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SOLIDARITY: THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF AN IDEA IN NINETEENTH CENTURY FRANCE¹

The survival of a concept is generally only secured at the price of an intellectual odyssey in the course of which it is transformed out of all recognition. The nineteenth century fortunes of the idea of solidarity exemplify this axiom only too strictly. It became the victim of a multiplicity of ingenious puns and metaphors as well as outright malicious distortions that rendered a simple, technical word, drawn from the sphere of jurisprudence, at once emotive and obscure, influential and diffuse. As the eminent and caustic critic of the twentieth century, Julien Benda, formulated this vital problem of the fate of concepts, "pour l'historien des idées des hommes, la réalité ce n'est point ce qu'ont été les idées dans l'esprit de ceux qui les ont inventées, mais ce qu'elles ont été dans l'esprit de ceux qui les ont trahies... car il est clair qu'une doctrine se propage d'autant plus largement qu'elle est apte à satisfaire un plus grand nombre de sentiments divers."² This pessimistic view has been all too frequently verified in human history.

It can be argued that the concept of solidarity is extremely vague and indeterminate if used without qualification; without prefix or suffix that gives it a distinctive orientation. Over and above the fact that it denotes some form of interdependence, it might be urged that little can be said meaningfully unless it is made clear whether,

¹ This article is based on the introduction to a Ph. D. thesis presented to the University of London in 1958, entitled: "The idea of solidarity in French social and political thought in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."

² *Mon Premier Testament*, 1910, pp. 15, 49. This brochure formed the third Cahier of the 12th Series of Charles Péguy's celebrated Cahiers de la Quinzaine. In a lecture on the idea of solidarity in 1900, the Catholic critic Brunetière asserted that "le mouvement des idées étant presque toujours plus rapide que la transformation du langage, les mêmes mots à quelques années d'intervalle, s'ils continuent à rendre le même son, expriment rarement les mêmes idées. Ils en signifient même quelquefois des contradictoires." *Discours de Combat*, Nouvelle Série, 1903, p. 52.

for example, the solidarity in question is conceived as voluntary or involuntary; unilateral, bi-lateral or multi-lateral; natural or non-natural; monistic, pluralistic or atomistic. Furthermore, unless the degree of generality and organization is specified, for example, whether one is dealing with interdependence at the level of the individual, trade union, nation state or international society; unless it is clear whether it is spatial solidarity (e.g. the division of labour and exchange) or temporal solidarity (e.g. heredity, whether physiological, technical, cultural etc.) that is involved; unless the strength and intensity of a particular relationship of solidarity is made explicit, it could be maintained that discussion is likely to become bogged down in a morass of imprecision. Finally, unless it is stipulated that a particular bond of solidarity is rooted, for example, in biology, sociology, psychology, economics, politics, etc., the interpretation of its significance could be considered most hazardous.

However, when from the standpoint of the fashionable philosopher, one passes to that of the social historian, the matter appears in a different light. As an eminent social historian, the late Maxime Leroy, wrote, in phrases accredited by his encyclopaedic erudition in this field, "Lorsque des doctrines on passe aux faits, on constate qu'il n'y a, en eux, nulle trace de cette logique tout abstraite que les auteurs de plans ont toujours considérés comme la meilleure preuve de l'excellence de leurs vues; et, on le sait, *l'illogisme*, la *contradiction*, est un reproche communément adressé par tous les logiciens de l'idée ou du fait aux institutions d'une époque, aujourd'hui comme hier. Les doctrines, qui prétendent corriger les institutions de toute contradiction, imprimer l'unité, n'échappent pas plus que les institutions à ce genre de critique: il suffit de prendre connaissance des controverses entre écoles sociales pour constater quelles influences diverses enlèvent toute possibilité d'unité logique aux systèmes en apparence les plus rigoureux... il semble qu'un des enseignements de l'histoire des idées et des institutions au XIXe siècle soit celui-ci: les sociétés et les systèmes sociaux présentent une telle diversité interne qu'il est vain de les critiquer d'un tel point de vue, non moins vain de vouloir leur imposer un régime uniforme."¹ It was precisely this eclectic character that gave the idea of solidarity its ephemeral popularity and potent political influence, which culminated at the turn of the century in the official philosophy of Solidarism, greeted by a crescendo of impassioned eulogies and broken only by the dissonant voices of extreme right-wing economists and extreme left-wing Marxists and Anarcho-Syndicalists. Solidarity became the skele-

¹ Maxime Leroy, *La Politique de Sainte-Beuve*, 1941, pp. 279-80.

ton-key to all social problems. However, its more perspicacious exponents anxiously pointed out the fragility of a superficial fusion or confusion of disparate constituents under the auspices of a single, Protean word. That their fears proved to be justified, indicates that whilst social and political practice does not require, and in fact might be unduly inhibited by a wholly systematic, logically constructed doctrine, a minimum of coherence is essential if a doctrine is not to be indiscriminately used and abused, its key ideas degenerating into equivocal clichés, until it ceases to be able to rally support for a specific programme of action.

Our discussion of the rôle of the concept of solidarity in France is an appraisal of the social history of an idea rather than the history of a social idea. It is intended to be not merely the chronological description – or even the logical analysis – of the development of this idea; it is an attempt to elicit its social significance, its direct influence upon French society and its indirect implications for the social organization of humanity. As Benda has affirmed: "In general, it is possible to consider the ideas of a philosopher from two points of view. One can consider them in relation to the philosopher himself, and to a degree, in relation to himself alone. This involves tracing the development of an idea in a specific mind, taking into account all the problems which have engaged a philosopher's attention, without concerning ourselves over the extent of their real importance, and considering them worthy of study merely by virtue of the fact that they captured his attention. Such a study basically belongs as much to individual psychology as to philosophy. When the individual who serves as its object is a great thinker, it can teach us profound lessons. On the other hand, one can consider the ideas of a philosopher in relation to mankind; i.e. to the extent that they have been remembered by groups of men, have unsettled their former conceptions, have become points of departure for other, entirely new conceptions. This second kind of study belongs rather to what one can call the social history of ideas."¹ In our effort to elucidate the historical development of the notion of solidarity, it is the latter standpoint that has been adopted.

This type of inquiry, more impersonal, detached and objective – being concerned with the extrinsic rather than the intrinsic importance of a particular social philosopher's interpretation of the idea of solidarity – belongs as much to social science as to social philosophy. It lies in fact at their point of convergence in ideology. Given the notorious French addiction to deductive reasoning from

¹ J. Benda, *The Living Thoughts of Kant*, 1940, pp. 16-17.

first principles – programmes of social, political and economic reform being placed under the aegis of one or more ideas – the ideological approach to French social theory provides a particularly penetrating insight into the significance of French politics, in all its baffling complexity. Just as the eighteenth century witnessed in France the development into a dominant position of the idea of unfettered personal liberty, coupled with the institution of civil and political justice for the defence of individual rights, the material and intellectual circumstances of the nineteenth century promoted the progressive prominence of the idea of social solidarity, associated with the establishment of economic justice for the protection of “social” rights. Whereas the demand for liberty came particularly from the spokesmen of the self-confident middle classes, the advocates of solidarity were generally defending the interests and voicing the inarticulate aspirations of the urban wage-earners. How is this to be explained?

THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

When an individual enjoys good health, intellectual and emotional equanimity, an appropriate physical environment, adequate professional opportunities, etc., he easily acquires the illusion of self-sufficiency. Liberty seems to be the supreme and unqualified good. However, when he is ill or suffers from any other crisis in his life, the security that comes from solidarity with his neighbours becomes infinitely more desirable than an impotent liberty in the hands of an isolated, ineffective individual; ineffective because of such calamities as disease, war, unemployment. Personal insecurity leads to a demand for collectively organised social security. Hence, in his first and second childhood, and at moments in his youth and prime when he encounters major personal difficulties, the need for the sympathy and mutual-aid stemming from a sense of solidarity make themselves felt by everyone. This helps to explain the contemporary coincidence between an “age of anxiety” and the comprehensive provision of social assistance of various kinds “from the cradle to the grave”.

Transposed on to the social plane, this need for solidarity takes an organized form in a variety of social institutions, ranging from almost completely involuntary to wholly voluntary associations: state, trade union or professional association, provident society, club, societies for the promotion, preservation or elimination of something. Each individual – and this is what in large measure both reflects and shapes his individuality – enters into a specific set of social relations, making his own particular “synthesis” of liberty and solidarity. In the nineteenth century, the appeal to solidarity was made principally

by the protagonists of the politically and economically downtrodden and the complacent assertion of "laissez faire" was voiced by the apologists of the political and economic upstarts who had successfully overthrown (in France) or transformed (in Britain) the old order.

Bertrand Russell has affirmed that "From a political and social point of view, the most important change resulting from industrialism is the greater interdependence of men and groups of men upon one another."¹ It was fundamentally the recognition of the politico-economic implications of the extension and intensification of the division of labour and of exchange that provided the economic framework within which the social reforms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were worked out in the teeth of despairing and embittered, last-ditch resistance of dogmatic theorists, endeavouring to rehabilitate, through the incantation of resounding but hollow slogans, an order of things which was being inexorably submerged by events. Struck both by the legitimacy of the proletarian grievances and by the dangers of violent class-struggle, various reformist currents emerged, opposed both to doctrinaire liberalism and to doctrinaire socialism and inspired by an anti-individualist liberalism and an anti-collectivist socialism. Retrospectively, it appears that it is thanks to this appreciation of the significance of social interdependence that several strikingly contrasted nineteenth century social philosophers groped their various but converging ways to a rationale of the practical readjustments in social ideals and social reorganization necessitated by the problems with which they were faced.

The late nineteenth century in France, and in other countries subject to similar social changes, e.g. Britain, Germany, witnessed the extension of the great concern with problems of social organizations – more especially with social reorganisation – which had culminated in the period immediately preceding 1848, from the plane of theory to that of practical application. Those social philosophers, politicians and publicists who discussed this issue were no longer voices in the wilderness but were eagerly heeded because of the growing recognition of the immediate relevance of their contributions to contemporary circumstances. The gravity of the issues raised by the social

¹ "The Reasoning of Europeans," article in *Listener*, Nov. 21, 1957, Vol. LVIII, No. 1459, p. 836. – In *The Good Society*, Walter Lippmann pointed to the same phenomenon. "It is no exaggeration to say that the transition from the relative self-sufficiency of individuals in local communities to their interdependence in a world-wide economy is the most revolutionary experience in recorded history. It has forced mankind into a radically new way of life and, consequently, it has unsettled customs, institutions and traditions, transforming the whole human outlook" (1st ed. 1938; 1944 ed. pp. 161-62; cf. pp. 161-65).

revolution launched a century earlier were being manifested so flagrantly that to presume to ignore them necessitated an increasingly barefaced hypocrisy or reactionary escapism from reality. A very different set of circumstances confronted the early nineteenth century pioneers.

Europe's post-Renaissance intellectual tradition combined the ever-expanding application of human reason through science to the solution of terrestrial problems with a reinterpreted Christian moralism – increasingly independent of religious form and foundation and with a modified content – asserting man's will to seek good and shun evil, which was not calculated to foster the quietism that, despite all apologetic exertions aimed at attenuating the tendentious exaggerations of the eighteenth century rationalists, was characteristic of the pre-Renaissance period. However, as long as these two constituents of the European tradition were developed divergently, the moralists, e.g. Thomas More, tended towards Utopianism, whilst the materialists, e.g. Thomas Hobbes, developed a scientific naturalism – human nature in Hobbes' psychologism. The moralists neglected the factual preconditions indispensable to the effective implementation of their ideals; whilst the materialists prided themselves upon the pretended exclusion of all non-natural values from their systems.

Nineteenth century French social philosophers sought to base the principles of social reorganization upon a conciliation of social moralism and social scientism – associated with, but cutting across, the simultaneously attempted synthesis between individualism and collectivism – as the only both acceptable and viable foundation for social life. What gave their ambitious enterprise urgency was that the early nineteenth century was recognized by some of the more acute thinkers of the time as a period of crisis and convulsion in the realms of science and philosophy, religion and morality, economics and politics. "Nous sommes arrivés à une de ces époques de renouvellement où, après la destruction d'un ordre social tout entier, un nouvel ordre social commence."¹ In the face of the disintegration of the old order and the largely negative character of the new, numerous and strenuous attempts were made at founding a new discipline based upon a fusion of social doctrine and social science, most systematically exemplified by the two philosophies of Comte, the first of which expounded the scientific and the second the ideological aspects of this Romantic reaction to Revolution in

¹ Leroux, *Discours aux philosophes*, in Volume I of his *Oeuvres*, 1850, p. 9. This *Discours* first appeared in 1831.

all its manifestations. As that great Rationalist critic of sentimentality in intellectualist guise, Renouvier, wrote of this early nineteenth century epoch, "Sauf les deux premiers siècles de notre ère, jamais le bourdonnement des songes métaphysiques ne fut si fort et si continu; jamais on n'eut plus d'inclination pour croire non sa raison mais son coeur... qui fait la raison dupe du coeur."¹

