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Solidarity in the Classical Tradition[1]

Introduction:
Modern Crisis
and Classical Remedies

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In everyday language, solidarity functions as a catchword. It has earned a certain notoriety through newspaper headlines and is widely associated with the banners of the Polish "Solidarity" socio-political movement, or as part of the famous French saying, *liberté, egalité, fraternité.* Even though solidarity is one of the main foundations of the European legal system, there is no theory of solidarity, in the vein of the theories of freedom, equality and justice. Apart from this vagueness, the concept also suffers from ambiguity. It is sometimes used as a synonym for compassion, mercy or charity; at other times, it is interpreted as civic friendship or legal principle. In the prevailing contemporary legal interpretations, solidarity is reduced to "state benevolence," i.e. the so-called welfare-state, with its over-expanded bureaucratic machine. Even worse, solidarity is sometimes associated with the Leviathan-like communist rhetoric that has appealed to the values of international (workers') brotherhoods.

This complicated history of the concept and the ambiguity of its meaning renders solidarity unattractive. This unattractiveness is augmented

by the volatile nature of modernity, suspicious towards all forms of common good and long-lasting commitment. Solidarity is regarded as a threat to individual freedom, and a dangerous projection of utopian spirit discredited by 20th century totalitarianism. However, despite this modern crisis, appeals to solidarity have not lessened, proving that it is not only a practically needed concept, but also an intellectually intriguing one. This paper presents the thesis that, contrary to popular opinion, solidarity is a freedom-enhancing power. To prove this, it will be necessary to reach back *ad fontes* – to the very beginnings of solidarity in the ancient and Judaeo-Christian tradition.

1. Ancient Roots of Solidarity

"All for One, One for All" – The Private-Public Phenomenon

The most natural etymological source of solidarity is a category of debt known as *in solidum*. The Latin word *solidus* means "dense, lasting, total." The Roman law liability *in solidum* ("in full") was indeed solid, lasting, and total. It was also radical: debtors were liable for the entire obligation, and were obliged to repay the debt of all the other debtors. As such, a person deciding to enter into such a legal relationship had to be ready, in case of failure, to carry the burden of their partners in the arrangement. As those most famous solidary partners in literature, the three musketeers, were prone to declaring, "All for one, one for all."

The only "method" that could explain this sort of "madness" is trust, or rather the madness of trust. The first, most fundamental feature of solidary communities is their basis in radical trust, occasionally even resembling private or personal relationships. At the same time, a solidary community is public in nature, as in most cases partners in the *societas* put their agreement into a contractual framework, legalizing and publicizing it. Traced back to antiquity, the legal, public sources of solidarity are immensely important in the context of contemporary attempts to privatize and sentimentalize it as the rather blurry idea of

a universal *fraternité*, or instinctual compassion. They prove instead that solidarity, at its source, was a bridging concept: it brings together the private and the public, introducing high-quality relationships based on deep mutual trust to the formalised, distanced world of public relationships.

Still, legal institutions are only normative derivatives of informal social institutions, so in order to understand how this paradoxical ("miraculous") combination of radical, almost personal trust and formalised public relationships (as encapsulated in the concept of liability *in solidum*) has been made possible, it is necessary to make a more thorough examination of the founding fathers of solidarity, the solidary communities of antiquity.

Radicalism of Friendship

Like the Greeks, the Romans valued friendship very highly. Aristotle wrote that friendship is "[…] most necessary with a view to living. For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods."[2] Cicero stated that friendship "[…] projects the bright ray of hope into the future, and does not suffer the spirit to grow faint or to fall."[3] A closer look at the principles of this definition of friendship will be useful, as these are the principles underlying the radical co-responsibility of the concept of *in solidum* debt.

The first and most apparent feature is the fact that its formal prerequisite was freedom. The importance of freedom as a formal condition has two aspects. Firstly, friendship could be established only between free men. Slaves, at least in the opinion of ancient theorists, were deprived of the pleasures of friendship, as having no legal capacity, they were stuck in family relationships, relationships hallowed with blood ties or the sanctity of hearth and home, i.e. relationships not rooted in free choice. Secondly, not every man that was formally free could establish a relationship

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[2] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, Oxford 2009, VIII, 1155a.
[3] Cicero, *Laelius on Friendship*, Barnsley 1991, VII, 23.

of friendship, as this required a certain level of economic and social self-sufficiency that guaranteed gratuitousness ("Friendships therefore based on pleasure and on and utility can exist between two bad men"[4]). Self-sufficiency also guaranteed the necessary equality in the relationship, unlike, for instance, an asymmetrical merchant friendship, where the friend-benefactor has a higher position than the one that needs his beneficence, and this beneficence must be compensated for with something more than "just liking," for example, reverence expressed by the friend-beneficiary. Freedom was not only a formal, external prerequisite of friendship, but also its internal requirement. In order to afford pure friendship one had to be "affluent" enough. Aristotle described this kind of internal affluence with a notion of *philautos*.[5] *Philautos*, according to the etymological roots of the term, is a person who is self-loving, but in the noble sense of self-love. Its "nobility" flows from the fact that it is not based on greed for material goods, but on the striving for nobler aims, the greater good and higher beauty. *Philautos* thus is not meant as egoistic and self-seeking, but as "virtue-seeking," and by means of this virtuousness, worthy of self-respect and self-love. In parallel with the politically and financially self-sufficient person, the *philautos* does not look for any emotional reward (as this person already has one good friend – themselves), but can give the other a pure liking, and give it freely. This freeness, this "gratuitous" character of friendship, highlighted by Aristotle on every level – political, social and mental – reveals that a "pure friendship" is a "gift relationship." The *philautos* is freely giving of perfect love from his internal abundance, and as he chooses equally virtuous friends, this gift doesn't go unreturned. However, this kind of reciprocity should not be conceived as an exchange of goods, but rather a sharing of goodness ("common love for the good") and common effort in its creation ("cultivation of virtue"). Free, perfectly-loving and reciprocal friendship has consequences for the theory of solidarity. It distinguishes this notion from its closest contemporary cousins – ordinary, business-like cooperation

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[4] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit., VIII, 1157a.
[5] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit., IX, 1168b-1169b.

based on mutual interests on the one hand (when the interest in cooperation with the other comes down to one's own "encapsulated interest"[6]), and charity based on the asymmetrical relationship of beneficence on the other. Authentic friendship-based solidarity unifies both aspects: voluntary, reciprocal cooperation of equals, with their mutual need for being rooted in a greater, common good.

