Conscience Matters

By

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Abstract

This paper examines the role and value of conscience. Primarily, three basic conclusions are advanced: (1) that action in accord with conscience is productive of psychological health; (2) that for conscience to serve as an adequate guide to conduct it has to be developed; and (3) that both the expression and development of conscience require, or at least appreciably benefit from, the greatest amount of social liberty possible. In accord with the interdisciplinary nature of this project, the aforesaid conclusions were drawn (and are explored) from the diverse disciplinary perspectives of psychology, philosophy, religious studies, and history. Ultimately, more questions are raised than answered. Nevertheless, there is a central argument: conscience matters.

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Introduction

What is the role of conscience within a democratic society? What should it be? When I first began this project a little over a year ago, this is the question I was interested in engaging with. In particular, it was Leo Tolstoy's pacifist writings that encouraged me to reflect upon the purpose of individual moral convictions within a democratic society, where, by definition, the majority rules. To be clear, conscience here refers to an individual's intuitive sense of right and wrong.

However, once I began to seriously look into the topic I quickly discovered it had been previously exhausted to the point that it was doubtful whether or not I could add anything to the discussion. Conscience was overwhelmingly considered of great importance. This is true of the writings of Leo Tolstoy, A.J. Muste, Henry David Thoreau, John Stuart Mill, Sri Aurobindo, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, Viktor Frankl, Alice Chown, Gandhi, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, etc., etc. Had I read more, I'm confident this trend would have persisted. Notably, the opinion that conscience plays an important role in life (democratic or otherwise) spans the disciplinary perspectives of philosophy, psychology, political theory, and religious studies, among others. Upon recognizing this, my focus shifted towards *why* conscience has been considered of value. This resulted in a far more exploratory work than argumentative. Consequently, it raises more questions than it answers. Nevertheless, I do make an argument: conscience matters.

Ultimately, I arrived at three broad conclusions regarding the value and function of conscience. They are: (1) that action in accord with conscience is productive of psychological health; (2) that for conscience to serve as an adequate guide to conduct it has to be developed;

and (3) that both the expression and development of conscience require, or at least appreciably benefit from, the greatest amount of social liberty possible. Not particularly novel. Nonetheless important. I reached these conclusions via two main areas of inquiry: first, a theoretical analysis of several different systems of psychotherapy, the philosophic concept of liberty, and of pacifist theory; second, an exploration of the historical data regarding the experiences of Canadian pacifists during the First World War.

Correspondingly, this paper proceeds in the following order: first, a discussion on the relevant insights of the various psychotherapies I studied (client-centered therapy, analytical psychology, and logotherapy); second, an overview of liberty and its relationship to conscience, particularly in terms of development and well-being; third, a brief summary of pacifism, what it is and what it entails; fourth, an outline of the experiences of Canadian pacifists during the First World War.

I. The Real and The Ideal

What is and what can be; reality and ideals. Too often the reality and the ideal are so dissimilar that to transform the one into the other seems without any real hope. One example of this being the reality of war and the ideal of peace. Sadly, it seems that the ideal is not much more than a dream. Unsurprisingly, apathy follows. Yet, at the same time, transforming what is into what could (and should) be is an essential characteristic of being human –

> being human means being in the face of meaning to fulfill and values to realize. It means living in the polar field of tension established between reality and ideals to materialize.

> Man [sic] lives by ideals and values. Human existence is not authentic unless it is lived in terms of self-transcendence. (Frankl, 1969/2014, p. 34)[1]

There is therefore no reason to conclude that the pursuit of ideals is a futile or hopeless endeavour. Rather, it is in this pursuit that we find some semblance of direction in life. Still though, it may be said, what of the impossibility of it all? – ideals are ideals, they don't exist. Why pursue something that doesn't exist? More pertinently, why pursue something that *cannot* exist? Clearly, if one does not pursue one's own ideals, then it is guaranteed they will never be realized. And, if everyone were to take this approach, nothing would ever change, or, at least, things would change only in response to circumstance and chance. But things do change. And they change partly in response to human efforts. So, "though the ideal may not be immediately practicable, it is that to which our action ought more and more to move." (Aurobindo, 1950/1999, p. 157) It is only through pursuit that ideals can become reality – and it is only through pursuit that the ideals which today seem impossible of realization may in the future become reality.

Furthermore, it appears that this behaviour is both natural and healthy, perhaps necessary, for human beings to engage in. Viktor Frankl (Holocaust survivor, neurologist, and founder of logotherapy) even proposes that the pursuit of ideals, in contrast to the pursuit of pleasure, is the primary motivator underlying human behaviour:

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[1] Also consider: "Both what is and what may be are expressions of the same constant facts of existence and forces or powers of our Nature from which we cannot and are not meant to escape, since all life is Nature fulfilling itself and not Nature destroying or denying itself…Standing thus between the actual and the possible [is human] intellect." (Aurobindo, 1950/1999, p. 149); "Our mentality represents the conscious part of the movement of Nature." (Aurobindo, 1950/1999, p. 150)

> [n]ormally pleasure is never the goal of human strivings but rather is, and must remain, an effect, more specifically, the side effect of attaining a goal. Attaining the goal constitutes a reason for being happy [and] if there is a reason for happiness, *happiness ensues* automatically and spontaneously, as it were. (Frankl, 1969/2014, p. 19)

In logotherapeutic terms *the will to meaning*, which is defined as "the basic striving… to find and fulfill meaning and purpose" (Frankl, 1969/2014, p. 21). What I hope to show in the following section is that the pursuit of ideals, in particular the pursuit of the ideal self, is productive of psychological health, and that action in accordance with *one's own* conscience is an effective means of pursuing and achieving this end.

Self and Ideal Self

The central psychological construct forwarded by Carl Rogers[2] is the self-concept, which can be further divided into the *self* and *ideal self*. Simply, self refers to who we are, as we are, at any given moment. It is the person one is in reality, what they think, say, and do. But, the self is not *all* of what we are. It only consists of the experiences an individual allows in, passed through a kind of conceptual filter (the self-conceptual filter), and the behaviours and thoughts that follow. Conversely, the ideal self represents a person's idealized notion of themselves. It is the version of self someone thinks they should or could be. Importantly, Rogers' concept of the ideal self is not a punitive collection of internalized rules and norms (this appears to be more characteristic of the self), but the person one truly is. In contrast to the self, the ideal self encompasses the totality of an individual's experience. Moreover, it is thought that the ideal self

[2] one of the early forerunners of humanistic psychology and the founder of client-centered therapy

is something which individuals continually strive towards realizing, either consciously or unconsciously, and is thus one of the primary motivators underlying behaviour (similar to Frankl's will to meaning). Within a client-centered perspective, neurosis occurs when the self comes into conflict with the ideal self. But (1) what is the ideal self? And (2) how does it become actualized?

In response to (1), the ideal self is first and foremost a person's entire physical being: "the inner core of man's [sic] personality is the organism itself" (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p. 92). It is also the version of self that accords with an individual's beliefs, ideals, and values. Still more, it is the representation of self that one truly is, i.e. the self that *would be* if a person were to fully experience and accept themselves. Appreciably, research into these concepts has found that the ideal self is a much more stable psychic construct than the self. (Rogers, 1961/1995b, p. 236) Accordingly, it has been observed that as individuals progress in therapy they tend to move in the direction of their ideal self rather than away from it – this means that instead of altering their values people tend to alter their behaviours, i.e. themselves:

> it had been our expectation that some clients would achieve greater congruence of self and ideal primarily through alteration of their values, others through the alteration of self. Our evidence thus far indicates that this is incorrect, and that with only occasional exceptions, it appears to be the… self which exhibits the greater change. (Rogers, 1961/1995b, p. 236)

It is worth mentioning that within a client-centered theory of persons (in contrast to, say, a psychoanalytic model) the self that 'one truly is' is thought of as something essentially positive: "[o]ne of the most revolutionary concepts to grow out of our clinical experience is the…recognition that the innermost core of man's [sic] nature, the deepest layers of his

personality…is positive in nature – is basically socialized, forward-moving, rational and realistic." (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p. 91)[3] A positive view of human nature represents a significant change in the field of psychology, and is one of the hallmarks of humanistic psychology. Because client-centered therapy holds this view of human nature, counselling focuses on bringing the inner self forward rather than subduing it.