By contrast, the complacent protagonists of the new order, the influential French "liberal"² economists, whilst relying largely upon vulgarisations of the works of Adam Smith ("The Wealth of Nations" was translated in 1788 and again in 1820-22), Ricardo and Malthus, innovated in the dogmatic ruthlessness and pious optimism with which their sententious sophistries were implemented, regardless of the consequences. Against these unscientific, latter-day neo-Leibnizian pan-harmonists, a number of important schools of thought rose in protest, the idea of social solidarity playing a key rôle in their onslaught on the new despotism that masqueraded as freedom. Though each placed a different emphasis upon the elements which constituted this solidarity, they represented as a whole a decisive revulsion against "murderous competition," produced by private enterprise and yielding in its turn "social atheism" on the economic plane, and "isolation, incoherence and fragmentation of all human knowledge" on the intellectual plane. Whilst some appealed primarily for the mental and moral reform of the individual, others looked, rather, to politico-economic institutional engineering to provide the new synthesis through which social anarchy and social injustice were to be subdued. It is not in the Communist Manifesto of 1848 but in the Fourierist periodical "Démocratie Pacifique" of 1847 that the following inspired prediction appeared: "La révolution prochaine ne sera pas nationale, c'est à dire française, anglaise ou allemande; elle sera européenne. Elle ne sera pas purement religieuse ou politique, elle sera principalement économique et sociale. Elle ne

¹ Renouvier, *Philosophie analytique de l'histoire*, IV, 1896-97, p. 84. As Paul Desjardins wrote of a later wave of solidarist activity, by then less abstract, at the end of the nineteenth century: "la solidarité se développe en même temps que renaît l'espérance... Jamais, peut-être, depuis l'établissement des ordres monastiques, on n'avait vu une telle ferveur d'union par le monde; il se fonde partout des Sociétés coopératives, des syndicats, des Lignes, des Compagnies, pour ne pas dire des Eglises. On n'a guère affaire en tous lieux qu'à des groupes au lieu de personnes" (*Le Devoir Présent*, pp. 33-34).

² The name "liberal" in a French context should not, at the risk of serious misinterpretation, be given the same connotation as it possesses in Britain. The credo of the French Liberals was much more narrow, dogmatic and intimately associated with the "sinister interests" of the "grande bourgeoisie." The rights of the individual were conceived as the exclusive, sacrosanct privileges of the few rather than a precondition of human dignity, due to all men.

prendra pas son origine dans la violation d'une charte (a reference to the origin of the revolution of 1830), ni même dans un déni de droit électoral, mais bien plutôt dans un déni de droit de vivre en travaillant, dans une grève d'ouvriers affamés, dans un conflit d'intérêts entre le prolétariat et la bourgeoisie."¹

The air resounded with impassioned attacks upon egoism and appeals to sociability; upon ignorance of the laws of humanity and appeals to a "science of humanity"; the savage critique of the self-assertive nineteenth century "new feudalism" that had replaced the residual feudalism of earlier times, counterbalanced by a variety of schemes for reforming or revolutionising society through new forms of social and economic organization founded upon more or less bizarre theological, ethical, pre-sociological and psychological doctrines; with attempts at founding new religions to replace retreating Christianity, e.g. the illuminist and occultist vogue, the expansion of Freemasonry, Comte's Positivist Religion of Humanity, Pecqueur's "Philadelphes" and the numerous other sects described in Erdan's "La France Mystique" (sic). Whether it is termed, with Saint-Simon, "a critical epoch," or, with Comte, an "age of transition" – a catch-phrase that has since become a cliché of historicist sociology – the first half of the nineteenth century reveals an environment, both material and intellectual, that was exceptionally favourable to the emergence of social and political theories concerned to find a *modus vivendi* between the devils of individualism and collectivism which provoked conflicts that were threatening the very foundations of society.

Yet, compared with Britain, the industrial revolution in France was limited and belated in character. The absence of large coal deposits, a peasant agriculture that restricted the drift from the land, relative demographic stagnation, and a predominantly rentier rather than entrepreneur class of capitalists, kept France, until the late nineteenth century, a haven of small-scale productive and distributive units; and to this day it remains, relative to Britain and Germany, a nation of peasants, artisans and shopkeepers. The gradual nature of the French socio-economic transformation presents a marked contrast with the Revolutionary legislative onslaught upon the débris of corporativism; following up the repudiation of all feudal privileges in 1789 by the decrees of 1791, known as the "Loi Le Chapelier," and the Napoleonic Legal Codes of the first decade of the nineteenth century, inspired by an individualistically-conceived liberty, i.e. at

¹ *Démocratie Pacifique*, 12. 8. 1847. Quoted by D. Villey: *La Vie, l'Oeuvre et la Doctrine de C.-B. Dupont-White*, 1936, p. 554.

the expense of the other members of the Revolutionary trinity: equality and fraternity.¹

Thus, a notion of solidarity came into vogue to satisfy the need to reintroduce a measure of fraternal justice into social relations disrupted by the unilateral assertion of bourgeois-biased liberty as "laissez-faire". In itself, the fact of human solidarity or interdependence is not merely unoriginal but immemorial; the consciousness of its nature and significance, its function and its value, did not emerge until the reaction in the nineteenth century against the ultra-individualism of the late eighteenth century, itself an exasperated revulsion against the authoritarian oppression, spiritual intolerance and retrograde traditionalism of the ancien régime. Whilst its earliest exponents either sought, purely and simply, to restore and rehabilitate the old order, e.g. de Maistre, or reorganize it to suit the new politico-economic conditions, e.g. Saint-Simon, the radical reassessments of the intellectual, moral and material foundations of social life necessitated by the political and industrial revolutions, with their repercussions upon social norms, led ultimately and often indirectly, to a clarification of the primordial and increasingly extensive relevance of the complex of heterogeneous factors subsumed under the notion of solidarity. From being an anti-individualist, ideological instrument of conflict in the early nineteenth century, it became in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the instrument par excellence for securing the ideological reconciliation of individualism and collectivism, bringing in its train a host of state-organized and associationist institutions calculated to repair the damage wreaked by uninhibited self-seeking without restoring the retrograde, despotic, illiberal ancien régime.

