

SOLIDARITY

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SOLIDARITY

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Foreword

Solidarity as a phenomenon lies like an erratic block in the midst of the moral landscape of our Modern Age. It is familiar in an everyday sense, and yet it has remained a foreign body; its dimensions and weight cannot be overlooked, and yet it is bulky. Until now, the geologists familiar with this landscape – Modern Age moral philosophers – have taken it for granted, have circumnavigated it: in any case, they have been incapable of moving it.

This has not prevented a ready and frequent use of the term solidarity in everyday politics. Its popularity has maybe even increased as a result of its unexplained theoretical status: the more unclear its prerequisites and implications are, the more freely it is seemingly employed. This has enabled appealing to solidarity – as well as complaining about its disappearance – to become a ritual linguistic sport, in which hardly anybody would choose to be offside.

In the Autumn of 1994, this theoretically and politically unsatisfactory situation was motivation enough for a group of scientists from diverse disciplines – including philosophy, sociology, history, law, psychology and biology – to meet and discuss the concept of solidarity, its history and its significance. The conference was brought to life and prepared by Kurt Bayertz (Münster), Nicholas Capaldi (Tulsa) and H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. (Houston); it was financed and organized by the *Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung* (ZiF) at the University of Bielefeld.

The course of this discussion, which was as intense as it was instructive, sometimes controversial and always fruitful, was the ultimate motivation for planning this book. Besides the manuscripts prepared for the Bielefeld conference, it also includes a series of additional manuscripts which pick up on the discussion and take it further.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank, firstly, Nicholas Capaldi and H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. for their commitment in planning, preparing and executing the conference. Working with them was not only extremely helpful and promotive for our common project, but also a personal pleasure. Secondly, I would like to thank the ZiF directors for providing both finances and content for our conference, as well as the ZiF employees for their professional and friendly organization. Without the hospitality extended to us in Bielefeld, the conference would have been neither as pleasant nor as productive, which in turn would ultimately have affected the outcome of this book. The scientific preparation and post-assessment of the conference was additionally supported

by *International Studies in Philosophy and Medicine, Inc.*, which I would also like to thank at this point. And last but not least, a very warm thank you goes to Ulrike Arndt for her editorial assistance with the manuscripts in this book, a task which was often far from easy.

KURT BAYERTZ