Which brings us to (2). Within a client-centered perspective the first step towards realizing the ideal self is that an individual fully allows into awareness and accepts *all* aspects of their experience in an undistorted, non-judgemental, and genuine manner (e.g. feeling sad when one is sad rather than angry and vice versa). In part, this involves experiencing aspects of oneself which are unpleasant and/or socially unacceptable, e.g. fear, anger, hate, greed, etc. By doing so we experience ourselves as we actually are and movement towards the ideal self becomes possible. It is thought that this is brought about primarily through the relationship established in therapy, which is characterized by non-judgment, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard. Interestingly, Rogers hypothesized that when a client-therapist relationship (or any relationship for that matter) was established that meets these conditions, growth would occur, more or less, of its own accord. The basic idea being that a relationship built upon the principles of non-judgement, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard create a secure environment (i.e. a healthy relationship) in which it is possible for individual's to fully examine their own experience: "in the absence of any actual or implied threat to self, the client

[3] More on human nature: "There is no beast in man [sic]. There is only man in man, and this we have been able to release." (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p.105); "As I descend into myself, I discover something exciting, a core that is totally without hate." (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p. 99); "one client's discovery [was] that the deeper she dug within herself, the less she had to fear; that instead of finding something terribly wrong within herself, she gradually uncovered a core of self which wanted neither to reward or punish others, a self without hate, a self which was deeply socialized." (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p. 103)

can… examine various aspects of…experience as they actually feel… without distorting them to fit the existing concept of self." (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p. 76) Moreover, during this process individuals develop an increasingly positive view of both themselves and of others, which in turn results in improved social behaviour. (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p. 87)

An important implication of this is that when the ideal self is realized, or when the inner self is brought forward, people become increasingly socialized, tolerant and accepting of others, etc. Consider Roger's (1953/1995a) description of a realized person:

> [w]hen man's [sic] unique capacity of awareness is thus functioning freely and fully, we find that we have, not an animal whom we must fear… but an organism able to achieve, through the remarkable integrative capacity of its central nervous system, a balanced, realistic, self-enhancing, other-enhancing behaviour… when man is less than fully man – when he denies to awareness various aspects of his experience – then indeed we have all too often reason to fear him and his behaviour (p. 105).

If Roger's ideas concerning human nature have any basis in reality, then it is clearly desirable that the greatest number of individuals possible realize their ideal selves in life. Admitting this has certain implications for how we structure our social environments and for how we live. And in what way does this relate to conscience? Conscience can be of thought as an expression of one's ideal self. Being so, conscience is worth listening to, as doing so may help lead one towards realizing their ideal self in life.

Incongruence and Congruence; Changes in Therapy

Incongruence and congruence describe the relationship that exists between an individual's self and ideal self. Along with self-concept, they are two of the foundational ideas

forwarded in client-centered therapy. The terms refer to different states of being that fall along a continuum (often depicted using a venn diagram) and are thought of as the major distinguishing markers between psychological dysfunction and health. Simply, greater incongruence equals greater dysfunction and vice versa.

Incongruence occurs when an individual's self and ideal self are in contradiction or conflict with one another, whereas congruence occurs when the two are for the most part consistent or in harmony. Accordingly, the goal of client-centered therapy is to help individuals move from a state of incongruence to a state of congruence, i.e. from dysfunction to health. (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p. 103) Alternatively, the movement from incongruence to congruence can be thought of as the realization of (or closer approximation of) one's ideal self in life.

Over several years of practice Rogers observed that during therapy clients tended to follow a general pattern on their journey towards greater and greater congruence. This led him to the conclusion that "[t]he process of psychotherapy… is a unique and dynamic experience, different for each individual, yet exhibiting a lawfulness and order which is astonishing in its generality." (Rogers, 1953/1995a, p. 74) The pattern Rogers observed consists of two major phases or movements. The first is negative. It is a movement *away* from, or disassociating from, aspects of the self which a person no longer is, can be, or desires to be. The second is positive. It is a movement *toward* the self one freely chooses, usually characterized by flexibility, creativity, and autonomy. This second phase has been alternatively conceptualized as a movement toward the self one genuinely is. Taken together, these two movements constitute the process of achieving congruence.

To go into a bit more detail, during the first phase of this process individuals exhibit "a tendency to move away, hesitantly and fearfully, from a self that… is *not*." (Rogers, 1961/1995b,

p. 167) Rogers describes this movement away as generally involving an abandoning of facades, ought's, cultural expectations, and the need to please others. The first phase then is a kind of un-becoming. The entire second phase can be summed up as a movement toward being. It involves a movement toward "that self which one truly is." (Rogers, 1961/1995b, p. 166) Rogers (1961/1995b) notes that during this phase of therapy clients achieve greater autonomy, fluidity of self [4], a desire to be *all* of oneself, acceptance of self, general acceptance of others, and a greater trust of self. (p. 170-175) So, first a movement away from what we are not, and then a movement towards what we are. This movement towards being, towards becoming 'what one truly is', is the achievement of the ideal self in life. Through this, one becomes congruent.

Significantly, Rogers' description of successful therapy and 'becoming' bears a marked resemblance to Jung's, particularly the latter's concept of transformation. In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* Jung describes psychotherapy as a process consisting of four basic stages: confession, explanation, education, and transformation. Each of the four stages has its own particular function in terms of development.

The first Jung relates principally to the religious tradition of the confessional[5], as well as to Freud and early psychoanalytic practices. Its primary utilities being catharsis and putting one in touch with repressed elements of the unconscious (Jung, 1933, p. 31). The second stage Jung also associates with psychoanalysis, and has to do with interpretation and understanding of the unconscious or repressed material brought forward during the first stage. This is sometimes

[4] Notably, Jung (1933) had a similar goal in therapy: "My aim is to bring about a psychic state in which my patient begins to experiment with his own nature – a state of fluidity, change and growth, in which there is no longer anything eternally fixed and hopelessly petrified." (p. 66)
[5] "The first beginnings of all analytical treatment are to be found in its prototype, the confessional… As soon as man was capable of conceiving the idea of sin… repressions arose." (Jung, 1933, p. 31)

referred to as shadow work. The third stage Jung (1933) associates primarily with Adler and individual psychology, its purpose being to teach the client habits which improve social functioning:

> [b]ut then comes the period of education, which makes us realize that no confession and no amount of explaining will make the ill-formed tree grow straight, but that it must be trained with the gardener's art upon the trellis before normal adaptation can be attained. (p. 46)

Lastly, transformation. Jung considered this stage unique to analytical psychology[6], its purpose being the self-education, self-development, and self-perfecting of both doctor and patient as individual persons. Notably, the process of transformation involves both the therapist and client – similar to Rogers, Jung thought it was the result of a particular kind of relationship. Transformation involves finding meaning in individual life, getting in touch with and on good terms with the unconscious or inner self, and, evidently, the transformation of living that follows. Further, the usefulness of this stage is not restricted to the sick, nor is it merely a restorative practice meant to bring individuals up to social par. Rather, it is a way of transcending normalization, finding purpose in individual life, and, ultimately, becoming 'what one truly is'. Consider Jung (1933) on transformation:

[6] Not really. Unique in consideration to what other psychologists were doing at the time, but really only a rediscovery of older knowledge, e.g. yoga. "It is a fact that the beginnings of psychoanalysis were fundamentally nothing else than the scientific rediscovery of an ancient truth… which the Eastern yoga systems describe as meditation or contemplation." (Jung, 1933, p. 35)

> we are speaking not of people who have still to prove their social usefulness, but of those who can no longer find significance in their value to society, and who have come upon the deeper and more dangerous question of the meaning of their individual lives. (p. 68)[7]

What Jung calls transformation describes a very similar process to what Rogers calls becoming, and these processes further bear a marked resemblance to a few of the ideas that will be touched upon shortly – namely, Mill's 'development of individuality', Aurobindo's 'self-finding', and Tolstoy's beliefs regarding the necessity of bringing one's way of living into harmony with conscience and reason. Fundamentally, they all describe a movement toward, or a realization of, or an actualization of, the ideal self in life.[8] And, by realizing this self, or by bringing our action into accord with it, we become congruent, i.e. psychologically healthy. Again, what does this have to do with conscience? Read on.

Conscience

Conscience has been conceptualized in so many different ways that the word itself, by virtue of its seemingly infinite meanings, has become next to meaningless. So, rather than discussing all the different ways conscience has been defined, we are here going to consider two: first, that conscience is solely a product of learning, i.e. the internalization of external social rules, norms, oughts, and shoulds; second, that conscience is an innate normative capacity

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[7] This, I believe, is analogous to the second 'movement' of client-centered therapy, and what Rogers (1961/1995b) describes as becoming: "'What is my goal in life?' 'What am I striving for?' 'What is my purpose?' These are questions which every individual asks himself at one time or another, sometimes calmly… sometimes in agonizing uncertainty or despair… they are… questions which every individual must ask and answer for himself, in his own way." (p. 164) Note the similarity between these questions and Tolstoy's.

