

In Search of Solidarity
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Introduction

If etymology is to be believed, solidarity is about firmness (as in *solide*), about safety in tightly knit numbers, about unity and, ultimately, about power. Trade unions (from the fledgling left wing workers' associations at the dawn of the 20th century to Poland's *Solidarnosc* seventy years later) have always understood it in this manner, even if they regularly allowed it to be undermined. So have army generals, football coaches and the Mafia. Nevertheless it feels wrong to say that solidarity is captured fully by the idea of people physically standing together or, more generally, of coordinated action in response to a common interest. There seems to be more to solidarity than that.

A clue to the extra ingredient can be had by turning to etymology again : the Greek word for solidarity (

) implies a mutually supportive relationship (see Sweet, 1996). The problem with relationships, as we all know, is that they are riddled with normative beliefs and expectations which evolve inexorably and mostly unpredictably. Therefore the search ? ? ?

h for the meaning of solidarity is likely to lead us beyond a mere investigation of collective action. Oil giants, who refrain from lowering petrol prices when the price of oil falls, make short term private sacrifices to promote their long term common good. Yet calling their action "solidaristic" over-stretches credulity. Perhaps the reason is that such an "association" lacks the interwoven normative beliefs and emotions which characterise mutually supportive relationships. Already we find ourselves in a dilemma : Either we shall seek a neat definition of solidarity which conflates it with collusion, or the definition will remain looser, less precise, yet juicier and closer to the everyday (often subconscious) meaning of the word. To help us along, the following sections are structured around a series of elements which a definition of solidarity must encompass. As we progress from one element to another we recount the philosophical traditions which have at times accounted for these elements. The hope is that in the end, even if left without a precise and all-purpose definition, the concept of solidarity will have been illuminated.

Part 1 — Analytic–Synthetic Approaches to a Definition

In this part the search for solidarity begins with a series of four elements which the analytic–synthetic approach can handle with ease. The first two elements (see Section 1 below) are manageable within the instrumental rational choice approach of Hobbes and Hume (as well as of the economists who adorned it with equations). However the third requires a departure from the anglo–saxon view of rationality in favour of something more akin to Kant. Lastly the fourth element creates room for an evolutionary approach in which solidarity appears as a sub–set of interwoven conventions emerging in response to the fact that rationality is not enough in order to guide people's behaviour. Part 2 will then take over following the introduction of another two elements (or constituents) of solidarity which need an approach radically different from those feasible within the analytic–synthetic approach.

1. Solidarity as the re–assessment of internal reasons by instrumentally rational agents

Element 1 : Solidarity involves actions which seemingly contradict the agent's internal reasons (at least those construed narrowly by given calculative beliefs).

Perceived sacrifice (even in the form of unexpressed unhappiness at the plight of others) is a first sign of solidarity's presence. Thus our definition must account for a degree of individual sacrifice whose purpose is the good of "others". At the simplest level, such a phenomenon reduces to the problem of cooperation within a prisoner's dilemma or common assurance type of interaction. Two broad explanations are readily available. Firstly, that a transition of calculative beliefs has recommended to the agent cooperative behaviour as more efficient than selfish action (see [1i] below). Secondly, that moral or ideological externalities may alter the structure of the interaction so as to render cooperation, or sympathetic behaviour, individually rational (see [1ii] below).

[1i] Transition to new calculative beliefs

(1ia) Emergence of trust in common assurance games

Let each of n players face a choice of an integer between 1 and 10. The payoff of player k is then determined by the following formula :

,
where

denotes the integer choice of player k ,

represents the lowest integer chosen within the group, and $A > B$ are constants. Clearly, the Pareto-superior Nash equilibrium is for each to choose 10. However, lack of trust that all will do so justifies a more cautious choice which, in a never ending circle, leads to a Pareto-inferior outcome. (Indeed if you expect that at least one player will expect the lowest chosen integer in your group to equal x , your best strategy is to choose x also — however small the value of x .) In this context, greater trust in each other's instrumental rationality could yield the Pareto result. Alternatively the same outcome could be achieved if n players felt more solidarity towards one another. Self-sacrificial actions (e.g., selecting 10 when you know that there will be some who will select no more than, say, 2) by enlightened individuals, as well as common expectations of such actions, can foster such solidarity and coordinate behaviour effectively by altering the group's predictions.