The relationship between freedom and friendship was mutual: not only was freedom, both in the external and internal aspects, a ticket to friendship, but also – reciprocally – friendship allowed for freedom to flourish. Where does this intertwinement between friendship and freedom come from? Why was friendship considered to be the ultimate good ("Without friends no one would choose to live"[7])? Firstly, because of its epistemic function, dialogue with a friend helped in learning the truth. The Greek man, who knew neither the concept nor the method of introspection, could *se ipsum noscere* only by acting ("testing himself") in the social world. But having a friend played a special role in the process of knowing oneself. Having a liking for someone purely for their character was the ultimate confirmation of their excellence (*areté*). Moreover, friendship allowed not only for learning the truth about oneself, but also about the external world, as confirmed by Plato having written his works in the form of dialogues and discussions between members of the Academic school school: the Greek never learned the truth sitting alone, but through friendly conversation or occasionally, fierce dispute. Secondly, friendship opened not only the horizon of truth, but also the horizon of goodness. Aristotle asks: "What is the use of such prosperity without the opportunity of beneficence, which is exercised chiefly and in its most laudable form towards friends?"[8] One cannot overestimate the importance of this intriguing quote, as it proves that in the understanding of the Greeks, a friend is not only an *alter ego*, an epistemic mirror, but primarily an *alter*, someone who is fundamentally different and distinct.

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[6] Cf. R. Hardin, *Trust*, Cambridge 2006, p. 1.

[7] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit., VIII, 1155a.

[8] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit., 1155a.

Doing good to that person allows for going beyond oneself, thus creating an opportunity to expand the ego and bring about the "miracle" of altruism. For the Greeks, friendship was a way to go beyond oneself, to follow the highest purpose available in the life of an individual: serving virtue. This ethical aspect of friendship is even more emphasized in the idealistic philosophy of Plato, who introduced the concept of the "first friend" (the *proton Philon*[9]): the idea of the Good. Plato sensed the existence of a metaphysical good (Aristotle shared this view, as expressed in his *Metaphysics*), and his concept of friendship shows it very clearly. In contrast, Aristotle's concept of friendship, although rooted in a greater, common good, was a drama played out between earthly actors. These were noble, "good" characters, who acted freely, cultivated virtue and realized higher values, thus proving the existence of a metaphysical element in human nature and our "natural" metaphysical hunger, but still – the scene of their play was irreducibly horizontal. Plato's universe was richer: he introduced the concept of the "first friend" (the *proton Philon*): the idea of the Good. Although it was a concept, an idea, not a personage in a full sense, it had a fruitful potential. This is vividly illustrated in Plato's Symposium, wherein Diotyma explains the idea of "being pregnant in soul." This kind of pregnancy, which gives birth in beauty, presupposes a different kind of romance – romance with Beauty itself. This romance, as well as its fruits – "the proper ordering of cities and households"[10] and "making young men better"[11] – shows that in Plato, ideas have a more independent and causal status, even if their realization, or embodiment, lies within the realm of human responsibilities. Plato's idealism does not change the fact that ancient Greeks lived in a world where the gods were created in the image of humans, which means that the triad of the ultimate values – Truth, Goodness, and Beauty – could come into existence only through the heroic effort of man and only in the horizontal

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[9] Plato, *Lysis*, 219d, trans. B. Jowett, http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/lysis.html (19.01.2018).

[10] Plato, *Symposium,* 209a6–7, trans. B. Jowett, http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html (19.01.2018).

[11] Plato, *Symposium*, op. cit., 210c1–3.

(interpersonal) space, and especially in the most noble, gratuitous, and free relationship known as friendship.

Vita Activa: Playground of Metaphysical Heroism

The horizontal dimension of life in ancient Greece is also related to the importance attached to public life, as the mainspring of freedom. This was the only place where the one-dimensional reality in which humans and gods dwelled together (albeit with the latter residing in the heights of Mount Olympus and having access to the nectar of immortality) was opened to the vertical, transcendent dimension. Even if, starting from the modern age, public life has been equated with the *vita active*, and as such opposed to the *vita contemplativa*, the first and proper antagonist to the public life of antiquity was the private life.

