The potential for civility

The Potential for Civility: Labour and Love Among British Pacifists in the Second World War

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Abstract
Is civility an end in itself, or simply a means to other ends? The relationship between means and ends marks theoretical debates about the meanings and implications of civility. This article addresses how these tensions played out in the context of the particular forms of civility promoted by pacifists in Second World War Britain. More specifically, it focuses on the experiences of those pacifists who set up community farms as a way to try and merge both means and ends through a form sociality marked by love, mutual labour and conscience. The paper makes two arguments. First, the attempt to merge means and ends meant that the compromises of the present could be hard to overcome. The distinctly pacifist civility of Second World War Britain therefore tended to reproduce particular middle class and masculine ways of being in the world. Second, it was the very tension between means and ends however that gave claims of pacifist civility fraught potency. For many British pacifists, pacifist forms of civility were an attempt to propose an alternative, not despite, but because of the space between their aspiration for cooperation and love, and the disappointments of experience. Pacifist civility was understood as a form of potential. But it is also important to note that potentiality is marked by two possibilities: the potential to do and the potential not to do. It is on this delicate balance between the inequities of the here and now and the aspired for future that pacifist civility stood.

Keywords: civility, pacifism, Second World War, Britain, violence, nonviolence, means-ends

Introduction

In the face of the violence of the Second World War, groups of English pacifists argued that it was still possible to lead a life of peace. From their perspective, violence could not be countered through more violence, and peaceful goals could only ever be achieved through nonviolent methods. Many of these people would set up agricultural communes that tried to show that they could live according to principles of love, mutual labour and conscience in the midst of war. However,

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they were widely criticised for what was seen as a naive and self-indulgent failure to provide any constructive response to the horrors of fascism. George Orwell, for example, wrote that English pacifists were 'irresponsible' (1942), lumping them together with 'every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac… in England' (1937, 161). More broadly, it was claimed that pacifism merely served to preserve individual purity, whilst reproducing violence in other places and at other times. By refusing to fight, nonviolence was simply failing to respond to actually existing violence, and therefore indirectly contributing to its success. In short, pacifists were accused of having no viable means through which to reach their goal of peace.

The dispute over the relationship between pacifist means and their ends speaks directly to tensions found more broadly within civility. Differences in approaches to the relationship between means and ends have served as fissure marking particular theoretical approaches to civility. As argued in the introduction this this volume, there is a tradition of thought that sees civility as primarily an instrumental practice that helps us live side by side. For people like Richard Sennet, for example, civility is simply a means to other ends (1976, 264; see also Boyd 2006; Calhoun 2000). From this perspective, civility is a secondary virtue that creates a space for us to live beside other people without strife. However, such an approach to civility faces criticisms that it is a thin and watery virtue - all surface presentation and no content, and therefore coming dangerously close to looking like hypocrisy (Oakshott 1990; Sinopoli 1995).

In contrast, there is another way of looking at civility that sees it as an end in and of itself. We are not civil, from this point of view, as a way of arriving at other goals, but because civility, in and of itself, embodies the principles or virtues that we seek to promote. Edwards Shils (1997) has argued, for example, that civility is a 'thick' substantive virtue in and of itself; an active and positive form of sociality. For such a view, civility contains within itself key values and behaviours, which should be valued in themselves. This is a tradition that can see civility as

being fundamentally concerned with 'conscience, truth, suffering' (Mehta 2015, 37), However, critics of such perspectives see its proponents as complicit in exclusion and injustice (Keane 1998; Volpi 2011). Promoting civility in situations of inequality and violence, they argue, leads to accusations of failing to provide viable means to tackle injustice.

Historically, the relationship between means and ends has been central to a great deal of philosophy and social science (Kant 2009; Weber 1946; Sahlins 1976). At the same time, there have also been repeated analytical attempts to break down the very distinction, either through a focus on pure means, pure ends, or by combining both means and ends (Agamben 2000; Arendt 1958; Benjamin 1995; Dewey 1939, 1957; Lambek 2010; McIntyre 2007). Theorists of civility have also tried to see it as the merger of means and ends, bringing together functional and intrinsic values simultaneously. As Michael Oakshott argued, for example, civility combines instrumentalism and virtues such as love and respect (1990, 147). However, although the merger of means and ends remains a topic of much analytical reflection, the historical and ethnographic record suggests that it is more often an aspiration than an achievement (Laidlaw 2013; Schielke 2015). Means-ends thinking is easier to dissolve in theory than in practice.

