Acting upon a Concern:
British Quakers, Democracy, Utopia
and the Republican Tradition

Valerie Anne Whittington

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:…………………………………………………….

Summary

This thesis examines the political engagement of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain through a study of secondary literature and interviews with Quakers and Attenders at Quaker Meetings in England. The contribution to knowledge offered by the thesis is an examination of British Quaker political engagement, through Quaker concern[*] and the Quaker decision-making method of discernment[†], in the light of theoretical material drawn from social and political thought.

Whereas in extant Quaker studies, British Quakerism is described primarily as a theologically liberal, or a liberal-Liberal religion, this thesis reappraises that description in the light of current Quaker political activism and the democratic republican tradition.

The republicanism referred to is associated primarily with radical and utopian socialist politics. It is identified firstly, in the kinds of left-green politics that predominate in British Quaker activism and secondly, in the decision-making process undertaken by Friends, individually and corporately, in identifying concerns and in testing them.

This process of discernment, which takes place within a Quaker ethical habitus of interpersonal respect, is found to be a critical-historical process, responsive to the political reality of the present. It exposes a gap perceived by Quakers, between the world as it is, and as it should be in the light of Quaker discernment and testimonies. While decisions require 'unity', in theory a single dissenting voice can prevent this. The role of 'hope'[‡] in Quakerism mediates theological and political 'certainty' in that the 'rightness' of all decisions is subject to ongoing discernment. This leads Quakers to treat their decision making (and their faith) as non-coercive. In light of this, it is claimed that British Quakerism is prefigurative of a 'community of all individuals' as posited by French political theorist Miguel Abensour.

Despite decision-making without votes, Quakers are an example of a non-coercive community, engaged in a form of strongly deliberative democratic self-governance, imbued with republican virtues. This non-totalitarian form of governance enables and upholds utopian political endeavours aimed at achieving collective goods. It offers a counterexample to the decline towards totalitarian forms of governance regarded by some theorists as inevitable when radical republicanism embraces utopian projects.

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[*] see page 1.
[†] see pages 2-3.
[‡] see pages 42-45, and Chapter 6.

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I wish to thank the Quakers, and Attenders who generously participated in this research: my interviewees, Quaker Meetings that allowed me to approach members, QPSW, BYM, Young Friends. I am grateful to Ben Pink Dandelion, Rhiannon Grant and Betty Hagglund of Woodbrooke Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies for invitations to the Centre's study days and use of the library. I have made use of the library of the University of Sussex interlibrary loan service and had access to a wide range of journals and books on JSTOR, SCOPUS; the Library of the Religious Society of Friends at Friends House (Euston); and the library of the Brighton Friends Meeting House. I have also had access to texts in early Quakerism made available online by Earlham School of Religion, Digital Quaker Collection.[§] It was also possible to access Quaker History Recordings made available online by Haverford College Library.[**] Contemporary academic studies in Quakerism are published in the refereed Journal *Quaker Studies* produced by the Quaker Studies Research Association and online by Liverpool University Press to which I also had access.

I had the benefit of telephone and email exchanges with Jane Pearn who was awarded an Eva Koch scholarship in 2016 to study and write about Quaker concern and whose work *The Language of Leadings* was published in 2017. No references were made to conversations with any individuals during our discussions, thus protecting the anonymity of participants. It was helpful to be able to share discussion of common themes that arose in both studies. The researcher also attended and participated in a workshop for the assistance of Elders and Overseers engaged in the discernment of concern*s* led by Jane Pearn and Joycelin Dawes at the Quaker Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017. I am also grateful to Quaker and writer Harvey Gillman, who first prompted me to explore Buber and Levinas's work.

The flexibility of my employers at BHASVIC college where I have worked, 2005 to the present, assisted me in having time to give to the PhD. I also thank the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at Sussex for facilitating and supporting my work on Jews and Quakers including the 2017 conference I organised at Sussex.

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[§] Earlham School of Religion, Digital Quaker Collection, available at: https://esr.earlham.edu/dqc/biblio.html.
[**] Haverford College Library Quaker and Special Collections, Quaker History Recordings digitally available at: https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/handle/10066/1598.

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List of Abbreviations

AM   Area Meeting – a Quaker Meeting based on county or regional area and comprising a number of Local Meetings.

BYM   British Quakers are members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, sometimes simply called the Society of Friends. Britain Yearly Meeting is the national community of Quakers in Britain, sometimes also used to denote the annual weekend-long meeting held in London, more properly called Yearly Meeting (see below).