For the Greeks, privacy was a sphere of twofold slavery: the slavery of submission (of women and slaves) and the slavery of domination (power binding the master to his property). This enslaved type of private life, entangled in the double-edged relationships of submission and domination, is very suggestively described by Pierre Manent[12] in his discussion of the Achaeans' superiority to the Trojans, as depicted by Homer in the *Iliad*. In the opinion of the French philosopher, the most expressive example of Greek fortitude was not their undeniable courage on the battlefield ("The Achaeans, however, breathing fury, firm in resolve to aid each other, came on in silence"[13]), but the distance kept in private life, or rather the mature separation between private and public life – between the will to possess (being a specific form of slavery) and the ability to exist in the social world, which often requires dedication and sacrifice. Manent describes this difference using the suggestive example of the relationship between Paris and Helen (an Achaean embarrassed by the entire story and despising her sexual submission[14]) who is his unlawful "property," and

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[12] P. Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic,* Cambridge 2013.
[13] Homer, *The Iliad*, London 1998, III, 8–9.
[14] Cf. Homer, *The Iliad*, op. cit., III, 441–447.

the relationship between Achilles and Briseis who is his lawful "property."
The weak Paris abducts and enslaves Helen, becoming enslaved himself as
he is unable to disown her, even in the face of the good of the entire na-
tion being at stake, and none of the Trojans is able to stop him or at least
create some form of common opposition. In turn, Achilles, proud and
strong, a son of the gods, at the (unjust) order of Agamemnon, disowns
Briseis. The truth about the ascetic fortitude of the Greeks is expressed
even more distinctly by Zbigniew Herbert, in his poem *Why The Classics*,
succinctly describing the case of Thucydides. In book four of the *History
of the Peloponnesian War*, speaking of a failed military expedition that
resulted in exile from his home city, Thucydides mentions only that "he
had seven ships, it was winter, and he sailed quickly."[15] This self-restraint
in describing one's own sorrowful situation is a literary expression of
asceticism of the spirit, which becomes particularly clear in the context
of the importance the Greeks attached to public life. The fact that it was
the only place to experience freedom and a truly human life means that
the price paid by the succinct Thucydides was even higher than that paid
by all later exiles, "[…] whining on their knees before posterity, praising
their heroism and innocence."[16]

Remaining humbly in shadow, listening, keeping a spiritual distance,
acting freely, cooperating with others and renouncing one's self for the
common good (which, though, was not separate from the individual
good), and all in silence. These were the features that were manifested in
Greek culture in a number of ways: in Homer's description of the Achae-
an camp, in Spartan fortitude, in Plato's ideal of the state, in the solitary
nature of Greek tragedy and the cathartic nature of joint theatrical per-
formances, in discussions at the agora, and in conversations between
the friends/members of the Academic school. For the Greeks, all these
places were schools for transcending oneself; schools of public life. The
demonstration of virtues in public life show its importance to the Greeks:
the public life was deeply spiritual, much more so than religious rites

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[15] Z. Hebert, *Dlaczego klasycy*, in: Z. Hebert, *89 wierszy*, Kraków 2003, p. 48.
[16] Z. Herbert, *Why The Classics*, op. cit., p. 48.

and offerings made to vindictive gods. The Greeks, who did not know the grace of redemption that Christianity brings, had to win immortality with their own hands: by deserving it, by making themselves immortal through their words or actions, to be later described by a bard or a poet in the "kingdom without limit and the city of ashes."[17] Therefore, public life was the only place to experience freedom, to practise courage, lose one's life, transcend oneself, and earn a truly dignified, human life. In this spiritual dimension created by the Greeks, the great strength of man is manifested, the strength that is capable of creating a space for discussion and mutual service, of discovering the nature of good, and of awakening the ability to persevere and sacrifice oneself without reference to external imperatives or prohibitions. This strength comes from the depth of one's spirit: it is an expression of human freedom and heroism in its purest form.

Conclusions: Solidarity *in Virtu*

One should bear in mind the principal features of the Greek community, its most predominant tones that still resonate in the contemporary concept of solidarity. The first, fundamental feature of those ancient solidary communities was their basis in freedom and serving freedom. This feature manifested itself primarily in the very constitution of Greek friendship: it could be established only between individuals that were formally free and could make it flourish, due to their being self-sufficient. Freedom was not only a condition, but also the essence of friendship: a man would become truly free only in a relationship with another man with whom he could talk, polemicize, and transcend his individual limits in a fight for the common good. In the context of Greek civic friendship, equality was ancillary to freedom. This was especially emphasized by Aristotle in his description of friendship based on virtue as a relationship between equals, and therefore free from domination. Equal friendship, friendship in the strict sense, unlike merchant or hedonistic friendship based on an

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[17]   Z. Herbert, *Why The Classics*, op. cit., p. 48.

exchange of services or pleasures, is a friendship in which someone is literally paid back in their own coin, like for like. It is only in such friendship that freedom can be given full rein.

Secondly, the fact of Greek community's rooting in freedom was manifest in the sphere of acting. This aspect can also be found in the humanistic concepts of solidarity, such as that created by Richard Rorty,[18] the source of which is the postmodern metaphysical void. Devoid of absolute reference points, Rorty defined solidarity as a relationship of intellectual uncertainty and emotional compassion. For the postmodernist Rorty, solidarity cannot be anchored in any "grand narrative" (such as rules governing traditional communities of people sharing the same background or beliefs), but only in irreducibly individual sensitivity to another man's suffering, which creates a common "imaginary" space only when transformed into an act of helping a neighbour. This individual act of creation of a solidary community, despite age gaps and intellectual disparities, captures the same moment of heroic effort that was made by Camus' Sisyphus[19] or the many other Greek heroes, philosophers, and statesmen who, in their Promethean courage and honour, tried to tame the austere world and uncover the divine in human nature.

The second feature of solidary communities was their basis in virtue and serving virtue. A community of friends, warriors, or philosophers was focused on achieving the greater good: honour, justice, truth, and reciprocally actualized these noble values. The question of the relationship between solidarity and virtue (or generally speaking, ethical principles) is an I mportant concern in many contemporary discussions of solidarity. Greek friendship was established between noble men and grew out of mutual love for "the good," and spreading this good throughout life. Still, many communities display some form of internal loyalty, which is by no means intended to serve any form of external good (e.g. the "solidarity" of the Sicilian mafia). The question arises: what distinguishes a truly solidary community from an apparent one?