THE JURIDICAL ORIGINS OF "SOLIDARITY"

Historically, the idea of solidarity had a juridical point of departure and terminus, superficially traversing many brusque changes of fortune whilst below the surface, it had a continuity of its own that is only apparent in retrospect. It was characterised by the metamorphosis and diffusion of a specific juristic concept into a network of social institutions, i.e. beliefs incarnated in certain social modes of conduct, e.g. state intervention to protect the young, the ill, the aged, and purge the social milieu of noxious influences; the organization of

¹ However, on close examination, the French Revolution ceases to live up to the boast of being "un bloc." Against the antisolidarist "Loi Le Chapelier" must be set Article 21 of the abortive Jacobin Declaration of Rights of 1793 which proclaimed a sacred social debt of work and assistance to which all citizens were entitled.

associations for material, cultural and intellectual mutual aid; co-operation in its various forms and collective bargaining. Its legal origin is evident from the entries in the "Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française" of 1694, though by 1765, in Diderot's celebrated "Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisoné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers," the words "solidaire," "solidairement" and "solidarité" in the sense of an indivisibly collective debt, have passed from the strict realm of jurisprudence to that of commerce.¹ In a thesis entitled "De l'idée de Solidarité entre Codébiteurs" of 1898, the author quoted in his bibliography no fewer than nineteen theses devoted in the half-century since 1848 to the examination of the principle of solidarity in Roman and French Law, not to mention other books and articles on this subject.² This provides no uncertain indication of the important and controversial place which the notion of solidarity came to occupy in French jurisprudence. An inheritance from Roman Law, embodied in the Code Civil in 1804, the juridical conception of a relationship of solidarity between members of a society can be regarded as possessing its first official French landmark in the fourth section ("Titre" three, Chapter four) of the Code Civil entitled "Des Obligations Solidaires."

The principle of solidarity between creditors and between debtors is traced by the jurists to the co-proprietorial obligations of mutual assistance and collective responsibility within the Roman extended family or "Gens," each member of which was held responsible for the payment of the whole of the debt contracted by any member, and had the right to receive payment of debts owed to the collectivity.³ The same principle, in the form of obligations of mutual assistance, existed, in Rome and in the Roman Provinces such as Gaul, in the "sodalitates" or religious brotherhoods and "collegia" or workers'

¹ Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, 1694, II, p. 485; Encyclopédie, 1765, XV, p. 320. See also F. Brunot, Histoire de la langue française, IX (2) 1937, p. 669 n. and 745 n. for the use of the term "solidarity" in a wider sense in the Revolutionary Assemblies. — See Ib. X (2), p. 876 sq. for the further extension of its usage. "Solidariser" and "Solidarisme" appear in J.-B. Richard's Enrichissement de la langue française. Dictionnaire de mots nouveaux, 1842, p. 390. — By 1864, in Maurice Block's Dictionnaire Général de la Politique, under the heading "Solidarité," appeared the following significant words: "C'est une des grandes lois qui régissent le développement de l'humanité et dominent la science politique... Peut-être parviendra-t-il à donner un plus large et plus rapide essor au progrès politique en étudiant davantage cette loi de solidarité qui relie l'un à l'autre tous les membres de la famille humaine" (II, p. 935). A shortened version of the above entry appeared in Block's Petit Dictionnaire Politique et Social, pp. 716-17, published in 1896, the same year as Léon Bourgeois' Solidarité.

² A.-J.-B. Melon, De l'idée de Solidarité entre Codébiteurs, 1898, pp. 134-35.

³ Melon, op.cit., p. 26. The same obligation existed in classical Greece, cf. Glotz: La Solidarité dans la Famille en Grèce.

corporations,¹ which may be regarded as representing associations of voluntary solidarity by contrast with the legally sanctioned, involuntary solidarity of the family association. In both cases, the interdependence of interests was regarded as sufficiently intense to warrant the imputation of collective responsibility, based upon the legal fiction of corporate personality.

Though Roman Law, within the framework of the medieval "communitas communitatum," had to contend with custom and Canon Law, in France, it had reemerged largely unscathed by the end of the Middle Ages, and the lawyers thereafter worked to restore the Roman Law dichotomy of state and individual. The guilds and fraternities, with their corporate personality, which represented during the medieval era the organized sociability, mutual aid, professional solidarity and esprit de corps of earlier times (and were idealised by the nineteenth century pluralist champions of the "Genossenschaft," such as Gierke) were not acceptable to the post-medieval champions of statism and individualism. The attack by the *Loi Le Chapelier* of 1791 upon the corporations and the "compagnonnages" (condemned by the Sorbonne as early as 1655) heralded the attenuated conception of solidarity adopted in the codification of French law undertaken a decade later. The abandonment of the restraints of co-proprietorial feudal rights in land and the decline of the medieval "sacerdotium," was followed at the end of the eighteenth century – first by the French Revolutionaries and then by Napoleon – by the reassertion of the Roman Law principles of "dominium": the absolute and exclusive individual right to use and abuse at will one's private property, and "imperium": the absolute and exclusive sovereign right of public power to command.

The principle of solidary debt and credit was embodied, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the Napoleonic Legal Codes, following in the Roman Law tradition, under the inspiration of the eminent French jurist Pothier. It gave rise to a great deal of conflicting judicial interpretation which can be consulted in the abundant literature on the subject.² For our purpose, it must suffice to indicate

¹ R. Thisse, *Etude comparée sur l'histoire et le rôle actuel du cautionnement et de la solidarité*, 1895, p. 243.

² The most succinct discussion is to be found in H. Moreau, *De la Solidarité*, 1930. Solidarity between creditors was dealt with in Arts. 1197-99; between debtors in Arts. 2000-02; between creditors and debtors in Arts. 1203-04; and between co-debtors in Arts. 1213-15, of the Code Civil. See also articles 20, 22, 24, 28, 140, 187 of the Code du Commerce; and article 55 of the Code Pénal. – The most important articles are 1197 and 1200 of the Code Civil. Article 1197 lays down: "L'obligation est solidaire entre plusieurs créanciers lorsque le titre donne expressément à chacun d'eux le droit de demander le paiement du total de la créance, et que le paiement fait à l'un d'eux libère le

that the individualistic inspiration of the authors of the Code Civil led to the strict limitation of the application of the principle of solidarity either to an explicit expression of the will of the contracting parties or to legal enactment. Article 1202 states categorically: “La solidarité ne se présume point; il faut qu’elle soit expressément stipulée. Cette règle ne cesse que dans le cas où la solidarité a lieu de plein droit, en vertu d’une disposition de la loi.”¹

The Napoleonic Legal Codes – in whose rigid grip the legalistic French have since uncomfortably languished, despite ingenious efforts to evade the disastrous consequences of its more antiquated axioms and the conservative implications of the accumulated dicta based upon them – were calculated to place the employed at a gross disadvantage vis à vis the employers, both in their individualist and super-individualist conception of contract and the right to association, nominally equal – though not always even this – but effectively inegalitarian as between wage-earner and industrial magnate. However, the anti-solidarist bias of the Napoleonic Codes did not prevent the increasing importance which accrued to the principle of solidarity as a consequence of the political, economic and social changes during the nineteenth century and the reinterpretation of the Codes, in the light of Equity, by the Courts, inspired by a new school of jurisprudence that undermined the individualist and voluntarist bulwark of the non-presumption of solidarity.² These reinterpretations, amounting in practice to a metamorphosis of the law, were based upon the view that the attribution of responsibility solely to the individual and the state, both regarded in their own ways as “sovereign,” involved an arbitrary and noxious neglect of the supreme fact of social life: solidarity. Issuing in the doctrine of juridical objectivism – whose leading exponent was Léon Duguit – it authorised the judge to substitute his judgement of the legal implications of a given set of social relationships, in the light of the corollaries of social solidarity, for the subjective will of the contracting parties and even of the legislator. However, it is only after tracing its peregrinations through theology, morals, sociology, social psychology, economics,

débiteur, encore que le bénéfice de l’obligation soit partageable et divisible entre les divers créanciers” (Code Civil des Français, 1804, pp. 288-89). – Article 1200 asserts: “Il y a solidarité de la part des débiteurs, lorsqu’ils sont obligés à une même chose, de manière que chacun puisse être contraint pour la totalité, et que le paiement fait par un seul libère les autres envers le créancier” (Ib., p. 289).

