Who needs solidarity?

‘It is not difficult to identify what should be the core values of a party that belongs to the family of modern European social democracy. Top of anyone’s list must come solidarity – the principle that the strength of a society is measured by the extent that its rich members support vulnerable fellow citizens. Next comes the commitment to humanitarian rather than commercial priorities, and its corollary that the market should be managed to meet people’s needs rather than the people harnessed to serve the market’ (Robin Cook, Guardian Feb 4, 2005)

‘[European integration]…ist nicht der Weltfriede, nicht die Abrüstung und nicht die Erschlaffung, aber es ist Milderung der Konflikte, Kräfteersparnis und solidarische Zivilisation’ (Walther Rathenau, cited in Beck 1997)

The term solidarity is of course a central element of the Marxist and, more broadly, socialist tradition, and of the work of Emile Durkheim, who established its use in the late nineteenth century as a theoretical category of the emergent discipline of sociology. Writing against the background of a political doctrine known as solidarism¹, which dominated French political thinking in the second half of the nineteenth century (Zeldin, 1973, ch. 21), Durkheim devoted his first major work, on The Division of Labour in Society (1895) to an ambitious contrast between the ‘mechanical solidarity’ of simple societies, based on their homogeneity, and the organic solidarity of more complex and differentiated societies, based on the mutual dependence of individuals.

There is, then, a broad concept of social solidarity, which makes it equivalent to an answer to the question ‘how is society or social order possible?’. The Durkheimian tradition, influenced by late nineteenth century solidarism, claims that it is central, while an economistic tradition says it is not. In his lectures on social solidarity at Bordeaux in 1887 Durkheim described the problem of sociology as being: ‘What are the bonds that unite men to one another, that so to speak determine the formation of
solid social aggregates?" In David Lockwood’s *Solidarity and Schism*, which is concerned with the problem of social order in the work of Durkheim and Marx, solidarity represents the limit case ‘where there is widespread conformity with, and internalization of, the normative expectations attaching to the roles making up institutions.’ (Lockwood, 2002: 12).

Claus Offe (2000), at the beginning of a rather pessimistic analysis of the state of contemporary postcommunist societies, provides a similarly broad account of solidarity as a global feature of well functioning societies:

The “horizontal” phenomena of trust and solidarity (linking citizens to each other) are preconditions for the “vertical” phenomenon of the establishment and continued existence of state authority, manifested in effectively ensuring the performance of civic duties. In simple terms, this means that before citizens can recognize the authority of the state, they must first mutually recognize each other as being motivated by – and hence reciprocally worthy of – trust and solidarity. It is precisely when this abstract but resilient trust in “everyone else” as the collective co-author of the obligating norms is undermined, or when citizens’ active interest in each other’s well-being is successfully discredited that liberal notions about curtailing the scope of the state’s authority flourish. Trust in one’s fellow citizens provides the cognitive and moral foundations for democracy, the risks of which no one would reasonably accept otherwise. The solidarity citizens feel toward one another, or to which they allow themselves to be obligated through their representative institutions, is the moral basis of the welfare state. Thus, both democracy and
the welfare state are dependent upon the prior existence of binding motives, which in turn are tied to the form of political integration found in the nation-state.

Some commentators, like Offe, would see solidarity as the source and animating spirit of the European welfare state or, more broadly, social model. For Hartmut Kaelble, in Kaelble and Schmidt (2004): 40-1:


As Joe Weiler (2002: 569-70) puts it ‘Europe prides itself on a tradition of social solidarity which found political and legal expression in the post-war welfare state.’

Others however would see state-supported welfare policy as a substitute for solidarity, as much as for uncoordinated acts of private charity). More technical and policy-oriented discussions of the welfare state tend to avoid the term solidarity, while more reflective commentators often use it as a way of marking out certain forms of welfare state from others. The historian Peter Baldwin (1990), discussed in
more detail below, differentiates between solidaristic, i.e. redistributive, and more limited welfare systems, while Walter Streeck (1999) conceptualises the EU’s developing social model as ‘productivist-competitive solidarity’.  