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[18] R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge 1989.
[19] A. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus, and Other Essays*, New York 1991.

Does the internal structure of a solidary community not oblige its members to display some – even diluted – form of solidarity in its relations with the outside world? Must it not remain potentially open? This, in fact, is a question about the boundaries of solidarity, a question about the relationship between its internal and external rules, the tension between the particularism of solidary communities and the universalism of brotherhood. There is no doubt that for solidarity to remain a dense relationship based on authentic trust, even if dispersed, it must guard its boundaries. On the other hand, some sort of external friendliness is necessary to keep a solidary community from turning into its own antithesis, as in the case of the French Revolution. As one of its leaders, Georges Danton, pointedly stated before being guillotined, the revolution had devoured its children like Saturn. So the ideal of Greek friendship convincingly shows that solidarity must include a "third element": the *proton philon*, the idea of truth, goodness, and beauty. Virtue would lay the fundaments for the "house of solidarity," although obviously in ancient Greece, entry to this house was strictly reserved for select social groups (men, the free, and the self-sufficient). Universalism and the requirement of friendly regulation of relationships with enemies was introduced on a large scale by Christianity.

2. The Judeo-Christian Tradition: Abundance in Privacy

"Triumph of Gentleness"

The thesis that the culture of the West was shaped drawing on two sources, Athens and Jerusalem, is an obvious one. However, Manent formulates it in a new, intriguing way, emphasising the creative tension between civic action (born in the Greek *polis*, expanded within the republican or "Roman" tradition), and the Christian Word that opens the unbridgeable chasm between actions and words in a political society.[20] It is worth investigating how both these traditions, in their creative

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[20] P. Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic*, op. cit., p. 20.

dialectics, have affected the shape of the concept of solidarity and what the *differentiae specificae* are between the Judeo-Christian and Greek cultures against this dialectic background.

The most distinctive feature of the Judeo-Christian tradition is its far-reaching criticism of public authority. Criticism of it by Greek philosophers was rational (Socrates, as befits a gadfly, bit the citizens taking a stroll at the agora; Plato, disappointed with the end of this story conceived visions of the ideal state, and Aristotle, displaying his typical reserve and common sense, introduced a classification of state systems from least to most oppressive). Criticism of public authority by the Jews was of a substantialist nature. In principle (as confirmed by a number of exceptions), the Jews despised authority and shunned it. This is most clearly exposed in the fable related by Jotham in the Book of Judges, in which the good trees refused the crown as they did not hold it in high regard, while the least noble tree – the thorn bush – accepted it.[21] So why the nonchalance? The process of iconoclasm with respect to human-made deities began in the Old Testament. God presents himself as the one who is ("I am") and the reality of this existence goes beyond the imaginary. The iconoclastic faith of the Jews – believing in one God who is beyond human imagination that at the same time enters into a covenant with men – introduces a completely new, vertical order: the order of ultimate hope. God is no longer an improved version of man due to his Olympic immortality (with the vice and weakness being equally onerous), but transcends any personal reality: "For I am God and not man."[22] This reality changes the metaphysical perspective – the covenant with God is a school of freedom, courage, and trust, as well of acting. It is a creative, independent activity *par excellence*, which also deals in creating new beginnings.

The books of the Old Testament are a confirmation of the revolutionary power of this new, vertical covenant with God: a social revolution is taking place almost everywhere. The first stage of this revolution was the breaking free of family bonds, with Abraham the first revolutionary.

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[21] Cf. Book of Judges 9:7–14.
[22] Hosea 11:9.

The father of faith was called to "[…] go from his country, his people and his father's household to the land God will show him,"[23] to which command he responded with trust and courage. This escape from family bonds is further emphasized in the binding of Isaac, which has proved so intriguing to a number of philosophers.[24] The fact that this did not actually occur seems to indicate that the God of Israel, unlike the deities of neighbouring peoples, for example Moloch, does not want children to be sacrificed to him, desiring instead radical freedom for Abraham: freedom from family bonds and, seemingly, freedom from the image of the evil, bloody God. Abraham's revolution is an individual revolution, but it produces results for his immediate environment. Soon after, a social revolution *par excellence* occurs. The Book of Exodus stands as testimony to this revolution, with its story of the Israelites being led out of slavery in Egypt, where they had suffered under the despotic rule of the pharaoh. By the power of this revolution Israel is formed as a nation, the "chosen people." The revolutionary nature of this act is suggestively illustrated by the Red Sea crossing, which is made by the Israelites while dancing, led by a woman playing a timbre (Miriam, sister of Aaron). In this way, Miriam exemplifies the deep nature of the social revolution. It was not only liberation from the despotic power of the Egyptian tyrant and, gradually, from all forms of domination of one man over another, but also a transition from slavery to internal freedom and independence, from fear to gentleness, from huddling to dancing.

The Dynamics of Inclusion and Tolerance

The social revolution witnessed in the books of the Old Testament becomes even more radical in the New Testament. Jesus, the main protagonist, would break out of the existing social order at almost every opportunity. This manifested itself in two ways: in his particular attitude to the helpless, the unprivileged, and the excluded (traitors, lepers, and

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[23] Genesis 12:1.
[24] Cf. S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, London 1986, p. 13–23.

pagans), and on the other hand, in his despising of any form of author-
ity, including religious authority (the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the
Jewish dignitaries). However, the actions and teachings of Jesus were not
intended to bring about a political revolution ("My kingdom is not of
this world,"[25] he says, disappointing his disciples), but a transformation
within the sole idea and purpose of authority. His intended paradigm
shift was most clearly expressed in the washing of the feet of the Apos-
tles during the last supper. This act, reserved for the lowest servants, is
performed by the master and the sage, the teacher of the community, the
nominal authority figure – the Messiah, as his disciples believed. This
gesture is a firm expression of the revolutionary change in understanding
authority, which from now on should become service, its vector going
not only upwards, but also downwards: the purpose of authority is not to
take, but to give, not to rule, but to serve. This direction has (or at least
should have) defined the structure of subsequent Christian communi-
ties, starting from the largest, the Catholic Church, the head of which is
referred to as the servant of the servants of God, and ending with other
minor religious orders and charities.