¹ Code Civil, p. 290. The only articles in which solidarity was expressly stipulated were 395-96, 1033, 1442, 1887 and 2002.

² P. Drakides, *Du Principe en vertu duquel la solidarité ne se présume pas*, 1939, pp. 231-33; Moreau, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

bio-social philosophy, etc. – after having burst through the restrictive categories of the Code Civil – and its return, via politics, to law in the form of Radical social legislation and the theory of quasi-contract championed by Léon Bourgeois, that it will be appropriate to consider the idea of solidarity as a juridico-social dogma.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF SOLIDARITY

In the course of its development from its juridical origins, the idea of solidarity took on an increasingly practical form in the socio-political domain, though not without major setbacks arising out of its own imperfections as well as an inhospitable environment. Starting either as the recognition of a fact with vague but momentous implications for social organization or as the inspiration of an ideal capable of elaboration into a system of principles of social reorganization, it became increasingly intimately associated with a certain conciliationist type of social morality and social institutions that presented itself as a harmonious alternative to the warring ideologies, whether of scientism and moralism or individualism and collectivism.

There were broadly three main stages in the development of solidarity from “mystique” into “politique.” In the first period, prior to 1848, it emerged painfully from a morass of speculative debauchery and Romantic effusion, as a congeries of politico-social doctrines which the disintegration of Louis-Philippe’s “Bourgeoisie Absolue” in 1848 provoked into a premature attempt to engineer a solidarist Utopia. The second period, which extended from 1849-1895, witnessed its transition from a “mystique” into a “politique,” thanks in no small measure to a survivor of the ephemeral “République Démocratique et Sociale” of 1848, Louis Blanc, who handed on its tradition, in a form expurgated of many of its earlier eccentricities, to the Radical party and, in particular, to Léon Bourgeois. In the last period, post-1896, it became a dogmatic credo, supported by detailed schemes of social reform aided by organized political, economic, educational, intellectual, ethical and religious groups to secure its legislative enactment, its teaching and preaching, its practice. In the process, some of the dreams of the pre-solarist pioneers were realised, though whether their progenitors would always have recognised and acknowledged their offspring is questionable.

SOLIDARITY AS A MYSTIQUE

In its infancy, the idea of solidarity represented the focal point of an emerging social mystique which only in the decade preceding the Revolution of 1848 became frankly the advocacy of socio-economic

as well as political democracy. For years it remained suffused – not to say engulfed – in the wave of Romantic and mystical nostalgia associated with so much of the reaction against rapid social change, consequent upon the intellectual, industrial and political revolutions which had first undermined and then destroyed the “organic,” “closed” society inherited, with modifications, from the Middle Ages. It was characterised by a reactionary and irrationalist longing for a lost social stability and unity, in which each person knew his station and its duties within the hierarchical social framework; and by a revulsion against the anarchic individualism unleashed by the elimination of the old restraints upon egoistic impulses. However, the recognition of the need to solve certain specific practical problems led to the prescription of certain vague and universally applicable panaceas and to the advocacy of “utopian social engineering” based upon an appeal to fraternity and altruism with a view to restoring the mutual trust and confidence shattered by the crisis in social relations and ending the overt (and forestalling the latent) social conflicts, accentuated and exacerbated by the negative critique of the principles of social order. The strain upon social cohesion, prerequisite of any society, impelled the thinkers of this period to cast about for a simple and speedy solution. They did not scruple at the invocation of generous doses of pre-scientific metaphysical alchemy of the most dubious kind; whilst the selfsame strain rendered the general public particularly gullible, the predominance of a desire to believe over their critical faculties making them willing dupes of the effrontery of charlatans.¹

However, it was amongst the Roman Catholic social theologians – both De Maistre and Ballanche having connections with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century illuminist movement and thereby providing the link – that the idea of solidarity first achieved its pivotal social significance and underwent an evolution that prefigured its subsequent philosophic prominence and temporary political preeminence. Whilst in Britain both Feudalism and Catholicism had been eliminated as major politico-social forces by the early nineteenth century, in France Roman Catholicism remained an immensely powerful opponent of the individualist ideas that had swept all before them almost unopposed in Britain. It is therefore

¹ “On pourrait définir la Révolution de 1848: le romantisme en politique. Ce fut un déchaînement lyrique des imaginations, une débauche d’idéalisme” (G. Renard, quoted by J. Gaumont: *Histoire de la Coopération en France*, 1924, I, p. 240). – In Volume II, Ch. 3 of his monumental *Histoire de la Révolution Française* entitled “Les Révolutionnaires Mystiques,” a leading figure in the history of the idea of solidarity, Louis Blanc, discussed the contribution of Freemasonry, Martinism, Mesmerism and Illuminism in general to subsequent thought.

comprehensible that in France the Church should have initially become the rallying point for anti-individualism and that the appeal to solidarity should take the form of a campaign for a return to its politico-social constitution, even when its spiritual message was rejected. The social question, as a result, became embroiled with the problem of the origin of evil, the ultramontane authoritarian de Maistre – and in his first phase, Lamennais – emphasising the integrative rôle of theological solidarity derived from the collective responsibility of mankind in original sin. However, it was via the problem of evil and the moralistic attribution of responsibility for it to man and society rather than to God and nature that the religious pessimism and social quietism that it encouraged were subsequently transformed by Lamennais and the Swiss Social Protestant philosopher Secrétan into a critique of the complacent optimism of the economists.

