

A New Idea of Europe: The Liberal Internationalism of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (1919-1925)

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Abstract

The paper argues that there is a new form of liberal internationalism developing in France in the years after the First World War. This new liberalism, whilst emphasising economic prosperity, introduces international solidarity as a key concept. It insisted on international interdependence being a result of a division of labour amongst national societies. The article then goes to the new liberal idea of European unity, made up of two distinct dimensions: an economic-sociological and a normative dimension, which were, in turn, the foundations for the project of functionalist institutionalisation on a European level. It finally presents the stance France should hold according to the “new liberal internationalists” in the key problems of foreign policy, especially the problems of financial and economic reparations.

Keywords: *History of Economic Thought through 1925; Intergovernmental Relations; Federalism; International Linkages to Development; Role of International Organizations*

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1. Introduction

“In France, there is a much stronger current of liberalism and of liberal ideas than one often believes.” One of the great intellectuals in France's Third Republic (1870-1940), the literary critic Albert Thibaudet, offered this thesis in his celebrated essay on *The Political Ideas of France* in 1932 (Thibaudet 1932: 51). For the past several years, his viewpoint has been challenged in a series of brilliant studies by the historian Pierre Rosanvallon. For Rosanvallon, “something very profound, in any case structurally determinant, in French democracy's political culture is constituted by its ‘illiberalism of principle.’” This illiberalism, he indicates, is responsible for “the aspiration to unity resting in France on a conflation of pluralism with division” (Rosanvallon 1993: 382-383).¹ A short article is not the place for expressing a position in the ongoing debate on “the French exception”: a highly complex and stimulating debate, especially for Germans familiar with the Sonderweg thesis. Nevertheless, in the following pages I hope to contribute modestly to one dimension of the debate, involving the question of the strength or weakness – political but also strictly intellectual - of the liberal tradition in France: We can in fact observe in France the emergence of a new concept of international relations in the years surrounding World War I – particular its aftermath. In this regard, I will speak of a new internationalism as one element (certainly not the least important) in a manifestly revitalised “new liberalism”.²

2. New Liberalism and Pluralism

Contemporary liberal internationalism can thus be linked to this history – which of course is not exclusively British or American. The ideas of David Mitrany or Walter Lippmann, for instance, could be juxtaposed with those of a series of now forgotten Frenchmen, some of whom will be discussed below, and it is already quite clear that there was an intellectual exchange across the Channel.—as well as across the ocean and, indeed the Rhine.³ There is a need for much more research on this topic; the first aim of my paper will simply be to rectify a remarkable silence in international relations and in the history of ideas in general. It is the case that, moving from an international conceptual field too often ignored by students of political ideas, one needs to also reconsider the innovative force of French liberalism itself. To be sure, the concepts discussed below are in formation and are hence far from constituting a full-fledged theory. But the fact that, as I propose in this article, it is possible to analyse the *Nouvelle Revue Française* – beacon of France's cultural life — as an innovative voice in this rather political field, demonstrates one thing in particular: in France as much as Britain and America, the nascent political science of international relations imported both ideas and their authors from the essay and from journalism.⁴ All these authors were struggling to delineate the challenges posed by fundamental changes within society, and indeed between different national societies. The changes, which often had made obvious or been accelerated by the First World War, were being addressed within the recently established discipline of sociology,

¹ I would like to thank for their comments on the ideas expressed in this paper the participants of a Berlin round table organized in 1998 by Luisa Passerini and Hartmut Kaelble as well as those of the international conference on Jacques Rivière held in 1997 at the German Historical Institute in Paris. A first draft has been published in French as a shorter version in the confidential *Bulletin of the Société des Amis de Jacques Rivière et d'Alain-Fournier-Paris*, 24(1998), S.50-61. Thanks also to Joel Golb for his lucid remarks and for his translation.

² I am here following the historical usage of the term “New Liberalism” in distinction to the original English political or mercantilist liberalism. On British “New Liberalism” see. esp. Freedman, Michael (1978) and idem (1986). On the transfer to France before 1914, see Logue, William (1983).

³ On the British side see Long, David (1995), (1996) and (1998); on Walter Lippmann see Syed Anwar H. (1963) and Riccio, Barry D. (1994).

⁴ On this phenomenon in England and America, see Rosamond, Ben (2000), p.25.

but also within the “realist” current of legal theory, the “non-conformist” current of economics, and the pragmatist current of philosophy.