(1ib) Emergence of trust in free rider problems

Consider the slightly amended version of the above n -person game. The payoff of player i is now given by:

where

represents the average choice of integer within the group and again $A > B$. The substitution of the minimum integer choice with the average choice in the group turns the game into a free rider problem by turning the choice of 1 into the dominant strategy. How can agents overcome their urge to play the dominant strategy (while remaining instrumentally rational) ? The standard answer involves "trigger strategies" which can be shown to lead to cooperative action, i.e., to a behavioural pattern that satisfies Element 1 above, provided the game is expected to last sufficiently long and the long term benefits from cooperation outweigh the short term profit from cheating.

Element 2 : Solidarity involves action which unveils a sense of commitment to "others" as well as to their viewpoint.

Acting in solidarity with others surely means more than defeating pessimistic expectations about their actions. It means that one actually feels something like sympathy (or even empathy) for

others (as well as for their views) which, like all passions, is satisfied by appropriate (solidaristic) deeds. Within the tradition of instrumentally rational choice (which became firmly established with Hume's Treatise), there are three distinct ways of modelling this thought :

[1ii] Possession of solidaristic internal reasons

(1iia) Pure utility externalities or Humean natural sympathy

For instance, let

,

where

is the average of all apyments except i's.

(1iib) Utility gain from demonstrations of solidarity

For instance, let

,

where

is the agent's payoff and

is her additional utility from the act of contributing to others'. The latter could be due either to a form of act-utilitarianism (e.g., the satisfaction from having acted sympathetically) or, less righteously, due to satisfaction from being seen to be good (e.g., the satisfaction from cultivating an image as a sympathetic type of person).

(1iic) Endogenous Solidarity

For instance, let

,

where

is the agent's payoff and

is her additional utility from the act of contributing to others' — as above. Only in this case we allow for the utility function's arguments to be affected not only by one's actions (or others' perception of them) but also by the actions of the rest of the group. For instance, the utility one gets from acting selflessly may depend on the proportion of other group members who acted similarly. Letting

if agent i demonstrates no solidarity towards members of a group

if solidarity is demonstrated

if solidarity is not demonstrated

if solidarity is demonstrated

where

,

utility maximisers will be solidaire if and only if

, where

= a/b, and

. Suppose now that

are a function of the proportion

of the group (or community) who are also solidaire. Two potential cases emerge.

First, if the relative reputational or moral benefits from contributing to the group (i.e., function r) is greater than the relative monetary benefits from absconding (i.e., if $d > r/dN$), then sooner or later either the whole group will act in unison or solidarity will break down totally (here I assume identical relative valuations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits, i.e., identical

s). In this situation, and assuming that there exists a proportion

* such that

*) if a critical mass of agents expect solidarity to spread to at least a proportion of the group equal to

*, then the power of this prophecy will carry the day and all will act solidaristically. Otherwise none will.

Second, if d

$< r/dN$, and provided

* exists, there will be a tendency for solidarity to be displayed by a stable proportion of the population equal to

*.

Element 3 : Solidarity involves a capacity to side-step calculation of internal reasons and do what is Right for reasons irreducible to personal gain. In short, solidarity for the sake of solidarity. Our third element cannot make sense within the tradition of instrumental rationality. In Section 2 below, we look at two narratives capable of embracing Element 3.

2. Solidarity as the insufficiency or over-coming of internal reasons

[2i] Non-rational solidarity

Instrumental rational choice pre-supposes a one-way avenue leading from (plausibly subconscious) rational deliberation to choice. Sceptics (amongst them well-known analytical philosophers, e.g., Bertrand Russell) have often complained that rational choice theory has put the cart before the horses : that often we act in a manner dictated by convention or faith first and, once the deed is done, we seek a rationalisation (e.g., forming the view « I acted thus because it was the most efficient way of satisfying my preferences » ex post — if only in order to minimise cognitive dissonance).

In the absence of any guarantees that motivation leads to choice (rather than vice versa) solidarity may be part of the world which shapes agents (and keeps their beliefs, passions and reasoning conflated), as opposed to the result of instrumental choices. If this is so, it makes little sense to think of a group in solidarity as a rational or as an irrational phenomenon. A more honest adjective is “non-rational” and the best approach to it is anthropological, socio-economic, or political.