[8] Of course, Rogers, Jung, Mill, Aurobindo, and Tolstoy all had different ideas about what exactly the inner or ideal self is. Nevertheless, it does appear that all three considered its realization in life a positive thing.

possessed by human beings, essentially the inner expression of an individual's ideals, – in client-centered terms, an expression of the ideal self.

The first definition of the word best relates to Freud's concept of the superego. In this view, conscience is simply the internalization of social rules and norms, usually imparted unto individuals by their primary caregivers. Being a product of the superego, it is often punitive and a source of guilt. Accordingly, conscience is thought of as something to be reformed rather than listened to. This conception shares several notable similarities to a behaviourist perspective of mind, in which mental processes such as 'conscience' are largely, if not entirely, the product of conditioning processes.

So, conscience is internalized rules, nothing more, nothing less. Not necessarily good, not necessarily bad (though, it could be bad if the 'wrong' rules are internalized). In this view, conscience, as distinct from rule following, is not allotted any special role in decision making, nor should it be. Noticeably, Frankl (1969/2014) took issue with this: "[r]educing conscience to the mere result of conditioning processes is but one instance of reductionism" (p. 6).

The second definition shares some similarities with the first, but arrives at a different conclusion regarding the role of conscience in life. The similarity being that conscience is still a product of learning. However, rather than being conceptualized of as merely the internalization of social norms, it is instead thought to be the internalization and inner expression of ideals. In this view, conscience is a kind of innate normative capacity possessed by human beings, its purpose being to guide behaviour via feeling and by doing so alter life in a way that better conforms with an individual's ideals – really, the ideals of the society they are a part of. This second definition more closely aligns with Frankl's (1969/2014) thoughts regarding the purpose of conscience: "man [sic] is guided in his search for meaning by conscience [which] could be

defined as the intuitive capacity of man to find out the meaning of a situation." (p. 43) Accordingly, the development of conscience, which would be the development and refining of one's ideals, results in improved conduct.

So, conscience is the inner expression of ideals. By bringing our actions into accord with it, we move towards realizing said ideals in reality. If we suppose that ideals are worth realizing, conscience would then be something worth taking into consideration. In this view, conscience is something to be listened to. Again, this aligns with Frankl's (1969/2014) views: "man [sic] must learn more than ever to listen to the ten thousand commandments arising from the ten thousand unique situations of which his life consists. And to *these* commandments, he is referred to, and must rely on, his conscience." (p. 44-45) Why is it that life is so often unlike our ideals? Perhaps because we reduce, devalue, ignore, and consequently impede the development of a healthy conscience. The solution? To *listen*, to *act*, to *observe* the consequences of action, and to *improve* our behaviors accordingly.

Implications

If we recognize some process as healthy and desirable for individual persons in a clinical setting, it would seem reasonable that we would likewise admit that that same process is desirable for society at large, as society is really nothing more than a collection of individual persons. Accordingly, the insights, teachings, and practices of the different systems of psychotherapy should not be restricted to medical settings; rather, they can and should be applied in everyday life – "[a]ll the implements of psychotherapy developed in clinical practice, refined and systematized, are now put at our service and can be used for our self-education and self-perfectioning." (Jung, 1933, p. 53)

II. Liberty

During the First World War Sri Aurobindo[9] authored a little-known book titled *The Ideal of Human Unity*, in which he forwards a rather unique solution to world conflict: unity in diversity. Central to Aurobindo's theory of achieving unity through diversity is the principle of liberty, – a principle which he considered "the most precious gain of humanity's past spiritual, political, and social struggles." (Aurobindo, 1950/1999, p. 136) Interestingly, Aurobindo (1950/1999) reasoned that liberty was one of the foundational truths of existence and therefore a social principle based, not on positive law, but on natural law:

> [n]ature does not manufacture, does not impose a pattern or rule from outside; she impels life to grow from within and to assert its own natural law… modified only by its commerce with the environment. All liberty, individual, national, religious, social, ethical, takes its ground upon this fundamental principle of our existence. (p. 155)

He also considered liberty an indispensable component of any society deserving of the title 'just' and necessary for a durable peace to emerge among human beings. For, if a unity of the human species can be achieved through diversity, liberty needs be present, as liberty is a necessary precondition for diversity.

However, what exactly a free society looks like or should look like is uncertain, and there are many instances when liberty has proved itself a greater threat to peace than productive of it. It is consequently appropriate to ask what is the ideal balance between individual liberty and

[9] Indian nationalist, political revolutionary, philosopher, and mystic.

state authority. Moreover, what role does conscience play in this equation? In the following section this difficulty will be addressed.

Social Liberty

Social liberty has been defined as "the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual." (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 7) Alternatively, it can be thought of as the degree or number of freedoms allotted to citizens within a society. Yet the proper extent of social liberty is something persistently called into question, and it would seem that there is no clear solution to the problem.

In *On Liberty* Mill argues in support of granting individual persons the greatest degree of social liberty possible. Yet, at the same time, he acknowledges the necessity of placing restraints or checks on liberty, observing that the liberty of one all too often results in harm to another. (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 11, 87) Again, we arrive at a dilemma – what is the ideal balance? In reply to this, Mill (1859/2006) proposes a standard colloquially referred to as the harm principle; it reads:

> that the sole end for which mankind [sic] are warranted, individually or collectively, for interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. (p. 16)

Following this Mill proposes three basic conditions that must be met in order for a society to be considered free. They are: first, freedom of thought and conscience; second, freedom to pursue one's own tastes and pursuits; third, freedom of association. (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 19) So

long as harm to others is avoided, these conditions are to be met. By Mill's standard, if they are not met, the society cannot be considered free.

In addition to the prevention of harm Mill maintained that there are several 'positive acts' which justifiably warrant the restriction of individual liberty and even compulsion on the part of governments. These include activities such as giving evidence in court, partaking in defense of one's country, saving another's life, etc. (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 17) However, and unlike the harm principle, Mill provides two instances when one's duty to act positively towards others may be excused. The first is when the individual is likely to act in a more responsible manner when left alone. The second is when the attempt to hold the individual to the duty would cause greater harm than the good which would be produced by its fulfillment. (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 18) Taken together, these principles are meant to help us determine the proper extent of social liberty within a society.

Liberty of Thought

Liberty of thought is a notion central to Mill's arguments in support of social liberty. The idea being that it is necessary both for better ways of thinking to develop and for incorrect ways of thinking to be found out and rejected. Grossly simplified, the value of liberty of thought is threefold: first, it allows for the development of a diversity of opinions; second, a diversity of opinions encourages discussion and argumentation; third, that through discussion and argumentation thought is refined. So, liberty of thought encourages dialectics, and through this process our ideas, beliefs, morals, etc., are cultivated and advanced. (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 24-29)

Additionally, liberty of thought is desirable as it functions as a counterbalance to the problem of infallibility. Infallibility being the assumption that one's opinions are always and

unquestionably true – *in* as in 'not', *fallible* as in 'false'. Whenever an opinion is silenced, i.e. when liberty of thought is restricted, a claim of infallibility has been made on the part of those doing the silencing. Clearly, that an opinion or particular point of view is always and unquestionably true warrants discussion. And when liberty of thought has been restricted, it is unlikely that a discussion will take place. How could it? "Wrong opinions and practices gradually yield to fact and argument: but facts and arguments, to produce any effect on the mind, must be brought before it." (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 27) Of course, there is not much use in having liberty of thought without also having freedom of speech: "[f]reedom of thought and speech – the two necessarily go together, since there can be no real freedom of thought where a padlock is put upon freedom of speech" (Aurobindo, 1950/1999, p. 240).

Closely related to the problem of infallibility is the problem of 'Truth'. Simply, when an opinion is put down without being properly considered, there exists the possibility that a true (or truer) opinion has been rejected.[10] For obvious reasons, this is not desirable. And, even if the rejected opinion were false, in silencing it we would lose out on the opportunity to use that opinion as a means of refining our own position.[11] Therefore, alternative and even contradictory opinions, correct or incorrect, should be permitted to co-exist as in either case they allow for the development of better thinking to emerge. Remember that a diversity of opinions is needed for meaningful discussion to take place. And that it is through meaningful discussion that thought is advanced.