Indeed, the new liberal thinking of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (the *NRF* as it was usually called) responded to prevailing social, economic, and political circumstances, as well as to a broader social-scientific context. In 1927, Albert Thibaudet used a term that – although developed in a still hesitant and sometimes markedly ambivalent manner – referred to an already pervasive concept. This had become the case through transfer from its original philosophical context to that of other disciplines such as theology and politics: something observed by the essayist Georges Guy-Grand in 1916 and by Harold Laski in Britain around the same time. “Whoever says liberalism says *pluralism*,” confirms Thibaudet, revealing the direction being taken by the French liberal vanguard: “Political liberalism is a consciousness of a pluralism within the state, a consciousness of a number of irreducible groupings that the ordinary liberal will tolerate in good faith, but whose plurality and coexistence will be seen by the refined and integral liberal as a good to be maintained” (Thibaudet 1927: 526). Thibaudet here refers to groupings *within* the state. But it does not seem exaggerated to say that French liberalism's pluralist evolution proceeds with special speed *beyond* the state, i.e. within the realm of international relations, continuing to represent the most charged political realm in Europe after the war.

Here again, what is at stake for the “new liberals” is freshly articulating what they conceive of as plurality, on the one hand, unity, on the other, the plurality of nations and the unity constituted by Europe. And here again, a central consideration is coexistence – meaning, of course peace – itself a good to be retained after four years of war. In fact, the first avatars of this new French internationalism emerged in the decade before 1914. But it is clear that the “Great War” marked a caesura in thinking about international relations. It is the realm in which, following the peace treaty of 1919, the “new liberals” particularly insist on changes to traditional approaches. They see these changes as resulting from both the plunge into war, understood as a political event, and social as well as economic changes often only revealed by such an event. In other words, these are changes due to the modernisation of national societies and the relations between them, brought to awareness by the war and its impact. In this manner, we find the “new liberals” speaking of the arrival of a “new era” in relations between the European nations. It thus seems that the starting point for their thinking is a specific diagnosis of modernity in international relations.

I will thus initially address this underlying theory of the interdependence of modern national societies, before considering in a second section, the elements of the new idea of Europe I see as accompanying the theory. Finally, the idea serves as a kind of leitmotif for the “new liberal” foreign policy reflected in the political articles of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* authors. We might perhaps even speak of a “new diplomacy” being pursued by this review in the cultural domain that was truly its own. A third, concluding section will focus on this domain, here as earlier drawing on the writings of four intellectuals who regularly contributed to the *NRF* during the years of Jacques Rivière's direction (1919-1925): Rivière himself, along with Albert Thibaudet, Jean Schlumberger, and Alfred Fabre-Luce.

3. Idealist or Pragmatist? The French Theory of Interdependence

In 1920, the *NRF* devotes a note to an author often considered the great ancestor of the liberal theory of international relations, the British New Liberal Norman Angell.⁵ Curious, insufficient attention has been paid to the fact that for 14 years until 1913, Angell lived in Paris. It is thus more than likely it was here that he became aware of the basic ideas of three French authors – Emile Durkheim, Léon Bourgeois, and Léon Duguit – without whom Angell's mag-

⁵ On Norman Angell see Miller, John D.B. (1986).