LM   Local Meeting – a Quaker meeting located in a village, town, or city, usually with a Meeting House where Friends meet weekly for worship

MfS   Meeting for Sufferings – reviews and tests concerns brought from AMs and reports to BYM the work of Quakers engaging with concerns. It monitors prosecutions and those friends who are in prison or suffering hardship as a consequence of their activism under concern with a view to supporting them as necessary.

QCEA   Quaker Council for European Affairs – this is a Quaker European co-ordinating agency and EU lobbying organisation based in Brussels.

QF&P   Quaker Faith and Practice – this refers to the current online (5th) edition of *The book of Christian discipline of Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain* unless otherwise stated. Where in some footnotes the 'print edition' is cited this refers to the printed 3rd edition (see bibliography for full entries).

QPSW   Quaker Peace and Social Witness: Generally perceived to be an 'activist' grouping within Quakers. Centrally funded and supported, QPSW promotes and actively seeks to put the Quaker testimonies to peace and social justice into effect.

QUNO   Quaker United Nations Office – two offices in Geneva and New York staffed and tasked with lobbying at the UN in relation to Quaker concerns especially on issues of peace and Human Rights. They also offer neutral and confidential support for those engaging in conflict resolution.

TTT   Turning the Tide, activist resource and support offered by QPSW

YM   Yearly Meeting – annual national meeting of Quakers in Britain generally held in the summer between a Friday – Monday at Friends' House, Euston, London except for every third year when Quakers hold a YMG (see below)

YMG   Yearly Meeting Gathering – triennial week-long gathering held at different regional locations eg 2017's gathering was held at Warwick University 29 July – 5 August.

Chapter overview

Chapter 1 addresses the need for and relevance of the research in Quaker studies and in the theoretical arena of contemporary social and political thought. It includes a review of Quaker writings on concern and suggests relevant themes in social and political thought.

Chapter 2 offers the research methodology adopted for the interviews and preliminary argument on the worth of having a qualitative sociological element in what is a thesis grounded in political philosophy. It then presents selections from and explores interviews with contemporary British Quakers.

Chapter 3 explores the potential affinities between Quakerism and the republican tradition in social and political thought. Republicanism when expressed in bureaucratised centralised State forms declines towards totalitarian forms. The chapter considers how the utopic Quakerism presented in this study offers tools to avoid coercive practices and to evade coercion. The vision of 'wild' (*sauvage*) democracy imagined by Claude Lefort and Miguel Abensour is explored as it relates to Quaker political engagement.

Chapter 4 explores material drawn from Martin Buber's dialogical theology, and from a contemporary Christian theological interpretation of the Quaker approach to interpersonal ethics set out by Rachel Muers in her book *Testimony.* Taken together these reflect two key aspects of material that emerges directly out of the interviews: the importance of dialogue and the centrality of interpersonal ethics for Quakers acting under concern. This chapter also considers the importance of *habitus* as a term

characterising 'Quaker' thought and behaviour. The Prophetic and Dialogical are introduced as two approaches to Quaker political engagement.

Chapter 5 Examines the applicability of liberal political philosophy to Quaker political engagement and considers how the use of the Quaker example by liberal political philosophers, John Rawls, Nicholas Wolterstorff and Jürgen Habermas reveals the difficulty of accommodating contemporary Quaker activism within a liberal political tradition.

Chapter 6 addresses 'discernment' – the process by which Quakers make decisions but also the means of identifying a concern. Michael Löwy's analysis of Walter Benjamin's messianic radicalism is applied to Quakerism to disclose its 'elective affinity' with the radical libertarian republican tradition. Quaker discernment is identified as a critical-historical process that supports a radical utopian politics as conceived by French theorist Miguel Abensour. This utopian politics is discovered in the discernment of the gap between a violent reality of the political present and the utopic alterity of a world in accordance with Quaker testimonies.

Chapter 7 This chapter explores how the Quakerism posited in this study, by dint of its utopian principles and practices, offers a model of a prefigurative 'community of all individuals' as theorised by Miguel Abensour. Final remarks restate some key observations from previous chapters and concluding observations revisit the nature of 'hope' in Quaker concern.

Chapter 8 provides an overview of conclusions reached in preceding chapters and offers some last observations on the findings of the study.

Chapter 1: Overview, Research Rationale, Literature reviews

Part I - Overview and Research Rationale.

Overview

The Oxford English Dictionary 2015 edition offers the following definition of Quaker concern.[1]

> *concern, n.*[2]
> In the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers): a feeling, arising from an insight into the divine will, that action must be taken on a particular matter. Also in **under concern**: experiencing such a feeling.

