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Four Uses of "Solidarity"*

The term "solidarity" has its roots in the Roman law of obligations. Here the unlimited liability of each individual member within a family or other community to pay common debts was characterized as *obligatio in solidum*. Since the end of the 18th century, this principle of mutual responsibility between the individual and society, where each individual vouches for the community and the community vouches for each individual, has been generalized beyond the law of obligations context and applied to the field of morality, society and politics.[1] "Solidarity" is now comprehended as a mutual attachment between individuals, encompassing two levels: a *factual* level of actual common ground between the individuals and a *normative* level of mutual obligations to aid each other, as and when should be necessary. Without clearly acknowledging the difference between the two levels or their relationship to one another, it has repeatedly been supposed that factual common ground is sufficient justification for normative obligations. This supposition has been made easier by the assumption that actual common ground is not simply objective, but has an emotional dimension: from common ground a feeling of obligation thus spontaneously emerges, bridging the gap between what is and what ought to be.

In this generalized meaning, the term "solidarity" entered political terminology during the first half of the 19th century and assumed a place alongside the term "*fraternity*", which had gained prominence in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and even to an extent replaced it. At the same time, Comte and (later) Durkheim helped it to become a basic sociological concept; ultimately, it was also adopted by philosophical ethics, where until today it stands, largely unexplained, in relation to complementary terms such as "community spirit" or "mutual attachment", "social cooperation" or "charity", and – from time to time – "brotherly love" or "love of mankind".

The concept of solidarity thus shares the same fate as other central concepts within ethical and political terminology, namely that of not being defined in a binding manner, and consequently of being used in very different and sometimes very contradictory ways. Other than is the case with comparable terms such as "justice", "liberty" or "equality", this heterogeneity does not stem from an abundance of competitive *theories*. It would be wrong to speak of an *embarras de richesse* with respect to theories on solidarity. Although in everyday politics the term solidarity is freely used, as and when required, in

K. Bayertz (ed.), Solidarity, 3–28.

order to mobilize a readiness to act and/or to make sacrifices, it has seldom been the object of an elaborated theory. A wavering, inexact and often suggestive use of the term is also dominant in ethical and theoretico-political literature. As is also the case with fraternity, the theoretical content of the solidarity concept seems to be overshadowed by its appellative function.

One of the reasons behind this theoretical neglect is the fact *that positive obligations to act*, as the term solidarity implies, are difficult to incorporate within mainstream ethical and political thought. Modern Age ethics and political philosophy have a fundamentally defensive orientation: they aim primarily to *ward off* dangers to the individual accruing from competition with other individuals, the maelstrom of social conformity or the powers of the state. Justifying individual rights of freedom has become a chief task of ethics; institutionally safeguarding them has become a chief task of politics and law. "The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others" (Mill, 1867, p. 6). Claims made of the individual are principally met with mistrust; when it comes to obligations, increased pressure is exerted to ensure that they are justified. With this in mind, manifestations of solidarity may be morally commendable but they cannot be made *binding*. A second reason is that solidary relationships usually only include *particular* obligations. One is not "solidary" with just anybody, but only with the other members of the particular community to which one believes oneself to belong. A differentiation between those belonging to "us" and everybody else is thus prerequisite; in most cases, one is only "solidary" towards the former. Modern ethics is universalistic, however: followers of Kant and utilitarians are united in their belief that moral norms may not contain any reference to contingent characteristics such as the membership of groups. Family obligations, patriotic connections or solidary attachments do not automatically appear to be compatible with this postulate of universalizability.[2] It therefore seems reasonable to comprehend "solidarity" not as an *ethical* term, but merely as a *political* watchword.

It thus comes as no surprise that, in the past, the term "solidarity" was mainly used by representatives of non-individualistic sidestreams of modern ethical and political thought, especially in the various areas of socialistic theoretical tradition and in Catholic social theory; nor that, in present times, it has once again been taken up within the framework of those theoretical approaches which attempt to separate themselves from the dominant normative orientations of Modernity. These include communitarianism, feminism, and post-Modernism, to name but a few, all based on a common discomfort with regard to the emphasis upon the general in modern ethics, and all (each in its own way) aiming towards a rehabilitation of the particular. There is no room here to discuss these approaches and their prospects; they do, however,

all seem to be aiming in the right direction, insofar as they question the *narrowing* of our horizons towards universal norms. The phenomenon of morality is more complex and more differentiated than modern ethics has often been willing to believe; it cannot be reduced to universal principles since it includes particular reasons and obligations to act.

In this paper I shall not attempt to create a theory of solidarity on the basis of a theory of particular reasons and obligations to act. Instead, I shall differentiate between four uses of the term solidarity and analyze them with regard to their moral dimension. I thus hope to contribute to a better clarity of vision in the previously little explored terrain of solidarity, and in this way indirectly do some groundwork towards a future solidarity theory.

I. Solidarity and Morality

(1) In its most general use, the term "solidarity" focuses on the tie which binds all of us human beings to one big moral community. This wide-ranging, universalistic understanding of moral community was preceded by a long period in which an essentially more limited understanding dominated. The further back we go in the development of the human race, the less ambiguously the ties defining a community assume a naturalistic character. These ties are essentially biological: blood relations and sexual relationships. In these phases of history, "solidarity" still had the same meaning as "fraternity", strictly implying kinship; "morality" accordingly denoted an entire set of norms governing behavior towards the members of one's own family or clan. Larger communities did not emerge until later on, no longer based on family ties, but on ethnic, cultural and political common ground. The decisive step towards a universalistic understanding of morality was ultimately taken in the late Ancient world when, against a background of the Greek *polis* and its decay, the idea of a comprehensive community including *all* human beings emerged; an idea which was then taken up and made binding by Christianity during its two-thousand-year-long cultural dominance within the Western world. The cosmological justification bestowed upon this idea by the Stoics was thus dropped, to be replaced by a theological justification which may be simplified as the conviction that all human beings are *God's children* and, in this sense, *brothers*.

This idea of a fraternity of all human beings as the children of God[3] was undoubtedly the historical foundation for *ethical universalism*. It is also central, if not literally then at least figuratively, to the ethics which has no (explicit) religious context, but which is based on the idea of emotional connections existing between all human beings. A telling example of this is

utilitarianism, the basic principle of which is only comprehensible in connection with the assumption that human beings collectively form one large community. According to John Stuart Mill, a "basis of powerful natural sentiment . . . of the utilitarian morality" exists:

> This firm foundation is that of the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature, and happily one of those which tend to become stronger, even without express inculcation, from the influences of advancing civilisation. The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that, except in some unusual circumstances or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body. . . . Not only does all strengthening of social ties, and all healthy growth of society, give to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others; it also leads him to identify his *feelings* more and more with their good, or at least with an ever greater degree of practical consideration for it. He comes, as though instinctively, to be conscious of himself as a being who *of course* pays regard to others (Mill, 1882, pp. 46ff.)