num opus of 1910, *The Great Illusion*, would perhaps not have been what it is. Solidarism is, in fact, not a doctrine limited to considerations of national society. In his famous thesis of 1893, Durkheim had already marginally noted that the progress of labor-division, characterising modern societies, transforms to an equal degree the international structures in which they are embedded. One first observes a differentiation, a specialisation, of national societies that nonetheless is simultaneously compensated for by a second movement: that of their integration by means of an organic solidarity. National societies are themselves composed of a plurality of actors-individuals behaving on an intersocial level, as Léon Duguit stresses, thus here finally decomposing the notion of state “sovereignty.” The structural plurality of such societies gives birth to effectively new forms of solidarity henceforth assuring a cohesion of the ensemble. In fact, modern societies and their individuals, ever-more specialised in their functions, are by the same token ever-less suited for self sufficiency. They depend on the good functioning of increasingly intensifying mutual exchange (Durkheim 1893: esp. p. 311).⁶ A colleague of Durkheim in Bordeaux, head of the then so called “realist juridical school” in France, Léon Duguit, had taken up this thesis of the emerging discipline of sociology. Duguit would himself take up – but again only in outline-form – the theme of international relations, integrating it into his great critique of “this absorbing and persistent notion of sovereignty” (Duguit 1927: para. 17&67, and idem 1922, pp. 102-126, cit. *ibid.*, p. 107).⁷ But for Duguit's ideas to have real influence on approaches to international relations, a popularisation of solidarism by the politician Léon Bourgeois was needed, this followed, after the World War, by their direct assimilation into international law by a generation of young jurists – in particular, Georges Scelle and Nicolas Politis.⁸ It is important to note that in its gestational period between the turn of the century and the Great War, solidarist thinking could lose – although it certainly did not always do so – the organicist and constraining qualities manifest in Léon Duguit's writing. (Duguit himself ended up correcting his sociological realism with a new idealist content.)⁹ We find the salient thesis of solidarism – of a dialectic between differentiation and integration – in both Angell's work of 1910 and the *NRF* authors after 1919. Modernity in international relations is defined, in their eyes, by the development of a functional solidarity between national societies and their individuals: a basically materialist solidarity nonetheless complemented with a contractual solidarity presupposing the will of the various groupings.

This thesis of interdependence has important corollaries. It by no means amounts to the classical free-trade postulate (itself rejected by Durkheim). According to this postulate, specialisation accompanied by unhampered commerce increases economic return, increased prosperity constituting both an individual and general interest. Now it is certainly the case that – as we will see – economic prosperity is an essential goal of the French “new liberals”, who could sometimes lean toward a materialist interpretation of life rendering economic criteria the key criteria. But they augment such strict economic utilitarianism with another important dimension: solidarism. Jacques Rivière expresses as much in 1922, reflecting on the reason for “not only individuals, but, even today, nations” being able to lay claim “in the first place to solidarity, as their most indispensable nourishment.” There are certainly, he asserts, “physical reasons” since different nations confirm a mutual solidarity that is “already real, already unbreakable ... within the economic order.” But there are also “moral reasons ... because they need them to protect themselves against a return to war.” In essence, Rivière is here arguing,

⁶ On the proper interpretation of Durkheim and the political implications of his doctrine – a longstanding and ongoing controversy, see inter alia Müller, Hans-Peter (1983), and Cladis, Mark S. (1992).

⁷ On this aspect of Duguit's doctrine, see Reglade, Marc (1930) and Politis, Nicolas (1932).

⁸ Cf. Bourgeois, Léon (1902); for international aspects: id (1914). Of Georges Scelle's work see esp. (1923) and, later, (1932); on Georges Scelle, see Segal, S. (1935) and Leonetti, Antoine-Jean (1992). Of Nicolas Politis' work, see inter alia (1927) as well as the article cited above.

⁹ On Léon Duguit and the controversy over his work, see inter alia Pisier, Evelyne (1972) and Grimm, Dieter (1973). There is a renewed interest in Duguit, reflected in Didry, Claude (1990); Jones, H. Stuart (1993); Laborde, Cécile (1996) and Schaegis, Chrystelle (1998). On the greater liberalism of one branch of evolving solidarism, see Güllich, Christian (1989).

in identical terms to those of Durkheimian sociology (“solidarity,” “moral”) – that what is at stake is assuring the integration of the larger group, already solidary *de facto* on the economic level, through a deepening of the inter-social moral order present among its different elements. For this purpose, it was necessary to proceed along the lines of Léon Duguit, who was not convinced that Durkheim's organic solidarity sufficed for integrating an inwardly differentiated ensemble. There was, in addition, a need for an awareness of those *de facto* forms of solidarity uniting members of different national societies – this serving as the eventual foundation of intersocial norms, or, in the end, juridical rules.