Concern operates as a concept, an experience and a form of praxis engaged in by Quakers.[3]

Quakers in Britain take up concerns after a process of personal and corporate discernment. In Quakerism, from its earliest days, discernment was understood to be a religious, spiritual practice whereby an individual or a group as part of a meeting for worship sought 'God's will' with respect to an issue before them. When individuals felt themselves guided by God towards a certain action - this would be described as a 'leading of the spirit'. An important

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[1] The word concern is ubiquitous throughout and therefore is not italicised or otherwise distinguished when applied in its Quaker sense. Its Quaker usage will be evident from context.
[2] 'concern, n.' Oxford English Dictionary Online, March 2020, accessed May 15, 2020, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38152?rskey=qrf4Jo. This entry is from the OED Third Edition, September 2015. Historical examples of Quaker usage from the OED are reproduced in Appendix I.
[3] 'Quaker' was a derogatory term used in the 17th century to describe adherents to the early 'Friends' movement. The correct term for a Quaker is a Friend. Friends are individuals who are members of The Religious Society of Friends who have applied for membership and been accepted by the Society. Children of Quakers are no longer automatically members – formerly known as 'birthright' Friends. Quakers today use the term Quaker and Friend interchangeably and that practice is followed in this study. 'Attenders' are individuals recognised by the society as regularly attending a Quaker meeting but who have not sought membership of the Society. They may also be referred to inclusively as Quakers. However, all references in this study to 'Friends' with a capitalised 'F' refer to members of the Religious Society of Friends.

aspect of this process was the 'ability to differentiate reliable leadings from unreliable ones'.[4]

Early founder George Fox believed that individuals were capable of achieving this by attending

inwardly to the 'Light of Christ'.[5] The 'Light Within' is a fundamental theological concept for

Quakers. Dandelion selects the following extract as representative of Quakerism in all its

traditions:

> Friends place a special emphasis on the ever present Holy Spirit in
> the hearts of men. This power we call the Light Within or the Light
> of Christ. We believe that a seed of this spirit is in every man. The
> basis of faith is thus the belief that God endows each human being
> with a measure of His own Divine Spirit. He leaves no one without
> witness, but gives the light of his truth and presence to all men of
> all races and all walks of life.[6]

In the 17th century, some individuals appeared to have erred in their individual discernment

of this 'Light Within' and this led the movement towards greater reliance upon group or

'corporate' discernment through which the personal vision of God's 'Truth' could be checked

and mediated.[7] Today, discernment is normally undertaken through silent reflection either

individually or communally as part of a group meeting for worship. It is the method used for

decision making in all Quaker meetings worldwide and is the method most readily described

in the contemporary literature.

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[4] Michael J. Sheeran, *Beyond Majority Rule: Voteless Decisions in the Religious Society of Friends.* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1983), 22.

[5] Sheeran, sets out in brief the position of Fox and early Quakers on the ability of individuals to discern God's will or the 'Truth', and traces its trajectory towards greater reliance upon group discernment in *Beyond Majority Rule,* 22-43.

[6] *The Book of Discipline of Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Conservative)* (Barnesville, Ohio: Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1992), 4, quoted by Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press: 2007), 209.

[7] Sheeran, *Beyond Majority Rule,* 22-43. For the meaning of 'Truth' or 'truth' in this study see page 7 et seq.

Joycelin Dawes in her 2017 exploration of discernment observed that she could find 'no single account of Quaker discernment, what is it and how it is done.'[8] Nevertheless the centrality of silent reflection is predominant and is reflected in *Quaker Faith & Practice: The book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*:

> In our meetings for worship we seek through the stillness to know God's will for ourselves and for the gathered group. Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other, and are not blinkered by preconceived opinions. It is this belief that God's will can be recognised through the discipline of silent waiting which distinguishes our decision-making process from the secular idea of consensus. We have a common purpose in seeking God's will through waiting and listening, believing that every activity of life should be subject to divine guidance.[9]

Discernment can lead to a variety of forms of private and public, individual or joint action. The corporate discernment process is in stark contrast to the immediacy with which the movement's key founder, George Fox (1624-1691) took his concern*s* to be manifest 'leadings of the spirit' or God.[10] Appendix I contains extracts from Fox's Journal and sections from *Quaker Faith & Practice* (*QF&P*) as examples of these distinct discernment processes.

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[8] Joycelin Dawes, *Discernment and Inner Knowing: making decisions for the best*, (FeedARead.com, 2017), 24.