Mill might not have used either the term solidarity or the term fraternity, and yet the analogy to a kin-like or family-like community had already been clearly perceived and on occasion critically emphasized by his contemporaries (Stephen, 1873, pp. 164-203). The concept of solidarity did not find *explicit* access to moral philosophy until the beginning of the 20th century. Max Scheler, Nicolai Hartmann and Henri Bergson are especially worth noting here. This access was preceded by almost one hundred years during which the terms "solidarity" and "fraternity" were in use, especially in political terminology but also in the social sciences. With Scheler this is still detectable, although for him the links to Christianity seem to play a far greater role (cf. Scheler, 1916, p. 119). According to his views, the principle of solidarity renders the entire moral world one big whole, in which each individual is "co-responsible" (*mitverantwortlich*) for the actions and desires, the faults and merits of every other individual; so that alongside and independently of the faults for which each individual is to blame and the merits which each individual has itself earned, there also exist *overall* faults and *overall* merits in which each individual participates (Scheler, 1916, p. 488). Scheler even talks in this context of the "overall person" (*Gesamtperson*), to which he attributes an independent existence as a collective individual. A tendency towards ontologization is expressed here, characteristic of Scheler's philosophy and also making its mark on his interpretation of the solidarity principle. According to this principle, mutuality is based not on actual, empirical connections between people, but on the essence of people, including community with other people (Scheler, 1916, pp. 523ff.).

(2) The idea of a solidary attachment between all human beings is not automatically compatible with the real picture of mankind offered to us by

history, however. Neither in the past, nor in the present have there been any indications that friendly and benevolent feelings between human beings are stronger or more frequent than feelings of animosity and resentment. The assumption that human relationships are defined *not only* through sympathy *but also* through conflict therefore seems more realistic; in each case, the proportions of sympathy and conflict do not remain constant, but change with external and internal circumstances. This was also the direction in J. F. Stephen's criticism of Mill's "fraternity":

> He appears to believe that if men are all freed from restraints and put, as far as possible, on an equal footing, they will naturally treat each other as brothers, and work together harmoniously for their common good. I believe that many men are bad, a vast majority of men indifferent, and many good, and that the great mass of indifferent people sway this way or that according to circumstances, one of the most important of which circumstances is the predominance for the time being of the bad or good. I further believe that between all classes of men there are and always will be real occasions of enmity and strife, and that even good men may be and often are compelled to treat each other as enemies either by the existence of conflicting interests which bring them into collision, or by their different ways of conceiving goodness (Stephen, 1873, p. 169).

The only way of avoiding objections such as these, which are obviously only too justified, is to interpret this allegedly universal solidarity not as a factual predicate, but as a metaphysical determination of the essence of the human race. We then no longer have to assume that we will encounter the described feelings of fraternity in certain empirical individuals. Empirical human beings are weak and inadequate; in many cases they have not even worked their way up to the height of their own true essence and remain behind the norm; in other cases they are subject to detrimental influences from the outside, which fire their egotism and eclipse their natural feelings of sympathy. This was precisely the way in which Max Scheler attempted to explain the discrepancies which may be observed between his definition of human essence and actual human behavior. Accordingly, egotism is not a "natural" characteristic of the human being, but the product of certain experiences – e.g. the disappointment of an original trust or an illness – and their mental assimilation. The same goes for historical epochs: egotism becomes a governing principle only when communities are internally sick or overcome by senility (Scheler, 1916, p. 284). For Scheler, solidarity therefore always comes from the inside and egotism always from the outside.

This interpretation is not very convincing. It is based on an essentialist anthropology, to which serious objections may be raised, even if Rorty's criticism (Rorty, 1989, ch. 2) of the idea of a *core-self* and his emphasis upon the contingency of human nature should be considered exaggerated. If solidarity is deemed an element of the "true human essence", then the problem of anti-solidary feelings and actions is rejected far too comfortably: through

a normative statement. Any attempt to bring about or legitimize solidary behavior by referring to human nature or the human essence thus becomes circular, since this "human nature" or "human essence" has already been defined as solidary. The moral output of theories such as these is always guaranteed by a corresponding anthropological input.

(3) A further objection may be added. Universal solidarity is obviously not only hindered by external factors such as competition and conflict; solidary feelings and actions also seem to be limited from within. Early on, David Hume emphasized that sympathy and benevolence do not usually extend beyond the intimate sphere: we evince them undividedly for the members of our family and our friends, less for our neighbors and acquaintances, hardly at all for the inhabitants of our town or our compatriots, and towards the inhabitants of distant continents we are ultimately indifferent. "In general, it may be affirm'd, that there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself" (Hume, 1739, p. 481). This is an expression not only of the general relativity of all feelings of fraternity, but also of the fact that a particular inclination or affection towards a human being or a group of human beings is usually *exclusive*. The existence of other human beings or groups for whom one does *not* evince such inclination or affection is always taken for granted. In this sense, "fraternity" is always exclusive too, insofar as it is based on the differentiability of our brothers (and sisters) from all other human beings who are not children of the same parents.

This phenomenon of the relativity and exclusiveness of solidary feelings and methods of action seems to me to be a weighty objection to the *universalistic* use of the term solidarity. We usually comprehend "solidarity" as mutual vouching, to be found in people who are linked to each other by specific things in common. One is "solidary" with those to whom one is close due to some common ground: a shared history, shared feelings, convictions or interests. In this sense, a particularistic – maybe even exclusive – dimension is inherent in the general use of the term solidarity. Rorty (1989, p. 308) was also drawing attention to the fact that the best and strongest reasons for acting are often particular reasons, when he stated

> that our sense of solidarity is strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as "one of us", where "us" means something smaller and more local than the human race. That is why "because she is a human being" is a weak, unconvincing explanation of a generous action (Rorty, 1989, p. 191).

We may regret it and complain about it: the fact is that positive assistance is usually, if not always motivated by particular bonds. The idea of a *general* fraternity of *all* human beings, as well as the postulate deduced from it that

each individual is morally obliged to help all other individuals without differentiation, seems to overtax the moral capability of most human beings. The motivational basis for a postulate such as this is extremely weak; it is thus just as demanding as it is powerless. Realistic ethics cannot simply ignore the limits of sympathy between human beings. This is, however, no reason to throw the baby out with the bath water and heave moral universalism overboard in favor of a cult of the particular – an idea that seems to have become post-modern recently. With regard to *negative* obligations, universalism remains indispensable. Just because nobody is obliged to carry out benevolent acts for the entire human race, it by no means follows that one may kill, injure, steal from or discriminate against strangers. Justified criticism of an exalted universalism must not be permitted to lead to the restitution of an atavistic horde morality, refusing moral status to anybody not belonging to the horde. In contrast to positive obligations to act, the essential obligations to refrain from acting are universalistic and must remain so.