Breaking up not only the structures, but also the idea of authority her-
alds completely new social dynamics. Its motor is no longer the desire to
rule or be ruled (the latter, though paradoxical, exists and has been most
pointedly described by Erich Fromm,[26] and in literature by Fiodor Dos-
toyevsky[27]), but the principle of brotherhood and loving thy neighbour.
Following on from the abandonment of family structures and other social
structures by Abraham and his descendants, this brotherhood has a spe-
cial nature and cannot be understood as the sentimental *fraternité*. It is,
however, an obligation to endorse the universalism that the Greek com-
munity of friends lacked, with its exclusivity for men of a certain social
status. In contrast, this new universalism, resulting from the idea of divine
filiation, manifests itself primarily through radical openness to "others"

[25] John 18:33b–37.
[26] E. Fromm, *Escape form Freedom*, New York 1994.
[27] Cf. the legend of the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

(pagans, the non-kosher, and the non-circumcised[28]), and also through gradual transformation of existing communities: the abolition of slavery and a slow change in the social situation of women. Christian communities not only extended the circles of their internal solidarity, but also followed the rules of solidary co-existence with persons remaining outside the communities, in accordance with Jesus' call to love one's enemies. One interesting, minimalist interpretation of this demanding commandment comes from John Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration*. He perceived it to be an invitation to religious freedom based on mutual respect and the right to public worship, and an obligation of non-interference.

Paradoxically, in spite of an active attempt to love their enemies, Christians were accused of *odium humani generis* (hatred of the human race).[29] The *modi vivendi* of the first Christians were so different from those that were prevalent in the Roman Empire, gathered around the semi-divine figure of Cesar and the sanctified family hearth guarded by the Vestals, that this expression does not seem exaggerated. The rift between republican civic actions and the Christian word that opened a completely new space not subordinated to authority, as mentioned by Manent, is visible here. The first to notice this tension was St. Augustine, who crystallised it in the concept of the two cities. The bone of contention between them is the attitude to authority: the earthly city is based on the relationships of ruling, while the heavenly city is based on the relationships of serving. What is particularly valuable is that St. Augustine does not offer simplifying juxtapositions (e.g. by definitely placing the heavenly state on the Christian side), but displaying deep anthropological perceptiveness, he roots both cities in the human condition (referring, along the lines of Romulus and Remus, to the biblical characters of Cain and Abel). The human condition is, in principle, composed of good human nature and free will, which includes the

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[28]   The Acts of the Apostles document the effort required to create a world in which "[…] there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

[29]   Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 44, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D15%3Achapter%3D44 (19.01.2018).

possibility of diabolical evil (most clearly expressed in the Augustinian account of stealing pears from an orchard[30]), the main driving force behind which is the desire to rule (pride). The border between the two cities is therefore not an external wall running along political or even religious divisions, but an internal one, the *locus* of which lies in human will. Ultimately, the source of the expansion of the "earthly city" with its often inhuman rules, is not some sort of an external "system," but man himself, as such. This discovery gives birth not so much to the necessity of limiting external authority, but rather to the postulate of constant vigilance – self-limitation of all authority and continued mistrust towards its overly expansive manifestations.

The philosophy of St. Augustine well represents the ambivalence of human nature enlightened by Christianity. Christian anthropology clearly exposes man's limits. These are not only his physical finitude, but also his limited abilities: bounded rationality[31], imperfect cognition and a corrupted heart.[32] Having explored the corners of his soul, St. Augustin didn't have any illusions: Cain was able to kill Abel out of pure envy, Judas betrayed his beloved Master and Augustine himself not only occasionally stole pears from an orchard, but notoriously cheated his saintly mother, Monika. At first glance, radically sincere but corrupt Augustine might look less encouraging than the dignified figures of the ancient heroes – brave Achilles, or the rebellious, self-sacrificing Prometheus. However, these pictures do not prejudge the general nature of ancient and Christian anthropology. The efforts of the ancient heroes were hopeless (albeit captivating), as they tried to win immortality against unfavourable or even vindictive gods, relentlessly pursued by fate, so well expressed in the ancient tragedies. Achilles' freedom was a radiant but short moment of fame and glory on the battlefield, which nevertheless condemned the hero to a tragic ending. In contrast to its ancient predecessor, Christian freedom is not an illusionary moment of triumph over fate, but a gift

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[30] Cf. St. Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, New York 1960, p. 28.
[31] Cf. D. Kahmenan, *Thinking Past and Slow*, New York 2011, passim.
[32] Cf. I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge 1995, passim.

given once and for all that can be abused by the recipient but not consumed by irrevocable fate. Christian anthropology has its own concept of "gravity of evil," observed on Augustine's example and expressed in the doctrine of original sin. The contagion of human nature renders his efforts to realize higher values (including the value of solidarity) imperfect, and sometimes brutally utopian. This causes man's propensity to do evil, limits his freedom and often shrinks his horizons to the narrowly egotistic. Still, the heritage of original sin is not tragic: it does not operate as predestination, nor inevitable fate, but causes man's inclination towards evil and burdens the freedom of his will, so well expressed in Saint Paul's famous phrase, "I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do."[33] Despite this heavy load, man's sinfulness, if experienced *in humilitas*, can open him to forgiveness and amaze with the lightness of its grace.