[2ii] External reasons and Kantian rationality

For instrumental rational choice, to be rational is to be an efficient servant of your internal reasons (i.e., your preferences or your passions for those who want to maintain Hume’s distinction between preference and passion). For Kant it is the capacity to liberate yourself from your internal reasons and act on the maxim : choose the action which, if universalised, would yield the maximum payoff. To be precise, the rational person i compares with

[where

is the i th player’s payoff when everyone makes the maximum contribution, and

is her payoff when each contributes least] and contributes to the full if the former utility exceeds the latter. Such universalisable rules are external reasons that only the genuinely rational person (i.e., the one who is emancipated from the tyranny of preference/passion) is capable of adopting. In Section 1 we saw that Elements 1 and 2 could be accounted for without straying from instrumental rational choice. As long as there was some personal reward (either direct or indirect) from acting solidaristically towards others, it made sense to do so. However Element 3 demands more. It demands that for solidarity to count as genuine (rather than as a simulation of solidarity), agents must be able to demonstrate that they would act in this way independently of what is in it for them. Could this ever be rational? Yes, answers Kant in outlining his definition of rationality in the previous paragraph. In summary, just as to be genuinely good requires a capacity rationally to deliberate that you are not looking for anything in return, genuine solidarity is founded on external rather than on internal reasons for action (see Hollis, 1987).

3. Solidarity by convention : the evolutionary perspective

While the Kantian approach addresses Element 3, its universalisable character seems to demand too much. Rational agents must always be truthful (as long as a world of truth-speaking is better than a world of lies), solidaristic and non-hypothetical in their reasoning — even if it means never lying to the secret police. The thought that solidarity may involve judgment as to when one ought to lie as well as to when one should be *solidaire*, combined with the observation that solidarity comes in degrees and different shades (as opposed to the On/Off type proposed by Kantian reasoning) suggests that we are still missing one important ingredient of solidarity. Element 4 below attempts to articulate it.

Element 4 : There are degrees of solidarity ranging from the Fragile (e.g., explanation [1ia]) to the Deep (e.g., explanation [2ii]). Thus even agents who are capable of sidestepping the calculus of their internal reasons in order to be *solidaire* with others do not (and perhaps cannot/should not) follow simple universalisable rules. They seem to be following conventions.

Most people engaging in solidaristic action or thoughts will explain these by recourse to habit : “This is the done (or proper) thing”, they would say. Often they mean that the “done”, or the “proper”, thing is determined by convention rather than rational deliberation. Thus there is a dualist view that behaviour is determined on the one hand by the rational sorting of internal reasons (e.g., preferences, passions etc.) while on the other there are morals or conventions which simply demand to be followed. Kant argued that the latter ought also to be derived rationally (albeit by means of a rationality which has little to do with the instrumental version). On the other hand, Humeans have argued that conventions just evolve in response to gaps in instrumentally rational deliberation. To recite their argument (whose source is Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature*), if people’s preferences are such that Reason cannot decide on which action serves them best (as in the case, for instance, of multiple equilibria), there is a void ; that is, it is impossible to know what one ought to do rationally. People then randomise. Nevertheless it is often highly wasteful and risky to decide what to do via randomisation. Rational people then respond by looking for a behavioural pattern which seems to work best. As a result of chance some pattern attracts more attention over others and becomes established as a convention the moment some people (that is, a critical mass) believe that other people are following it. Conventions which serve the interests of those who follow it reasonably well (though not necessarily optimally or fairly) remain evolutionarily stable and survive. Others become destabilised and are overthrown. The survivors, provided they have been around long enough, acquire a moral complexion ; that is, people not only expect others to follow it but actually treat those who do not as somehow morally defective. By that stage a behavioural pattern which has emerged and evolved in

response to indeterminacy has become a moral code.

In this sense, solidarity is an emotional abstraction of the melange of cooperative actions and empathetic feelings. Like all other moral entities, it is no more than an illusion, albeit a useful one. To summarise this perspective, we add another category to our list:

[3i] Hume and the Humeans on spontaneous solidarity

(3ia) Hume on conventions as a rational response to indeterminacy (e.g., multiple equilibria).

