

Job Talk Title: Cosmopolitan Solidarities of Difference

Abstract: In my talk, I will be reflecting on how the concept of solidarity can offer possibilities of acting politically through the multiple, interlocking layers of critical solidarity across differences. I present Solidarity as an intersubjective relation that allows human beings to rebuild the sphere of plurality and commonality that the totalitarian mechanism threatens to dismantle. I draw from Arendt, Habermas and Sally Scholz's accounts of political solidarity to work out this concept. Cosmopolitan solidarity is a political relation through which individuals can coexist as a plurality without losing their uniqueness and freedom. What separates it from other forms of collectives is that it does not require a shared membership as a condition of solidarity as in case of group-based solidarities. It acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual. This account of political solidarity is characterized by an openness to the other and an expectation that the other has something valuable to contribute to one's self-understanding and to the group as a whole. Cosmopolitanism denies that a person's cultural identity is bounded by homogeneous cultural resources available in the world.

Solidarity has a reactive and 'offensive' character that allows us to disengage from any form of naturalistic solidarities, whereby what unites people are precise characteristics that they all share (gender, society, nation, race, or other). Yet it is not a feeling, nor is it merely conscience or based on any naturalistic bonds but it is a political relation based on ideas and the experience of suffering. Conflict is not always a divisive force but it can also be understood as a creative potential that can ignite a process of change. In other words, difference does not necessarily preclude solidarity. Conflicts and tension do not undermine the possibility of uniting people for common goals.