By contrast with the illusion of individual self-sufficiency encouraged by the economists, the pre-Solidarist thinkers placed man within the context of his spatial solidarity in society and society itself within the temporal solidarity of history. Progress and solidarity were widely regarded in the nineteenth century as open sesame words, abstract a priori answers to all social problems, even by the most eminent and influential, for “progress” expressed the dynamic need to go beyond the limits of an outdated social structure, whilst “solidarity” indicated the will to reorganize it on a sound and just basis. Within the spate of pretentious systematising, the pre-sociologists presented with particular effectiveness these two aspects. Despite latter-day relapses into “theophilanthropy,” Saint-Simon and Comte scientifically stressed the physio-social and historical solidarity of human societies, based respectively on organically functional collective effort and the dependence of the present upon the past, the future upon the present; whilst Pierre Leroux placed the idea of solidarity at the very heart of social philosophy, giving it a practical, democratic and socialist application to economic problems. Taking his distinguished contribution in conjunction with that of Fourier, Considérant (who performed for Fourierism what Leroux had done for Saint-Simonism), Sismondi, Dupont-White, Louis Blanc and Proudhon, as well as those of less eloquent proletarians, we can trace the transition between dissatisfaction with the consequences of the Revolution of 1830 and the explosion of accumulated wrath with the individualist past and ambition for the Solidarist future in the Revolutions of February and June 1848.

The achievements of the February Revolution were remarkable if ephemeral. Within the space of a few weeks, the humblest citizen

became an elector, conquered the right to form professional associations and to strike, received a public guarantee of employment, the limitation of working hours, subsidies for producer co-operatives, the abolition of certain undesirable industrial practices and government arbitration between employer and employees. However, by June, the divergence between those who regarded the Revolution as a starting point and those who regarded it as a terminus had come to a head; the savage suppression of an abortive left-wing revolt was followed by a ruthless reaction by the Conservative Republic to a doctrinaire plutocracy which rapidly reached a state of abject and senile sclerosis in which "Napoléon le Petit" could, by contrast with his mediocre competitors, seem a giant.

BETWEEN MYSTIQUE AND POLITIQUE

The Second Empire, during its first decade, perpetuated the anti-socialism of the Second Republic (post-June), issuing decrees rendering professional associations – unless expressly authorised by the government – and strikes illegal. Friendly societies were amongst the few manifestations of working-class solidarity tolerated by authority, and in this transitional period in the evolution of the idea of solidarity, "le développement de ces sociétés témoigne, chez les ouvriers, du désir d'assurer la solidarité et l'entraide... Même lorsque ces groupements s'occupèrent uniquement de mutualité, leur caractère professionnel devait nécessairement conduire leurs adhérents à un sentiment de solidarité dans le cadre du métier et dépasser la prévoyance individuelle contre la maladie ou les accidents, pour s'affirmer dans le domaine collectif des conditions du travail."¹ This, doubtless, explains Proudhon's post-1848 tenderness towards "mutuellisme," being in close touch as he was with proletarian grassroots.

With the (relative) "liberalization" of the Napoleonic plebiscitary dictatorship in its second decade, strikes were legalised in 1864, but were hamstrung by the denial of the right to association and assembly, calculated, speciously claimed the official, "liberal" economists, to inhibit the individual's freedom to work. Whilst the co-operative was legalised in 1867, an International Co-operative Congress, due to be held in the same year in Paris was banned; and the French branch of the First International was suppressed as a secret society in 1868. The resurgent working class movement did not find the régime born of military defeat in 1870 to its taste, and the equivalent of the "June Days" of 1848 emerged in the Paris

¹ E. Dolléans and G. Dehove, *Histoire du Travail en France*, 1953, I, p. 238; cf. *Revue de la Solidarité Sociale*, Nov. 1905, pp. 259-60.

Commune of 1871, a turning point in the transition between the tragic pre-solidarist dress rehearsal of 1848 and the triumphant performance at the turn of the century.

Despite the oversimplification inseparable from fixing a particular date as the turning-point in a continuous process, it is broadly true to affirm that prior to the Commune of 1871, the enunciation of solidarist ideas and sentiments came predominantly from “socialist” sources: Fourier, Saint-Simon, Leroux, Louis Blanc, Proudhon; whereas, after 1871, proletarian bitterness at bourgeois-organized butchery and inhumanity impelled the decimated remnants to renounce reformist class collaboration in favour of revolutionary class conflict. The brutal elimination of the old leaders and the debilitated and clandestine condition of the French working-class movement, persecuted during the first decade of the Third Republic – Trade Unions were only legalised in 1884 – facilitated the triumph of catastrophist Marxism’s leading French protagonist, Jules Guesde, over the disciples of Proudhon.

However, after the successful struggle to establish the Republican régime, despite the machinations of legitimists, Orleanists, Bonapartists and outright adventurers of the type of Boulanger, social problems recaptured the limelight and the left-wing of the Radical middle classes and peasantry joined hands with the reformist socialists to secure, piecemeal and gradually in the decades that followed, many of the reforms envisaged in the 1840’s and 1860’s, heyday of that liberal-socialist co-operation which reached its apotheosis at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, the focus of solidarist ideas was no longer in Socialism but in Radicalism – or as it increasingly (and significantly) came to be called, Radical-Socialism – which sought to unite the working and middle classes around a programme of social progress for all; which, while not – at least in the short run – threatening the “fundamental rights” of the latter, secured substantial and immediate improvements in the condition of the former and created the pre-conditions for a more searching reform of the social system subsequently. It is to this transitional, liberal-socialist phase in the fortunes of the idea of solidarity that the contributions of Renouvier, Secrétan, Walras, Gide, Fouillée, Durkheim and Duguit belong.¹ Louis Blanc and Proudhon are respectively

¹ It is impossible to go into detail here concerning the contributions of these theoreticians to the transition from the “Socialist” conception of solidarity in 1848 into the “Radical” doctrine of Solidarism half a century later. It must suffice to indicate that Charles Renouvier developed Proudhon’s juridico-moralistic critique of the pre-Solidarists of the early nineteenth century; Charles Secrétan gave the idea of solidarity a Social Protestant

the primarily constructive and critical links with the pre-solidarists prior to 1848.

SOLIDARITY AS A POLITIQUE

In the years preceding 1848, Louis Blanc's social thought and political programme represented a provisional eclecticism of the varied strands in pre-solidarist thought. His post-1848 career reflects the evolution which the notion of solidarity underwent after the miscarriage of the visionary schemes elaborated in the face of intractable practical problems and the intransigent truculence of entrenched interests. In the decade following his return from exile in 1870, he turned away from the violence of the Commune and gathered around him a group of deputies who in 1895 were sufficiently powerful to secure the election of their candidate for the post of Prime Minister: Léon Bourgeois, the apostle of solidarity. However, instead of representing the "Utopian" avant-garde in social reform, as did Louis Blanc in 1848, Léon Bourgeois' advocacy of the principle of solidarity took the prudent form, half a century later, of politically capitalising upon the fact that, in the interim, it had become almost a truism and a tautology to stress the need for social solidarity: to champion social legislation and governmental intervention; to promote voluntary associations. The protagonists of the practical implementation of the idea of solidarity in the realm of social reform were no longer predominantly the hierophants of the horny-handed but mainly middle-class advocates of the provision of a comprehensive range of social services to all citizens requiring them, with a view to establishing a classless common good as the foundation of social relations subject to interdependence. Bourgeois sought to achieve in late nineteenth century France, through the idea of solidarity supported by political Radicalism, a legislative revolution recalling that contemplated and partially realised in early nineteenth century Britain by Bentham through the idea of utility supported by the "Philosophic Radicals."