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[10] "History teems with instances of truth put down by persecution." (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 35)
[11] "We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still." (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 24); "He [sic] who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that." (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 44)

Liberty, Development, and Well-Being

Perhaps the strongest argument in support of liberty is that it is necessary for individual persons, upon reaching the age of majority, to properly develop themselves and consequently attain a sense of both physical and mental well-being (of course, this assumes that development of individuality has something to do with well-being). The 'development argument for liberty' in particular spans disciplinary perspectives and can be found throughout the subjects of philosophy, psychology, religious studies, and political theory. This argument is especially prominent in the works of Mill and Aurobindo – for example, "the free development of individuality is one of the leading essentials of well-being" (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 65).

Mill's claim that the development of individuality is one of the central elements of well-being hinges on two main points: first, that the development of individuality is necessary for and productive of social well-being as it allows for better ways of living to come into practice (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 65); second, that it allows individual persons to reach their fullest state of development and by doing so happiness (Mill, 1859/2006, p. 72). Importantly, the development of individuality requires that persons have the freedom both to make choices for themselves and to live out those decisions. By making choices we develop our thinking, conscience, emotional patterns, etc. Mill (1859/2006) holds that the development of these faculties results in greater well-being, both in terms of the individual in whom they develop, and, consequently, for those who said individual comes into contact with:

> to conform to custom, merely *as* custom, does not educate or develop in him any of the qualities which are the distinctive endowment of a human being. The human faculties of perception, judgement, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice… The mental and moral, like the muscular powers,

> are improved only by being used… In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others. There is greater fullness of life about his own existence, and when there is more life in the units there is more in the mass which is composed of them." (p. 67-72)

If development results from choice, and we recognize that choice requires the freedom to make a choice, we can conclude that development requires liberty.

> Interestingly, both these points are mirrored by Aurobindo (1950/1999) when he writes: [s]o long as humanity is not full-grown, so long as it needs to grow and is capable of a greater perfectibility, there can be no static good of all; nor can there be any progressive good of all independent of the growth of the individuals composing the all (p. 32)[12]

and, "[f]or man [sic] alone of terrestrial creatures to live rightly involves the necessity of knowing rightly…[both] for his own greater perfection and happiness… and the greater perfection and happiness of his fellow-creatures." (p. 147) To clarify, 'knowing rightly' is the result of learning, which requires choice, which requires liberty.

A further alleged benefit of the development of individuality is that it creates better, more moral persons, who in turn create a better world. The basic idea being that as individuals develop they become more useful to both themselves and to others. Appreciably, this is Aurobindo's

[12] More from Aurobindo (1950/1999): "without individual growth there can be no real and permanent good of all" (p. 32); "[a]lways it is the individual who progresses and compels the rest to progress; the instinct of the collectivity is to stand still in its established order." (p. 32); "without the freedom of the individual a society cannot remain progressive [as the] free individual is the conscious progressive: it is only when he is able to impart his own creative and mobile consciousness to the mass that a progressive society becomes possible." (p. 242)

(1950/1999) principal argument in *The Ideal of Human Unity,* and what he bases the possibility of unity in diversity upon:

> [t]he sound order is that which comes from within as the result of a nature that has discovered itself and found its own law and the law of its relations with others. Therefore the truest order is that which is founded upon the greatest possible liberty; for liberty is at once the condition of vigorous variation and the condition of self-finding. (p. 243)

Aurobindo's 'self-finding' is synonymous with Mill's 'development of individuality'. To restate, the basic argument is that individual development produces more moral persons, who in turn create better societies, which in turn produces better persons, and so on. Liberty is desirable as it allows for the development of individuality – it allows for the development of conscience.

III. Pacifism

Pacifism as a moral doctrine or normative ethical theory expresses the ideas and practices of several different religious, political, and philosophical traditions. That being so, there is in reality no one all-encompassing pacifism; rather, there are *pacifisms*. It is consequently doubtful that the term can be defined in a way that would completely satisfy or properly represent all of its various adherents and meanings. And so, a definition of that kind will not be provided here. Instead, a description of pacifism that aims at capturing the general spirit of the practice and the common threads that run throughout the different positions will be offered.

That being said, pacifism can be separated into two distinct basic groupings: sectarian and non-sectarian. While this difference may not be of particular importance to an understanding of the idea generally, it is of considerable practical importance as it has made a noticeable difference in the actual application of pacifist principles to life. More importantly, the distinction

between sectarian and non-sectarian pacifism is meaningful in the context of Canadian pacifism during the First World War. Accordingly, the principal differences between the two positions will be made clear.

Finally, several aspects of Tolstoyan pacifist theory will be examined as they played an important role in the development of a new kind of socially oriented pacifism, one which helped bridge the ideological divide between sectarian and non-sectarian pacifists:

> Tolstoy… was instrumental in the formulation of a new pacifist idea built upon individual moral responsibility with a universal application to all mankind rather than just a sectarian Christian approach – a pacifism concerned with the extent to which war and violence are rooted in the social environment. (Socknat, 1987, p. 18)

What is Pacifism?

Etymologically, pacifism is derived from the Latin word "pacific," which means "peace making" (*paci,* from *pax*, meaning "peace", and *ficus* meaning "making"). Today, in the broadest sense of the word, pacifism can be defined as the rejection of violence, force, or excessive coercion as an appropriate means of settling disputes, effecting social change, remediating injustice, etc. (Huxley, 1937/1986, p. 64-68)[13] Accordingly, most pacifists deny the validity of war, which is what the word has come to be commonly understood as indicating – a rejection of war. This is true, but only partially. Pacifism encompasses significantly more than just a rejection of war. At most, it is a comprehensive philosophy of living directed towards the

[13] Though Huxley has been cited, this definition is not based upon any particular text or author. Rather, it is what I have come to understand pacifism as meaning.

realization of peace.[14] And when understood in its full significance, pacifism applies to all of life, not merely a single and isolated feature such as war. Likewise, it applies equally during times of peace as during times of conflict. In fact, the practice is arguably more applicable during peace time than war time as it is then that conditions may be so altered as to prevent future conflicts. Ultimately, pacifism is a way of living that seeks to establish peace via peaceful means, both between individual persons, communities, nations, and, at most, all living things (so far as this is possible). But how exactly does one arrive at this point of view?

Pacifism is the result of accepting a set of principles which generally include or are founded upon the recognition of life as sacred – "[t]he recognition of the life of every man [sic] as sacred is the first and only basis of all ethics… Life is a value which has no weight nor size… and so there is no sense in destroying a life for a life." (Tolstoy, 1894/2016c, p. 186)[15] For some pacifists this means all life and for others it means only human life. To be clear, sacred in this context means that life is recognized as being of the utmost value, therefore to be preserved, respected, and cultivated always. In line with this way of thinking the unnecessary destruction of life is considered a senseless and depraved action, anathema to the pacifist spirit, something to be avoided to the greatest extent possible. How an individual or group arrives at this recognition varies considerably; it can and has been founded on religious, humanistic, and philosophic grounds. Nevertheless, it does appear that the sacredness of life is a notion that commonly

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[14] In *Letters from a Stoic* Seneca describes peace as central to all philosophy: "You want to know, do you, what philosophy has unearthed, what philosophy has achieved?... She does not set about constructing walls or arms or anything of use in war. On the contrary, her voice is for peace, calling all mankind to live in harmony." (Seneca, 1969/2004, p. 171)

[15] This concept is sometimes extended to include all life, e.g. the virtue of Ahimsa, present in Jainist, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions: "absence of even the desire to do harm to any living being… complete non-violence to the extent that is humanly possible" (Long, 2009/2015, p. 193); "Never producing pain by thought, word, and deed, in any living being, is what is called Ahimsa, non-injury. There is no virtue higher than non-injury." (Vivekananda, 1896/2017, p. 44)

underlies and unites the different expressions of pacifism – both in terms of religious and non-religious pacifists (of course, what exactly sacred means varies).

Pacifist theory generally denies that any real and enduring good can be brought into the world through violent, oppressive, or hate-inspired means. It therefore denies the validity of war and conquest, whether political, religious, military, or economic in its motivation; of armed resistance and revolution (despite often lofty sentiments); and even, in its more uncompromising expressions, of police forces, of courts of law, of government, - that is, of any organization or way of being that is maintained by or profits from the injury, exploitation, corruption, oppression, or outright annihilation of human life.[16]

However, as mentioned earlier, pacifism has different meanings depending on who it is being defined by. It is useful, therefore, to think of pacifism as existing on a spectrum – on the one hand there are pacifists who always and absolutely reject the legitimacy of war, on the other there are those who maintain that there are certain circumstances under which war is justified, e.g. in order to stop the Nazi's. What unites these different groups is an underlying commitment to peace.