[9] *Quaker Faith and Practice, The Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Quakers in Britain*,(*QF&P*) (London: Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 5th edition, 2015 - 2020), ¶3.02, available at: https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/3/ .

[10] See Jane Pearn, *The language of leadings: a reflection on faith, action and concern* (London:Quaker Books, 2017), for an examination of the term 'leadings' as understood by contemporary Quakers in Britain.

Acting 'under concern' is described in religious terms in the most recent version of *Quaker Faith and Practice.*[11] The study hopes to develop an understanding of how this religious basis of discernment operates in contemporary Quakerism. British Quakers are more theologically diverse than at any time in their history. Today's corporate discernment process is still undertaken by Quakers individually and by Quakers together in meetings, but Quakers today include both Christians and non-Christians, theists and nontheists.[12]

The term 'theist' is used here largely as a differentiating term to mark the gap between those Quakers who identify themselves as nontheist and those who do not. The OED defines theism variously as: '[b]elief in a deity, or deities, as opposed to atheism…. [b]elief in one god, as opposed to polytheism or pantheism… monotheism'. It may include '[b]elief in the existence of God, with denial of revelation', [deism] or, '[b]elief in one God as creator and supreme ruler of the universe, without denial of revelation'.[13] The term 'theist' as applied to Quakerism is effectively a 'catch-all' descriptor for the diverse religious views held by Quakers who would describe themselves as believing in a personal God, or a God more generally as understood within a given faith community. In this study I also include those who hold a belief in a non-human divine power, or creative force.

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[11] *QF&P,* ¶13.02-13.18, available at http://qfp.quaker.org.uk. In different countries, different 'Yearly Meetings' have their own distinctive versions of this text, but the one referred to here will be that of Quakers in Britain unless otherwise stated. For its history and an explanation of its contents see the 'Introduction' available at: https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/introduction/.

[12] The unhyphenated spelling is adopted in this study following the spelling adopted by the 'Nontheist Friends Network' (NFN) on their website and in related literature.

[13] "theism, n.1" OED Online. December 2020. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/200296, accessed February 14, 2021.

Nontheism is now a recognised strand of British Quakerism dating back at least as far as 2004.[14] In 2010 a Nontheist Friends Network (NFN) was established which is now a 'Quaker recognised body'.[15] Their constitution and website cites this aim: 'to provide a forum and supportive framework for Friends and attenders who regard religion as a human creation.'[16] David Bolton gave some insight into the difficulties for the group in deciding upon the appropriate descriptor to use. In his introductory essay to *Godless for God's Sake: Nontheism in Contemporary Quakerism.* Boulton pointed to the diversity of nontheism and the difficulty of settling upon the descriptor 'nontheist'. The group chose it in preference to 'atheist', 'humanist', 'agnostic' or 'naturalist' which were all possible alternatives, however the anti-religion tenor of some contemporary atheism and humanism was inappropriate, while naturalism had confusing meanings associated with nudism or nature-study. Agnostic was rejected as connoting indecision.[17] In the experience of the researcher the use of the term 'theist' is not always happily accepted by all Quakers who might be so labelled.[18] This indicates

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[14] In 2004 David Boulton was one of 37 Quakers from Britain and the USA who took part in a workshop at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre titled 'Beyond Universalism: The Experience and Understanding of Nontheism in Contemporary Quakerism'. See: http://www.nontheistfriends. org/article/greetings-from-woodbrooke-2004 . Following this event a pamphlet was produced containing ten essays and seventeen 'testimonies' outlining the diverse views of Quaker nontheists. See: David Boulton ed., *Godless for God's Sake: Nontheism in Contemporary Quakerism* (Dent, Cumbria: Dales Historical Monographs, 2006).

[15] 'Quaker recognised bodies': A Quaker recognised body '…is an independent group of Friends (and others) who explore a common interest, seek affirmation or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker organisation because its Quaker roots are important to its identity.' Michael S Booth, 'Quaker recognised bodies: an overview' available at https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups , accessed February 2021.

[16] The NFN Constitution is available via a link at: https://nontheist-quakers.org.uk/about/aims-of-the-network/.

[17] David Boulton, 'For God's sake? – An introduction', in *Godless for God's Sake: Nontheism in Contemporary Quakerism* (Dent, Cumbria: Dales Historical Monographs, 2006), 6-7.