Through an analysis of struggles over means and ends, this article examines the dilemmas of a *pacifist form of civility* in Second World War Britain, as they grappled with the relationship between means and ends. In line with the introduction to this volume, civility is used as a term of analytical provocation, rather than simply an ethnographic description. The pacifists described below rarely use the word 'civility' in their own encounters. However, the questions they tried to answer in relation to nonviolence in the face of conflict, and the tensions between means and ends that this produce, fit squarely within wider theoretical debates about civility. It is important to note though that not all traditions of civility are pacifist. And not all forms of pacifism – in the broadest sense – are

committed to civility. British pacifists though tried to show that their particular form of civility was not only the best way to overcome and prevent violence, but was also an example of the type of society that they hoped to produce - one based on love, labour and conscience.

This attempt to merge means and ends through pacifist forms of civility can be seen as an example of what more contemporary analysis has called 'prefigurative politics' (Boggs 1977; Cooper 2016; Stiltanen 2015). This is a form of action that tries to embody 'within the ongoing … practice of a movement [...] those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal' (Boggs 1977). The future yet to come, is brought into the here and now. In doing so, prefigurative politics tries to short circuit the gap between means and ends (Cooper 2016). Ends are not simply a distant objective, but an immanent practice in the present. Pacifist forms of civility can be seen as part of this attempt to avoid a linear conception of politics, by trying to bridge the gap between the limitations of the present and the aspired for future.

This article makes two related arguments. First, it argues that the pacifist civility of Second World War Britain, also tended to reproduce particular middle-class and masculine ways of being in the world. As with prefigurative politics more generally, pacifist civility was embedded in already existing social relationships, complete with their own inequalities and contradictions, and remained haunted by traces of the very hierarchies it sought to overcome. Bridging the gap between the future and the present, meant that compromises of the here and now were always present. In this context, pacifist labour was often unequally distributed or unproductive, their love could seem fickle, narcissistic or patriarchal, and conscience could look like cowardice.

However, the second argument of the article is that the tension between means and ends, gave claims of pacifist civility its potency. Whilst the struggles of British pacifists might often have resulted in apparent failure or contradiction, for the

pacifists themselves, this gap also marked out a space of potential. As Seligman, Weller, Puett and Simon argue more generally, civility takes place in the subjunctive 'as if' mode (2008). Pacifist civility in Second World War Britain was an attempt to propose an alternative, not despite, but because of the space between their aspiration for cooperation and love, and the disappointments of experience. Yet, if civility is a form of imaginative potential, it is important to note, as Georgio Agamben has reminded us, potentiality is marked by two possibilities: the potential to do and the potential not to do (1998). Pacifist civility was therefore fraught and ambivalent, standing on the delicate balance between the inequities of the present and the aspired for future.

Before getting into the bulk of the article, it is necessary to say a word or two about method. The article is based on the letters, diaries, unpublished memoirs, autobiographies and oral history interviews of British pacifists. Pacifists left behind a rich record as they attempted to inscribe their conscience and make it legible (Kelly 2014). Although many of the sources are contemporary, it is important to recognize that memoirs and oral history interviews have to be read in the light of hindsight and the widespread understanding of the Second World War as a 'good war'. Whether contemporary or not, what we have access to are the relatively public processes of ethical 'objectification' (Keane 2010). The sources should therefore be understood as efforts towards justification and persuasion, as pacifists sought to explain to themselves and to others, how and why they were taking their particular stance.

The article is structured as follows: It focuses on the particular example of a group of community farms associated with the leading pacifist John Middleton Murry as they exemplify many of the issues of pacifist civility. Following a brief introduction of Middleton Murry, the next section introduces the ways in which British pacifists understood the forms of sociality that shaped their approach to civility, marked by labour, love and conscience. The article then examines the particular relationship between means and ends in pacifist civility, before

describing how these played out in practice. The article ends with a discussion on the relationship between potential and doubt.

The Many Lives of John Middleton Murry

If we are to understand the complexity of British pacifist communes in the middle to the twentieth century, there is probably no better place to start than the person of John Middleton. Middleton Murry was one of the dominant intellectual presences in British pacifism from the late 1930s until the end of the Second World War. A literary critic, Middleton Murry is probably best remembered today, if at all, for his friendship with D.H. Lawrence and marriage to the New Zealand modernist novelist, Katherine Mansfield. However, throughout the years of the Second World War he helped set the British pacifist agenda, largely through his controversial editorship of the largest pacifist news Peace News. Middleton Murry was married four times, and was variously a Revolutionary Socialist and a Christian spiritualist. At one point he considered becoming an Anglican priest, and ended his life an enthusiastic Conservative party voter. Today his body lies buried in a quiet Sussex graveyard, where he is described as an 'author and farmer'. Middleton Murry therefore serves as an important reminder of the ways in which pacifism can contain many different, and often contradictory projects.