Durkheim differed from orthodox economic theory, Herbert Spencer’s sociology and Hayek’s later notion of catallaxy in arguing that this solidarity was not an automatic product of self-legitimating commercial exchanges. Rather it was grounded in deeper moral sentiments and ties reaching ‘far beyond the short moments during which exchange is made’ (Durkheim, 1984: 227; Ray, 1999: 97, Crow, 2002:12ff). Durkheim’s main interest was to develop this view against utilitarian and contract theories (such as Spencer) on the one hand and Marxist materialism on the other. Solidarism was connected in complicated ways to the politics of mutual aid, friendly societies and what became the welfare state. The Durkheimian tradition, like Marxism, was not particularly enthusiastic about the welfare state. For the Durkheimians, the welfare state cannot be an adequate solution since it does not assure the necessary moral and social integration, but on the contrary weakens the integrative functions of intermediate structures; by inflating expectations, it promotes anomic tendencies, and by individualising benefits it encourages “selfish “ tendencies in our societies’ (Flora, 1981: 363).

The European welfare state, from its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, had been in large part an oblique answer to ‘the social question’, responding to political demands for democracy and/or socialism with the consolation prize of welfare regimes. Bismarck’s social legislation of the 1880s was initiated in the middle of a twenty-year period during which the socialist party was banned. In democratic France, in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions, conflicts such as that over the ‘right to work’ pointed up potential challenges to the state. As Tocqueville
pointed out, this would entail, if taken seriously, that the state either itself become an employer or that it impose rigid controls on independent entrepreneurs (Donzelot 1984: 44). The question, then, for the Republic, was how to give rights to those whose social condition did not match their political status, ‘without these rights giving them rights against the state’ (p.71). As Donzelot argues, it was the rise of the social sector with social legislation, an ideology of solidarity and an institutionalised practice of negotiation, which answered these dilemmas. Similarly in Britain, the more protracted development of social policy legislation, from the restriction of night work for children in 1802 to the full-fledged post WW2 welfare state, was in part a response to the challenge of radical democrats inspired by the French Revolution or, later, socialists radicalised by the two world wars. ‘Initially, the policy of integration was directed exclusively at the working class, whose militancy against the system was to be restrained and channelled...’(Flora, 1981: 343). In France, in particular, ‘solidarity’ has been the organising slogan for social policy, and to some extent for state ideology as a whole, from the late nineteenth century to the present.6

The French expert Pierre Rosenvallon, whose book on the crisis of the welfare state was a fundamental contribution to discussion in the 1980s, continues to frame the issues in terms of solidarity. Foreshadowed by Leibniz at the end of the 17C, the principle of social insurance, ‘acting as a sort of invisible hand of solidarity’, becomes in the late 18th and 19th centuries another way of conceptualising the ‘lien social’, along with contact and the market (Rosenvallon, 1995: 19). Over time the notion of insurance is superseded by more explicitly solidaristic forms of welfare provision (p.45,49), culminating in recent attempts in Europe to act directly on the social relations of individuals through programmes encouraging self-reliance, healthy living,
‘family preservation’ and so on. Here the solidarity represented by the state complements, incorporates and acts through ‘local and family solidarities’ (pp. 215-6). For Rosenvallon (p. 223), this demands a rethinking of politics: ‘C’est seulement du sein d’une vision approfondie de la démocratie et d’une redéfinition lucide de l’idée réformiste que peut prendre naissance une pratique elle-même renouvelée de la solidarité. For Rosenvallon (p.49), then, a political conception of the welfare state goes alongside a more technical or institutional one.

…il y a deux histoires possibles de l’État-providence. D’un côté une histoire institutionnelle, fondée sur l’analyse de l’application des techniques assurancielles au domaine social et de leur extension. De l’autre, une histoire philosophique, articulée autour de la notion de citoyenneté, mettant en rapport les droits sociaux avec la dette que l’État contracte envers les individus.

While it is fairly clear what Rosenvallon understands by solidarity, it is interesting that the only explicit definition he provides is one formulated in terms of practice rather than sentiment:

On peut en effet très schématiquement définir la solidarité comme une forme de compensation des différences. Elle se caractérise donc par une action positive de partage (pp. 56-7).

Fine, one might say, but what is explicitly solidaristic in this process of redistribution, especially if it is, as he assumes, coordinated by the state? Would not utilitarianism and the principle of marginal utility underwrite such a policy – not to mention the sort
of concerns for the healthy state of the ‘nation’ or ‘Volk’ which tend to motivate social policy innovations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?