(3ib) The neoclassical/ neo-Humean synthesis (e.g., evolutionary game theory, in which the equilibrium outcome, such as cooperation in the repeated n-person prisoner's dilemma, is not derived axiomatically, i.e., by imposing the assumption of consistently aligned beliefs à la Harsanyi, but instead by searching for behaviour which is evolutionary stable — see Sugden, 1986 and Weibull, 1996).

[3ii] Solidarity as an illusion : the neo-liberal perspective

As mentioned above, recent years have seen a tendency to discover in Hume the elements of a radical rejection not just of collective values (such as solidarity) but also of the theoretical attempts to define them. The argument goes something like this : If people learn to act solidaristically because such behaviour serves their preferences/passions best, and if such a behavioural pattern becomes more stable when people believe that it is not only effective but also right, then an interesting meta-theory suggests itself as an answer to the question “Why are we looking for a sensitive definition of solidarity ?” The answer is that solidarity, being pregnant with moral illusions without which it would not do its job of coordinating our collective actions efficiently, remains a concept which inspires romanticism within us yet one which will be rendered useless the moment we grasp it fully. The search for the meaning of solidarity, furthermore, is to be explained by this extraordinary combination of romanticism and ignorance. In short, this neo-Humean meta-theory of solidarity suggests that there is no need to establish a definition of solidarity and its meaning. Indeed it would be impossible to do so without debasing it (it would be akin to engineering spontaneity). The reason for classifying this view as neo-liberal (or New Right) is that it reduces all social interaction and facts (and thus solidaristic relations) to private acts and, moreover, rules out all possibility of socially constructed objective (i.e., non-illusory) meaning.

Part 2 — Towards a historical approach to solidarity

Each of the four elements which have been motivating our search in Part 1 demanded that the full armour of the analytical approach is utilised in order to accommodate them. Elements 1 and 2 were accounted for without much strain by the political philosophy of Hobbes and Hume, which in our times has grown into the rational choice paradigm. Element 3 required that the analytical approach made the transition from hypothetical to categorical reasoning. Lastly Element 4 extended the rational choice model by borrowing evolutionary concepts from biology while tempering the economists' tendency to impose equilibrium solutions by axiom.

Yet there are still elements of solidarity, as commonly understood, which are missing conspicuously. Two are listed below :

Element 5 : Particular circumstances, actions or beliefs must matter. Some engender solidarity while others do not.

Element 6 : There must exist a qualitative difference between solidarity amongst victims and solidarity amongst villains.

The discussion so far has been abstract viz. the particular action or contribution involved.

Element 5 suggests that this cannot be so. Whether the “contribution” to others comes in the form of personal work (as opposed to a monetary donation), a determination to maintain prices (rather than undercut one’s competitor), the urge to join the resistance during the occupation (instead of collaborating) etc. ought to matter. Element 6 goes further : Solidarity as a social phenomenon emerges at its strongest when we are faced with persons who have been hard done by. Moreover it portrays solidarity as a relational phenomenon which cannot flourish equally amongst those who have been oppressing, violating others and their victims.

Jon Elster has distinguished between collusion and solidarity by explaining them in terms of (1ib) and [1ii] respectively. In short, collusion reflects the selection of trigger strategies whereas solidarity requires something more like utility externalities. However this distinction elevates the question to a different plane without answering it : Why ? Why is it that OPEC oil ministers are not capable of genuine solidarity whereas battered women are ? Why does Mafia–solidarity seem fragile and qualitatively (and perhaps quantitatively) lower–order when contrasted against solidarity amongst mine workers ? Quite obviously the answer must have something to do with social location, power and exploitation. The problem here is that if our concept of solidarity is to be responsive to the social location of agents (that is, if Elements 5 and 6 are to be addressed), it cannot be analytically pinned down (in the manner of the analysis in Part 1) unless it is debauched.

We seem to have come to an important juncture. One inviting road leads back to the neo–Humean avenue which, as we saw in Section 3, demystifies solidarity (along with all sets of moral entities) by classifying it as an illusory state of mind by people whose behaviour has been selected by some evolutionary process. If those who conventionally think of themselves as “victims” of some injustice act in a manner which is, again conventionally, construed by themselves and others as solidaristic (or they attract such “solidaristic” behaviour by others who sympathise with them), this is no more than one out of the many possible conventions which could have been established. Then determining how common such conventions (and their concomitant illusions of solidarity) are becomes an empirical matter.