Despite Middleton Murry's own particularities, his journey towards and eventually away from pacifism was part of a much broader trend. For much of the 1920s he was a magazine editor and literary critic, known for his interest in Romanticism. In 1931 though Middleton Murry discovered Marxism and joined the intellectual and revolutionary vanguard of the British left, the Independent Labour Party (ILP). Whilst a member of the ILP, Middleton Murry supported the limited use of violence, but only in the service of the particular end of revolutionary socialist change.[1] He even urged physical training, 'so that a young revolutionary socialist

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[1] Taking Bearings, 1936. Papers of John Middleton Murry, University of Edinburgh (JMM), MS 2508.

should feel he is capable of taking care of himself in a street fight'.[2] However, Middleton Murry would soon begin to feel that opposition to war rather than revolution was the best way to defeat capitalism. From the late 1930s a particular interpretation of Anglican Christianity dominated his life. And, as with many other Christian pacifist of the time, he begun to see pacifism as a way of renewing the church, providing a more authentic and intimate form of religion, rethinking both the means and ends of his political and personal commitments (1945).

In the mid 1930s, with the support of wealthy pacifists, Middleton Murry purchased a rambling house in Essex - known as the Adelphi Centre - that he hoped would become a community settlement. The Centre was run by Max Plowman, Middleton Murry's great friend, as well as a poet, pacifist and First World War veteran. The original idea was to set up a cultural center and farm, with half the residents recruited from the unemployed working class. However, for reasons we shall discuss below, the Adelphi Centre soon folded, and Middleton Murry would move to Lodge Farm in Suffolk, which he brought with his own funds.

Love, Labour and the Sociality of Pacifist Civility
In the turn to community living, pacifists such as Middleton Murry, were taking part in a much wider and longer tradition of 'community experiments', involving a range of different groups, with goals ranging from anarcho-communism to reactionary neo-medievalism (Hardy 2000). By the early 1940s, in addition to the community farms like Middleton Murry's, there were also several communes inspired by Tolstoy, as well as various Christian settlements. These community farms could be relatively inclusive, containing pacifists from across the range of socialists, anarchists, humanitarians, and Christians.

Pacifist civility was marked by a commitment to the productive power of love, labour and conscience. This was a form of civility that stressed the perceived

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[2] Memorandum on the Organisation of the New ILP. Late 1932. JMM, MS 2508.

virtues of sincere cooperation and community. Cyril Wright, for example, who established his own farm to the south of London, would write at the time that he rejected pacifism as a negative stance, and instead saw it as a call to 'positive service'.[3] Peace was seen here as more than simply being about the absence of war, but as a productive contribution to social life. For Middleton Murry, and those he influenced, community living was a matter of leading exemplary pacifists lives - based on the principle of love for your neighbour, and thereby demonstrating the possibility of living at peace. He would write that 'our task is always to take the most creative and constructive action in the face of existing circumstances… the way of justice and love' (1940,1).

Crucially, for Middleton Murry, love was not an abstract issue, but one rooted in human relationships, and above all in his own relationships. He would write to Mary Gamble, for example, – his mistress and future wife - that 'I am convinced that love such as ours is the one complete and simple reply to the war: - that it is the only real pacifism' (Lea 1959, 68). Middleton Murry would go onto claim that 'love is the only means to Freedom. Finally, except for Love, freedom is impossible to man' (Lea 1959,175). But as well shall see below, the meanings and implications of such love could be deeply ambiguous in practice.

Labour was seen as standing alongside love. Work on the farms was important as a way to produce food for others, and therefore be productive in a very literal sense. But labour was also understood as being significant as it provided a way to work on the self. This was not work on the self in some sort of monadic sense, but also as a way to promote cooperation. Finding a way to work together, to mutual benefit, rather than narrowly instrumental and individual gain, was at the heart of the turn to community farms. The newsletter of one community farm, for example, described such processes as the 'painstaking development in the

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[3] Papers of Cyril Wright, Imperial War Museum Archives (IWMA).

qualities which communal living demands'.[4] In this context, labouring on community farms was a way to build pacifist character.

The particular understanding of sociality promoted through pacifist civility was therefore substantively 'thick'- marked by love and mutual labour. In contrast, for some of the academic proponents of civility, it is 'thin' instrumental virtue that exists simply in surface displays of politeness. As Richard Boyd, for example, puts it, civility is 'functional… easing social conflicts and facilitating social interactions' (Boyd 2006, 863). However, civility can also be seen as was way to 'communicate basic moral attitudes of respect, tolerance and considerateness' (Calhoun 2000, 255). From this perspective, civility goes 'all the way down'. It is not merely about performance and artifice, but about the deep commitments and motivations of the people who practice it. Importantly, the pacifist civility of Second World War Britain was shot through with a desire to communicate deep seated commitments, marked most significantly by a focus on conscience (Kelly 2014). This was conscience understand as a form of moral agency that existed deep in the interiors of individuals. The moral force of this inner conscience lay in the ability to present it as transparently as possible to others (Keane 2010). But as we say see below, it could also be hard to make this conscience persuasive in public. And equally importantly, there was often a tension to the individual focus- marked by conscience, and the hope for community.