It is considerations of this kind which Peter Baldwin (1990) makes the focus of his detailed comparison of welfare systems in five European countries in the century from 1875 to 1975:

Not all, in fact very little, social policy has been solidaristic. Welfare states have varied much in this respect. Where their nature was determined by elites who were still persuaded that self-reliance was feasible, redistribution was restricted. (21)

The welfare state raised the possibility of equality in the real terms of risk redistribution, the possibility of solidarity. Only some welfare states have gone significantly beyond the levels of social policy necessitated by economic optimality and basic political legitimacy to achieve a degree of redistribution that speaks as much to the needs of the least fortunate as to the fears of the better-off. How such solidarity was possible is the concern of this book. (7)

Solidarity, for Baldwin, is attributed to policies rather than to individual or collective sentiments.

Solidarity – the group’s decision to allocate resources by need – is only misleadingly analogous to altruism. An individual sentiment, altruism is generally confined to narrow circles of the like-minded. Solidarity, I those few instances where it has been realized, has been the outcome of a generalized and reciprocal self-interest. Not ethics, but politics explain it. (299)

Whether or not Baldwin is right in his explanation of the historical development of what he calls solidaristic welfare states, his book usefully marks out
one of the distinctions which I wish to explore here, between solidarity as a sentiment, which may be grounded in sympathy, a kind of *souffrance à distance* (Boltanski, tr. 1999) and/or in a feeling of commonality or ‘we’ness.⁹

Even in Durkheim, it may be possible to demonstrate a tension between his conceptions of solidarity. In the original model of the Division of Labour, there is already the contrast between the ‘warm’ solidarity based on similarity and the cooler organic solidarity based on interdependence; this is reflected in Durkheim’s somewhat vague remarks about changing states of the conscience commune. In his preface to the second edition, he writes at length about an institutional recommendation: the famous occupational corporations. These are of course at the heart of his lectures first delivered in the 1890s but posthumously published in English as *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, in which the term ‘solidarity’ does not appear. It may seem that in theorising about social order, institutions increasingly substitute for sentiments in Durkheim’s analysis.¹⁰ On the other hand, in this same work, and in other, later works, we find him emphasising the importance of collective sentiments as a common source of conceptions of charity and justice (pp.218ff).

To us it does not seem equitable that a man should be better treated as a social being because he was born of parentage that is rich or of high rank. But is it any more equitable that he should be better treated because he was born of a father of higher intelligence or in a more favourable moral milieu? It is here that the domain of charity begins. Charity is the feeling of human sympathy that we see becoming clear even of any special merit in gifts or mental capacity acquired by heredity. This, then, is the very acme of justice. It is society, we find, that is coming to exercise complete dominion over nature, to
lay down the law for it and to set this moral equality over physical inequality which in fact is inherent in things. (220)

A similar conception can be found in a lecture given early in 1914, quoted by Jean-Claude Filloux (1993:225):

We aspire to a higher form of justice...All that matters is to feel beneath the moral coldness which reigns upon the surface of our collective life, the sources of warmth which our societies bear within them.

It is ideas of this kind that led Mike Gane (1992) to speak of ‘the radical sociology of Durkheim and Mauss’, expressed in their conception of socialism and professional corporations. For Durkheim, these must

be genuinely interdependent in two vital senses: they possess a high degree of relative autonomy and internal moral solidarity, but, crucially, coming together within the limits of a real unity. It is only the intervention of the latter which prevents the internal political form of the corporation from degenerating into despotism and the abnormal forms of the division of labour on the one hand, or being incorporated into the state on the other. (Gane, 1992: 149-50)

Mauss’ socialism was more explicit, and his conception of solidarity correspondingly closer to an orthodox socialist one: ‘le syndicat et la cooperative socialiste sont les fondements de la société future. The Belgian cooperatives were ‘une oeuvre de la solidarité ouvrière et populaire’.
…we must first of all organise the cooperative into an enormous bloc of consumers. When we have succeeded in creating huge co-operative workshops, models of communist production; when we have succeeded in invading the various branches of production in every way…when we have succeeded in creating, by means of a whole level of institutions of solidarity, a close union between all the members of the workers’ cooperatives; when we have succeeded in establishing our relationship with the various workers’ organisations…then we could contemplate organising ourselves completely on an international basis: to join ourselves into a federation for administering together wealth which will have become the wealth of a universal proletariat.