Now according to the *NRF* authors, the recent war is what had elevated the *de facto* interdependence diagnosed by a few enlightened spirits before 1914 into general consciousness: “As paradoxical as such an affirmation might seem,” writes Jacques Rivière, “the war created a sense of solidarity among all the peoples of the world” (Rivière 1922a: 187). For the war tore apart a tissue of economic and financial relations, now requiring replacement through an unheard-of effort within each of the two alliances. On the one hand, this process illuminated the positive conditions for prosperity in the modern period more clearly than before. On the other hand, it intensified a consciousness of the new fragility of each national society, and even each individual, from now on dependent on the continuity of the ensemble and its well-oiled functioning: modern, industrial civilisation proved highly vulnerable. It seems to me that Paul Valéry expresses a sense of precisely this vulnerability in his famous phrase *les civilisations mortelles*, contained in a letter he wrote to the British journal *The Athenaeum*, its translated version being published by the *NRF* in the issue of 1919 (Valéry 1919: 322-323). This is the context for a highly programmatic article in the *NRF* by Alfred Fabre-Luce – the most overtly political article that Rivière would ever publish: Little by little, Fabre-Luce observes, “the nations had to discover ... this 'great illusion' referred to by N. Angell,” viz they had to discover that in the industrial age, war and invasion would no longer pay. “To announce that war will return means announcing, whatever its outcome, the loss of our civilisation” (Fabre-Luce 1924a: 561).

From now on, opposition to war will thus be motivated by idealism – in any event not first and foremost, as we shall see – but by a pragmatism characterising the “new liberalism” in its totality. In Jean Schlumberger's words: “not only by fatigue, but by the obscure sentiment that war is about to reach a degree of perfection beyond which there will no longer be any defeated parties, and perhaps no longer any victors, but simply scorched earth” (Schlumberger 1923: 479). At heart, this pragmatism postulates the existence of two great “general interests” that nations would share, steering them toward the “inextricable intertwining” cited by Jacques Rivière in his talk in Zurich in 1922 (Rivière 1922a: 152) : an interest in achieving greater prosperity, necessitating maximum exploitation of the civilisation's potential for labour-division; and an interest in adequately compensating for the vulnerability, the risk of explosion – continuously generated by the same civilisation. Without a doubt, what distinguishes the “new liberalism” on an economic level is a pragmatism defining maximal material efficiency as its primary goal.

4. The new concept of Europe: economical fact and collective consciousness

In insisting with Durkheim on division of labour as a generating phenomenon of modernity, the French theory of international interdependence implies a revalorisation of the economic sphere. This fresh assessment characterises the new liberal thought in its entirety. Hence Alfred Fabre-Luce's radical critique of any doctrine boasting of having “established an absolute primacy of politics over economics, which one would see exiled to the inferior order of materialism” (Fabre-Luce 1924a: 544). To the contrary, the theorists of interdependence intend to take account of these conditions – these new “realities”; and in actuality, what amounts to

their conceptual master key, the idea of Europe, reflects the particular importance they grant material factors. It is worth noting that in the brief consideration in his thesis of the international aspects of labour division, Durkheim himself stressed that the latter “has only truly been produced in Europe, and in our time” (Durkheim 1893: 311).

We thus find this fundamental process of social change not only defining modernity in international relations, but also the contours of a space: one in which an international division of labour can emerge that at the same time creates *de facto* solidarity of a material nature. This thesis of the formation of a unity of civilisation beyond nations becomes a commonplace among the “new liberals” after the war's end: “No European state can persist in living alone. Interdependence is a fact,” is Jean Schlumberger's strong vitalist formulation in 1923 (Schlumberger 1923: 476). But crucially, the new liberal idea of Europe is not exhausted by this economic definition: On the condition of considerably deepening the international division of labour, thus creating a new surplus of wealth that can then be redistributed, a more prosperous Europe had to also be more socially just – and more powerful. It is henceforth “impossible,” writes Alfred Fabre-Luce in 1924, to conceive of France's grandeur and prosperity together with European disunion (Fabre-Luce 1924d: 617 and id. 1924 a: 545).

Thus set on a prosperous course, sharing a desire to improve their standard of living, Europeans would finally be led to also share a concern with peace, and to formulate a new definition of their security. “In past centuries, a people's anarchy could serve as a guarantee” of security, explains Jacques Rivière. “That was an age in which each was economically self-sufficient. At present, it can only serve as a source of general ruin, of paralysis for the other nations” (Rivière 1923b: 231). Hence the Europeans would support the stability of this unity created by civilisation beyond their national societies: a creative yet fragile unity, in which they would recognise the conditions guaranteeing their material well being. Until now purely pragmatist, the new liberal idea of Europe is enriched at this point with a normative content. In two regards, Europe as a “unity” or “entity” is a continuous creation. It is so first of all through dependence on an awareness ideally held by all Europeans of the intrinsic vulnerability of the system responsible for the prosperity. And this means, of course, of modern capitalism having largely passed beyond a narrow national framework. This awareness of interdependence is also something like an awareness of the consequences of the international division of labour.