The second road leads to territory largely inhospitable to those who feel most comfortable within the safety of the analytic–synthetic paradigm. Instead of defining individuals as bundles of preferences or passions, it portrays us as bundles of capacities. Rather than defining the good life as one that satisfies preferences and quenches the passions, it suggests that a wasted life is one which failed to fulfil its potential regardless of the level of utility attained. At the level of the social it suggests that there are gradations depending on the degree of sophistication with which a community or society allows its members fully to realise their capacities.

4. Solidarity in conflict and adversity : the historical approach

Consider any slave–based society of the past. Segregating between masters and slaves, it restricted ruthlessly the social roles of the latter and thus allowed the former to build a more commodious life by appropriating the fruits of their labour. To maintain its equilibrium, two conditions were required : collusion amongst masters and a sufficient degree of mystification characterising the slaves’ conceptualisation of their situation. Instinctively it feels right to use the term collusion (instead of “solidarity”) for describing the acts and beliefs binding the masters together (recall Elements 5 and 6). Sufficient collusion therefore amongst the oppressors is equivalent to the absence of genuine solidarity between them as masters and their human property. Nevertheless the preservation of slavery is compatible with the masters’ sympathy for individual slaves provided any claim to kinship between the slave and the master is denied. In

brief, masters could afford to feel sympathetic to their victims provided they remained indifferent to the prime cause of their suffering. Much later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the same could be said about conservative philanthropists' attitudes towards the poor.

Indeed a stronger case can be made for such sympathy devoid of kinship (a form of fake solidarity). Not only was it admissible under a system of sustainable slavery but, interestingly, often it proved indispensable. For if slavery could be made more tolerable by the master's occasional expression of sympathy, it would add to its stability by blurring the slaves' thoughts about the causes of his or her plight. Spartacus' job at organising a revolt would be much easier in a Roman Empire riddled with brutal, as opposed to self-restrained, masters. In conclusion virtual solidarity is self-perpetuating in that it helps reproduce the misfortune of those towards whom it is directed. In this sense, it is a form of regressive solidarity against which we need to juxtapose a different solidarity whose *raison d'être* is to undo the causes which brought it about. I shall refer to it as progressive solidarity. The feelings of mutuality amongst Spartacus' ex-slave soldiers is but one example. Equally solidarity towards the victims of a natural disaster is to be classified as progressive if functional to the overcoming of the disastrous repercussions and regressive if it contains as a dominant feature an attempt to compound the calamity with further disadvantages (e.g., offers of tied aid at exorbitant interest rates to third world countries suffering from flooding).

Why is this approach to solidarity not compatible with the analytic-synthetic paradigm? Because in the context of our illustration, it turns on a notion that cannot be handled successfully by anything short of an historical approach. For who can define freedom in the abstract (in order thence to define slavery)? Of course it is always possible to define freedom in the standard manner with which liberal political philosophy has been defining its main concepts (e.g., Reason, Liberty, etc.); that is, as the absence of something (irrationality in the case of Reason, interference or constraints in the case of Liberty). Elsewhere I have argued that neither rationality nor freedom can be defined a priori in any way which respects their essence (see Varoufakis, 1992/3 and 1996, but also 1991 and 1993). If these claims are right, then neither can solidarity. The simple reason is that, if solidarity acquires its meaning in relation to the common experience of oppression or illiberty, then the impossibility of an a priori explanation of the latter precludes an a priori definition of solidarity.

So, how else can solidarity be understood? As the above illustration has shown, it can be understood by observers with a shared historical appreciation of the ways in which society had segregated persons (in this case of slavery). Casual observers of bonded labour in the Indian subcontinent are under no illusion that these (often child-) workers are but slaves, regardless of their legal status or their families' formal consent to their situation. What is it that makes all except the meanest of observers empathise with them? Surely it is the same urge which makes us feel sympathy for a victim of a road accident or for a community struck by vicious earthquakes: a shared revulsion against the lack of freedom from disaster either imposed by nature or, perhaps worse, by other people.

The above points can be summarised in terms of three propositions which spring from a historical assumption (see below) and the definition of three types of solidarity.