II. Solidarity and Society

(4) It accordingly makes sense to maintain the particularistic interpretation usual in normal everyday speech, according to which "solidarity" does not refer to the tie binding humanity as a whole, but to the cohesion of a narrower and more limited community, including the resulting (particular) obligations. And since in the modern world, societies and states (in lieu of clans or tribes) play an important role, it seems reasonable to define solidarity as the inner cement holding together *a society*. Frequently named – in the past and present – central elements of such a cohesion include a common descent and history, a common culture and way of life, and common ideals and goals.

This idea is principally very old. Aristotle even discussed it under the label "friendship", whereby he employed the term in a very comprehensive sense. For him, friendship is "the will to live together" (Aristotle, 1952, 1280b, p. 36), not understood as a free decision of the individual, but rather as an expression of the social nature of human beings. Here the human being lives simultaneously in a multitude of different communities, starting with the family; via short-term, occasional communities such as coach parties; on to business relationships; and ultimately arriving at the *polis*, each corresponding to a specific kind of friendship. Since for Aristotle the *polis* represented the most important and highest form of human co-existence, the corresponding form of friendship was particularly significant in his eyes. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he defines it as harmony, as the unanimity of citizens' interests, actions and decisions (Aristotle, 1949, IX, 6). According to Aristotle, localized

community, relationships between relatives and economic exchange are necessary, but not sufficient foundations for the state; his actual goal was the community of noble life within houses and families for the sake of a self-sufficient and perfect life.

In Aristotle's opinion, the basis of "the will to live together" is the nature of the human being. The human being is not made for a solitary way of life, but for a life in a community with others. This idea of a social nature of the human being has been taken up again and again in the context of different philosophical systems and on the basis of diverging anthropological theories and has been variously reformulated. From time to time, human sociability has been interpreted as a natural and direct extension of loving the other sex and the children resulting from it. Other theoreticians, in contrast, have attempted to separate the inclination to form societies from love or sympathy, and have traced it back to an independent "drive" within human nature. This second group of theoreticians includes Prince Kropotkin, who in his book *Mutual Aid. A Factor of Evolution* (1939), inveighed against making the "struggle for survival" absolute, as had come into fashion at the time of vulgar Darwinism, and collected numerous examples for cooperative behavior in animals and human beings. During the course of evolution, this cooperation has become an hereditary characteristic in animals and human beings and has taken effect as a second legitimate evolutionary factor (besides the "struggle for survival"). Here, as Kropotkin expressively emphasizes, the tendency to form cooperative social associations is not to be interpreted as an expression of love or sympathy:

> However, to reduce animal sociability to *love* and *sympathy* means to reduce its generality and its importance, just as human ethics based upon love and personal sympathy only have contributed to narrow the comprehension of the moral feeling as a whole. It is not love to my neighbour – whom I often do not know at all – which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire; it is a far wider, even though more vague feeling or instinct of human solidarity and sociability which moves me. So it is also with animals. . . . It is a feeling infinitely wider than love or personal sympathy – an instinct that has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution, and which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from the practice of mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life. . . . But it is not love and not even sympathy upon which Society is based in mankind. It is the conscience – be it only at the stage of an instinct – of human solidarity (Kropotkin, 1939, pp. 15ff.).

Although it should not be overlooked that the supposition of an independent solidary or social drive is burdened with considerable problems, Kropotkin does draw attention to one of the essential reasons for not tracing society back to love or sympathy. Love and sympathy are intimate relationships which cannot be taken for granted as general ties between individuals, at least not in larger societies. Most of the human beings within such societies are strangers

to each other. This is also a reason for the difficulties encountered by Aristotle's concept of friendship. Although Aristotle on no account denies the differences which exist between the different kinds of "friendship", he does view them as different versions of the same disposition. The decisive point here is that he interprets all kinds of friendships as personal relationships. Characteristic of this is his analogy between the structures of various forms of government and the various forms of personal relationships (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, pp. 12ff.). In the context of the Greek *polis*, an interpretation of this nature is just as understandable as an accentuation of the significance of family ties for sociopolitical cohesion.

(5) Obviously, the cohesion of large, modern societies cannot be traced back to personal relations or to kinship. Modern societies are based on a network of social relationships which are largely indirect and anonymous. Even the significance of normative (religious) ties recedes; modern societies are typically pluralistic. The individuals live under the common roof of the state, and yet the latter is increasingly comprehended merely as a formal framework, or to put it more exactly: as an instrument for the achievement of common (in a distributive, not in a collective sense) goals. It is thus no longer a personal tie but a common interest which is paradigmatic for the social relationships which constitute and hold together a modern society: "the others" cease to be "friends" for whom one would like to do something good for their own sake; they become – if not competitors – then merely business partners. The personal tie is replaced by agreements for the benefit of both parties. Aristotle did discuss this kind of "advantage friendship" as a special kind of friendship; and yet what appeared to him as a somewhat lower-level kind of human interaction has, in modern social theory since Hobbes, become *the* fundamental and paradigmatic form of the mutuality of individuals and social cohesion.

Particularly since Ferdinand Tönnies' classic study *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), the type of human coexistence characteristic for Modernity has usually been termed "society", and sharply differentiated from "community". According to this differentiation, communities are more small groupings of human beings, similar to families and bound together by a "substantial" tie, whereas societies are more large, anonymous groupings of human beings typically connected by formal, external ties – especially contracts. As Tönnies states, a society is based on the peaceful coexistence of human beings who are "not essentially attached, but essentially divided"; and it is this subdivision into independent individuals which more than anything distinguishes a society from a community. According to Tönnies, activities which may be traced back to an *a priori* and necessary unity, and which lend expression to that unit's spirit, do not take place within a society. Here each

person is alone, on his or her own and in a state of tension towards all the others; nobody will do anything for anybody else or willingly give anybody else something unless it is for a return service or a return gift regarded as being at least equal to what has been given (Tönnies, 1887, p. 34 (§19)).

Out of this individualism characteristic for modern societies, the problem fundamental to the theory of a society ensues, namely how the cohesion of such agglomerations of independent individuals may be explained and conceptualized. Whereas communities seem to come prior to the individuals and thus exist as independent entities, the existence of societies poses a puzzle. To put it pointedly: how is society possible under the conditions of individualism?