(Quoted by Gane, 1992: 140-1)

What remains of solidarity in the Marxist and more broadly socialist tradition? The word remains, as in the quotation from the late Robin Cook at the beginning of this chapter, but Cook’s depreciation of the market in this quotation puts him outside the New Labour orthodoxy, in which the market is primary and solidarity appears more as an optional extra, present in a muted form as in Giddens’ defence of the Third Way:

Third way politics…aims to empower people: ‘to help citizens plot their way through the major revolutions of our time: globalization, transformations in personal life and our relationship to nature’ Giddens, 1998: 64). [And while] ‘Third way politics should preserve a core concern with social justice’ (p.65), [these issues] ‘are not about social justice, but about how we should live after the decline of tradition and custom, how to recreate social solidarity and how to react to ecological problems (p.67).
One thinker in the broadly conceived Marxist tradition who deserves particular attention here is Jürgen Habermas. Peter Dews’ excellent collection of interviews with Habermas has the title *Autonomy and Solidarity*. The autonomy theme is of course self-explanatory in Habermas’s thought, which is centrally concerned with the autonomous use of reason, but less attention has been paid to the importance of notions of solidarity in his thinking.

A lecture from 1984, reprinted in *Erläuterungen zur Diskursethik* though not in the English version, *Justification and Application*, has the title ‘Justice and Solidarity. On the Discussion of <stage 6>’. This somewhat coded title refers to the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg’s model of moral development, in which individuals advance from conventional to more reflective conceptions. For a summary see McCarthy (1978) and Outhwaite (1994): 52-3. Habermas was attracted by Kohlberg’s idea of a complementary relationship between the psychological claim that “individuals prefer the highest stage of reasoning they comprehend, a claim supported by research” and the "philosophical claim that a later stage is 'objectively' preferable or more adequate by certain moral criteria"; this view of the interrelationship between philosophy and science is one which Habermas has advanced at various times. But he concedes that even if empirical psychology restricts the choice of acceptable moral theories to those which are consistent with the psychological evidence, the choice between competing ethics "has to be settled with another kind of argument".

The problem can be avoided, Habermas suggests, by dropping the idea of successive stages of post-conventional morality. Taking up a suggestion made by McCarthy, Habermas agrees that we should treat the moral reasoning of post-conventional subjects as on a level with the metatheoretical disagreements of moral philosophers: the oppositions between utilitarianism, contract theory, and so on.

In relation to stage 6, Habermas argues that an ethics of justice, criticised, as it has been, for sharing ‘the narrow perspective of the civil intercourse of bourgeois subjects of private law’ (p.62), needs to be augmented not, as Rawls had suggested, with benevolence or other aspects of private morality, but by solidarity, where justice and
solidarity are seen not as two complementary moments but as ‘two aspects of the same thing’ (p.70).

From a communication-theoretical perspective there is...a close connection between concern for the good of one’s neighbour and an interest in the common good: the identity of the group reproduces itself by means of intact relations of reciprocal recognition. Thus the complementary perspective to individual equal treatment is not benevolence but solidarity...

*Justice* refers to the equal freedoms of unrepresentable and and self-determining individuals, whereas *solidarity* refers to the good of the good of the consociates (Genossen) united in an intersubjectively shared form of life – and therefore to the preservation of the integrity of this form of life itself...

As a component of a universalistic morality solidarity loses its merely particular meaning, limited to the internal relations of a collective which closes itself off ethnocentrically from other groups...Postconventionally conceived justice can only converge with solidarity as its other when this is transformed in the light of the idea of a universal collective process of will formation...