Late nineteenth century "bourgeois" Solidarism was appreciably more restrained in its criticisms and timid in its proposed reforms of the status quo, and generally more moderate in tone than its mid-century "proletarian" predecessor. It stressed the rational and realistic elements in the solidarist message rather than its utopian and idealistic

orientation; Alfred Fouillée made it the keystone of an eclectic juridico-social philosophy; Léon Walras utilised it in his theory of social economics; Emile Durkheim made it the foundation of an "objective" sociology with syndicalist undertones that were rendered fully explicit in the jurisprudence of Léon Duguit; whilst Charles Gide adopted it as the pivot of his "Co-operative Republic."

aspects; it emphasised the gradual, piecemeal and voluntary character of social reform in contrast with the tendency towards impatient, holistic and compulsory change governed by the forces of social and historical necessity; it was anti-clerical in character, shunning the Romantic religiosity which permeated its forerunner; it favoured calculated appeals to enlightened self-interest rather than impassioned appeals for self-sacrifice and invocations of universal fraternity, charity or love: all of which bear the mark of Proudhon's searching critique of the well-intentioned sophistries of the pre-solidarists. However, many of these differences arise from the fact that in the 1840's the offer of collaboration between social classes, on the basis of a compromise policy of social peace through social reform of injustices, came from the enlightened spokesmen of the wage-earners, in a weak bargaining position owing to their political immaturity and their poverty. From the 1890's, however, the overtures came principally from the enlightened representatives of the middle classes to a proletariat that was rapidly coming of age, both politically and economically. No longer was an uneducated, unenfranchised, unorganized and unpropertied mob at the mercy of a self-confident, secure and self-sufficient, privileged middle class. Now, an important section of the militant wage-earners adopted an attitude of uncompromising hostility towards the existing economic order, whilst in reaction to the Communist credo of "all or nothing" class-struggle, the doctrinaire "liberal" economists paraded their sterile slogans and were content to rely on the negative efficacy of the "Red Spectre" bogey. Only through a more rational and constructive approach by the leaders of the middle class could the mid-nineteenth century solidarist Utopia pacifically – and in a modified form – become a twentieth century reality.

This change in middle class social and political attitudes, after being feebly foreshadowed by Léon Gambetta's opportunistic Radicalism in the late 1860's and 1870's, began to gather momentum in the 1880's when the Radicals and Radical-Socialists under the leadership of Clemenceau – the immediate political heir of Louis Blanc – began to show a more than occasional and electoral interest in the "social question" about which a great number of books were beginning to be published, becoming a spate at the turn of the century. The erosion of the electoral clientèle of the Radicals by the Socialists (incontrovertible evidence of whose increasing appeal was provided by their success in municipal elections), led the Radical leaders to offer the Socialists an electoral alliance in 1891 which took effect, to their mutual benefit, in 1893, a collaboration prepared by the

enactment of a number of social reforms in the preceding years and itself making possible the formation of the first homogeneous Radical government, headed by Léon Bourgeois, with Socialist Parliamentary support. To woo the disillusioned and embittered wage-earners whom, it was feared, would turn their resentment at being treated as economic and social pariahs to electoral account, Bourgeois enunciated a solidarist theory and elaborated a political programme which gave practical significance to the electoral slogan "Pas d'ennemis à gauche". That his success was in a sense transitory gives point to Proudhon's prophetic assessment of the political incapacity of the middle classes, to whom the wage-earners were vainly offering, in the 1860's, an alliance which they would be only too happy to obtain before very long.¹

In the decade following the publication, in 1896, of Léon Bourgeois' epoch-making brochure (subsequently expanded into a book) entitled "Solidarité," it would be accurate to assert of the notion of solidarity that it came, was seen and conquered; though whether it conquered or was itself conquered by its enthusiastic public, whether it was merely manipulated by the public to satisfy its desire to rationalise its immediate needs, is not clear. "Solidarity" had become what one of its champions, Fouillée, called an "idea-force": an idea of key importance that galvanised and directed, through a simultaneous appeal to the intellect, emotions and will to action, the social, political and economic life of France. Its astounding popularity derived mainly from the wider and more profound recognition of the need to deal by collective action with the complex problems raised by the rapid and interrelated economic, political and social changes of the nineteenth century. Under this general tendency were subsumed many contrasting and even conflicting principles interpretative of, and methods of social reorganization applicable to, these conditions; but the current of socio-political thinking which succeeded at the turn of the century in infusing the word "solidarity" with a systematic, doctrinal content – from which was "deduced" the desired socio-political programme – and appropriating its intellectual, emotional and volitional "goodwill" was not the exclusive product of any one of these interpretations of the concept of solidarity but an eclectic and pragmatic association of aspects of each of them in the guise of a synthesis.

CONCLUSION

To attempt to conceal the logical fragility of such a syncretist construction would be fruitless. However, to single out the Solidarists

¹ Proudhon, *De la Capacité Politique des Classes Ouvrières*, 1865, p. 226.

for castigation on the ground that they were unable to create a uniform, integrated, monolithic and fully consistent doctrine, in their sincere attempt to come to grips with the gravest practical problems of the hour in a humane and conciliatory spirit, without either evading the difficulties by equivocal oversimplification or cutting the Gordian knot in authoritarian fashion, is beside the point in a "social history of ideas." J. S. Mill cogently formulated the eclectic's apologia when he admitted that "Truth in the great practical concerns of life is so much a reconciliation and combination of opposites"; a viewpoint expressed in a more striking and paradoxical form by Samuel Butler when he wrote that "Extremes are alone logical, but they are always absurd, and the mean is alone practicable, and it is always illogical."¹ The achievements of the Solidarist school were a superb exemplification of these dicta, for it was primarily in an eclectic form that the multitudinous and diverse strands of which their doctrine was woven were successfully applied, eschewing the Scylla of ultra-individualism and the Charybdis of hyper-collectivism.