In an attempt to answer this question, the theories forming the mainstream of modern social philosophy have fallen back upon the rational self-interest of individuals: the striving for physical self-preservation (Thomas Hobbes) or the striving for the satisfaction of needs (Adam Smith) and the insight that this is only possible in cooperation with other individuals. Neutral fora, in which independent individuals bind themselves to each other through autonomous acts, function as mechanisms of cohesion: the Law, in the form of contracts, and the marketplace. A third mechanism is particularly significant for the present context because it was introduced to social theory by Auguste Comte under the term "solidarity": namely, the division of labor. According to Durkheim, Comte was the first to point out that the division of labor is not only an economic phenomenon, but the most principal source of social solidarity; he did not recognize, however, that it is the source of a specific form of solidarity, namely the solidarity characteristic of modern societies. One of Durkheim's achievements is thus the differentiation between different forms of solidarity (i.e., kinds of social cohesion). Social life stems from different sources: on the one hand, it springs from similarities and agreements in individual consciences – to such an extent that the latter merge to form a collective type; on the other hand, it springs from the division of labor, resulting from the individuals' varying natures. In the first case, Durkheim speaks of "mechanic" solidarity, in the second case of "organic" solidarity. The important point here is that these two forms of solidarity do not exist alongside each other in a never-changing state of equilibrium; in the course of social evolution, the division of labor constantly increases, and with it the individuality. Accordingly, the cohesion of society is realized less and less through similarity and more and more through difference. The division of labor becomes the cement of society. Durkheim characterizes the stepwise replacement of mechanic through organic solidarity as a "law of history" (Durkheim, 1902, p. 229).

(6) Precisely this historical process, which Durkheim describes as the supersession of one particular type of solidarity by another, has been comprehended by other authors as a gradual *decline* of solidarity. They contrast, more or less sharply, the picture of a community characterized by close solidary relationships with a society want of ties. Social evolution then no longer appears as a gradual transformation of solidarity, but as a gradual desolidarization, at the end of which isolated individuals remain. Countering the euphoria spread by Adam Smith in connection with the division of labor, an historical diagnosis of this kind had already been made by Adam Ferguson:

> . . . the separation of professions, while it seems to promise improvement of skill, and is actually the cause why the productions of every art become more perfect as commerce advances; yet in its termination, and ultimate effects, serves, in some measure, to break the bands of society, to substitute mere forms and rules of art in place of ingenuity, and to withdraw individuals from the common scene of occupation, on which the sentiments of the heart, and the mind, are most happily employed. . . . and society is made to consist of parts, of which none is animated with the spirit that ought to prevail in the conduct of nations (Ferguson, 1773, p. 364).

A century later, the deliberations of Ferdinand Tönnies pointed in the same direction. He, too, comprehended the transition to the Modern Age not as the decline of a particular type of social tie, but as the decline of social ties altogether. Accordingly, the typological differentiation between the community and society manifoldly amounts to a devaluation of society compared with the community: only the community is a "real" coexistence, whereas society is an "irreal" form of coexistence. This is the tone in Tönnies (1887, p. 4), when he characterizes the community as a "living organism", but society only as a "mechanic aggregate and artifact"; in the first case coexistence is then "genuine", in the second merely "temporary and seeming".

In the present day, the theory that modernization must be viewed as equivalent to desolidarization is particularly strengthened by advocates of Communitarianism. In their scriptures, we encounter nearly all of the relevant motives for criticizing modernity from the last two centuries: amongst them criticism of individualism, of the tyranny of the market, of instrumentalist understanding of the state. Appropriate to the name of the movement, this criticism is aimed at reanimating forms of social solidarity previously characteristic of genuine communities. Beyond its theoretical dimension (What holds a society together?), the solidarity problem hereby assumes a *practical political dimension*: the question as to how the cohesion of society can be promoted and consolidated must be answered. Aristotle was early to emphasize the practical political dimension with regard to this concept of friendship when he called for prudent politicians to work towards a consolidation of the polis friendship:

> Friendship seems to hold a state together, too, and lawgivers seem to pay more attention to friendship than to justice; for concord seems to be somewhat akin to friendship, and this they aim at most of all and try their utmost to drive out faction, which is inimical to the state. And when men are friends, they have no need of justice at all, but when they are just, they still need friendship; and a thing which is most just is thought to be done in a friendly way (Aristotle, 1949, 1155a, pp. 22-25).

If, as far back as Aristotle, friendship in the polis was on no account a reality to be taken for granted, but a phenomenon which requires promotion and special care in a political sense, then this is even more true of solidarity in modern societies. The communitarians see immense and pressing tasks in this area. The tendency, resulting from modern individualism, to regard the state and society merely as instruments for the achievement of various individual goals, must eventually undermine the moral basis of the polity and thus endanger the continued existence of modern democracy. As with every polity, stability accordingly represents a problem for the liberal society which remains unsolved not only theoretically, but also practically. The ability of the liberal society to survive cannot be fundamentally secured on the basis of an atomistic self-understanding. Charles Taylor opposes the liberal atomism of modern society with the idea of a "republican solidarity" and a "patriotism", overcoming the egotism of the individuals in favor of a *common good*. "Republics", in Taylor's sense of the word, differ from liberal societies in that their inhabitants see themselves as a community borne by common values and bound by a common destiny, prepared to defend this polity as a "directly common good".

> The difference is that patriotism is based on an identification with others in a particular common enterprise. I am not dedicated to defending the liberty of just anyone, but I feel the bond of solidarity with my compatriots in our common enterprise, the common expression of our respective dignity. . . . Functioning republics are like families in this crucial respect, that part of what binds people together is their common history. Family ties or old friendships are deep because of what we have lived through together, and republics are bonded by time and climactic transitions. . . . My (frequently inoperative) moral commitment to the welfare of all humans is altruistic. But the bond of solidarity with my compatriots in a functioning republic is based on a sense of shared fate, where the sharing itself is of value. This is what gives this bond its special importance, what makes my ties with these people and to this enterprise peculiarly binding, what animates my "virtu", or patriotism (Taylor, 1989, p. 166-170).

This kind of republic is a tempting idea, and yet the appeal to families and destiny also arouses a certain degree of skepticism. In reality, modern states are *not* like families in nearly every relevant aspect. Characteristic for modern states are the dominance of anonymous and instrumental social relationships, the lack of a common idea of good or being part of a "common undertaking". Not even history necessarily binds human beings: in many cases it separates the individuals from one another because the fate suffered within this history

is totally different. Even conceding that the fragmentation and pluralism of modern societies are by no means absolute and that within the framework of anonymous and instrumental social relationships communities can indeed not only survive, but even emerge (cf. Giddens, 1992, p 116), considerable doubts will necessarily arise with regard to the realization of Taylor's idea of republics. Upon what foundations are republics to emerge, and from what material should the prerequisite ties of solidarity be woven?