It is above all in the reciprocal recognition of accountable subjects, who orient their action to validity claims, that that the ideas of justice and solidarity become real (gegenwärtig). But these normative obligations do not of *themselves* extend beyond the boundaries of a concrete lifeworld of family, tribe, town or nation. These limits can only be broken through in discourses, so far as these are institutionalised in modern societies. (p.71)

This passage prefigures much of Habermas’ subsequent formal work on morality, law and democracy and their subsequent extension to a cosmopolitan or postnational scale. It also offers a promising approach to questions of global justice (cf. Sen, 2001).
Between Facts and Norms and the related texts written immediately before and after it constitute Habermas’s attempt to answer the often-posed question of the implications of his theory of discourse ethics for politics. Twenty-five years on, he starts from the issue which had preoccupied him in the early 1960s in Theory and Practice. His Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered in 1986, are entitled 'Law and Morality', and attempt to reconstruct the traditional concept of the Rechtsstaat, a state embodying the rule of law, in terms of the underlying question how legal forms of state authority can be legitimate. Max Weber had a short answer to this question: "it is the rationality inherent in the juridical form itself which provided legitimacy for domination exercised in legal forms". 1 But Weber's value-free concepts of rationality and of legitimacy are too impoverished, as is shown by the difficulty he has in giving an adequate account of the intrusion of substantive considerations, such as those of welfare, into an, in principle, formal system of law. Weber saw this process as an adulteration of the formal rationality of the legal system. As with economic systems, the choice at the margin between the pursuit of formal and substantive rationality is ultimately a matter of arbitrary decision. For Habermas, by contrast, such "collisions" between the conflicting principles of substantive considerations of social justice on the one hand, and the formal precision, and therefore calculability of the law on the other, "must then be decided from the moral point of view of the universalizability of interests" (F&G, p. 547).

It is not, he stresses, a matter of just extending morality into law or complementing it with law in order to give it teeth – an interpretation suggested by McCarthy and by Habermas himself in fn 14 of the essay cited in the previous section (see also F&G 145 and ‘Remarks on Discourse Ethics’, Justification and Application section 11.). Rather, law and morality must be treated as two aspects of the same principles, in both sociological and philosophical or logical terms.

a) Sociologically, he points out that:

In the controversies which since the 17th century we have continually conducted over the legal constitution of the political community, there is also expressed a moral-practical self-understanding of modernity as a whole. This is expressed
equally in the testimony for universalistic moral consciousness and in the free institutions of the democratic constitutional state. (F&G 11)

b) Philosophically, the link is made by that between postconventional morality, as reconstructed in Habermas’s discourse principle (F&G 138, BFN 106ff), and postconventional politics.

We must not understand basic rights or Grundrechte, which take the shape of constitutional norms, as mere imitations of moral rights, and we must not take political autonomy as a mere copy of moral autonomy. Rather, norms of action branch out into moral and legal rules.

The discourse principle, Habermas stresses,

lies at a level of abstraction that is still neutral with respect to morality and law, for it refers to action norms in general:

(D) just those action norms are valid to which all possibly affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses.

Law, Habermas argues, is both a system of knowledge and a system of action (F&G 106). The tension between facticity and validity in legal discourse and practice, Habermas believes, is ultimately resolved through democracy (F&G 13), the idea ‘that in the sign of a fully secularised politics the constitutional state cannot exist or be preserved without radical democracy’ (F&G 13). However, this tension continues to be reflected in an ambiguous social context, characterised by

a) The eclipse of socialism, both as a concrete political project and (in Habermas’s preferred broader formulation) as representing the democratic self-organisation of a legally constituted community (Rechtsgemeinschaft).

b) a triumphalist capitalism which endangers the social solidarity expressed inter alia in law (F&G 52)

c) the complexity of modern societies, with the result that models of state and society have become problematic (F&G 15).
Thus modern law, which treats the *addressees* of law as also its *originators*, can be seen in ideal terms as living off and reinforcing ‘a solidarity which is concentrated in the role of the citizen and ultimately derives from communicative action’ (F&G 52). From a sociological or of course from a critical legal studies point of view, this is problematic, as Habermas recognises:

The tension between the idealism of constitutional law and the materialism of a legal order, particularly of economic law, which merely reflects the unequal distribution of social power, finds its echo in the way philosophical and empirical approaches to law tend to drift apart.