Vita Contemplativa: "The Unbearable Lightness of Being"

"It should be mistrust" is the artistic credo of Stanisław Barańczak, an outstanding Polish poet, translator, and essayist, formulated in his collection under the significant title *Etyka i poetyka* [Ethics and Poetics].[34] Barańczak adds that "[…] this is the only thing that justifies its [poetry's] existence."[35] Barańczak's credo is paradoxical, and can be seen as the credo of postwar Polish poetry as a whole (cf. Czesław Miłosz's lyrical question "What is poetry which does not save nations or people?"[36]). On the one hand, Barańczak questions the *ratio essendi* of traditional poetry, with its admiration of the "ladies' dresses spinning around"[37] and surges of emotions,

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[33] Romans 7:19.

[34] S. Barańczak, *Etyka i poetyka*, Kraków 2009.

[35] S. Barańczak, *Parę przypuszczeń na temat poezji współczesnej*, in: S. Barańczak, *Etyka i poetyka*, op. cit., p. 497–498.

[36] Cf. Cz. Miłosz, *Dedication*, in: *The Collected Poems: 1931–1987*, New York 1988; URL=https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49458/dedication-56d22b9082a83 (19.01.2018).

[37] Probably the last Polish poem, praising women's dresses light-heartedly is *Sur le pont d'Avignon* by Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, a subsequent victim of the Warsaw Uprising, written in the midst of World War II, on his hospital bed in 1941.

while on the other hand he "coaches the voice"[38] of Settembrini[39] very highly, attributing the function of saving men and nations to him. This disbelief in the meaning of poetry is understandable when viewed in historical context: on the one hand, the word seems to have died together with God (Barańczak's concern is reminiscent of Hans Jonas' questioning of the idea of God after Auschwitz[40]). On the other hand, the word born in the new reality (communist newspeak) did not work *ad rem*, but was intended to shape, in accordance with the arbitrary assumption of a criminal ideology, a brave new world. The historical situation fully explains the need to re-justify poetry, rendering the concurrent belief in the creative, salutary power of the word even more daring. Where does this belief originate? Where does this spirit of mistrust, criticism, and defiance of authority and its means of coercion, terror, and even holocaust come from? This spirit that connects Barańczak (who declares himself in *Ethics and poetics* to be an atheist) with the Jewish princess Miriam and with St. Augustine, one of the greatest Church Fathers. Where is the source of resistance?

In another form, this question was asked by Arendt: "Where are we when we think?"[41] Poetry and philosophy are expressions of the same activity. The question of where we are while thinking is justified insofar as the experience of thinking does actually require some form of withdrawal from the world. Arendt quotes Paul Valéry: "*Tantôt je pense, tantôt je suis*" – "Sometimes I think, sometimes I am," juxtaposing "being" with "thinking." Although thinking cannot be equated with solipsism or escapism, the activity itself contains something that in a sense justifies the tendency to back away from the world. There is no doubt that thinking is a form of getting away from the evil world, a form of

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[38] Cf. S. Barańczak, *Voice Coaching*, trans. S. Barańczak and C. Cavanagh, "Metamorphoses: A Journal of Literary Translation" 7 (1999) 2, p. 112–114.

[39] In the essay *Zmieniony głos Settembriniego* [The changed voice of Settembrini], Barańczak gives poetry the role of carrying out the ethical postulates of Settembrini: the ideal figure of the 'Western man,' as Thomas Mann depicts him in *The Magic Mountain*.

[40] H. Jonas, *The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice*, "Journal of Religion" 67 (1987), p. 1–13.

[41] H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, San Diego 1981, passim.

internal emigration. What's more, for thinking to be a source of creative mistrust and defiance, it cannot be otherwise. Even escapist forms of internal life prove, indirectly, that this withdrawal carries a great, positive force that can bear fruit in the form of art, philosophy, creative activity, individual rebellion and solidary revolution. Therefore, it turns out that this "nowhere" holds a reservoir of creative power and the power to act, and that "nonexistence" is an infinite source of existence. The activity of thinking is more than just a withdrawal, as withdrawal is linked with another type of movement: entering. Over the ages, this movement has progressed along different paths, leading Socrates to his own conscience and teaching him to stay in dialogue with himself ("The Soul selects her own society, Then shuts the door"[42]). It led Plato to examine eternal ideas and to contemplate the logic of the universe and discover its rules. It also led the Jewish philosopher and Carmelite nun Edith Stein to enter into conversation with the God-Logos. In each case, this conversation is accompanied by a powerful positive experience, an experience of internal freedom and creative *élan*. An important element of this experience is the fact of it being given for free, as expressed in the Christian (especially Protestant) tradition through the doctrine of grace, and in philosophical tradition, through consolation offered by philosophy. The abundance of a life experienced in privacy has one more seminal consequence: one does not need to fight for power over one's mortality. Ancient heroes had to win immortality with their own hands through courage or talent, overcoming internal and external obstacles and risking their life, while for philosophers, poets, and monks, it was enough to peacefully talk to the Logos and contemplate the eternal ideas in a cave. This approach, which shifts the emphasis from deserving to receiving and which hails humility and not greatness as the primary virtue, is also a certain type of a scandal of the mind. To an external observer, this scandal may be unbearable, but for an engaged participant it is the source of internal freedom and a joyful lightness of being.

[42]   E. Dickinson, *303*, in: E. Dickinson, *The Complete Poems*, Faber& Faber 2016, URL= https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/soul-selects-her-own-society-303 (22.01.2018).