The endurance of European unity depends in the second place on maintaining the basic condition for an international division of labour – one both allowing it to get started and to be pushed forward. According to solidarist sociology, this condition is the existence of a collective consciousness among the Europeans. Durkheim had already postulated that an “economic or other function cannot be shared between two [national] societies unless they in some regards share a common life, consequently being part of the same society.” Hence the cohesion of the European ensemble presupposes a certain dose of similarity or identity concerning norms, feelings, or habits. Such identity would, as Durkheim put it, “mechanically” tie the individual to the wider unity – and the sociologist from Bordeaux even uses the notion of “comprehensive patriotism” to define it (Durkheim 1893: 311).

“The rapprochement of nations,” explains Fabre-Luce in the *NRF* of August 1924, “can only be profound and durable if they gain awareness of an international spiritual patrimony” (Fabre-Luce 1924c: 217-218). Still, after 1919, Durkheim's argument loses its obligatory character for the “new liberals”. This is because what they see as defining the European “patrimony” is a set of individualist and liberal values at the base of a common civilisation. For Paul Valéry, what unites Europe is the intellectual complexity of the Europeans: “the active avidity, the ardent and disinterested curiosity, a happy mix of imagination and logical rigour, a certain non-pessimistic skepticism, a non-resigned mysticism” (Valéry 1919: 323). And for his part, Albert Thibaudet observes that what constitutes the unity of the Europeans is precisely – and not paradoxically – their active acceptance of the plurality of Europe, a locus

where “every doubt ... is provisional – as is every dogmatism,” a locus of “truths in movement” (Thibaudet 1923: 423).” Hence in the middle of the 1920s, the French “new liberals” arrange a map of Europe where neither Bolshevik Russia nor Fascist Italy have a place. In the last part of my discussion, I will try to briefly show that such a notion of Europe constitutes the guiding idea of the “new diplomacy” of liberal internationalism being called for by the *NRF* authors between 1919 and 1925.¹⁰

5. The Diplomacy of Interdependence

I have pointed to the key importance of labor-division for all aspects of the theory of interdependence. It is thus scarcely surprising that following the Great War, the chief preoccupation of the “new liberals” involves restarting the generative dialectic process of transnational solidarity. From their perspective, as the economic policies steered within each of the alliances have made clear, the return to prosperity is no longer possible through faith in the forces of classical liberalism. Rather, it needs to be actively catalyzed through political means. This is the sense in which we should understand Rivière's statement “the innovative effort awaiting the world today is an antiliberal effort.” (Rivière 1922a: 152). Two possible paths have thus opened. As Rivière indicates, politics might create the conditions for private economic interests to reconstitute “Europe by detail, each people looking for the most convenient economic ties with its neighbour. ... Little by little, as a result of separate agreements concluded according to the needs of simple individuals, the general network existing before the war would form again; Europe would regain its unified existence, it would revive” (Rivière 1922b: 190).

Beyond this political starting point of free trade, there is the alternative of direct political intervention, actively creating the international economic solidarity that, once solidly established, could be injected into a liberal economy. “The nations are demanding the organisation of solidarity, above all, on their behalf,” is how Rivière articulates the idea in his Zurich talk. “They are demanding that another solidarity – more scientific, better guaranteed and even, if necessary, codified – be substituted for what was constructed empirically, and according to circumstances alone, before 1914: the war showed them its terrible fragility” (Rivière 1922a: 151). There can be no doubt that the new liberal internationalism offers here a critique of absolute national sovereignty: “We must not cultivate illusions, nor for example think of an exclusion of the danger of war as corresponding with a true autonomy of nations – with the capacity of each nation to consider itself as individual” (Rivière 1922a: 152). It is necessary to envisage such a revised politics, Rivière continues, since the “compatibility” and “economic convergence of nations”, can “only be acquired at the price of a serious abatement of the rights which they habitually consider their natural prerogative, and the condition for their individuality”. This new politics would offer the surest footing for economic solidarity and common prosperity, “the conditions sine qua non of peace” (Rivière 1922a: 153). All the new liberals are, in fact, very keenly aware of the problem of power in international relations, and – more precisely – of the fact that the weakness of Germany in 1919 is, in Schlumberger's words, “simply artificial,” “since it does not respond to the proportions of populations and industrial resources.” Hence the momentary strength of France, consecrated by the Treaty of Versailles, urgently needs to be used in a very precise manner: this power must “protect the birth of an order in which it will be dispensable” (Schlumberger 1923: 477).