Habermas recognises, then, though perhaps not quite as fully as some of us might wish, that in offering this analysis he is engaged in a delicate balancing act. More importantly, modern societies also are. On the one hand there is the expansion of communicative action, human rights discourse, democracy; on the other the degradation of natural environments, welfare states, political debate etc. This matters particularly to Habermas’ analysis because it relies crucially on the mutual support of law, morality democracy, public opinion, civil society and so on, without an easy prospect of weaknesses in one area being compensated by strengths in another. All this indicates a further tension between universalistic principles and realms of discourse which, in the case of moral discourse, point towards a community of word citizens, and the sense that these can only be articulated and made real in bounded constitutional states. F&G 165, with its invocation of a ‘the initiatives of a population accustomed to freedom’, whose ‘spontaneity regenerates itself from free traditions and preserves itself in the associational relations of a liberal political culture, suggests a state-based model, and this is as far as Habermas goes, I think, at this time (1992). At the same time, however, he was of course very sensitive to the kinds of issues raised by David Held and other theorists of cosmopolitan democracy, and this has come to dominate much of his more recent work, notably *The Postnational Constellation* and *The Inclusion of the Other*. In the Preface to the latter he declares his ‘interest in the question of what conclusions can still be drawn from the universalistic content of republican principles, in particular for pluralistic societies in which multicultural conflicts are becoming more acute, for nation-states that are
coalescing into supranational units, and for the citizens of a world society who have
been drawn unbeknownst to themselves into an involuntary risk society’.

This approach, which Habermas has of course mobilised in favour of notions
European civil society independent of a concretistically conceived European people, a
Staatsvolk, also makes models of world civil society or public opinion perhaps less
incredible. Habermas certainly wants to move beyond the nation-state in his thinking
and his practical proposals, eg for European federalism, conceived as ‘Europe’s
second chance’ to offer the world an attractive political model and as a first stage or
trial run for a more global (in both senses of the term) integration process.

Habermas.

Joas (1993: 238-9) offers a Habermasian reading of Durkheim, in which the division
of labour results from ‘a morality of cooperation’:

If…only just rules fulfill Durkheim’s conception of organic solidarity, his
concept of the division of labor is intrinsically bound to his notions of justice…Organic solidarity would then be a type of morality which arises in
the participants by means of an act of reflection on the universal conditions of
their cooperation.

This is an attractive reading, but one which I think makes Durkheim look too much
like a pragmatist.

We are left, then, with something like the following list of partially
overlapping and partially conflicting usages of the term solidarity; the letters denote
relations of opposition on the same issue.
1a) Solidarity is a fundamental condition of social order (Durkheim, Offe?).

1b) Solidarity is either unnecessary to, or is a by-product of, self-legitimating market exchanges (Spencer, economic theory, Hayek).

1c) Solidarity is an ideal limit case of social order.

2a) Solidarity is the fundamental source or animating spirit of welfare policies (Kaelble).

2b) Solidarity like charity, is rendered unnecessary by welfare policies in differentiated modern societies.

2c) Solidarity accompanies or animates some, but not all, social welfare policies (Baldwin).

3a) Solidarity is fundamental to class action (most Marxism, Habermas).

3b) Solidarity is irrelevant to, or a by-product of, class action explained in terms of individual rationality (rational choice Marxism).

4a) Solidarity refers to practices of various kinds.

4b) Solidarity refers to orientations of various kinds.

‘Solidarity’ is, then, poised between a generalised sentiment, something like altruism though more specific, and a set of redistributive or insurance-like practices. These may however be linked, rather as in the British Labour Party’s ill-fated ‘ethical foreign policy’, which was finally discredited with the 2003 attack on Iraq. The variable geometry of solidarity may in fact be seen as a virtue, in that it can be used to bridge the gap between sentiment and action, specificity and diffuseness. I can feel solidarity with a close friend or colleague, but also with distant earthquake victims, for whom the practical expression of my solidarity is likely to be highly mediated. This flexibility will indeed be particularly advantageous in cases of transnational solidarity, such as that across the boundaries of European states, where the
conventional ideological and factual (e.g. fiscal) reinforcements may be lacking. I cannot plausibly demand that support paid for by my taxes go only to residents of the South-East of England, but I might join a pressure group against the extension of transfer payments to poorer parts of the EU or against an increase in development aid. The failure of the EU to Europeanise social policy is no doubt substantially driven by a fear that large numbers of citizens might indeed resist such an initiative.