It is noticeable that, in their diagnosis of the evil they bemoan, communitarians concentrate almost exclusively on *ideological* causes. Accordingly, the anomie of modern societies is rooted in the dominance of liberal and individualistic ideology. If this is true, then a reform of conscience would be sufficient to cause a fundamental turnaround in society. And this is precisely what the communitarian program amounts to. Tellingly, Alasdair MacIntyre spoke of a "conversion" (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 396), through which liberalism could be overcome. This forgets, however, that conversions may always be possible as individual acts, but are rather improbable as collective changes if there are no causal factors in social reality pointing in the same direction. As far as the emergence of strong solidary relationships between the individuals forming large modern societies is concerned, factors such as these are not in sight. With their diagnosis, the advocates of Communitarianism fall back behind insights which had already been attained at the end of the 19th century, when Tönnies emphasized that the decline of the "community" (critically observed by him) and the rise of the "society" is a historical process which should not primarily be analyzed ideologically, but far more as a process of changing objective social structures; Durkheim even spoke of an "historical law". Both of them equally draw attention to the fact that the processes they have described and explained cannot simply be traced back to the spreading of a "false" ideology.

Moreover, Durkheim's theory of a transformation (instead of a decline) of solidarity deserved to be taken more seriously. One of the main points within this theory was, after all, that the "organic" solidarity typical of modern societies is essentially a solidarity between autonomous individuals. For "mechanistic" solidarity, this is precisely the difference existing between similar, i.e. non-individualized human beings. The consequence of this theory is that there is no conceptual or factually irreconcilable conflict between solidarity and individuality as insinuated by the communitarians – as well as some liberals.

III. Solidarity and Liberation

(7) A third important use of "solidarity" is to be found wherever individuals form a group in order to stand up for their common interests. This type of solidarity may in turn be divided into a collection of very different variations. For example – to start at the less pleasant end of the spectrum – human beings can come together to form a band of criminals, or officers to form a military junta, supporting each other in order to promote their immoral goals; individuals can also enter into an obligation of mutual help for the eventuality of particular risks, or they can take out fire, health, or life insurance. A third variation of this kind of solidarity is to be found in the context of the social movements in the 19th and 20th centuries. Here, "solidarity" denotes the emotional cohesion between the members of these social movements and the mutual support they give each other in their battle for common goals. The concept of solidarity played a particularly important role within the labor movement of the 19th and 20th centuries; today it is claimed by the "new" social movements, especially the ecological and women's movements. For its historical significance alone, this third variation is of particular interest in the current context: it was the socialist movement from which the concept of solidarity historically emerged and from which it seeped into general ethical and political terminology. In addition, the specific character of the normative dimension, especially its implied reference to justice, makes this use of the term a worthy object of observation.

From its content, this form of solidarity has a *positive* component, which results from the goals which those involved are keen to realize with the help of their solidary actions. This is often a case of carrying through political and social rights. The rights, in particular the human rights, to which we are privy today (albeit not in all parts of the world, by any means) should not be taken for granted. They had to be arduously fought for. A central role was played in this by solidarity, in the form of support for minority groups (or even majority groups) suppressed because of their biological, religious or cultural particularities. The history of the human race was a history of suppression from the very beginning, as well as of revolt against this suppression. The labor movement in the 19th and 20th centuries, the civil rights movement in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa or the civilian movements within the socialist countries in the 1980s have all delivered examples of solidary activity and success in developing rights. Solidarity thus was – and is – an important source of legal progress. Yet this is not only true of dictatorships and authoritarian regimes. Even in democratic states, individuals or groups were (and are) denied certain rights: the discrimination of women and blacks, for example. Since the elementary rights of

human beings are by no means ensured everywhere, solidarity is a political resource which has always been urgently needed.

This type of solidarity is particularly needed where institutionalized mechanisms for the production and maintenance of justice do not exist or fail. For this reason, rival interests and claims can only be decided through a battle between the parties involved (laborers and capitalists; environmental protectionists and environmental polluters; women and men). These battles often take place within a legally regulated framework; from time to time, however, solidary activity may also be aimed at certain state institutions or legal structures regarded as unjust. The worst abuses of human rights have, in actual fact, often come from state institutions or been backed by state authority.[4] One permanent characteristic of this type of solidarity, however, is that it involves a commitment *against* an opponent, from whom positive goals must be wrung. This leads to a *negative* component significantly differentiating this type of solidarity from those mentioned previously: it is not only exclusive, in that it excludes particular individuals or groups, but adversative, in that it opposes particular individuals or groups.

(8) With regard to the labor movement, in which context the concept of solidarity was so classically molded, Friedrich Engels maintained "that the simple feeling of solidarity, based on an insight into the sameness of the class position, is sufficient in order to create amongst all of the laborers of all countries and languages one large and cohesive proletariat party" (Engels, 1885, p. 223). This formulation corresponds with the tendency characteristic of Marx and Engels towards objectivizing historical processes and social relationships, a tendency which has prevented the elaboration of a theory of solidarity within the framework of historical materialism. Characteristic of the few relevant statements on this subject is that they totally play down the *normative* dimension of solidarity. This is clear from the fact that the "sameness of the class position" and the agreement of interests stemming from it may represent an explanation for solidary activity, but not a normative justification. If common interests had a morally obliging character *eo ipso*, then the theoreticians of the labor movement would have had to grant the common interests of the capitalists (including the class solidarity based on them) the same moral dignity as the common interests of the proletariat. At most, a theory of this kind may be justifiable in the eyes of theoreticians, but for the protagonists of the labor movement acting in terms of political practice, it would not have been at all acceptable because the consciousness of these protagonists was constituted by their conviction that they were combating an existing wrong, and thus had justice on their side. This finding may be generalized. Although, from time to time, "solidarity" is even referred to in

conjunction with the cohesion of the mafia or a military junta, this linguistic application must be carefully differentiated from the normative use of the term. In the self-perception of the members of political and social emancipatory movements, it is not a case of carrying through bare interests, but of realizing *just* goals. And, insofar as the matter at stake is a just matter, the solidarity put into practice during the fight for it contains a genuinely moral dimension.