[18] A view expressed to the researcher in an informal conversation with a Quaker about the use of the terms theist and nontheist.

that although now in usage, neither 'theist' nor 'nontheist' are entirely satisfactory terms. Nevertheless, the terms appear in the literature and in the absence of alternatives, they are retained in this study.

British Quakers take concern seriously. Between 2015-2018 concern was the focus of a three-year long programme among British Quakers, *Living out our Faith in the World*. At the 2016 BYM, held over a weekend at Friends House, Euston, descriptions were given as ministry,[19] during sessions where several hundred Quakers from all over the country and a handful who were visiting from other countries sat in silence together to explore the work of the Yearly Meeting on concerns.[20] The programme involved exploration among Quakers in Britain at the national and local level through courses, workshops, meetings, and testimony at Yearly Meetings, culminating at Britain Yearly Meeting gathering in July 2017 and the Yearly Meeting in London 2018. The 'testimony' referred to does not simply denote a vocal public bearing witness to 'faith' although it can include that.[21] In this study, the understanding of testimony

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[19] 'Ministry' is both '[t]he term used to describe vocal contributions during a Meeting for Worship' and also 'the work and service of individual Friends which arises out of the spiritual life, and/or which contributes to it', Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis,* 366. It can be given spontaneously or prepared. While much of the spoken ministry during the Yearly meetings observed by the researcher comprised spontaneous contributions from the body of the meeting, some ministry may have been partially prepared by these worshippers, responding to materials sent out to meetings in anticipation of the events. Particularly in relation to the intended exploration of the work of Quakers under concern which formed part of the agendas of Yearly Meetings in the triennium 2015-2018. The Yearly Meetings and Yearly Meeting Gathering also contained prepared ministry from some individuals invited because of their notable experience of acting under Quaker concern such as George Lakey (see Chapter 5). See also 'Worship and 'Meetings for Worship for Business' below at page 16 et seq.
[20] The writer attended BYM, 2016 and YMG, 2017.
[21] See related this dictionary entry, 'testify' – '3a. transitive. To profess and openly acknowledge (a fact, belief, object of faith or devotion, etc.); to proclaim as something that one knows or believes. Chiefly biblical. "testify, v.". OED Online. December 2020. Oxford University Press. https://www. oed.com/view/Entry/199741 accessed February 17, 2021.

is informed by the more complex Quaker meaning elaborated by Rachel Muers in her book *Testimony[22]*. Testimony in Quakerism requires disambiguation as it can refer to a specific 'Quaker Testimony', for example the Peace Testimony, capitalised here to distinguish it from the meaning of testimony as spoken witness. A Testimony reflects the position taken by Quakers corporately on an important ethical matter arrived at over many years and representing a culmination of Quaker discernment and experience. [23] Although 'testimony' can also be spoken witness, Muers regards it fundamentally as an engagement with ethics and a form of praxis. For Muers, testimony is not limited to 'speech'. She argues that '[i]ndividual and collective actions are testimony – not as a secondary extension of the idea of testimony, but rather at its core.'[24] All testimony for Muers is 'experiential'. Some individuals giving testimony at the Yearly meetings attended by the researcher, described their own work under concern. Some described the involvement of their meetings in a concern. In this sense their 'lived experience' contributed to their ministry and so reflected 'testimony' in Muers sense. This understanding of testimony is explored in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Truth

Theist Friends today do not appear to question that there are 'leadings of the spirit', but they are corporately cautious in the 'sifting' process to discern the authenticity of these 'leadings', and in assessing to what extent they can be taken for something which for Quakers is *true.*

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[22] Rachel Muers, *Testimony: Quakerism and Theological Ethics.* Norwich: SCM Press, 2015. Kindle edition.
[23] The corporately recognised Quaker 'Testimonies' are discussed below at pages 19-20.
[24] Muers, *Testimony,* Loc.1490 of 4070.

Truth is an important concept that recurs in the study. 'Truth' as referred to in this study is not cited here in reference to the analytic philosophical discipline of logic nor to correspondence theory.[25] In this research 'Truth' refers specifically to the Quaker use of the term and its developments. Historically the Quaker insight of the universal availability and communicative presence of a divine 'Light Within', for Christian Quakers 'the Light of Christ', provided authoritative guidance to Quakers both individually and corporately as to how one should live and act. This is what Quakers have traditionally understood as 'Truth'. Its discernment and how Quakers have 'witnessed' to it has given rise to their core Testimonies which underpin much of their political activism when acting upon concerns today.