Assumption: Societies have hitherto segregated systematically between oppressors (i.e., those with extractive power over others), oppressed (i.e., those whose only choice is to cooperate or contract with oppressors) and others who avoid that division.

Confusingly, a person can be an oppressor in one type of interaction and oppressed (or neither) in another.

[4i] Regressive and progressive solidarity

Solidarity towards (or amongst) victims which helps re-produce them as victims is regressive. By contrast solidarity which helps victims overcome their misfortune, oppression, alienation or unfreedom is progressive.

The above distinction presupposes Elements 5 and 6 and leaves no room for collusion amongst villains to stake a claim to solidarity–status. This seems rather harsh. For whatever one thinks of the Nazi troops in Stalingrad, for example, once they were cornered by the Red Army it would be absurdly arbitrary to deny them the claim that they acted solidaristically towards one another.

Perhaps this is an example of a form of solidarity which can grow out of the collusion between villains if and when their enterprise fails and are themselves placed in extreme adversity. Let us refer to this as:

[4ii] Last–ditch (rogue) solidarity

This is when collusion turns into solidarity amongst those who, in the process of pursuing (actively or passively) the victimisation of others, find themselves in acute adversity.

Having defined these three strands of solidarity, we can examine three propositions :

Proposition 1 : The systematic segregation which creates a group endowed with extractive power over another encourages the generation of regressive solidarity.

Proposition 2 : Freedom from extractive power exerts a gravitational pull on the oppressed which can generate progressive solidarity.

Proposition 3 : Different types of solidarity may coexist and cut across borderlines.

The first two propositions have already been defended. In a society divided arbitrarily between those with and those without systematic extractive power, such divisions are maintained not only by collusion amongst the powerful but, importantly, by a regressive solidarity (across the divide and within the group of those subject to extractive power) which is functional to the division. The third proposition emanates from the observation that dividing lines are non–unique and have the habit to intersect each other. Groups of people bound together by progressive solidarity over one issue can be simultaneously subject to regressive solidarity over another or indeed there may be subsets of the group whose members actively collude against some other subset. For instance, the population of an occupied town may be in progressive solidarity, manifesting itself in a resistance movement, while its women indulge in regressive solidarity, e.g., by defending their own lack of access to important social roles on the grounds of traditional feminine roles.

How readily does the above solidarity classification apply today ? Does the master–slave paradigm carry any weight in commercial society ? Neo–liberal thinkers tell us that, with the transition to a market system, self–ownership is guaranteed and individuals fetch rewards consistent with their marginal productivity. According to this view since no one either exploits or gets exploited, the above classification system (founded as it is on the assumption of systematic divisions along the lines of systematic extractive power) is worthless. On the other hand, their critics would argue that this view is a political strategy for obscuring the real dividing lines so that those with extractive power can be absolved.

To give but one example, the Russian mafia is rather keen to claim that the new regime is characterised by the equal capacity of all Russians to participate in the market. In effect, they painstakingly insist that the only division in the new order is between buyers and sellers. In reality, of course, the operative division remains one between the old elite which appropriated the most valuable assets and the rest who are at their mercy. The power of command gave its place to the extractive power springing from one–sided ownership of productive means.

In conclusion, the three propositions above, along with the three types of solidarity defined earlier, retain their relevance under market conditions as long as agents remain segregated between those whose access to highly prized social roles and assets endows them with extractive power over others. And progressive, regressive and last-ditch solidarity become difficult to disentangle because of the multi-faceted and intersecting dividing lines inherent in a sophisticated commercial society. However the fact that the different types of solidarity are difficult to disentangle is not a good reason for theoretical idleness; to the contrary, it makes it all the more pressing that we attain a capacity to speak of solidarity meaningfully by maintaining and illuminating the distinction between “solidarities”.