3. Conclusions: Solidarity as a Freedom-Enhancer

The experience of metaphysical lightness is fraught with consequences in the socio-political area. It redirects the chosen people from the metaphysical battlefield to the social one: a revolution the purpose of which is not to obtain power over oneself and one's mortality, but to leave the "house of slavery." Crossing the Red Sea, the formation of a people without a land, is a new type of revolution and harbinger of a new sphere: the social sphere. The birth of this sphere is ultimately confirmed by the Christian principle of brotherhood, establishing new types of interpersonal relations not rooted in the striving for political power. Thus, room is created for a new type of liberty: "liberty of the Moderns." This type of liberty has two aspects, internal and external. The internal draws on the movement to the inside, which allows for creation *ex nihilo*, i.e. creation of new things and new beginnings. As such, it necessarily offers space for idiosyncrasy, a place for radical individualism. On the other hand, the experience of such unbearably light, gratuitous freedom is not locked in an internal fortress, but naturally expands beyond its boundaries, "infects," and usually expresses itself in the external dimension of *vita activa* and spontaneous formation of solidary communities.

Examples of such solidary communities don't only include charities of a more or less religious provenance, acting for "social justice" or equality. Freedom is a way for goodness to exist,[43] and the first distinctive feature of such solidary communities is the freedom and spontaneity of their formation. Other examples include medieval guilds, associations of artists and scientists (starting with universities with their *artes liberales*), as well as all kinds of societies and clubs, such as those described by Robert Putnam: American bowling clubs and Italian football clubs[44] that determined the vitality of American and Italian societies, as well as business communities and joint ventures that, in spite of acting for profit, go far

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[43] As observed by philosopher, Józef Tischner, commenting on the Solidarity movement.

[44] Cf. R. D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton 1993, passim and *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York 2000, passim.

beyond the business model typical of the *homo oeconomicus* (operating instead operating like those Three Musketeers: "All for one and one for all," etc). Such communities, even though they determine the shape of democracy and make it work, are not focused on obtaining political power. They are intended for other purposes: sports, science, art, business – purposes Immanuel Kant would define as *per se*. As such, they are the germs of a different kind of politics (*poli-ethics* as Hannah Arendt might put it), which instead of striving for power, constitutes free cooperation. In this sense, Alexis de Tocqueville's famous claim that the passion for democracy and the yearning for freedom are not the same, is justified.

Solidarity is a revolutionary concept. Regardless of the place and time, it points in one direction: out of the house of slavery. As Adam Zagajewski was right to observe, one can leave the house of slavery in two ways: by holding a banner and singing revolutionary songs, or by leaving the French way, with a tome of poetry in hand.[45] Solidarity is necessary to make each of these revolutionary gestures. In the first case, this would be solidarity in the most literal sense, the same one that signed itself in red letters on the revolutionary banners in Poland. In the latter, it would be metaphorical solidarity, with "[…] the company of your ancestors: Gilgamesh Hector Roland the defenders of the kingdom without limit and the city of ashes," starting from another place (cf. "Where am I when I am thinking?") and leading to another place (*meta forum*): "Go where those others went to the dark boundary."[46] The revolutionary nature of solidarity proves that it is a liberal concept. Sources of common brotherhood should not be looked for in the utopian equality of all men, nor do they spring from individual compassion or compassion generalized as an abstract love of humankind, but from the yearning for freedom that every human knows, from dignity one unexpectedly finds in themselves, and from getting out of oppressive situations. The pictures of the revolutions – Jews crossing the Red Sea, ancient Greek heroes valuing

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[45] Cf. A. Zagajewski, *The Little Larousse*, in: A. Zagajewski, *Solidarity, Solitude: Essays*, Michigan 1990, p. 101.

[46] Z. Herbert, *Why The Classics*, op. cit., p. 48.

honour over life, Polish workers transforming the iron and dull scenery of the Gdańsk Shipyard into a living stage of a performative word and laboratory of new social ideas – expressively reveal the intimate weave of freedom and solidarity. Revolution is, however, only a symbol, an external manifestation of the liberal nature of solidarity, and the depth of the freedom-solidarity entanglement is not exhausted by the history of metaphysical, social or political fight. Ancient Academics, inspired by Plato's Diotyma, breeding in each other beauty, the Order of Hospitallers setting up a new clinic or a group of contemporary astrophysicists looking passionately for a new star, are all alternative, equally legitimate examples of solidarity. They are not necessarily triggering any revolutions in a political or social sense, but bring radical novelty in the form of artistic innovation, moral audacity or "Copernican revolution" in science. They share the same pursuit for freedom and breed the same miracle of widening the spectrum of human knowledge, and do so by the same freedom-releasing modus operandi, which will be described below.

The first distinctive freedom-enhancing feature of these associations is the fact that they act in higher aims, whether revolutionary, artistic, moral or scientific. Solidary associations are not set up for profit, and that in itself, in the contemporary prevalent market culture, is liberating. Even if at its etymological and historical beginnings solidarity was a joint venture, which was the ancient form of business cooperation, the term solidarity described not the business relation itself, but the special, "solid" kind of responsibility, adopted in this enterprise, which placed on each debtor the responsibility for the whole debt ("one for all, all for one"). This radical responsibility distinguished solidarity cooperation from ordinary cooperation based on interest. It clearly indicates that such cooperation is guided by a different kind of logic than the narrow, contemporarily prevalent, calculative rationality of *homo oeconomicus*. The rationality behind it is Max Weber's axiological understanding: values here not only set general goals and instruct singular actions, but also operate as a currency between actors in a solidary venture, enabling them to communicate and trust each other deeply enough to take up radical *obligatio in solidum* for one another's debt. Axiological rationality gives solidarity its liberal character – it introduces gift relationships, unfolds

horizons wider than narrow self-interest, and opens up the possibility of altruism.[47] In the course of non-instrumental, axiological action, one can recognize and experience the dynamics of personal freedom – and this is not only because of the pathos of this action, the novelty and revolutionary character of its outcomes, but also, paradoxically, because of the *onus* of radical responsibility, which, in Kantian terms, proves by the appeal of "ought" that this moral obligation also "can" be fulfilled – that is, that a man is free. This movement in the spirit radical opens a transcendental dimension in humans, inviting them not only to beat their own egoism, but also to rise above the existing form of the world. As such, it opens a perspective of radical novelty and miracles.