Instead of violence, pacifists support the use of non-violence as a means of achieving social reform. Ideally, this approach is characterized by love, forgiveness, respect for those who disagree, humility, and self-suffering when necessary. Some examples of non-violent methods include education, arbitration, various kinds of economic manoeuvres (boycotts and strikes),

[16] This is somewhat of an over-generalization. War and the taking of life have been permitted by some under certain circumstances, though this appears to be an exception among pacifists rather than a rule. Absolutist and anarchistic views, which go so far as to deny the validity of law, police, and government, are more often held by sectarian than non-sectarian pacifists. Still though, "[the] annihilation of life cannot be a means of the amelioration of life; it is a suicidal act." (Tolstoy, 1894/2016c, p. 186)

non-payment of taxes, and voluntary imprisonment. Considered outwardly, these methods have two principal goals: first, to arouse in others 'pangs of conscience', i.e. to awaken moral sentiment and by doing so alter public feeling and action in accord with pacifist ends; second, similar to the first, to generate discussion surrounding the issue of interest and consequently encourage individuals to question the legitimacy of their own and others actions. Inwardly, adherents are concerned about acting in harmony with their inner sense of right and wrong, whether it be recognized as God, conscience, love, or reason.

What exactly pacifism means differs from group to group and within groups between individuals, as there is in every case different reasoning and belief underlying acceptance of the idea. Likewise different understandings of principles lead to different practices, which in turn produce different ends. Regardless, the different pacifisms and pacifists are united in their insistence upon and pursuit of peace.

Sectarian Pacifism; Christianity and Non-Resistance

As it is being used here sectarian has two meanings. First, it designates a subgroup. For example, the Quakers, Mennonites, Hutterites, etc., are all subgroups (sects) of the larger category of Christianity. They are accordingly designated as sectarian. Secondly, the term is being used to differentiate between pacifists who found their way of living on sectarian religious principles, such as the abovementioned Quakers, Mennonites, and Hutterites, versus those who do not. Thomas Socknat (1987) provides a fitting description of the latter: "[t]he non-sectarian peace movement… was not pacifist in the strict sense, it was an example of the liberal, rational approach to international affairs – the belief that reason and arbitration could prevent war" (p. 41).

One of the better-known expressions of sectarian pacifism is the kind founded upon the teachings and example of Christ as documented in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In particular, Christian pacifism relies upon the moral instructions espoused in Matthew five to seven, the Sermon on the Mount. More specifically still, Christian pacifists base their views upon Christ's teaching of not resisting evil by force. The movements historic prominence has led some scholars to the conclusion that "pacifism is basically a Christian phenomenon" (Socknat, 1987, p. 3).

Peaceful living on the part of Christians has been observed since the first century and it is generally agreed that early Christians were for the most part pacifists. (Socknat, 1987, p. 4; Huxley, 1937/1986, p. 17-20) However, the practice of peaceful non-resistance on the part of Christians has fallen and risen throughout history, seeing a notable fall in the fourth century when the religion was adopted by Constantine, and a notable rebirth during the fifteenth century in reaction to the various reformation movements:

> [t]he Church's pacifist period terminated with the accession of Constantine and the appearance of the theory of the 'just war' as formulated by St. Ambrose and amplified by St. Augustine." (Socknt, 1987, p. 4)

Also consider Tolstoy's (1894/2016c) recounting of 15th century reformer Petr Chelčický's work:

> [Chelčický's] fundamental idea is that Christianity, by allying itself with temporal power in the days of Constantine, and by continuing to develop in such conditions, has become completely distorted, and has ceased to be Christianity altogether… [Chelčický] teaches previously what… is taught in these days by the non-resistant Mennonites and Quakers… He teaches that Christianity, expecting from its adherents' gentleness, meekness,

> peaceableness, forgiveness of injuries, turning the other cheek when one is struck, and love for enemies, is inconsistent with the use of force, which is an indispensable condition of authority. (p. 13)

Similar to the earlier reformation movements, the social gospel movement of the mid nineteenth century led to a general revival of pacifist sentiments among Christians (Tolstoy's work contributed greatly to this). Still, the real preserver of Christian pacifism has always been and is likely to remain the more radical sects and thinkers within the tradition.

Christian expressions of pacifism are striking for several reasons, perhaps most of all for their apparent simplicity, both in respect to how the position is arrived at and how it is lived. In terms of how the position is arrived at, the line of reasoning goes something like this: first, one needs accept that there is a God, whatever that may mean; second, that Christ was either God in human form, a divinely inspired human being, or, at the very least, a teacher of divine truth; third, that Christ left an example for human beings to emulate, and that by doing so one lives according to divine law; fourth, the opinion that Christ taught, above all, forgiveness, humility, non-resistance to evil, turning the other cheek, doing good to one another, – in a word, peace. If one accepts these premises it would seem that the logical result would be pacifistic in nature. This is indeed the case for Christian pacifists. And although the different pacifist sects all hold subtlety different beliefs and interpret Christ's teachings in different ways, the above more or less captures the basic position held in common among Christian pacifists. Consider the position of the Doukhobours:

> [l]ike that of the Quakers, the Doukhobours' faith is based upon a radical belief in the presence of Christ's spirit in each person… [and so] they naturally deny the right of the state or other external authority to dictate their actions. And, since all [people] are vessels

> for the divine essence, they regard it as sinful to kill other men, even in war… The Doukhobour philosophy present in the twentieth century, however, did not appear until their old traditions were fused with Tolstoyan ideas in the late nineteenth century." (Socknat, 1987, p. 16)

Some of Tolstoy's (1889/2014b) ideas:

> [w]hen we say, '*Turn the other cheek*,' '*Love your enemies,*' we express the very essence of Christianity… '*Resist not evil*' means, never resist, never oppose violence; or, in other words, never do anything contrary to the law of love. If one takes advantage of this disposition and affronts you, bear the affront, and do not, above all, have recourse to violence. (p. 9)

In terms of how it is lived, one of the more striking features of Christian pacifism is the tendency of adherents to take an absolutist stance on the impermissibility of violence. This has meant in the past that individuals would refuse to participate in violence to the point of imprisonment, torture, and, in some cases, death. In other words, people would refuse to act in opposition to principle and conscience regardless of ill-treatment. Actions of this sort properly exemplify the phenomenon of Christian martyrdom, which both Tolstoy and Mill considered [17]

One final characteristic unique among sectarian Christian pacifists is the trend of groups to isolate themselves from the larger society they are a part of, maintain a traditional mode of

[17] Tolstoy (1889/2014b) on martyrs: "If there has been in history a progressive movement for the suppression of evil, it is due to [those] who understood the doctrine of Jesus – who endured evil, and resisted not evil by violence. The advance of humanity towards righteousness is due, not to the tyrants, but to the martyrs." (p. 31) Mill (1859/2006) in reference to martyrs: "The only case in which the higher ground has been taken on principle and maintained with consistency, by any but an individual here or there, is that of religious belief" (p. 13).

life, and organize themselves in communal social arrangements.[18] In modern times this practice is best exemplified by peoples such as the Hutterites, Mennonites, and Doukhobors. Significantly, this mode of living has proven an effective means of preserving a pacifist point of view during times of conflict, – as will be touched upon later, the majority of Canadian pacifists who maintained their beliefs during the First World War were members of such communities, which seemed to provide them with a kind of mental resilience (or stubbornness, depending on your point of view) that was not typically found among non-sectarian pacifists. Moreover, members of such communities were less susceptible to 'war hysteria', i.e. the great social pressure which compelled individuals into service by means of guilt, insult, shaming, etc., and were consequently better able to maintain a pacifist position throughout the war.

Of course, Christian pacifism, likewise pacifism and Christianity, cannot be reduced to a single set of behaviours, nor a single way of thinking, nor a uniform set of beliefs. It manifests itself in different ways in different peoples at different times. And so, to say that one way is the definitive way or that all pacifists act and think according to this way would not only be incorrect, but a great injustice to the diversity of practices and beliefs that exist. Nevertheless, there are similarities among the different Christian pacifists, and these similarities provide a starting point for understanding.