If solidarity could be reduced to the common ground of the interests involved, then *prudence* would be the only remaining motive for solidary behavior. There can be little doubt that it is principally imprudent not to be solidary, because without it – at least in the long term – self-interests could be endangered. It is certainly also true that solidarity does not usually stem exclusively from pure altruism: in many solidary performances there are overtones of an expectation of potential mutuality and the hope of simultaneously serving one's own interests. On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that solidary behavior cannot be reduced to prudence. Wherever there is good reason to expect it, its absence is not only regretted but also morally disapproved of: non-solidary behavior is considered not only "imprudent", but shabby and reprehensible. This has to do with the fact that a person who behaves non-solidarily usually harms not only himself, but also those to whom he denies the anticipated solidarity. Moreover: a denial of solidarity towards those who are legitimately battling for their rights and interests automatically helps "the other side", namely those in opposition to the legitimate rights of the group in question. Laborers who refuse to participate in their colleagues' strike not only hold back envisaged solidarity with the strike's positive aims, but at the same time – and in thus doing – actually support the other side and *eo ipso* harm their colleagues.

In addition, a denial of solidarity necessarily seems *unfair*. The plausibility of this will become clear if we observe the following two types of "solidary" behavior. Firstly, it can mean the common commitment of those who are affected by a political or social disadvantage *themselves*, and who unite to defend themselves against it; one example of this would be united trade union strike action within a group of laborers. In this case, the solidary activity is aimed at a collective good, from which enjoyment nobody belonging to the group affected can be excluded. Wage increases, as well as similar achievements carried through by a trade union, benefit not only the members of that trade union, but also the other employees. It is seldom the case that somebody who has not participated in a debate aimed at warding off a threat and/or carrying through a common interest will willingly abstain from reaping the benefits. Aspirations such as these, to share in the fruits of a combat without previously sharing in its risks and burdens, are exactly what is perceived as

unfair and thus morally disapproved of. "Solidarity" is the concept to oppose that of "free riders".[5]

Secondly, "solidarity" of the type based on (material or symbolic) aids may be awarded to *other* individuals or groups in the process of defending themselves against some disadvantage; one example of this would be a donation intended to support a strike within another country. If assistance is not granted in this case, then the "free riders" accusation may not be applicable; and yet attention may still be drawn to the latent reciprocity inherent in all kinds of solidarity relationship. The difference between solidarity and charity is that, in the former, a fundamental equality exists between those involved, giving them the *mutual* right to expect help as it may be required. If one side does not fulfill this expectation, then he must be prepared for the accusation that, were the situation to be reversed, he would have expected help, and presumably would have accepted it. And precisely this refusal to help where one would have accepted it oneself is considered unfair.

(9) Additional, more fundamentally formulated arguments have often been used to justify the fact that the solidarity behind social movements may not be reduced to the expression of common interests or an instrument in the battle for these interests. In his famous essay *L'homme revolté*, Albert Camus, for example, was of the opinion that solidarity always has its origins in revolt. "La solidarité des hommes se fonde le mouvement de révolte et celui-ci à son tour, ne trouve de justification que dans cette complicité." (Camus, 1951, p. 35). This idea stems from the concept of the absurd as the basic position of the human being within the world. According to Camus, the human being does not, however, simply accept the absurd: it suffers from the absurd and revolts against it. At first sight the human being is alone in this. In experiencing the absurd, suffering is individual. Yet the movement of the revolt leads the individual to realize that others are in the same situation. The isolated individual comes to realize that it shares its suffering from the absurd with every other human being: the individual evil becomes a collective one. This is the moment where not only solidarity, but also the entire sphere of human values, emerges. Beyond the revolt, neither solidarity nor values exist. According to Camus, this revolt plays the same role in our daily experiences as the "cogito" in our thinking: it is the first thing to be taken for granted. And taking this for granted tears the individual away from its loneliness. It is common to attribute this as the foremost value of all human beings. "Je me révolte, donc nous sommes" (p. 36).

This conception of solidarity lends expression to the insight – incidentally also emphasized by Sartre (1960, pp. 451-468) – that, under certain circumstances, individuals are only capable of giving their lives sense and value in

a battle against the circumstances they find themselves confronted with, and that this revolt can, at the same time, be the way out of isolation. One of the problems of existentialist philosophy is, however, that historically possible (and real) situations of this kind are rendered absolute, as a metaphysical constant of human existence, by the concept of absurdity. The "revolt" is then no longer aimed at a concrete social or political reality, and solidarity accordingly becomes a metaphysical phenomenon; it was not in vain that Camus resorted to human nature for its interpretation.

And yet some of the real problems confronting social movements radiate from this theory. Social movements usually take place in an environment opposed to its goals and battles, at least reservedly, if not with animosity. Practicing solidarity under such circumstances is often laden with risks. In addition, various theoreticians have repeatedly diagnosed (cf. Kropotkin, pp. 257-265) that massive obstacles face not only the feeling of attachment to other human beings, but also the actual practice of solidarity in modern society. Insofar as this feeling *nevertheless* emerges and activity is realized in practice, it seems reasonable to interpret this as the revelation of a readiness towards solidarity which is generally and fundamentally inherent in human nature. The solidarity practiced here and now in the battle for a just cause thus appears as the expression of a moral disposition which is incorruptible, even under the dominance of a capitalist profit motive or a patriarchal competitive attitude. To put it pointedly: the solidarity practiced here and now in the battle for a just cause appears as a trial sample of what human beings are capable of when social obstacles hampering the development of their moral strengths are removed.

The solidarity practiced within social movements thus acquires a dimension which is simultaneously "archaeological" and anticipative. It is *archaeological* insofar as it uncovers a disposition, buried under the established social conditions, towards cooperation, mutual aid, common feeling – in short: towards solidarity. It is *anticipative* insofar as it also draws a picture of the future human being, who will ultimately be free to develop its cooperative and common strengths unhindered. In this way, the concept of solidarity becomes multi-faceted (or ambiguous). It refers directly to a *means* of the battle: solidarity as a weapon. Yet at the same time it refers to an *end* of the battle: solidarity as an anticipation of future society, as a part of Utopia already lived. And, as if this weren't enough: since many things which, in the tradition of moral thought, have been formulated and called for as a postulate to human action, but which have seldom been put into practice and may even have been systematically prevented by the dominating circumstances, are subsumed to the term solidarity, the solidarity actually practiced within the battles of social movements also represents the realization of a moral ideal. And if this ideal

coincides with Utopia, then solidarity-in-battle assumes a dimension which is at once historical, philosophical and eschatological. With regard to proletarian solidarity, this was formulated by Georg Lukàcs as follows:

> The solidarity propagated by the greatest philosophers of the bourgeoisie as an unattainable social ideal really does exist in the class consciousness, the class interests of the proletariat. In the history of the world, the vocation of the proletariat reveals itself in the fact that the fulfillment of its class interests brings with it the social deliverance of the human race (Lukàcs, 1919, p. 91).