neither r fidffce, nor sameness.
Claus Offe’s pessimistic assessment, formulated at the beginning of the 90s rather than at their end, but one which many, including perhaps their author, would still advance, sees a situation characterised by the weakness of social democratic political forces on the one hand, and on the other an ‘associational wilderness which ...must today be described as a pluralist-syndicalist-populist hybrid that is a far cry from Western European patterns.’ Such conditions, Offe (1996: 240-1) points out, form ‘the worst possible structural background for the emergence of social policies and social policy institutions.’ In a somewhat less negative vein, Graham Crow (2002), whose book on Social Solidarities includes a useful discussion of Solidarność in Poland, looks comparatively at the problems of social solidarity in what he calls ‘unsettled societies’, including those in post-communist Europe. His analysis, following Beck, of the decline of traditional solidarities and their replacement by more contingent and chosen ones (a shift which, in terms of classical social theory, could be compared with that from Tonnies’ ‘Gemeinschaft’ to Schmalenbach’s ‘Bund’ or voluntary association) has particular relvance to the post-communist condition, where old solidarities resulting from a shared condition, a widely shared, if more rarely openly expressed, opposition to the system, and mutual aid with the necessities of life in a shortage economy have lost their relevance.

Let us look a little more closely at the notions of social and political solidarity. In political theory, it has become standard to contrast liberal with republican and communitarian conceptions of the political community. In liberal thinking, political legitimacy arises directly out of the self-interest of the individual members of society who support economic, social and political institutions which enable them to fulfil themselves in more or less noble ways. It is not the job of the state or the political community to judge between alternative methods of self-fulfilment, so far as these are legal. In communitarian thought, political legitimacy derives out of the substantive will, to paraphrase Tonnies’ account of Gemeinschaft, of a real and vibrant human community. In republican conceptions, by contrast, such as that of Hannah Arendt, the political community is seen in more voluntaristic terms as in some sense self-constituting, formulating its own substantive goals in an active process of collective will-formation. (This division is paralleled in nationalist discourse between economically based theories of nationalism, seeking the best political shell for
individual or collective prosperity, and more explicitly nationalist theories of an ethnic or civic form, respectively).

This, however, is a difference of emphasis. No plausible theory of political legitimacy, whether normative or, as in the example cited below, empirical, can avoid some reference to the notion of solidarity. As

The unclear relations between the EU’s own development aid and that provided unilaterally by member states, and the somewhat incoherent attempts to justify European aid (see Karagiannis, 2004) are further examples of this. The replication of even a rather cold, Bismarckian welfare state on a European level seems both essential and unlikely – unless, that is, it achieves the mobilization of bias (Bachrach and Baratz 1970) in the same way that the Common Agricultural Policy, substantially supported by farmers, was grudgingly accepted by urban Europeans. In Scharpf’s view, a Europeanization of social policy is unfeasible, and the best alternative is a legal framework setting minimum standards for member states, and

This is, of course, to assume that solidarity, even if intangible, is important. An alternative view would be that what counts are systematically interlinked mechanisms which secure the same outcome, just as markets may be understood as more or less closely simulating genuinely social production for socially agreed needs via the operation of the individual profit motive. System integration, in other words, matters more than social integration. Many aspects of the development of modern societies may be seen to support this latter view. On the other hand, there are also increasing demands for what Habermas would call communicative justification of societal policies. The European Union, like the national states which gave birth to it, started off as, and is still an elite project, marked by a ‘democratic deficit (Marquand 1979, Mény 2002); it remains to be seen whether it can grow the sort of roots which national states were able to stimulate or simulate through banal (Billig 1995) and not so banal nationalism.
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Cologne: MPIfG. (Quoted in Prior and Sykes, 2001: 210)

Solidarité was to be diffused through the educational system promoting social justice as repayment of a ‘social debt’ by the privileged to the underprivileged. This assumed mutual interdependence and quasi-contractual obligations between all citizens and implied a programme of public education, social insurance and labour and welfare legislation. Solidarism advocated state intervention, social legislation, and voluntary associations to create a middle way between laissez-faire liberalism and revolutionary socialism. Durkheim shared the desire for social solidarity through reconciliation but believed in more thorough social reconstruction than voluntary associations. (Lukes 1973:350-4)

2 ‘Introduction à la sociologie de la famille’, quoted by Howard Andrews (1993: 116). Sociologists have subsequently learned from David Lockwood’s path-breaking article of 1964 to conceptualise this issue in terms of social versus system integration. See also Lockwood, 1992 where solidarity represents the .