The term 'Truth' or 'truth' is also applied by Quakers to the revelations offered through attention to this inner light. In the literature the word tends to be capitalised where it indicates either the traditional understanding of the term or a universalised concept, as opposed to a relativized one that would be suggestive of 'many truths' specific to given individuals and contexts. The development of this idea of 'truths' in the plural was noted by Quaker Jonathan Dale as a challenge for Quakers in the 20th century to accommodate alongside their own traditionally discerned 'Truth'.[26] In practise the terms may be blurred as a non-theist Quaker understanding of 'Truth' or 'truth' may not sit foursquare with more traditional theological uses of either term in Quakerism. In this study where 'Truth' is

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[25] See Marian David, 'The Correspondence Theory of Truth', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) Available at : https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/truth-correspondence/.
[26] Dale's views are explored further at pages 58-64.

capitalised it is either done so for accuracy where it is reproduced from existing texts which capitalise the word. Alternatively, it is being used to indicate a generally universalised concept which has been or could be corporately accepted by the body of Quakers in Britain as representing a Quaker view, which throughout their history of discernment, has been revealed as an important principle, such as an established Testimony.

The difficulty of incorporating religious or political ideas of 'Truth' or 'truths' in contemporary politics is considered in chapters three and five. Normative political agendas which assert how the world *should* be and advance policies to make it so based on the notion of universally applicable moral truths, are problematic for liberal political philosophy. Liberal philosophers simultaneously aim at neutrality towards the 'Good' for the preservation of personal liberty and civil concord in a diverse society, and attempt to forge a constitutional settlement around public goods that might reasonably be agreed upon.[27] In liberalism, which seeks to accommodate a pluralism of views within a single society, moral 'truth' or 'truths' are, as noted above, effectively replaced in the context of liberal democracy by agreed public goods. The emphasis within republicanism on specific goods, liberty, equality, and fraternity, vies with their alternative interpretation in liberal philosophy. The study explores some of the tensions between these two centrally important political philosophies of democracy and the relevance of the Quaker understanding of 'truth' to this issue.

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[27] See Chapters 3 and 5.

Truth as understood in Quakerism is embedded in a theological, teleological and epistemic frame for experience, subject to disclosure over time. It cannot be definitively *known* with certainty although it may be *experienced*.[28] Fox urged Friends to heed 'the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God'.[29] According to Richard Bauman the use of silence in early Quakerism was in effect to 'silence' the 'flesh' and the 'self' before God so that the life of the Quaker could become the pattern and 'vehicle' of God's Truth.[30] Quakers were enjoined by Fox to 'let the truth speak in all things' and further to 'Let your words be few' and 'Let your lives speak'.[31] In regarding themselves as 'publishers of the Truth' Bauman notes they were reflecting the Biblical command of Jesus to his Apostles in Matthew 10:26-27 to 'publish abroad' what he had revealed to them.[32]

The Quakers interviewed for this study vary in their views of 'Truth' but corporately the relation to Truth and God's Truth remains and a Quaker 'conscience-based ethics' became

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[28] For an overview of the Quaker epistemological position with regard to Rationalism and Empiricism see Laura Rediehs, 'A Distinctive Quaker Theory of Knowledge: An Expanded Experiential Empiricism', *Quaker Studies* 21, no.1 (2016): 67-94, doi:10.3828/quaker.2016.21.1.6.

[29] 'Advices' I, ¶1, 1964 reproduced in *Quaker Faith and Practice, The Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain,* Third Edition with revisions approved 1995-2004 and corrections*,* (London: The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995,2005) – This edition will be shortened as *QF&P* (print edition) to distinguish it from the online version. See also *QF&P* (print edition), ¶26.01. The 'Advices and Queries' comprise a section of *QF&P* that contains 'short passages of guidance and a list of questions, designed to help Friends, individually and corporately, examine the nature of their religious life', Pink Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers: The Silent Revolution.* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 362. See also *QF&P,* ¶1.04-¶1.06.

[30] Richard Bauman, *Let your words be few: symbolism of speaking and silence among seventeenth-century Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1998).

[31] Bauman, Let your words, 26-30

[32] Bauman, *Let your words,* 32-33.

established where 'Quakers saw the conscience as providing reliable access to truth'.[33] This is reflected in the phrase sometimes cited by Quakers engaging in activism, 'speaking truth to power'. Quaker political activism and the literature that surrounds it, produces a constellation of concepts with significance in political philosophy: 'unity' 'truth', 'hope' the 'prophetic' and the 'utopic' the meaning and relevance of which are addressed in later chapters. In British Quakerism there are many views of how society *should* be or could be improved and the taking up of concerns is the most notable way in which this utopic strand appears.