The second argument for the liberal nature of solidarity references this transcendental movement in sprit. On the social level, it appears in the form of common actions undertaken with a higher aim. Solidarity as a form of non-instrumental cooperation is the best example of "common action" in the Arendtian sense.[48] To understand, the transcendental nature of common action. Hannah Arendt distinguishes action from other activities, such as work and production. The latter can be undertaken by humans, but they do not develop proper human potential – the working person is only an *animal laborans*, the producing one – a *homo faber*. Common action, which can be regarded as a synonym of solidarity, is, as Arendt writes, the only "miracle-making" human activity, a way for freedom to come into existence. Firstly, because contrary to work and production, it does not deal with money or materials, but in both of its versions – praxis and lexis – with other people. Secondly, and most importantly, because it is not aimed at maintenance of one's biological life (this is another dimension of non-instrumentality), but at making the world better and more human. This process of humanizing the world even more visibly than in the agora (for Arendt, this was a prototype for common action), was demonstrated during the Polish Solidarity carnival, which tangibly turned rusting factories from places of monotonous production

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[47] Cf. T. Nagel, *Possibility of Altrusim*, Princeton 1969, passim.
[48] Cf. H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago 1958, passim.

and personal humiliation (aimed at reduction of humans to *homo faber*, in line with communist ideology), into arenas bursting with political debate and artistic creation. Undeniably, a highly inspiring role in triggering this miracle was played by John Paul II and his teachings, especially his book *Osoba i czyn*,[49] which is a tribute to human action. Wojtyła distinguished the *actus hominis* – a process or event taking place in humans or that can happen to them – from the *actus humanus*, which he understood as the highest expression of human personality and activation of the dynamics of human freedom. In this book he restored a proper sense of the world, against communist "newspeak," and a deep sense of action (and common action) against the communist cult of work and production.

The picture of solidarity that emerges from these analyses presents it as a freedom-releasing and freedom-enhancing power. The reasons for this are, firstly, metaphysical and grandiose: solidarity from its very beginnings has been a playground for metaphysical heroism and a way to prove that there are some goods, such as the virtue of honour, or the value of friendship for Greeks and the love of God for Christians which were worth the radical commitment and consecration of one's life. Such a commitment and consecration allowed one to transcend one's own biological condition and create a higher, human order. Ethics of commitment translated on a on a social and pragmatic level, created a safe ground for individuality to flourish. This was evident during the Solidarity movement, where the existence of a fraternal group allowed individuals to take the initiative and speak their mind, knowing that there would be someone ready to pay their debt in case of persecution. This interdependency can be translated to wider social relations, showing that the culture of liberty needs the culture of responsibility and assistance to succeed. Some amount of voluntary and non-instrumental solidarity is necessary for all individual rights and freedoms to prosper. Without social solidarity, individual rights become intrusive and freedoms negative and isolating, which in the longer perspective leads to a market version of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Thusly conceived solidarity is far from an oppressive culture of collectivity, but nourishes

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[49] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, Kraków 1969.

a culture of relational individuality instead. It works as a social guarantee for all the most exquisite individual values and all the creative potential it brings. Such a close relationship between solidarity and freedom puts the idea of solidarity that is prevalent today in the right perspective. Solidarity, as a freedom-enhancing power, invites another model of relations, and another policy other than the welfare-based obligation to help the most "needy," via progressive taxation: a policy based on dialogue, negotiation, and dispute, rather than violence or any different kind of domination (such as of the welfare-based Leviathan, trading freedom for safety and social security). It promotes human growth and flourishing, enhances the spirit of innovativeness and cooperation and strives to create as many free agorae as possible, thus enabling the "miracle" of bottom-up solidarity.

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Abstract

Solidarity in the Classical Tradition[50]

Solidarity is a "miracle," and not only because of the relative rarity of spontaneous, trusting, non-instrumental cooperation in todays' atomized societies, but also because of its inexplicable, invariably striking fundament – human freedom. This essay investigates the nature of "miracles," drawing on two giant traditions – the ancient, Judaeo--Christian. The image of solidarity that emerges from this analysis proves that solidarity is originally and irreducibly a freedom-enhancing concept.

Keywords

solidarity, civic friendship, freedom, common action, Hannah Arendt, Aristotle

Abstrakt

Solidarność w tradycji klasycznej

Solidarność jest „cudem". Zasługuje ona na takie miano nie tylko ze względu na relatywną rzadkość nieinstrumentalnej, spontanicznej i pełnej ufności współpracy we

współczesnych zatomizowanych społeczeństwach, lecz także ze względu na swój niewytłumaczalny i niezmiennie fascynujący fundament: ludzką wolność. Artykuł opisuje naturę „cudów" na przykładzie dwóch klasycznych tradycji myśli europejskiej: antycznej i judeochrześcijańskiej. Obraz solidarności wyłaniający się z tej analizy dowodzi, że solidarność jest źródłowo i nieredukowalnie fenomenem liberalnym, a więc ufundowanym na wolności i pomnażającym wolność.

Słowa kluczowe

solidarność, przyjaźń obywatelska, wspólne działanie, Hanna Arendt, Arystoteles