At the end of the day, whether one approaches the notion of solidarity in the manner of Part 1 or in that of Part 2 is a matter of one’s political philosophy. Yet what seems inescapable is that only one of the two lend explanatory weight and particular meaning to solidarity. At the end of Part 1, and in spite of the best efforts of analytical philosophy, solidarity could be seen as nothing more substantial than a type of collusion, non-rational feelings or, at best, the illusion which kept conventions going. On the other hand, an historical analysis which traces the evolving social divisions and characterises the moral and sentimental bonds between people accordingly is consistent with the gut feeling that solidarity matters. And if we, as social scientists have any doubt about that, there are other sources which confirm this : Firstly, there are the advertisers who know how to distinguish between progressive and regressive solidarity, usually playing on the latter in order to sell, for example, beer or stock cubes (as in the brilliant OXO advertisements in the UK). Secondly, there is music and art. Contrast, for instance, the musical legacies of the Sandinista peasants and of the CIA-backed Contra mercenaries : Regressive (or Last-ditch) solidarity produces art and music just as much as progressive solidarity. Yet they can be distinguished almost instantly even by the untrain eye or ear.

5. History versus evolution

In Section 3 the neo-Humean model explained solidarity in terms of the evolution of conventions which is geared towards “filling in” the gaps that Reason alone cannot fill (due to indeterminacy). Moral beliefs are the byproduct of this massive hill-climbing in the context of which agents adopt illusory, albeit crucial, beliefs which are functional to the convention which has evolved at any particular point in time. As we saw, this model offers an interesting meta-theory of solidarity: the view that any theory of solidarity which tries to lift it beyond the level of the illusory is itself to be understood as an illusion with a similar function to what it is trying to define ; namely, the stabilisation of the same conventions which are served by solidaristic behaviour. In short, the previous section runs the risk of being dismissed as an elaborate illusion whose purpose is to stabilise the original illusion (solidarity) which it is trying to explain. The neo-Humean position can be further bolstered by the claim that it offers an historical perspective since it describes the emergence of solidarity as part of an evolutionary model in which contemporaneous beliefs and actions can be understood solely in the context of the historical process that engendered them.

As with all energetic intellectual attacks, its force can be deflected straight back to the court from which it originated. In this section, I shall present the counter-claim that it is the neo-Humean view which is a useful illusion for the vested interests threatened by the classification of solidarity presented in Part 2. At the start of this claim, we find the familiar argument that evolution and history are not the same thing. According to this view, biology is not a sufficient source of insights partly because, unlike ants and other insects, we humans produce tools (which are then used to produce commodities ; initially for use and later for exchange) and therefore our

social position is determined partly viz. our access to those tools. Within this system an agent's well-being depends more on his or her location within the process of production than on either genotype (e.g., strength, talent, disposition, etc.) or phenotype (e.g., effort, strategy, etc.). For this reason, the history of human society is not amenable to the type of evolutionary explanation which suffices in biology.

Of course this is not to deny a place within historical analysis to insights from evolutionary biology. Indeed the pre-historic establishment of property rights over the first tools can probably be modelled quite nicely in the context of neo-Humean conventions. However once these property rights over tools and means of production were established, the evolution of the distribution of wealth and power (i.e., of "social fitness") amongst individuals ceased to reflect individual phenotypes. Instead it echoed the shifts of boundary lines demarcating social groups in terms of their extractive power over others. Within and across these groups behaviour was probably guided by evolving conventions functional not to some species interest (as in evolutionary biology) but to the current boundaries.

This is not to say that the social groupings thus created qualified automatically as fully fledged analytical categories such as class, gender, race etc. To reach the status of such a category, the conventions within each of them (but also across them) had to beget moral beliefs binding them tightly together. Focusing on agents on whom relative social power (at the expense of others) was bestowed, they tended to conceive of their "good" fortune (the quotation marks serving as an acknowledgement of Hegel's master-slave paradox) as somehow natural, just and deserved amongst people like themselves. For example, agents whose extractive power relied on ownership of land, developed the beliefs which made it easier to collude with their type. Land ownership thus became more than evolutionary stable equilibrium : its stability depended on being seen as a Right. Similarly agents who gained social power as a result of a biological-cum-historical (i.e., largely accidental) process that selected their sex as the dominant one, saw their gender as justly dominant. Equally, agents whose relative capacity to compel sprang from the colour of their skin (which, as Hume would describe, came to be conventionally recognised as the colour of the master race), a supremacist ideology helped them rationalise, and in so doing re-produce, their power.