Quakers in Britain have an unusual 'religious Society' that includes 'nontheists'. For nontheist Quakers,[34] for whom 'truth' is not underwritten by revelation, there does not appear initially to be a language in corporate Quakerism that 'speaks to their condition'.[35] Dan Christy Randazzo notes: 'Nontheism is knowingly constructed as an undefined definition in an effort to be as inclusive as possible for all people who … claim a Quaker identity, yet who cannot

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[33] Jeffrey Dudiak and Laura Rediehs, 'Quakers, Philosophy and Truth', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds. Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 514.

[34] In the 2013 British Quaker survey, 14% of Quakers identified as nontheist. Jennifer May Hampton, 'British Quaker Survey: Examining Religious Beliefs and Practices in the Twenty-First Century', *Quaker Studies* 19, no.1 (2014): 3. Adolescent Quaker belief is explored by Simon Peter Best, 'The Community of Intimacy: The Spiritual Beliefs and Religious Practices of Adolescent Quakers' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham Research Archive e-theses repository, March 2010), http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1250. While in Best's study the nature of Belief in God is described in similar terms to that of adult Quakers, adolescent Quakers were significantly less likely to state that they had a positive belief in God (41.3%): Best, 'Community of Intimacy', 100. This is compared with an earlier study where 74.0% of adult Quakers stated a positive belief in God: Pink Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis,* 159.

[35] The phrase 'speaks to my condition' has become axiomatic among Quakers. In his Journal Fox relates in his spiritual quest for answers among priests that there was 'none among them all that could speak to my condition' until he heard a voice saying '[t]here is one, even Christ Jesus that speaks to thy condition.' George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox,* ed. Norman Penney, (New York: Cosimo Inc., 1924, 2007) Kindle edition, Loc.278 of 5589.

ascribe to any form of personal monotheism'.[36] Participants in this study included both theist and nontheist Quakers. It is hoped the study offers both theist and nontheists an expanded understanding of concern, its discernment and its relation to democratic, republican and utopian political philosophy.

The contribution of this study to social and political thought, is the import of the Quaker 'case study' for contemporary debates. Quaker concern when sifted from praxis and considered through political philosophy, points towards a reconfigued relation between the ethical and the political. Its growth and survival in the modern era[37] deserves attention from moral and political philosophers engaging with the philosophical fallout of contemporary political liberalism and the impact of functional differentiation on society and economy.[38] This is because the Quaker example provokes a re-examination of the limits of secularism in the liberal political settlement, and the functional separation of the economic and political systems from religious belief.

Quaker concern, is found to *in-corporate* ethics through a mechanism of corporate

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[36] Dan Christy Randazzo, 'Quakers and Nontheism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Quakerism,* Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 274.
[37] In this study, the term 'modern' occurs in three distinct contexts. I take the early modern era to begin with the new English constitutional settlement of the 'Glorious Revolution' 1688-9, establishing the limitation of monarchical rule and the rise of Parliamentary sovereignty. Quakerism developed in the 1650s and many Quakers were witnesses and participants in the English revolution that preceded the settlement. Benjamin Constant (cited below) refers to the 'moderns' and intends those who are heirs to the 18th century revolutions in America and France. The third context of 'modernising' or a modernist era cited in this thesis, refers to Quakerism after 1895 and in the 20th and 21st centuries.
[38] See page 149 et seq.

discernment that, in the broad republican tradition, democratises and socialises the process of determining group endorsed ethics through reaching an extended and uncoerced unity in decision making. This process avoids totalising conceptual thought and totalitarian political and legal forms critiqued by Frankfurt school theorists (Adorno, Horkheimer) and Arendt,[39] because it has an underlying epistemological frame, that eschews certainty and operates in an inter-relational dialogic process between persons. It also challenges the theologically charged vertical chain of command model, operating within a societal homogeneity, as envisaged by Carl Schmitt[40] and suggests instead the potential for an Arendtian 'horizontal model of collective authority (collective self government)'.[41] In short, Quaker political praxis offers a possible model for a contemporary utopianism, born of the republican tradition, that avoids descent towards totalitarianism. This reconfigured relation between the ethical, religious and political is not a proposed reintegration, nor a form of theocratic politics, but rather the Quaker model proposed offers an example of how the religious and ethical can infuse politics without producing or abetting a pernicious anti-democratic coercive power.