Non-Sectarian Pacifism; The Religion of Humanity

If it is relatively straightforward to understand how religiously inspired persons arrive at a pacifist point of view and way of life, it is comparatively difficult to understand how and for

[18] Not all Christian pacifists go this route. The Quakers, for example, have in general been very socially active, i.e. not separate from their larger societies. Overall, isolated communalism as a way of living appears to be on the decline.

what reasons the non-religious end up there. Canadian war historian Thomas Socknat (1987) has suggested that "non-sectarian [pacifists] were inspired by the enlightenment's emphasis on rationalism and humanism" (p. 19). A similar observation was made by Sri Aurobindo (1950/1999) when he theorized that modern rationalistic and humanistic morality was the result of a growing acceptance of something he termed 'the intellectual religion of humanity'[19], a phenomenon attributed to eighteenth century enlightenment thinkers, essentially a modern substitute for the "formal spiritualism of ecclesiastical Christianity" (p. 294). It is described as follows:

> The fundamental idea is that mankind is the godhead to be worshipped and served by man and that the respect, the service, the progress of the human being and human life are the chief duty and chief aim of the human spirit… War, capital punishment, the taking of human life, cruelty of all kinds whether committed by the individual, the State or society, not only physical cruelty, but moral cruelty, the degradation of any human being… under whatever specious plea or in whatever interest, the oppression and exploitation of man by man, of class by class, of nation by nation and all those habits of life… which religion and ethics formerly tolerated or even favoured in practice… are crimes against the religion of humanity, abominable to its ethical mind… to be fought against always, in no degree to be tolerated. Man must be sacred to man regardless of all distinctions of race, creed, colour, nationality, status, political or social advancement… This, speaking largely, is the idea and spirit of the intellectual religion of humanity (Aurobindo, 1950/1999, p. 295-296)

[19] Aurobindo (1999) on the religion of humanity: "Democracy, socialism, pacifism are to a great extent its by-products or at least owe much of their vigour to its inner presence." (p. 295)

If Christian pacifism can be understood as the outcome of acceptance of a set of premises, likewise non-sectarian pacifism can be understood in this way. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to suggest that the acceptance of Aurobindo's religion of humanity, or something very similar, provides the foundation for many of the non-sectarian forms of pacifism.

One further distinction that can be made between sectarian and non-sectarian forms of pacifism is that non-sectarian approaches have traditionally been more socially oriented. In contrast to sectarian pacifists who have in general tended to take a separational and isolationist approach towards application of their ideals, non-sectarian pacifists have been interested in introducing social reform – transforming society through peace. Markedly, this fits with Aurobindo's (1950/1999) expectations concerning the objects of the religion of humanity: "[t]he aim of the religion of humanity… was and still is to re-create human society in the image of three kindred ideas, liberty, equality and fraternity." (p. 298)

Tolstoy

Tolstoy is of course best known for his great literary achievements *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*. But the Russian novelist also wrote extensively on the subjects of Christianity, social reform, anarchism, and pacifism. And even though the author's latter works are often overshadowed by his great novels, they are arguably Tolstoy's superior contributions to thought and to humanity. In order to better understand Tolstoy's pacifist views, it would first be helpful to touch upon the experiences that led him to think as he did. And this begins with a spiritual awakening.

Tolstoy's (1921/2005a) religious conversion occurred in his fiftieth year following a period of intense psychic distress:

> My question – that which at the age of fifty brought me to the verge of suicide – was the simplest of questions, lying in the soul of every man from the foolish child to the wisest elder: it was a question without answering which one cannot live, as I had found by experience. It was: 'What will come of what I am doing today or shall do tomorrow? – What will come of my whole life?' (p. 21).

The result was at first the author's wholesale adoption of Russian orthodox Christianity. But this was not to last. Tolstoy was unable to reconcile the great contradictions he perceived between the teachings of Christ and the those of the Church. Their apparent irreconcilability led him to re-examine both his own convictions and the 'Christianity' he had been taught since birth:

> I was troubled most that the miseries of humanity, the habit of judging one another, of passing judgement upon nations and religions, and the wars and massacres which resulted in consequence, all went on with the approbation of the Church. The doctrine of Jesus… was extolled by the Church in words, but at the same time the Church approved what was incompatible with the doctrine." (Tolstoy, 1889/2014b, p. 3); "I had been taught… I was taught… I was taught… I was taught… Then I was taught… From infancy to manhood I learned to venerate things that were in direct contradiction to the law of Jesus" (Tolstoy, 1889/2014b, p. 10).

Ultimately, this search led Tolstoy to a new understanding of what it meant to be a practicing Christian, – an understanding founded principally upon the belief that Christ's teaching of non-resistance to evil is essential. In fact, he came to regard non-resistance to evil as the fundamental teaching of Christ:

> [t]he command, '*Resist not evil*,' is the central point of Jesus' doctrine; it is not a mere verbal affirmation; it is a rule whose practice is obligatory. It is verily the key to the

> whole mystery… When we regard it as a command impossible of performance, the value of the entire doctrine is lost." (Tolstoy, 1889/2014b, p. 11)

Tolstoy's new understanding of Christianity served as the inspiration for much of his later pacifist writings.

From this new understanding followed Tolstoy's convictions regarding the applicability of Christian principles to humanity's ills. He came to think of the Christian mode of life as a practical and effective means of establishing lasting peace between both individual persons and nations – which he considered the whole purpose of Christianity: "[t]he whole doctrine of Jesus has but one object, to establish peace – the kingdom of God – among men [sic]." (Tolstoy, 1889/2014b, p. 69) Further, he reasoned that if Christianity were understood and practiced in its 'true' sense the result would be nothing less than the complete restructuring of all existing social arrangements: "Christianity in its true sense puts an end to government." (Tolstoy, 1894/2016c, p. 142)[20] Thus, Tolstoyan anarchism.

Tolstoy's moral philosophy was one of individual ethics, stressing personal responsibility, development of character, and action in accord with principle. While he is often criticized as being excessively moralistic, his writing is not overly prescriptive. Rather, Tolstoy recognized that different people have different truths and different understandings of what is good and what is evil. Even though the author personally considered Christianity a superior mode of life, he recognized that it was not the only mode of life, and that it could not and should not be forced upon others: "Christianity is a new and higher conception of human life. A new conception of life cannot be imposed on men; it can only be freely assimilated." (Tolstoy,

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[20] "The time will come and is inevitably coming when all institutions based on force will disappear through their uselessness, stupidity, and even inconvenience becoming obvious to all." (Tolstoy, 1894/2016c, p. 165)

1894/2016c, p. 112) It is for this reason that Tolstoy considered non-violence an ethical imperative, as it is the only possible way to peaceably account for conflicting definitions of good and evil. He explains the need for a non-violent approach in the following way:

> in what way are we to decide men's disputes, when some men consider evil what others consider good, and *vice versa*? And to reply that that is evil which I think evil, in spite of the fact that my opponent thinks it good, is not a solution… There can only be two solutions: either to find a real unquestionable criterion of what is evil or not to resist evil by force… The second solution – not forcibly to resist what we consider evil until we have found a universal criterion – that is the solution given by Christ. (Tolstoy, 1889/2014b, p. 28-29)

Still, perhaps the most important feature of Tolstoy's pacifist theory, certainly the part that had the greatest effect upon other pacifists, was the emphasis he placed on the necessity of *actual* change in life. The basic idea being that if a better world is to come, if any improvements are to be made, it will be solely the result of our own efforts, and nothing more: "to aid ourselves to a better life, we need expect nothing from heaven or from earth; we need only to cease from ways that result in our own loss." (Tolstoy, 1889/2014b, p. 86) In other words, he stressed the necessity of *actually* living one's ideals. (Note the similarity between this and Rogers' ideas concerning the ideal self and congruence.) Moreover, this component of Tolstoy's work is particularly important as it further encouraged non-sectarian pacifists in their pursuit of better social systems and because it inspired sectarian pacifists to question the legitimacy of their separationist modes of living. In this way, he helped bridge the ideological divide between sectarian and non-sectarian pacifists.