Looking at the "other" side of each of these divisions, i.e., peasants, women, slaves, people of "colour" (itself an expression whose idiocy exposes and underlying convention-cum-ideology), they also develop beliefs which either oppose the existence of the boundary line that defines them or rationalise, and thus make more bearable, their social location relative to that line. Additionally beliefs are formed which regulate cross-boundary interactions. When they subscribe to Elements 1 to 4 (see Part 1) they fall under the general term "solidarity" and can then be further classified à la definition [4] in Section 4. In general, progressive solidarity characterises solidaristic beliefs which are antagonistic to the divisions along extractive power lines (and which can be held by individuals regardless of social location) whereas regressive solidarity sooth without challenging the boundaries.

The question then becomes : Why is this perspective more historical than that of Section 3 ? On what grounds can one claim that this view of (multifaceted) solidarity rescues it from the realm of illusion and subjectivity ? To answer this question, note that the boundaries which define identities and social location are not totally arbitrary or fully subjective. Indeed, to the extent that they are linked to the production and distribution of material goods (e.g., of sugar cane in the case of slavery, or a clean house and a fed baby in the case of the sexual division of labour, etc.) they are founded on particular technologies. As long as division lines are interdependent (e.g., changes in class divisions following technological innovation have an impact on gender politics ; consider

the effect of the decline of manufacturing in the UK on women's opportunities during the 1980's), the sea of technological change will stir up turbulence which will leave no dividing line unaffected. While solidarity, in all its forms, remains a boundary phenomenon its manifestation will reflect these stormy shifts. In this sense, understanding solidarity and the evolution of its different guises does more than to illuminate illusions ; it helps us also catch a glimpse of an objective, an historic, transformation.

Behind Marx's critique of the notion of a "fair wage" in his *Wages, Prices and Profit*, we discern a challenge to the possibility of knowing what is a just distribution between two groups (or classes) whose very existence as groups depends on a boundary rendering a defensible notion of justice impossible. Moreover he rejected a political strategy of forging worker solidarity by appealing to such an incoherent notion on the grounds that this type of solidarity (i.e., a form of regressive solidarity) would not lead to the boundary change which is a minimum requirement for fairness. Of course it is an open question as to what type of political program would engender progressive solidarity sustainably across many different boundaries instead of leading to new boundaries (as it did in the USSR with the capital/labour opposition being replaced by the nomenclatura/subjects divide) or strengthening one divide in the process of building up progressive solidarity against another (as women increasingly found out within male-dominated working class parties).

Yet despite any misgivings about the practical politics of progressive solidarity, it is its proportion (in both quantitative and qualitative terms) relative to regressive solidarity which decides whether boundaries shift, are strengthened or wither. To the extent that the distribution of a society's surplus at once reflects and determines an agent's menu of available social roles, solidarity and its gradations are neither illusions nor useful. They are the social facts of an unsophisticated and inefficient society.

As for neo-Humeanism, its dismissal of solidarity as an elaborate illusion, as well as its meta-theory on solidarity, can be thus itself dismissed as a brilliant propaganda tool in the service of those who, endowed with extractive power, would wish for nothing else other than the preservation and obfuscation of the divisions which bestow upon them that power. In short, a meta-meta-theory of solidarity suggests that the neo-liberal dismissal of its objective historical meaning is due to the same process of history that creates the patterns of solidarity we observe daily; namely, a process of systematic, objective, real and wholesale exploitation.

Conclusion

The human disposition to solidarity generates hope and soothes us when feeling less than optimistic about our nature. On the other hand, solidarity can also be symbiotic with nastiness. Homer tells us that Hector fell unpitied, and his body was insulted by every Greek. Cities were razed, or enslaved ; the captives sold, mutilated or condemned to die. But what appears to be pathology is also a type of solidarity on the make. If the animosities and dangers were great, the aggressors' affectations were proportionate. Group identities reflect not underlying essences but boundary processes. Solidarity thus runs its course both within and across such boundaries. When it takes its progressive form, it helps destroy the boundaries which segregate people arbitrarily. When it functions as it did in the *Iliad*, or as it is doing in the hands of advertisers today, it is a rogue or regressive solidarity which strengthens and elongates the walls surrounding us. Social scientists who wish to understand the constitution and reconstitution of boundaries (i.e., classes, races, genders, etc.) will therefore have an interest in such a theory of solidarity. Others who wish to claim that the only explanatory category that matters is the individual agent, have the opposite interest: to dismiss as a wild goose chase not only solidarity but also the search for solidarity's

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