Pacifist Means, Ends and Perfection
Community farms provided an opportunity for British pacifists, such as Middleton Murry, to show that pacifist civility could be both a means and an end- a life lived in mutual labour, love and conscience, both as a method and a goal. In doing so they were often deeply influenced by the ideas of writer Gandhi and the writer Aldous Huxley. Gandhi had visited Britain in the 1930s, and stayed in a pacifist commune in East London, where is ideas of nonviolence were enthusiastically embraced. For Huxley, building on Gandhi (Mehta 2015), war could only bring

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[4] Kingsland Community Newsletter, Wright, IWMA.

about more war, and therefore the only way to bring about peace was through peaceful means.[5] He would write, for example, that: 'have peace and justice ever been secured by war? ... we all admit that the means employed determine the ends achieved … The man who uses violence as a means for securing the love of his family will certainly achieve quite another end' (1937, 10).

By the late 1930s it had become increasingly clear to many pacifists they could not prevent the outbreak of war. Pacifist principles offered no realistic means to stop fascism in its tracks. Throughout the 1930s, the British anti-war movement had been a broad alliance of socialist anti-militarists, liberal internationalists and advocates of Christian non-violence (Ceadel 1980). Often these positions could overlap, both in terms of specific individuals and ideals; Middleton Murry's own journey between radical socialism and Christian mysticism being a particular example. However, socialist anti-militarism, in particular, had never been pacifist in the absolutist sense. Middleton Murry in his socialist phase, for example had been attracted to revolutionary violence after all. In the face of fascism, the left wing of the movement begun to openly advocate the use of violence - the Spanish civil war being a significant turning point (Haapamaki 2005). As many socialists gravitated away from pacifism, Christian pacifism, albeit one with a heavy socialist influence, became the dominant stream (Ceadel 1980). This was a pacifism that was not based on a close interpretation of specific texts, or sanctioned by mainstream Protestant Churches. Instead, it was ecumenical, often veering towards mysticism. Above all, it sought inspiration in the perceived example of Christ's suffering and the commitment to love.

Against this context, a small minority of pacifists still tried to show that a pacifist society was possible. In the realization that pacifists could not offer practical solutions to prevent the twin horrors of war and fascism, many pacifists turned away from institutional forms of politics. Middleton Murry went so far as to claim

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[5] By the outbreak of the Second World War Huxley had gone to live in the United States of America.

that the prevention of war was not the goal of pacifism. [6] Instead, he argued that the 'pacifist cause will be won, if it is won, by those who have come to see that winning is a secondary affair. What maters is that men and women should bear their witness- and bear it, if need be, to the end' (1938, 11-12). Middleton Murry had broken entirely with instrumental arguments that pacifism could overcome violence, writing that 'do not be mislead by the clamorous demands for action-action-action… everything will fall into its place, if we keep the first thing first- and the first thing, and the last thing, for that matter, is that the movement itself shall be a community' (1941).

There are strong echoes here of Gandhian non-violence as a form of withdrawal - to the ashram of monastery for example - from the instrumental world of politics (Mehta 2015). However, many pacifists also saw the move as breaking from Gandhi, who had recruited for the First World War, and was deeply ambivalent about violence (Devji 2012). Middleton Murry now saw the goal of pacifist living as bearing witness to the possibility of peace. Pacifist witness might not be able to prevent war, but it could demonstrate that another way of life - one that shunned violence – was, just, possible. Pacifist means and ends had been shifted from preventing war, towards showing that another ways of life were possible.

Above all, the emphasis on the possibility of peace was based in a commitment to human perfectibility. For Huxley, 'men are capable of love for their fellows… the limitations imposed upon this love are of such a nature that it is always possible… to transcend them….' (1937, 32). The potential for 'peace' was something that human were already thought to hold within themselves. Huxley would write '… most people are detestable… But they're detestable because we detest them. If we liked them, they'd be likable' (1937). This faith in the ability of humanity to overcome misery stood in stark contrast to many of the dominant currents of what the historian Richard Overy has called the morbid age (2010). In

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[6] Taking Bearings, JMM.

1938, for example, Rheinhold Niebuhr, the American academic widely regard as the most influential protestant theologian of the time, and a former leading pacifist, stood up in Edinburgh to give the Gifford Lectures. He would argue that man sinned in hubristic efforts at self-transcendence (1940). For Niebuhr, 'the dream of perpetual peace and brotherhood for humanity is one which will never be fully realized' without divine intervention (1932, 22).