Finally, Tolstoy's conviction in the necessity of actual change in life stems from his recognition of the great contradictions that exist between life and conscience. Simply, conscience and life can be reconciled in one of two ways: by a change in life or by a change in conscience. Tolstoy (1894/2016c) suggests we pursue the former:

> One need only compare the practice of life with the theory of it, to be dismayed at the glaring antagonism between our conditions of life and our conscience. Our whole life is in flat contradiction with all… we regard as necessary and right… we do the very opposite of all that our conscience and our common sense requires of us. (p. 70); [t]he antagonism between life and the conscience may be removed in two ways: by a change of life or by a change of conscience. And there would seem there can be no doubt as to these alternatives… And therefore it would seem inevitable for [Christians] to abandon the pagan forms of society which they condemn, and to reconstruct their social existence on the… principles they profess. (p. 81)

IV. Pacifism in Canada 1900 – 1918

Though pacifists have only ever represented a relatively small proportion of Canada's overall population, and "like women and native peoples, were seen as largely irrelevant in the flow of history" (Socknat, 1987, p. 5), their impact on the development of rights, freedoms, and definitions of citizenship has not gone entirely unnoticed. In regards to The First World War, pacifist resistance to the use of force offered a major challenge to the implementation of universal conscription in the form of conscientious objection, - refusal of military service on grounds of conscience - which in turn instigated broader social discussion regarding "questions of voluntarism, and obligation in a democratic society." (Shaw, 2009, p. 3) By refusing service

and choosing to go against the tide of public opinion pacifists inspired discussion concerning rights within Canada and consequently played an influential role in determining what it means to be a Canadian citizen.[21] Likewise, pacifist activity in Canada during the First World War functioned as a kind of 'thought catalyst' for the general public, challenging not only the idea that Government has the right to exact military service from its citizens, but also the prevailing moral norms of the country.[22]

The following section will clarify who the Canadian pacifists were during The First World War, what brought them to Canada, their relationship to the Canadian government and public during wartime, and finally what it was about their actions that warrants discussion today.

Canadian Pacifists

Pacifists in Canada during the early twentieth century consisted primarily of members of one of the country's five historic peace churches, which includes the Mennonites, Hutterites, Quakers, Tunkers (also called the Brethren in Christ), and Doukhobors. These different groups of people immigrated into Canada throughout the mid eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries, with the Doukhobors being the last to arrive in 1899. Notably, "Tolstoy donated the royalties from his [final major] work, *Resurrection*, to [help resettle the Doukhobors in Canada]" (Socknat, 1987, p. 17).

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[21] "It is important to remember that the experiences of conscientious objectors in the first world war took place before the 'rights revolution'. Their assertion of their right *not* to serve in the military was part of that transformation in the discourse of citizenship." (Shaw, 2009, p. 7); "As a prophetic minority, they were influential beyond their numbers." (Socknat, 1987, p. 10)

[22] "The continuing experience of war and the questionable state of international order… gives significance… to the pacifist ideal and its role in the preservation of the moral basis of Canada's cultural identity, which includes the right of dissent, the right to freedom of conscience, respect for the non-violent resolution of conflict, and a commitment to achieving racial and religious harmony, gender equality, and social and economic justice for all." (Socknat, 1987, p. 5)

Sectarian pacifists came to Canada for two primary reasons: first, the prospect of inexpensive land and the opportunity that comes with it; second, government recognition and *protection* of their religious values and atypical ways of living. The second reason was particularly important as many of these groups faced oppression and persecution in their respective countries of origin: "[g]uarantees of freedom from military service were more important for these groups than the quality, quantity, and price of land." (Shaw, 2009, p. 45)[23] And, as the Canadian Government was at the time eager to settle the west, that is, it was interested in 'nation building', it eagerly welcomed the different pacifist sects and their beliefs into the country.

In fact, not only did the Government of Canada welcome these different peoples to the country, it legally recognized their pacifistic styles of living and granted them exemption from military service on condition of the payment of annual fines. This recognition was officially documented in the Militia Act of 1793. And though the act was amended several times leading up to the First World War, upon the outset of war "[t]he non-conformist pacifist traditions of all [the historic peace churches] were protected by Canadian law." (Socknat, 1987, p. 15)

In addition to the historic peace churches, pacifist groups in Canada included the Jehovah's Witnesses and Christadelphians, as well as several other smaller 'radical' congregations of the more traditional Churches, e.g. Baptists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, etc. And, of course, there were individual persons who rejected war independently of the larger

[23] "[T]he pacifist sects represented a radical revolutionary threat of unknown potential. Once the authorities reacted, large-scale persecution of Anabaptists occurred. Consequently, they began their search for a new home, a place where they could live according to their consciences – a search that ultimately brought them to Canada." (Socknat, 1987, p. 12)

group they were a part of, though actions of this sort were the exception rather than the rule. Consider Socknat (1987):

> Jehovah's Witnesses, Doukhobors, and the more traditional peace sects – Mennonites, Hutterites, and Quakers – formed the backbone of pacifist dissent in Canadian society and would provide the major resistance to compulsory military service in the course of the twentieth century... Outside the religious sects there was little pacifist activity in Canada's early past (p. 19).

Notably, pacifists who were not members of one of the five historic peace churches were not recognized and were therefore not protected under the Militia Act.

Altogether, it has been estimated that there were approximately twenty-six thousand (Shaw, 2009, p. 10) potential conscientious objectors in Canada during the First World War (an exceedingly small amount when considered in relation to the overall population, which was at the time around eight million), though this number is difficult to be certain of as "figures for conscientious objectors were not kept" (Shaw, 2009, p. 9). Besides, as most individuals who sought exemption did so on grounds other than conscience, it is almost impossible the know the exact number of pacifists in Canada during this time.

World War One and a Shifting Public Opinion

World War One officially began in August 1914, conscription was established in August 1917, the union government came to power in December 1917, and in April 1918 the Canadian government cancelled all exemptions from service except for conscientious exemption. A rude awakening for Canadians – not to mention the world at large. If this series of events was

shocking to the public generally, it was especially alarming to those who held pacifist beliefs and maintained a pacifistic way of living.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty facing pacifists during this period was that the broader public adopted a point of view contradictory and at times openly hostile to their beliefs and way of life. Curiously, as Canada at the time was predominantly Christian, and likewise Canadian pacifism was almost exclusively if not entirely founded upon Christian principles, that the public adopted a point of view wholly contradictory to that of the pacifists appears to be somewhat of a inconsistency. In reality, this fact serves as an excellent example of how a set of principles differently interpreted can result in a multitude of diverse and even conflicting beliefs. At any rate, leading up to and upon the outset of war there occurred a massive shift in public opinion within Canada. Though pacifism had previously been viewed as both "[r]espectable and uncontroversial" (Socknat, 1987, p. 43), in the presence of a rising militarism it came to be regarded with suspicion and disdain.

One of the primary sources of this shift in opinion was that the major churches all more or less adopted the position of the government towards war.[24] In other words, they folded under pressure. Not only did the churches come to support the war in spirit, they actively encouraged young men to enlist, eventually recasting the war as some kind of apocalyptic crusade: "[t]he passionate call to arms… was transformed into an… eschatological confrontation between good and evil, between Christianity and the Antichrist epitomized by Germany." (Socknat, 1987, p.

[24] "the nation's churches… [were anxious] to prove themselves [and] gradually identified almost totally with national policy. As a result, the religious press championed the war as a righteous cause." (Socknat, 1987, p. 49); "[The pacifist point of view was] silenced by the rising tide of militant Christian patriotism." (Socknat, 1987, p. 48)

50)[25] Consequently, military service was considered the fulfillment of a divine responsibility. And, as a result of mainstream Christianity adopting this position, pacifism appeared to most as something absurd, and, worse yet, a moral vice. Thus the vast majority of Canadians were unsympathetic toward the difficult decisions faced by pacifists during the war, - country or conscience. Among other things, this shift in opinion resulted in disenfranchisement, hateful rhetoric, scapegoating, and misapplication of the law (Shaw, 2009, p. 46).

Conscription, Exemption, and Conscience

Conscription is compulsory service. Basically, it is when the government decides for individual persons whether or not they will serve in war, and often in what capacity. Clearly, the introduction of conscription posed a major challenge to ideas of social liberty and individual rights within Canada.[26] For some, it posed a major challenge to conscience.