IV. Solidarity and the Welfare State

(10) In everyday politics, "solidarity" is chiefly referred to when a redistribution of financial resources by the state, in favor of materially needy individuals or groups, is to be justified. Here, the concept of solidarity serves to legitimate the welfare state. The decisive, normative premise of the relevant argumentation consists of the citizens of a state having certain obligations to help their fellow citizens, due to common history, language, culture, etc., which they do not have towards other human beings – i.e. inhabitants of other states.[6] One important historical source of this idea seems to be the concept of fraternity, which emerged in conjunction with the French Revolution, and which was laid down in concrete terms in §21 of the 1793 *Declaration of Human Rights* as a "holy duty" to support the "unfortunate members" of society. In its various forms and shapes, this idea of a mutual tie between the citizens of a modern state, similar to that binding the members of a family, has played a significant role in 19th and 20th century political thinking. We can still find it in John Rawls' work, in connection with the second basic principle of his theory of justice, according to which the justice of social and economic inequalities is to be measured according to the extent to which others, particularly the weakest members of society, will gain an advantage from them. According to Rawls, this "*principle of difference*" amounts to

> a natural meaning of fraternity: namely, to the idea of not wanting to have greater advantages unless this is to the benefit of others who are less well off. The family, in its ideal conception and often in practise, is one place where the principle of maximizing the sum of advantages is rejected. Members of family commonly do not wish to gain unless they can do so in ways that further the interests of the rest. Now wanting to act on the difference principle has precisely this consequence. Those better circumstanced are willing to have their greater advantages only under a scheme in which this works out for the benefit of the less fortunate (Rawls, 1971, p. 105).

Insofar as this is merely the formulation of a family "ideal" or a "holy" (or, less dramatically, "moral") duty to support fellow citizens in need, neither of the passages comes close to hitting upon the central element – or the central

problem – of the welfare state. Characteristic of the welfare state is not that it consists of *moral* ideals or duties to support the needy, but that this support is legally institutionalized by the state. Needy citizens do not expect help from their fellow citizens, but instead have a formalized claim to such aid from the appropriate institutions, which puts them in a position to force the appropriate services with legal means. For the remaining citizens, this claim simultaneously implies a legal duty to help, since the state finances the means it requires to support the needy from taxes and contributions levied from them, under the threat of authoritative measures. It is these two elements, its institutionalization and its coercive character, which render welfare state solidarity a problem, and which justify a special analysis of its linguistic usage in this context.

(11) Since the end of the 18th century, poverty and need have gradually been perceived less as the consequences of an inevitable "Fate" for which nobody is to blame, and more as a *social problem*; they have ceased to be attributed to external powers, and instead are traced back to social structures which, in turn, are the product of human action, and from which human protagonists profit. Since whatever was created by human beings can also be altered by human beings, this change in perception has led to the conclusion that poverty and need can be eliminated or at least mitigated by an appropriate reorganization of social conditions. Moreover: if some of the members of society reap particular advantages from the prevailing conditions whilst other members of society suffer from them, then a duty seems to emerge whereby the first group must help the second. In addition, the same economic and social processes which lead to specifically modern forms of poverty and need also undermine previously existing mechanisms of mutual aid and thus limit their effectiveness. The social networks which existed in pre-industrial society – particularly the (extended) family, but also neighborhoods and village communities, private and Church charity – to a large extent forfeit their effectiveness in a situation of mass industrial and urban misery.

In these circumstances, it seems reasonable to transfer at least some of the tasks previously fulfilled by the family or other social networks to the state, and to burden with the costs those people who a) profit from the prevailing situation and b) are thus in a position to make such contributions at all. The mere size of the problem rendered a moral duty to help alone seemingly insufficient. Additionally, the needy, who in the course of the 19th century had gradually gained equal status as state citizens, but who were nevertheless still at an economic and social disadvantage, acquired new self-confidence. Against this background, the concept of social rights appeared to be merely a consistent sequel to the emergence of political and civil rights, as social

equality is the consistent sequel to political equality. As Thomas H. Marshall made plausible, the "inner logic" of the equality concept necessarily leads to the conclusion that full membership within a community, beyond a formal equality of rights, additionally necessitates economic and social equality, or at least something approaching it (Marshall, 1964). Calls for full membership within the community thus consistently led from civil rights (in the 18th century) via political rights (in the 19th century) to social rights (in the 20th century).

If social equality is conceived as a precondition for full membership within the political community, then it must also, of course, be claimed as a *right*. It makes a difference whether one is reliant upon charity or whether one can stake an attested claim to aid. This difference applies not only to the probability of actually obtaining help as required, but also to the dignity and self-respect with which it may be received. More than anything, however, a dependence upon good will and the readiness of others to help creates second-class citizens who are not in a position to associate with their benefactors on the same level, and certainly not to oppose them politically. During the French Revolution, a *right* to support from the state in cases of need was accordingly raised within debates surrounding the *Declaration of Human Rights*, and the historical reason why a right of this kind was not included in the Declaration text in its final form seems rather coincidental (cf. Gauchet, 1991, p. 109). The fact that, as long as they are reliant upon the charity of others, the freedom, independence, and self-determination of individuals remains unfulfilled was also a conclusion to be drawn from Saint-Justs' appeal to give every Frenchman the means to satisfy his most urgent needs without being dependent upon another human being or upon anything else other than the Law, and without a mutual interdependence arising between individuals (cf. Gauchet, 1991, p. 115). In the same vein, the labor movement of the 19th and 20th centuries had also continually refused to be fobbed off with a pittance, fighting instead for attested social rights. The significance which the rejection of mere charity had for the emergence of the term "solidarity" can be seen in the fact that its "inventor" – the religious socialist, Pierre Leroux – introduced it expressively as a term to oppose "compassion" and "charity". According to Leroux, the "natural law of solidarity" justifies a claim to existential security through the community for each individual (cf. Schmelter, 1991, p. 11). Leading on from this prerequisite, the social state must then be comprehended as the practical realization of this claim – as the political implementation of a "natural law".

(12) On the other hand, various doubts can be raised regarding this justification of the welfare state by solidarity. First of all, apprehensions of an historical nature exist. The welfare state and social policies appear very

different if they are viewed not from the perspective of the working classes but from that of the ruling classes. In Bismarck's social legislation, marking the beginning of the welfare state, the concept of solidarity played a negligible role. The introduction of a legally instated pension and health insurance scheme was more an attempt to take the bread from the mouth of the increasingly influential labor movement: a concession which had to be made in the interests of stabilizing society. From the viewpoint of the social elites, the argument in favor of the welfare state was based not upon a moral concept of a mutual duty amongst citizens to care, but based far more upon a political calculation of prudence. Aristotle dared to express this far more openly than 19th and 20th century politicians and ideologists, pointing out that stability can only be permanently guaranteed by the limitation of social tensions:

> But one who is genuinely of the popular sort should see to it that the multitude is not overly poor; for this is the reason for democracy being depraved. Measures must therefore be divised so that there will be abundance over time. Since this is advantageous also for the well off, what ought to be done is to accumulate what is left over the revenues and distribute accumulated [sums] to the poor. This should particularly be done if one could accumulate enough for the acquisition of a plot of land, or failing this, for a start in trade or farming (Aristotle, 1952, 1320a, pp. 33-37).