The pacifism of those committed to community farms implicitly drew on Quaker and Methodist ideas of human perfectibility – the notion that humans can be without sin and could be prefect on earth. British pacifists had a commitment to peace based on the belief that humans already contained within themselves the capacity to live peaceful lives. Their pacifism was therefore immanent, not transcendental. For such people, peace could be brought about through human sweat and tears. Peace was a struggle, but it was a struggle that humans had the potential to win.

In merging means and ends, pacifist hoped to get away from a central paradox. Pacifism was understood as radical departures from the reality of war. Yet, even a separation by a hair's breadth from the present risks being a step too far, consigning the longed for peace to an always distant future (compare Douzinas 2000; Guyer 2007; Lear 2006; Miyazaki 2004). British pacifists tried to overcome this temporal fissure through the collapse of means and ends, bringing the future into the here and now. But in doing so, so they risked compromising the future through the inequities of the present. Speaking more broadly, if prefigurative political action tries to bring the future into the present, it is still necessarily embedded in the very here and now that it tries to overcome. As feminist critics have pointed out in particular, actually existing prefigurative political movements can therefore continue to be skewered by hierarchies around class and gender (Stiltanen 2015). As such, pacifist civility can bear the footprint of the very social hierarchies within which it is formed and which it wants to challenge. In this context, the next section will therefore examine the social background and

cultural motivations of the people that came to live on pacifist communes.

Conscientious Objectors and Community Farms

When conscription was reintroduced in Britain in 1939, pacifists could apply for exemption on the grounds of conscience (Kelly 2014). The majority of people who came to work on community farms were these conscientious objectors to military service. Stereotypically, those who applied for exemption came from the intellectual middle classes, but in practice they ranged from skilled labourers to white-collar workers.[7] Among them, Quakers and Methodists were particularly prominent, but there were also members of the Church of England and Catholics, as well as Jehovah Witnesses, Christelphians, and others, including socialists and secular humanitarians. The vast majority of applicants claimed a mixture of religious and moral motivation for their objection.[8]

Tribunals could grant full or partial exemptions from military service on the grounds that the applicant carried out other work of 'national importance'. Over 65% of the 60,000 applicants were given some kind of alternative service (Barker 1982, 145). Many pacifists enthusiastically took up various forms of broadly humanitarian activities, as well as fire watching and civil defense. Working on community farms was a particularly popular option. Such alternative service provided pacifists the opportunity to show the rest of the country that they were not cowards, but motivated by a positive and peaceful conscience.

It is important to note here that conscientious objectors should, despite the criticisms they faced, be seen as relatively socially and politically privileged. Unmarried women, for example, could be conscripted into non-combatant roles from 1942; however, they found it very hard to gain registration as conscientious objectors, as officials would usually simply assign them to other forms of employment (Kelly 2014). Nationalists from the fringes of the UK or the Indian

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[7] Jobs of COs, April 1940, TC6, Box 1, File A, Mass Observation Archives (MOA), University of Sussex.
[8] Report on COs, July 1940, TC6, Box 1, File A, MOA.

Empire were also routinely denied recognition. Socialists, Catholics, and Jehovah Witnesses found it very hard as well. Conscientious objection was therefore a space largely preserved for loyal, male, white British Protestants.

Pacifist Labour

Life in pacifist communities - as they attempted to bring means and ends together - was not without its problems, despite, or even because of their commitment to the possibility of human perfection. Labouring on the farms was supposed to provide a way for pacifists to work on their own characters, to make a positive contribution to British society by growing food, and provide a model of peaceful cooperation. However, if pacifist farms were to be an opportunity to show that cooperation was possible, the fruits of pacifist labour were not always self-evident.

At one level, the largely untrained and inexperienced pacifists often struggled to be agriculturally productive. Middleton Murry, for example, had never farmed before, and estimated that the 'average efficiency of our members was anything between half and two thirds that of the ordinary agricultural worker' (1953, 51). The initial yields from the crops were often disappointing and the community farms depended on donations from supporters. The War Agricultural Committee decided there were too many pacifists working on Lodge Farm, and redirected several of them to work gangs, clearing drainage ditches. Similarly, over their first full summer of Cyril Wright's commune got behind in the planting of crops.[9] Ronald Duncan, another leading exponent of community living, got behind on the weeding on his own farm, and he lacked a plough to prepare the ground (Duncan 1944). One of Duncan's sows also died, as no one knew that it was dangerous for pigs to eat wet grass (1944). Duncan would write in his diary that by July 1941 'it is difficult not to loose patience with ourselves because of our own incompetence' (1944).

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[9] Wright, IWMA.