Now the possibility of demanding German reparations accorded the Allies stamps the scene of post-Great War Europe with a formidable instrument of direct economic intervention. It is far from an accident that in May 1920, Jacques Rivière cannot “resist the temptation” to publish a chapter from John Maynard Keynes' *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, appearing in Great Britain at the end of 1919: a book that Rivière then published in its entirety,

¹⁰ For the notion of a “new diplomacy” see e.g. Schlumberger 1923 : 472.

and that was considered a true scandal by most French readers. (The translator was a very young “new liberal” from the wartime generation, Paul Franck.) Brilliantly formulating the liberal English critique of the Treaty of Versailles, the book offers a ferocious condemnation of what, according to Keynes, was “the true and clear goal of French policies [at Versailles]: to diminish the population and weaken Germany's economic system” (Direct English translation of Keynes 1920: 642). Keynes thus points to the direct opposite of a politics of European interdependence. To be sure, there could be no question here of denying the French right to collect reparations from Germany. But, Schlumberger wryly indicates, an awareness was necessary that “a treaty presuming a Germany flourishing enough to pay and constricted enough not to be able to abscond involves an intimate illogic incapable of being reduced” (Schlumberger 1923: 474).

What was actually called for was using the reparations as a means of creating – “from on high” and by applying pressure, a network of economic contacts that, after legitimately profiting the victors, could eventually promote mutual profit. In the view of Jacques Rivière, what was needed, in place of an insistence on constraint, was an insistence on “recompense to be offered Germany [for execution of the treaty], since Germany alone seems to me capable of offering an efficacious solution to the problem [of reparations] that is crushing us. We must no longer speak to Germany of what it owes and what it is capable of. We must offer it a chance for salvation, and simply come to an agreement allowing our own to follow mechanically” (Rivière 1923b, and id. 1921, reprinted in: id. 1992: 222). This statement amply outlines the gist of the commentaries and propositions of Rivière, Schlumberger, and Fabre-Luce regarding reparation policies. What is important is not laying out more details, but underlying the basic principle: cash reparations upset mutual contact, and ought to be largely truncated. To the contrary, what is necessary is a rapid development of reparations of kind: a bringing into play of that virtual harmony of interests present in heavy industry – in the exemplary space of interdependence defined by names like Lorraine, Sarre, Luxembourg, Ruhr.¹¹

A cultural journal like the *NRF* certainly has a role to play in such a project: it needs to cultivate both forms of the “European consciousness”, above all by combating the “extremist protectionism” that André Gide diagnoses within the intellectual France of the Bloc national. It is necessary to return to a free trade of the intellect – as Gide would have it, “to rediscover the routes that allow contact between both individual and national ideas – to rediscover them for themselves, for economic circulation” (Gide 1921: 516, 521).¹² Most likely, it was not a coincidence that at the same time Seydoux's plans for reparations in kind were becoming concrete in November 1921, Gide calls for a renewal of intellectual ties with the former enemy.

An image thus emerges on the horizon of an economic, cultural, and political collaboration among equals, from concern for individual prosperity as well as from concern for that which was defined as the norms of European civilisation. “International federalism”, Fabre-Luce remarks, having taken shape yesterday “in the quasi-world-wide alliance of the war”, “manifesting itself today within economic life in a thousand ways”, will be channeled tomorrow into some sort of institution. Such an institution might be built upon the existing structures of the *League of Nations* at Geneva, while transferring it to a European level: regionalising it according to a principle of federalism à la carte, following the interests and concrete needs of the various nations. At that point, he suggests, but not before, a new diplomacy would have every chance of emerging: a diplomacy based on publicising difference, on control by opinion, and on arbitration, with the mechanisms for resolving conflicts being respected out of a common concern for union – meaning for peace (the preceding citations: Fabre-Luce 1924a: 545 sq.). And a comment by Thibaudet amounts to a highly topical defini-

¹¹ See the articles by Jacques Rivière in the *Luxemburger Zeitung*, including (1922 b), (1923 a), (1924 a), (1924 b); for Alfred Fabre-Luce, along with his article 1924 a) his books (1922) and (1924 b); for Jean Schlumberger, see (1923).