Conscription was introduced in Canada for the first time on August 28 1917. It was enacted largely in response to the needs of war time Britain and to make up for the relatively

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[25] Consider Mill (1859/2006) on the subject of Christianity: "By Christianity I hear mean what is accounted such by all churches and sects – the maxims and precepts contained in the new testament. These are considered sacred, and accepted as laws, by all professing Christians. Yet it is scarcely too much to say that not one Christian in a thousand guides or tests his individual conduct by reference to those laws. The standard to which he does refer it, is the custom of his nation, his class, or his religious profession." (p. 48)

[26] Both Aurobindo (1950/1999) and Tolstoy (1894/2016c) considered compulsory service a negation of liberty, and even destructive of the benefits of society: "For a whole century mankind thirsts and battles after liberty and earns it with a bitter expense of toil, tears and blood; the century that enjoys without having fought for it turns away as from a puerile illusion and is ready to renounce the depreciated gain as the price of some new good." (Aurobindo, p. 10); "Universal military service is only the internal inconsistency inherent in the social conception of life carried to its furthest limits" (Tolstoy, p. 99) "But with universal military service it comes to pass that men, after making every sacrifice to get rid of the cruelty of strife and the insecurity of existence, are called upon to face all the perils they had meant to avoid… universal military service destroys all the benefits of the social order" (Tolstoy, p. 105).

small contribution Canada had made towards the war effort previously. Notably, conscription was not always binding, and there were opportunities for individuals to legally get out of service. These 'opportunities' are what is known as exemption.

One of the rarer kinds of exemption citizens could apply for was conscientious exemption. As alluded to earlier, it is exemption from military service on grounds of conscience. Conscientious exemption was the most difficult form of exemption to obtain and was granted almost exclusively to members of one of the five historic peace churches. And even if someone was a member of one of the recognized pacifist churches, they still had to present their case before a tribunal. Because of this, exemption on grounds of conscience depended largely on how sympathetic local tribunals were to the pacifist point of view – many were not. For example, it was not uncommon for tribunals to ask potential conscientious objectors what they would do if one of their family members were being assaulted, and "[i]n the discourse of Canadian tribunals, acceptance of any level of force under any circumstances was read as evidence of hypocrisy in claiming conscientious objection." (Shaw, 2006, p. 39) Along with a hostile public, this is one of the primary reasons why the majority of pacifists sought exemption from service on grounds other than conscience. However, Canadian tribunals did hear many cases and granted a substantial number of exemptions: "[by] the war's end, local tribunals had heard over 300,000 appeals, granting exemption in 86,000 cases." (Shaw, 2006, p. 41) Still, conscientious exemption was rarely applied for and rarely granted.

It is important to recognize that the Canadian public, especially English-speaking Canadians, mostly supported the introduction of conscription. Recognizing this, it is interesting that even though Canadians approved of conscription in speech, the vast majority of those conscripted sought exemption of one sort or another. Remarkably, of the more than 400,000

Canadians conscripted, “93.7 percent of those called asked to be excused from serving” (Shaw, 2006, p. 41). This figure led historian Amy Shaw (2006) to the conclusion that “[a]lthough the majority of Canadians had supported conscription as a means of equalization of sacrifice, they had apparently supported it as appropriate for someone else.” (p. 41) In light of this statistic, it is also curious that pacifists received such a hard time for objecting to war – it appears that many other Canadians felt and acted similarly. The general disinclination to be drafted led the Borden government to cancel all exemptions – except for conscientious exemption, which was granted to very few. (Shaw, 2006, p. 41) Of course, many Canadians did voluntarily choose to serve in the war. And this includes members of the historic peace churches. However, like the election of the Union government, the freedom surrounding voluntarism is questionable: “The average young man was under almost irresistible pressure to enlist. In Canada as in Britain, women and children were encouraged to shame men into uniform. Not to be in uniform labelled one a slacker or shirker” (Socknat, 1987, p. 62).

Outcomes

The First World War is a defining event in Canada’s past. Among other things, it brought the then disparate peoples of Canada together and helped forge a Canadian national identity. It also irreversibly altered Canada’s relationship with Britain and to the rest of the world. Moreover, it marked a change in the relationship between Canadian citizens and their government: “the First World War marked a turning point in the relationship between the citizen and the state.” (Shaw, 2006, p. 7) Pacifist activity during this time is notable principally because of its effects on discourses of citizenship.

If absolutely nothing else, the experiences of Canadian pacifists during The First World War raises several disquieting questions. Most importantly (and what I happen to be interested in) is this: at what point does conscience stop mattering? When do individual persons resign their sovereignty and become instead passive instruments of government? Should they ever?[27] Though these questions arise out of the past, they are nonetheless relevant to us today. Given the increasing power and centralization of governments, they may be even more relevant today.

Conclusion

At the outset of this paper I forwarded an argument encompassing three basic ideas. They were: (1) that action in accord with conscience is productive of psychological health; (2) that for conscience to serve as an adequate guide to conduct it has to be developed; and (3) that both the expression and development of conscience require, or at least appreciably benefit from, the greatest amount of social liberty possible.

The supposition that action in accord with conscience is productive of psychological health is in particular founded upon three of the themes examined in this paper. The first being Tolstoy's observations regarding the contradiction between conscience and life, the miserable condition which results[28], and the way out of said condition. Second are client-centered therapy's

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[27] "To remove freedom in order to get rid of disorder, strife and waste, to remove diversity in order to get rid of separatism and jarring complexities is the impulse of order and regimentation by which the arbitrary rigidity of the intellectual reason seeks to substitute its straight line for the difficult curves of the process of Nature. But freedom is as necessary to life as law and regime; diversity is as necessary as unity to our true completeness." (Aurobindo, 1950/1999, p. 153); "The over-centralisation which is the condition of a working uniformity, is not the healthy method of life." (Aurobindo, 1950/1999, p. 243)

[28] "But, however much they try to deceive themselves and others, they all know that what they are doing is opposed to all beliefs which they profess, and in the depth of their souls, when they are left alone with their conscience, they are ashamed and miserable at the recollection of it" (Tolstoy, 1894/2016c, p. 121).

models of self, ideal-self, incongruence, and congruence, in particular the process of achieving congruence. Third is Frankl's understanding of the function and importance of conscience.

The claim that for conscience to serve as an adequate guide to conduct it has to be developed is based primarily on Mill and Aurobindo's thoughts regarding development and well-being. Additionally, this idea is supported by Rogers' and Jung's recounting of the changes in personality that occur during successful therapy. Likewise, the conclusion that both the expression and development of conscience require, or at least appreciably benefit from, the greatest amount of social liberty possible is built upon the work of Mill, Aurobindo, Rogers, and Jung.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, more questions are raised than answered. And so, in closing, I would like to leave off with a brief treatment of one of said questions: what would life look like if it were directed by conscience? In the first place, it would be diverse, for there are as many consciences as there are individual persons. Moreover, conscience is situationally dependent, its exact expression being a combination of a person's ideals, past experiences, social position, and their immediate circumstances. Therefore, a life directed by conscience would be involve a great variety of behaviours and modes of living, – which is not so different from life now. However, and unlike our present reality, a life directed by conscience would likely be a closer approximation of social ideals. For if conscience is the inner expression of ideals, and if this inner expression came to serve as the primary guide of action, then, presumably, reality would come to greatly resemble our ideals, diverse as they may be. This is in fact the hope of both Tolstoy (1894/2016c) and Aurobindo (1950/1999), and the change of life they thought necessary for the realization of a better world –

> All these material reforms may be realized, but the position of humanity will not be improved. But only let each man [sic], according to his powers, at once realize in his life the truth he knows, or at least cease to support the falsehoods he is supporting in the place of the truth, and at once, in this year 1893, we should see such reforms as we do not dare to hope for within a century – the emancipation of men [sic] and the reign of truth upon earth. (Tolstoy, p. 202); an inner change could alone give some chance of durability to the unification [of humanity]. That change would be the growth of the living idea or religion of humanity; for only so could there come the psychological modification of life and feeling and outlook which would accustom both individual and group to live in their common humanity first and most…Until man [sic] in his heart is ready, a profound change of the world conditions cannot come… A frame may [be made] but the soul will have still to grow into that mechanical body. (Aurobindo, p. 277-283)

Limitations

The biggest limitation of this research is that the current relevance of the psychotherapies examined (client-centered therapy, logotherapy, and analytical psychology) are uncertain, as the field of counselling psychology has taken a marked turn in recent years away from philosophic understandings of the psyche and towards biological ones. Other limitations include: non-essentialists views of personhood, deontological arguments both in favour and against extending personal liberty, and feminist pacifist activity during the First World War.

Future Directions

There are several promising future areas of research arising from this document. They can be sorted into four broad categories: conscience, pacifism in Canada, liberty and psychological health. Examples of the kinds of questions include: can conscience be operationalized? Can conscience be understood in terms of specific brain areas and/or particular neurotransmitters? What is the relationship between conscience and psychological health? Is liberty, that is freedom of choice, productive of psychological health? In collectivist cultures is conscience considered important? Etc.

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