Cooperation could also be in short supply. At a practical level, the question of how to organise everyone's time on the community farms was particularly fraught, and it could be hard to forge pacifists into a common cause. Many of the pacifists working on farms were there precisely because they have objected to the compulsion of conscription and were highly individualist. This meant they could also be reluctant to take instructions or guidance from anyone, choosing, quite literally to plough their own furrow. As Dennis Hayes, who worked for the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors, wrote shortly after the war, it was 'only natural that the highly individual and libertarian COs should accepts such a system with grave misgiving, misgivings that from time to time flared up into disobedience and revolt in an effort to secure greater personal freedom' (1949, 212).

Perhaps most importantly, pacifist communes also found it difficult to move beyond the logic of private property, and were dominated by a largely middle class leadership. Proletarian recruits were hard to come by at the Adelphi Center, and after funding from its benefactors dried up, the Centre ended up as a home to a group of Basque orphans. Middleton Murry brought the new farm with his own money, as did Ronald Duncan, and it was often made very clear that these two men were first among equals. Geoffrey Platt described life on Middleton Murry's farm as a 'feudal system' and Middleton Murry as 'a total dictator.'[10] As Platt recalled it, Middleton Murry would constantly preach to them, dismissing any concerns, and living off their cheap labour. Duncan also got into an argument over whether he alone could decide whether to sell the horse over the wishes of the other members (1964, 253). Duncan would eventually close down the community, so that he could run the farm on his own. Middleton Murry would leave Lodge Farm, arguing that 'without our actual presence in the house, the members of the group would have to become far more responsible as human beings' (Lea 1959, 120). Labour, as both means and ends, could therefore take pacifists in many directions, not all of them civil, cooperative, or egalitarian. A

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[10] Interview with Geoffrey Platt, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive (IWMSA).

social movement based on both community and conscience, could find it hard to square the ideas of mutual labour with the individualistic ways in which it understood conscience.

Where is the Love?

Alongside labour, love was the key ideal of pacifist farms. Through love, it was hoped, pacifism could be experienced as both a means and an end. To talk about love –in contrast to labour perhaps - in terms of means to an end might seem slightly strange. In much European Romantic thought for example, love escapes the logic of instrumentality (Singer 2010). Recently Clara Han and Maya Mayblin have both analysed love and care as distinct from the calculus of cost effectiveness (Han 2012, 48; Mayblin 2012). However, British pacifists tried to show that love could itself be a productive form of sociality.

The turn to community living was deeply personal and intimate for Middleton Murry. Middleton Murry's daughter later argued that he saw community living as a partial response to his fraught home life (Middleton Murry 1986, 154). Indeed, Max Plowman was initially unconvinced by his friend's apparent desire for pacifist community. At the time, Middleton Murry's second marriage was failing, and Plowman wrote asking his friend in September 1935asking if it was the 'spontaneous expression of a deep, germinal religious faith…? Or is it a gesture of fatigue…' (Plowman 1944). Middleton Murry's third marriage, to Betty Cockbayne seemed an unusual choice to many of his friends. The uneducated daughter of a farmer, Cockbayne had previously worked as a housekeeper, and was known for her frequent rages. Life with Cockbayne seems to have been particularly miserable. He would write during this time, that he 'died everyday' (Lea 1959, 296). Home life was full of arguments, if not violence, and Middleton Murry also seems to have had some kind of nervous break down at least once during the marriage (Lea 1959, 238).

By time he set up Lodge farm, Middleton Murry was having an affair with Mary Gamble, who would eventually become his fourth wife. He did not leave Betty Cockbayne immediately because he was concerned that his inability to sustain a marriage reflected badly on pacifism. Eventually the strain became too much, and after a break down, he separated from Cockbayne. Middleton Murry seemed to hope that the farm, where he and Gamble would live together for the first time in October 1941, would be both a personal and a collective redemption (Lea 1959, 27).

Although Middleton Murry preached the importance of love, he does not seem to have been much liked by the other residents of the farm. Ronald Mallone, a peace activist and Lodge Farm resident, recalled in a later interview that Middleton Murry as a 'very egocentric… cold person' who 'talked down to people'. [11] Another pacifist described him as 'slightly inhuman… you could almost see the horns coming out of his head'.[12] There was a widespread sense that Middleton Murry was vain, instrumental and self-interested in his personal relationships. Geoffrey Platt, for example, worked on Middleton Murry's community for several years as the cowman. He had previously worked as an ambulance worker attached to the British army, but left after being inspired by Middleton Murry's writing. Platt would conclude that by the end Middleton Murry was 'the only person I can remember… that I loved and hated'.

The experience of Middleton Murry's farm was far from unique. There was a major dispute on Duncan's farm, for example, when two married couples argued over how to divide up a cottage. Duncan would write in his diary that the couples 'showed neither tact nor patience and a great deal of bad feeling was precipitated into that house within a few minutes' (Duncan 1944). Apparently, 'Betty accused Joan of stealing her napkins, and Joan accused Betty of not sweeping the common staircase' (Duncan 1944).