Another objection is ethically more relevant than these factual, historical apprehensions, however, namely the grave difference between a moral commitment to care for poor, sick, or elderly fellow citizens, on the one hand, and the bureaucratic services of a welfare state, on the other. Even if we assume that the factual service is the same in both cases, important differences remain with regard to the "subjective" dimension: morally motivated care is voluntary and, more often than not, involves a personal relationship between the donor and the recipient; in contrast, state social services are coerced from the donor and remain anonymous. From an ethical point of view, subjective aspects of this kind are not merely accidental; their absence touches most definitely upon the moral substance of the service in question. To put it pointedly: bureaucratic institutionalization of care services results in their demoralization. Even if the state were to be accepted as having the equivalent function today of the networks which, in former times, could be regarded as genuine solidary networks, the aid has assumed a different character. The term *dialectics of state control* can thus be coined: the same service which – when directly and voluntarily performed by individuals – earns the label "solidarity", is – when transferred to a bureaucratic apparatus and carried out anonymously – diluted to a kind of "quasi solidarity" (cf. Bayertz, 1996). It should be emphasized here, in order to prevent misunderstandings from arising, that this moral dilution does not represent an automatic objection to the welfare state; they may be the result of an irreversible historical process, and no comparatively effective way to support the needy may exist in modern

societies. This moral dilution is, however, definitely an argument against declaring the welfare state, without ifs and buts, to be an expression of solidarity. Terming what is coerced from the taxpayer under the threat of authoritative measures "solidarity" amounts to no less than a euphemism.

Thirdly and finally, it should not be forgotten that, in every relevant aspect, modern states are not families or communities, with their members bound by close substantial ties. For the formation of a powerful solidarity of the type envisaged by Taylor and the communitarians, decisive foundations are missing; and this is also true of the "fraternity" referred to by Rawls in conjunction with his *principle of difference*. It can thus come as no surprise that the spontaneous readiness to relinquish benefits, from which other, less privileged persons do not profit, is barely visible within modern societies (if it really was visible in former societies).

It is thus only consistent that, in political philosophy, the concept of justice is preferred to that of solidarity in order to justify the welfare state in ethical terms. Rawls did not attempt, as a closer look shows, to justify his *principle of difference* by deducing it from fraternity. Far more, justification results from a hypothetical decision of individuals in the original position to agree upon the two familiar principles of justice. This original position is defined, amongst other things, through the fact that the individuals are mutually disinterested in it "and are not willing to have their interests sacrificed to the others" (Rawls, 1971, p. 129). The prerequisite for the principle of difference is thus not a solidarity similar to that within a family, but a rational and, by all accounts, "selfish" calculation of interests on behalf of the parties involved. This construction is symptomatic for the fundamental difficulty confronting every new attempt to legitimate the welfare state through solidarity. Since there is no (longer?) reason to assume an existing perception of common ground, from which solidarity is known spontaneously to grow, it seems reasonable to deduce obligations to help from the principle of justice. Justice requires neither group-specific common ground nor emotional attachment, but is based instead on the distanced observation and the weighing up of competing claims from a neutral position. Hume was right in characterizing justice as an "artificial" virtue, contrasting it with the "natural" virtues of charity, brotherly love, and generosity – those virtues bordering on solidarity (1739, pp. 577ff.). In the conditions prevailing within modern society, a "natural" fraternity is replaced by an "artificial" justice, its practical realization shifting in turn from individuals to the state and its institutions. Justifying the social state by referring to solidarity is thus far more likely to be politically and/or ideologically motivated than philosophically so.

V. Conclusion

The concept of solidarity is relative to a concept of community. Its various usages are thus mainly the result of corresponding references to particular communities, through which even mutual duties are defined according to their kind and scope. Every human being is the member of several communities: starting with the entire human community, proceeding to the membership state, one's religion, social class, political party and the family, and ending with the sports club.

Viewed objectively, the community or communities of particular importance to an individual, as well as the form or forms of solidarity to which that individual is thus particularly obliged are historically and culturally contingent. From the point of view of the individual there is no such contingency, however. In many cases, belonging to a particular community constitutes personal identity. An obvious tension exists between these two points of view, which cannot be removed without loss incurring on one side or the other.

Modern ethics has often underestimated the significance of this power of communities to form identities and shape corresponding obligations. One-sided concentration on universal rules and norms has forced "solidarity" and the relevance of it and other group-specific obligations to take a back-seat. Theoretically speaking, it has also blotted out an important part of the motivation behind moral action. The tensions between universal and individual actions, as well as the reasons and obligations behind them, which characterize the moral conscience in practice must also be borne out in theory. The concept of solidarity is thus indispensable for a philosophy of morality and politics, if this is to pay justice to the true complexity of the moral conscience.

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Notes

* Translated into English by Sarah L. Kirkby, B.A. Hons. Exon.

1. A satisfactory and comprehensive analysis of "solidarity" and its terminological history does not yet exist; cf. the more recent works from Wildt (1996) and Schmelter (1991), as well as the older literature referred to there.
2. There is no room here to discuss whether this incompatibility is really based on a misunderstanding, as maintained by R. M. Hare (1981, ch. 8). Alan Gewirth also attempted to show recently that "ethical universalism can justify certain kinds of ethical particularism" (Gewirth, 1988, p. 283).

3. This "children of God" idea has its foundations in both the Old Testament (Mal. 2, 10) and the New Testament (1. John 3, 1 and 2). Regarding the sociological implications of this idea, cf. Troeltsch, 1912, pp. 39ff. and p. 60 passim.
4. Paradoxically, states have also become important guarantors of rights. Without the authoritative measures of the state, human rights might be less threatened but they would also be less safeguarded: for where they are (relatively) safeguarded, this is due to the institutional power of the state.
5. Some countries even have legal stipulations to prevent free-riders. In Switzerland, for example, employees who are not organized within a trade union can be obliged in a wage agreement to pay a "solidarity contribution" (*Solidaritätsbeitrag*) in return for the advantages which they will have as a result of this wage agreement.
6. Indicatively, the additional contribution imposed upon the German taxpayer to finance the costs of the German reunification is called the "solidarity surcharge" (*Solidaritätszuschlag*), and the corresponding law (from 24/6/1991) the "solidarity law".

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