: "[…] solidarity is actually two relations in one, the internal and the external, each set of relations can be guided by different norms given the members´ different roles. Internally, members can be guided by a commitment to norms of nondomination and nonexclusion—democratic norms through which the process of democracy is both enabled and lived. Externally, a solidarity group can be guided by strategic action because the world at large lacks commitment to democratic norms or nondomination."[1] Moreover: "[…], the democratic solidarity I want to develop is not merely strategic and tactical. It is also guided by an internal democratic ethos of nonexclusion, justice, and liberation."[2] That is, it is not just argued that members "can be guided by a commitment to norms of nondomination and nonexclusion", DuFord claims that there are non-pathological and pathological instances of solidarity, and that non-pathological practices of solidarity are characterized by having egalitarian inclusivity, the ending of all kinds of exclusions, as a shared goal. Pathological solidarity on the other hand is purely strategic, and anti-social. The strategic nature reveals itself in virtue of how any end (except honestly attempting to end oppression) can be the shared goal of collective action, and the antisocial consists in a shared intention to uphold (one´s own) domination, rather than fighting together to counteract unfair access to power. Interestingly, DuFord notes that in reality inauthentic solidarity groups, say white supremacists, or Men´s Rights Activists, tell stories about themselves as marginalized by contemporary liberal society, i.e. hiding the fact that they fight to regain lost privileges built on domination of others.

[1] DuFord, Rochelle. *Solidarity in Conflict A Democratic Theory*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2022, p. 68.
[2] Ibid., p. 65.

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Moreover, DuFord makes an eloquent distinction between liberal solidarity and democratic ditto. Liberal solidarity typically takes the form of privileged people who solidarize with other (oppressed) people, whereas democratic solidarity is lived and practiced by oppressed people themselves. It is labelled democratic in virtue of its aim, to end domination, to realize a way of living together that will not reproduce power over people constructed as insignificant, subordinate, or mere resources/things. "[…] the goal of a feminist solidarity group is that no one should be a patriarch any longer, and thus that no one should remain excluded permanently."[3]

The point is well taken. To be perfectly united or at one in aspirations to uphold undeserved privileges based on exploitation of others is wrong, according to most accounts of social justice. However, it is ambivalent to name unjust, racist and misogynist solidarity organizations, pathological. One could say that not all solidaristic organizations aim at something outsiders have any kind of, moral and other, reasons to value. Some may be examples of collective arrogant selfishness, and worse. There might be a reason for explicating such organizations as pathological rather than destructive or unjust. Naming the unjust pathological appears to hide the explicitly normative distinction between solidarity as it ought to be, ideal solidarity and wrongful, non-ideal solidarity. It is namely tricky to make necessary normative distinctions, between solidarity that undercuts and solidarity that strengthens democracy, and remain coherently within the confines of non-ideal theory. Non-ideal theories are not supposed to apply positive normative concepts on solidarity organization to map the contours of a less imperfect political reality. Lived experience is supposed to provide content and orientation, not theory. But, to name something an illness is to say that it is bad, in peculiar way. Indifference towards the pathological is not an option. On the contrary, the sick person, here society and white male "solidarity organizations", ought to be cured. One should not belong to those who just let the sick person. Moreover, naming wrongful solidarity sick comes with the risk of hiding that it is not solidarity alone that constitutes the exemplary character of emancipatory groups, it is what they are trying to achieve, and perhaps the means they would never use.

That being said, *Solidarity in Conflict* investigates urgent connections between democracy, a diminishing way of organizing society, and actual political activity that furthers democracy, and that counteracts tendencies to be mere reflections of current majority preferences.

The latter points us towards a second problem. Put bluntly, the non-ideal account of democracy offered in the book fails to acknowledge two significant aspects of the phenomenon. Firstly, democracy is about rule by the people, that is democracy connotes self-government as opposed to be governed by someone else. A specific way of ruling is democratic to the extent that the subjects rule themselves. Organizing distribution of scarce goods according to varying conceptions of need does not belong to the defining properties of democracy. Secondly, to be self-governing is different from just getting what you want. Self-government is about being in control of yourself, i.e. to have a say in whatever desire we are moved by. Collective self-government entails acknowledging others as not merely holders of preferences or desires, but as self-directing people worthy of respect. Put in other words, democracy should on principle include all self-directing subjects. This is why we could say that a government that does not represent some groups who live under its rule suffers from a democratic deficit.

[3] Ibid., p. 19.

Democracy is hard, especially when it comes to large organizations, when rule through representatives is found pragmatically necessary. However, DuFord draws an apparently wrongful conclusion: "Democracy as a form of life undermines democracy as a form of government because democracy as a form of government is an exercise of power over people."[4] Since all remaining actual democracies are indirect/representative, aggregative, and majority ruled, democratic government entails being ruled more than to rule. Just like some solidarity groups are destructive, some democracies are not completely authoritarian rather than perfectly democratic. The point is double; to identify flaws we need a conception of an ideal. Moreover, to govern oneself rather than to be governed is not necessarily a sign of mere non-ideal conditions, which DuFord claims, but can also be viewed as a sign of a respectful society of and for grownups.

Somewhat paradoxically, *Solidarity in Conflict* offers a nuanced and original ideal theory of solidarity (labelled non-pathological), and a less useful non-ideal account of democracy. All in all, this book is highly recommended.

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Ibid., p. 155.