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[11] Interview with Ronald Mallone, IWMSA.
[12] Interview with Bryan Platt, IWMSA.

Importantly, love was not just about cooperation. It was clearly also about sex, and sometimes pacifists could get along all too well. Middleton Murry was not the only pacifist who had affairs. Peace News wrote that at the Adelphi Centre 'the gregarious had their fill of human society in the bedrooms and bathrooms - the latter being responsible for the wholesale breaking down of inhibitions about taking one's bath in public'.[13] Heartbreak was also not unusual. One of the members of the Lodge Farm community, a former parson, tried to commit suicide after he unsuccessfully wooed another member (1953, 97). However, more sexually conservative Christian pacifists were often upset by the apparent erotic adventures of others. The fact that Gamble and Middleton Murry lived together whilst he was still married to someone else caused a minor scandal. There seems to have been a small campaign, led by the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, to have him removed from the editorship of Peace News. Despite that fact that Middleton Murry was a devout Christian, he felt unable to go to his local church until he married Gamble in the 1950s (Lea 1959, 164).

Pacifists tried to prioritise love, as both a means and end, through the principle of loving your neighbour as yourself. Yet, as Slavoj Zizek has argued, the call to love your neighbour has 'appeared deeply enigmatic', allowing us to 'rethink the very nature of subjectivity, responsibility, and community' (2005, 5). Who is your neighbour? What does love involve? What does this assume about the nature of self-love? Recent work in sociology, anthropology and social theory has shown the potentials and limitations of a politics based on different understandings of love. Goodwin, for example, argues that what he calls the 'libidinal constitution' of social movements can sustain their energy, but also risk 'draining off its source of sustenance' (1997, 56, see also Klatch 2004; Hardt 2011). Lauren Berlant has claimed that it is 'hard to tell the difference between (the) destructive and world building impulses' of love (2011, 690). Whilst Fiona Wright, has written that whilst

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[13] Peace News, 6 August 1940.

love can be the basis of solidarity, it can also be an imperfect relationship between unequal selves (2016; see also Ahmed 2004).

For British pacifists, their neighbours were not, in the first instance, in continental Europe, but encountered on a daily basis on the fields, streets and the homes of Britain. But, this was also a love that teetered between brotherly love and erotic love, between a narcissistic love and a mutual egalitarian love of others. It seemed to move between freedom and bondage, altruism and egotism (compare Povinelli 2006). Individual conscience could come close to narcissism, and could sometimes seemingly demand too much or too little love towards others. If love was the basis of the new pacifist society, this was a society based on foundations that often seemed fickle and fraught. As with labour, the forms of individualism that were valorised by pacifist conscience, could sit uneasily with more egalitarian and cooperative forms of love.

Doubts and Potential

Against the background of the turmoils of love and labour, community living could be a source of deep frustration. Mary Gamble would later recall that she was 'often grievously disappointed by the lack of response in some of the group' (Lea 1959, 123). Duncan wrote about 'depth of stupid childishness to which so many moderately intelligent people are brought when they are involved in any sort of community activity. It seems that the intelligence of a community is the lowest common denominator of its members; and, I think in our case, the cow must be included as a member' (Duncan 1944). Cyril Wright would write that 'living in the community has not lived up to expectations'.[14] Looking back forty years later, one former resident of a community farm would describe his fellow pacifists as 'bloody awkward sods', and another as 'difficult to relate to… narrow minded'.[15] Pacifist love and friendship often failed to go together.

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[14] Wright, IWMA.
[15] Interview with Tony Parker, IWSA; Interview with Dennis Waters, IWMSA.

Amongst British pacifists, there was a widespread suspicion that some of their number were not properly committed to the cause of community living. On the smallholding set up by Cyril Wright, for example, there were accusations that a few members had joined the commune with the aim of living an 'easy life'. John Chapman, who lived with Wright, 'worried that many residents were simply there as a 'matter of undisguised expediency'.[16] Similarly, after two new members joined his community, Duncan would write that 'the question is whether they have come here to join the community merely in order to comply with their tribunal order' (Duncan 1944). A month later he would add that 'each week brings three of four applications from young men wishing to join us. Some are merely looking for funk holes' (Duncan 1944). One observer, who was very sympathetic to pacifism, would write that many pacifists seemed determined 'to make the worst of a bad job. They worked only when the boss was watching, took no interest in their work, had no respect for the genuine farm workers' (Hayes 1949, 211). Similarly, one community's newsletter would declare that many of the residents seemed motivated by 'fulfilling their tribunal obligations… (and) simply leading an easy life, free of responsibility'.[17]