¹² Thibaudet speaks in 1921 : 79 of the “separation” of France of the “rest of humanity”, of an interruption of intellectual “communication”.

tion of pluralism in international relations: “It would be impossible to say that the interests of any nation ... are identical with those of humanity, just as the interests of the individual are never completely identical with those of the collectivity. It is through a continuous effort of adaptation, of perfection, and, in rare moments, of sacrifice, that one manages to steer them toward something approaching collaboration” (Thibaudet, in Gide 1921: 521).

Using the example of the *NRF*, the above analysis of the “new liberal internationalism” has tried to show that the early years of peace after the First World War represented a key moment in thinking about international relations, in France as well as in Britain and the United States. It thus would seem important for historians who have recently been focusing on the British contribution to such thinking to consider the French side as well. More specifically, attention needs to be paid the French liberal theories of international interdependence reviewed in this essay—and this, ideally, in a comparative framework involving not only Britain and America but also Germany and Italy.¹³ At the same time, the ideas analysed in this paper need to be linked to contemporary French political ideas, both in respect to the present debate over reform and enlargement of the European Union and, more generally, to the problem of international relations after another major caesura—that of 1989-1990. For in that period as well as in 1919, a diagnosis emerged of a crisis of the state and of state sovereignty, a diagnosis leading away from the idea of an international balance of power (and from the idea of power in general) while favouring the idea of an international division of labour (and of promoting the proper conditions for shared prosperity). It is here worth noting that the French liberals of the 1920s defined themselves not as “idealists” but as “realists” or “pragmatists”. They consequently did not view peace as an “ideal”—but rather as a social precondition for efficiency in pursuing the (egoist) interest of material well-being; for them, it was out of the question to forget about the role of power and of the existence of conflict over scarce resources. Even then, in the 1920s, the “international liberalism” dear to Robert O. Keohane was more “sceptical” in spirit, less “naïve”, in sum: more “realist”, than its opponents would most likely admit (Keohane 1990: 166-167). But at the same time, it held firmly to the concept of “consciousness” and, reflecting the same perspective, to that of an individual “will” capable of comprehending the possibilities as well as the dangers of modernity. It is notable that such “will” was defined as an active agent within international relations, alongside states and governments. After 1918, the French “new liberal internationalists” quite unequivocally rejected the Wilsonian project of a new world order as an idealist illusion; but at the same time, they were convinced that it was possible to create a new order – on condition of its limitation to Western Europe. Certain norms common to individuals living in a certain space were in fact considered the *conditio sine qua non* for pragmatic international efficiency – an efficiency that could in turn strengthen awareness of what one had in “common”, including norms.

These economic-sociological and normative dimensions were the basis for a contemporary project of European functionalist institutionalisation – a project that while laying stress on the political economy of integration, nevertheless did not become entirely technocratic, at least at that moment.¹⁴ Underscoring this double legacy may have relevance at a time when political scientists speak of a re-evaluation of the role of “ideas” on an international plane, and when a French liberal who might well see himself as part of the legacy has become president of the convention meant to prepare the draft of a European Constitutional Treaty.¹⁵ Citation of

¹³ See now, as a first step in this direction, the study by the Swiss historian Milène Wegmann (2002), focused on the post-1945 German liberalism (*Ordoliberalismus*); for a detailed look at the French side of the phenomenon: Klaus-Peter Sick (2002).

¹⁴ On the technocratic guiding logic of human action in some later accounts of functionalism, see Rosamond (2000 : 28).

¹⁵ Cf. the *Draft Text of the Articles of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*, published by the Secretariat of the European Convention, Brussels, 6 February 2003, esp. articles 1.3. and 1.2, and the article “Valéry Giscard d’Estaing appelle les députés français à participer à l’élaboration de la Constitution eu-

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing may, finally, lead us back to the historical debate concerning the strength of French liberalism referred to in the introduction. It would seem that, emerging from the space defined by Geneva and Coppet, French liberalism returned to that space a century later, in profoundly renewed fashion. Jacques Rivière's *Nouvelle Revue Française* bears witness to the intellectual energy of twentieth century French liberalism; but it appears that the inability of such a new, internationalist political thinking to prevail, at least in the years after the First World War, supports those who speak with the historian Pierre Rosanvallon of its relative weakness in French society as a whole.

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