3 He later cites De Grazia (1948; 4), for whom ‘solidarité…[is]…the expression Durkheim used to designate the perfect integration of a society with clear-cut values that define the status of each member of the community.’ (Lockwood: 2002: 66n.). Lockwood suggests, following Parsons, that Durkheim’s conception of organic solidarity is ‘…unacceptable, because the fact of the interdependence of functions, from which the moral rules regulating this interdependence are supposed spontaneously to arise, is in itself just as likely to eventuate in conflict as in solidarity’. In particular, it may give rise, à la Marx, to conflict between opposed classes solidaristic only within themselves.

4 He goes on to say that...‘the consensus around the classical welfare state is no longer as solid as before’.
In a rather different vein Bo Rothstein (2001: 223, 226) uses the term solidaristic to describe the behaviour of those who contribute to or use benefits; here it means something like refraining from free-riding (in the former case) or fraud (in the latter).

This is marked, for example, in the current title of the ‘Ministère des affaires sociales, du travail et de la solidarité’.

Baldwin’s answer, in a word, is that solidaristic or seriously redistributive emerged in Scandinavia and Britain, and much later in France and Germany, where not just the working class but middle class groups came round to the idea. ‘In many cases, solidarity – a more inclusive risk community, a wider and fairer spreading of social costs – was realized only when sufficiently powerful social groups among those who, in other respects were favored also saw their interests thus to be safeguarded. By themselves, the needy have rarely won significant advantage. Only when risk, redistributive advantage and political clout coincided was solidarity possible.’ (42)

There is prima facie something odd about defining altruism as an exclusively individual predicate, whereas one might expect it to be at least susceptible of imitation and contagion, if not a more genuinely collective sentiment.

One of the most useful explicit definitions of solidarity is that by the anthropologist M. Llewelyn-Davies (1978: 206, quoted in Crow, 2002: 6): ‘a commitment to some kind of mutual aid or support, based upon the perception, by those who are solidary, that they share certain characteristics, or that they are equal with respect to some social principle’.

One conjecture would be that Durkheim came to see the notion of solidarity as too specific, and suggesting a psychological basis of a social phenomenon of the kind he
had excluded in *The Rules of Sociological Method*. As Ceri (1993: 164) writes, ‘We have seen how Durkheim upholds the principle of the irrelevance of the content of beliefs. An analogous principle holds for sentiments, whose specific characteristics…he does not consider relevant. It is not the specific content or reference of sentiments…that explains behaviour, but their *intensity*, as an expression of the moral state of the group.’ This would however contrast with the overall development of Durkheim’s thought towards the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, where the stress is increasingly on representations. (This prompted Parsons (1937:) to suggest that he had gone ‘clean over into idealism’.) Another interpretation would be simply that he felt he had been insufficiently precise: ‘…since he bases his argument largely on the antithesis between the individual and society, the vehicles of organic solidarity are not dealt with in detail’ (Müller, 1993: 100). As Müller points out (107 n. 2) Durkheim remedies this deficiency with his preface on occupational groups in the second edition of *Division of Labour*.

11 This somewhat coded title refers to the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg’s model of moral development, best illustrated in its Habermasian reconstruction by means of the useful summary by Thomas McCarthy (1978) which I reproduced in my book on Habermas (Outhwaite 1994: 52-3).

It should be noted that stage 7 is Habermas’ addition to Kohlberg’s six-stage model (*Moral Development & Ego Identity*, p.90). Kohlberg’s stage 6 focuses on individual conscience, whereas in Habermas’ stage 7 ‘the principle of justification of norms is no longer the monologically applicable principle of generalizability but the communally followed procedure of redeeming normative validity claims discursively.’ Stages 5-6 are postconventional, but incompletely so, in that they postulate conceptions of utility (stage 5) and principles and duties (stage 6) which themselves have to be relativised against one another in stage 7, where concrete moral dilemmas flow naturally into
metaethical discourses about conflicting fundamental principles. It should be noted that stage 7 is Habermas' addition to Kohlberg's six-stage model ('Moral Development & Ego Identity', p.90). Kohlberg's stage 6 focuses on individual conscience, whereas in Habermas' stage 7 'the principle of justification of norms is no longer the monologically applicable principle of generalizability but the communally followed procedure of redeeming normative validity claims discursively.'