The Solidarists were extremely influential in rendering respectable many of the reforms that are being increasingly taken for granted within the modern Welfare State, and in canvassing various forms of social, political and economic reorganization of a far-reaching though gradualist character. The significance of the idea of social solidarity to its chief proponents was that it appeared to provide an impregnable foundation for an extended version of the ideals of the French Revolution by going beyond sentimental fraternity to the facts of interdependence with all their implications for the rights and duties of citizens, based simultaneously upon the ideals of liberty and

¹ J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Watts ed. 1941, p. 57; cf. 55 sq.; S. Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, Dent ed. 1954, Ch. LXIX, p. 267. — Dicey has pointed out in words fully applicable to France: "Extreme and logically coherent theories have, during the nineteenth century, exerted no material effect on the laws of England. It is moderate though it may be inconsistent individualism alone, as it is moderate though it may be inconsistent socialism alone, which has told upon the making of English laws, and which therefore can claim to be legislative opinion" (*Lectures on the relation between Law and Public Opinion in England during the nineteenth century*, 1905, p. 18). In his *Introduction to The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe*, 2nd ed., 1941, Professor M. Oakshott made the point in a more general form when he indicated a "danger that the intellectual critic of political doctrines should avoid. He is apt to think that the value of a régime or of a condition or an ideal of society depends upon the coherence with which the doctrine associated with it is expressed. He observes a system of reasons adduced to explain the practice of a régime, and he is apt to conclude that because it leaves something to be desired the régime itself stands condemned... And this tendency may lead him astray. The value of a régime, fortunately, does not depend upon the intellectual competence of its apologists; indeed, in most cases, practice is more coherent than doctrine and its superiority recognised" (p. xv).

equality and the necessities arising from participation in the life of a community.

Realising, however, the existence of many undesirable types of interdependence in society, they rejected quietist fatalism and sought to correct the very imperfect natural and social solidarities inherited from the past by introducing a just solidarity (a moral and voluntary solidarity) through the rational manipulation of natural and social determinisms in the light of moral ideals. This task of social justice involved embarking upon public intervention in social activity on a considerable scale, but it was regarded merely as a duty to discharge a social debt contracted in space and time; for, it was considered that the injustices involved in natural and social solidarity, e.g. to the weak, the poor, the ignorant, the unemployed or the propertyless, placed certain obligations upon society vis à vis the individual, just as the values embodied in natural and social solidarity were held to involve all individuals in obligations towards society; and it was maintained that merely to aid such individuals through the traditional Christian channels of charity was approaching impertinence because they had a claim of right, as belonging to a community striving to be both rational and ethical in its conduct towards its citizens.

Throughout its period of gestation in the nineteenth century, the word solidarity expressed a plurality of associated, interrelated ideas, emphasis being placed, at different times and by different exponents, on one or more of these constituent conceptions of interdependence. The source of its emotional and intellectual force, what led to its utilisation by so many of those who sought to reform the existing social and economic order, was that it simultaneously connoted a fact and a value which the battle against entrenched tyranny had led Liberals to overlook or despise: the need for mutual aid and co-operation and the desire for harmonious unity. However, not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did the idea of solidarity emerge from infancy, first into an uncertain adolescence and then a self-confident maturity. Significantly, at the "Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la vie moderne," held in Paris in 1937, all the exhibits on social matters were grouped in the "Pavillon de la Solidarité." Writing in the guide to this section of the exhibition, entitled "Solidarité," the eminent economist and politician Etienne Antonelli declared: "On peut vraiment dire que l'idée de solidarité étendue successivement à la protection des malades, des infirmes, des vieillards, des femmes, des enfants, des économiquement

faibles, constitue aujourd'hui l'assise fondamentale de toute la politique sociale française."¹

Though the rise of the Welfare State has converted the idea of solidarity, applied within the nation, into a cliché, in the more primitive society of nations, it retains its importance in opposition to the entrenched dogma of sacrosanct state sovereignty, which, through its neglect of the consequences of international interdependence in the twentieth century, has been instrumental in provoking two World Wars and a host of lesser conflicts. In perspective, the choice of the champion of Solidarism, Léon Bourgeois, to attend the Hague Peace Conference of 1899 as French plenipotentiary, in preference to accepting the offer to form a government, marks a significant shift in policy. The substitution of the force of law for the law of force between rather than within nations, was recognised to be the major task of the twentieth century politician. It was the action, not of a visionary but of a "previsory."

In conclusion, the concept of solidarity might be described as an abstractive and summational fiction: summational because it is a comprehensive grouping together of a wide range of phenomena; abstractive because it neglects certain elements of these phenomena; a fiction because it is a conceptual construction motivated by practical expediency and not a dogmatic fact or hypothesis about facts. Unfortunately, the exponents of this idea did not recognise its fictional character and sought to base it upon the myth of original sin and the utopia of natural harmony conceived as facts, and upon the hypotheses of social contract and social organism. The facts that form its subject-

¹ Solidarité, p. 25. For example, the French Social Security Act of 1946 consolidated the legislation on industrial accidents and diseases within the framework of those common social risks to be dealt with preventively as well as reparatively – the solidarist notion of professional, physiological and family risks replacing the traditional Code Civil principle of personal responsibility – insurance replacing assistance. (Dolléans and Dehove: *Histoire du Travail*, II, pp. 404, 419 sq.) "La sécurité sociale nous paraît correspondre à une double préoccupation de sécurité et de solidarité" (Ib., p. 463). In particular, the authors refer to solidarity between rich and poor (cf. insurance against unemployment and industrial accidents) between the healthy and the ill (national health insurance contributions) and between adults and both the very young and the very old (family allowances and old age pensions). (Ib., pp. 464-65) – P. Durand, Professor of Law at the University of Nancy and member of the "Conseil Supérieur de la Sécurité Sociale," wrote in *La Politique Contemporaine de Sécurité Sociale* (1953, p. 51): "Les formes modernes de réparation des risques sociaux traduisent... une volonté d'étendre à de nouveaux risques la garantie sociale"; whilst P. Laroque, President of the "Caisse nationale de Sécurité Sociale," has affirmed: "Toute l'organisation française de la Sécurité sociale repose sur la solidarité nationale." (*Informations Sociales*, May-June, 1957, p. 521; cf. 516, 518; and his preface to H. C. Galant's *Histoire Politique de la Sécurité Sociale Française*, 1945-52, 1955, pp. XV-XVII; cf. pp. 5, 39, 49, 76-77, 112, 177.)

matter should have been interpreted (pace Vaihinger) *as if* their interdependence and co-operation rather than their independence and competition were of primordial importance. If this approach is adopted, the study of the use of this fruitful fiction serves a heuristic purpose. It provides an easily identifiable focus in tracing the emergence in nineteenth century French social thought of the ideological presuppositions of the pioneers of the new institutions and associations which have become the pillars of the twentieth century Welfare State.

The practical value of the ideal of solidarity does not derogate from its fictional character. In fact, the ultimate lesson to be derived from the idea of solidarity, which during the late nineteenth century crystallised the social aspirations of Frenchmen as they grappled with the intractable problems posed by the economic, social and political revolutions of the late eighteenth century, is both the practical value of having a pivotal social purpose which imparts a dynamic enthusiasm capable of overriding reverses, and the philosophical vanity of attempting to subordinate particular policy decisions to deductions from some first principle, which, under the stress of changing needs and circumstances, adopts the characteristics of the chameleon.