An understanding of conscience and love as deeply personal and 'socially thick' meant that ways had to be found to make them public- as it was in their public presence that they gained value and were recognised by others. As Hannah Arendt has argued, if conscience is understood as having its roots deep within an individual, ways must be found to give it a public presence if claims of conscience are going to have any purchase (Arendt 1972). And this process of making conscience public can create doubts and suspicion (see also Keane 2010). How do we know that public conscience is a true and sincere manifestation of deep seated and thick commitments? For British pacifists, conscience could look like cowardice or laziness unless it was constantly proved. And love was never self-evident or obvious. Love for your neighbour could look

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[16] Kingston Community Newsletter, March 1942; Wright, IWMA.
[17] Kingsland Community Newsletter, March 1942, Wright, IWMA.

like narcissism or erotic desire. Claims of conscience and love could never be taken for granted, and pacifist convictions could always be in doubt.

Crucially though, it is important not to stop our assessments of the achievements of pacifist civility at the point of disappointment, anxiety and doubt. As in many projects of grand aspiration, pacifists found ways to keep going despite their setbacks. In the face of war and their own failings, many pacifists still remained committed to the idea that humans contained within themselves the possibility to love and to live better more peaceful lives. Indeed, there was a strong sense that the worse things got around them, the more the commitment many pacifists became to the possibility of peace. Although pacifists certainly left the movement, and even signed up to fight, those who remained thought that the difficulties they faced- not least the war in Europe- did not rule out peace but made it even more necessary. Edward Blishen, a conscientious objector, would later say that he had little choice but to 'hold one's breath and hurl prayers against the dark, windy unfortunate weather' (1972, 182). Whereas, for Middleton Murry, pacifism was the 'willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith' (Lea 1959, 243). For its supporters, pacifism was necessarily based on a leap of faith.

Conclusion

Let us return to the questions with which we started. Is pacifist civility a means to and end, or an end itself, or both? Civility as means to an end is accused of hypocrisy. Civility as an end in itself is accused on naivety or conservatism. And, we can further ask, as in the introduction to this volume, is civility an inherently conservative favouring of the status quo or a radical source of change? When does civility move from being conformist to dissenting, and what are its limits?

British pacifists in the Second World War tried to produce a distinctively pacifists form of civility that was both means and an end- one that was substantively and socially thick, but also deeply practical and instrumental. In doing so, they can be

seen as part of a much longer tradition to break with both instrumentalist logics and absolute principles (Agamben 1999; Arendt 1958; Dewey 1939, 1953; Lambek 2010; Weber 1946). But their struggles also showed just how difficult this could be. As with other perfectionist projects, their experience seemed to be more of failure than success (Laidlaw 2013; Schielke 2015). If the merger of means and ends was to come about through love, labour and conscience, this was a form of civility that also –perhaps inevitably - reproduced the prevailing forms of patriarchy and class inequality within which it was formed. In their commitment to the potential to human perfection, the visions of actual living humans tended to duplicate the gender and class relations of mid-twentieth century Britain. In the introduction to this volume we call civility, following Hall, an 'incomplete horizon' (2000). But it is important to remember, that this is a horizon that is always viewed from a particular time and place. As pacifist civility looked to the horizon, it was dragged back by the very forms of sociality that it sought to overcome.

The fact that pacifists sought to root a new way of living in everyday and mundane social relations - in acts of love and cooperative labour – meant that the possibility of a new pacifist society was also always at risk in those banal actions- and the most ordinary events could call them into question. Pacifist civility was therefore a particular source of anxiety and doubt. And the attempt to merge means and ends contributed to this anxiety in particular ways. A separation of means and ends allows you to fall back on the opposite pair at the point of failure. If your means fail you, you can always turn to your ends, and vice versa. However, the attempt to bring together of means and ends left no possibility of deferral. Both means and ends were always at stake.

The gap between the aspiration for a pacifism on the one hand, and the everyday of incompetence and vanity, on the other, can be read negatively, as a source of tragedy or even hypocrisy. It is easy to see the British pacifists as naïve or self-indulgent. However, it is also possible to see them as engaged in a form of

critical reflection, that could recognise the ways they were deeply compromised, but sought to imagine a world that could be otherwise. This was a form of pacifist civility that existed as a finely balanced potential. For the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, building on the work of Deleuze and Aristotle, amongst others, potentiality stands opposed to the actual (1999). Potentiality for Agamben, is not only the potential to become, but also the potential to fulfil that already exists. We have potential now and not just in the future. Crucially though, potential is not simply the potential to do, but also the potential not to do. It is the potential to not act, as much as the potential to act. It is this potential absence at the heart of potential that makes it, for Agamben 'the bitterest experience possible' (1999, 178). From this perspective, civility – pacifist or otherwise - can be seen as a potential whose fulfilment cannot be taken for granted. Pacifist civility had the potential not to be, as much as to be.

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