Key features of British Quakerism

British Local Meetings (LMs) exist at the city, town, or village level and are run through a Meeting for Worship for Business (MFWFB or simply BM) held monthly, that can be attended

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[39] Discussed in chapters 3 and 5.
[40] Carl Schmitt, 'Preface to the Second Edition (1926): On the Contradiction between Parliamentarism and Democracy', *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (1923, 1926), trans. Ellen Kennedy, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1985), 9-17; Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty,* trans. George Schwab, (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[41] Darrow Schecter, *Sovereign states or political commmunities? : Civil Society and contemporary politics* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 51.

by all members of a meeting, and with permission of the clerk, by Attenders. LMs are part of

larger Area Meetings (AMs). AMs comprise a number of LMs within a geographical area and

when an individual becomes a Friend in membership, it is as a member of the Area meeting.[42]

In *QF&P* Area Meetings are described in the following way:

> The area meeting is the primary meeting for church affairs in Britain
> Yearly Meeting. Its role is to develop and maintain a community of
> Friends, a family of local meetings who gather for worship and
> spiritual enrichment. It should provide that balance between
> worship, mutual support, administration, learning, deliberation and
> social life which can make its meetings enjoyable occasions and
> build up the spiritual life of its members.
>
> Area meetings act as facilitators and co-ordinators, ensuring that
> their constituent local meetings have access to opportunities for
> fellowship, spiritual development, and spiritual and pastoral care,
> including the care of children and young people. They also provide
> mutual support through the shared testing of concerns.[43]

The role of the AM in 'testing' concerns is considered below, at page 56.

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) is the 'executive' body of BYM.[44] It is described at the Quakers

in Britain website as 'the standing representative body of Quakers in Britain. Its members

are appointed by Yearly Meeting, and they meet five or six times a year.'[45] MfS 'takes

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[42] Quakers in Britain, 'Area Meetings', accessed February 2021, https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/book-of-meetings/area-meetings. The structure of meetings in BYM is available at Quakers in Britain, 'Our structure', accessed February 2021, https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures .

[43] *QF&P,* ¶4.02

[44] Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis,* 366.

[45] Quakers in Britain, 'Our structures', accessed February 2021 https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures .

decisions and manages business between Yearly Meetings; sets priorities for centrally managed work' and 'helps other parts of Britain Yearly Meeting – for example, by sharing information and testing concerns from area meetings'.[46] The process of 'testing' is undertaken as an activity of 'discernment' during a MfS meeting – again these meetings are regarded as worship as are LM Business meetings and those of AMs. Meeting for Sufferings has a membership of 102: the majority (77 representatives) are nominated by AMs and include a representative from Young Friends General Meeting and 1 each from Scotland and Wales. There are also 4 representatives of standing committees: Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR), and Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC).[47] Two MfS clerks, the Yearly Meeting Treasurer and Clerks, 14 BYM Trustees and some *ex-officio* staff take the remaining places.[48]

The name 'Meeting for Sufferings' dates back to the seventeenth century when originally MfS was tasked with 'recording the sufferings' of Friends[49] – in particular those who had been imprisoned or had suffered on account of their faith. It revived this activity in 1997.[50] Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) is run as a charity with trustees responsible for the

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[46] *QF&P,* ¶7.08. The history and current role of MfS is recorded in Chapter 7 of *QF&P,* available at https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/7/.
[47] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 'Meeting for Sufferings Essential Information For the triennium 2018-2021' Third Revision October 2018, 9. Available at: https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/74dfb6e36584f8c20f6881d18 73ad5cfa55a0abdbeebf7b0bc2bfec6581a Accessed: February 2021.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis,* 366.
[50] 'In 1997 Meeting for Sufferings revived the practice of maintaining a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience': *QF&P,* ¶7.01

management and running of its work and assets. BYM employs around 150 staff. The most senior member of staff is the Recording Clerk. BYM's work is funded through; individual Quakers, Quaker meetings, charitable trusts, a café at Friends House, Euston and investment and room rental income.[51] The roles of MfS '[a]s a worshipping community,' include the following:

- to discern the furtherance of the spiritual life of our Yearly Meeting and of the
development of its visionary and prophetic role
- to set the priorities for the centrally managed work
- to issue public statements in the name of BYM
- to receive regular interim reports from BYM Trustees
- to make a report of its own activities to Yearly Meeting each year
- to foster communication throughout the Yearly Meeting
- to receive and take appropriate action on minutes received from Area Meetings and other committees[52]

Worship and 'Meetings for Worship for Business'

Quakers in Britain are unprogrammed. The key features of unprogrammed Quakerism are that there are no paid ministers, no use of 'services' or hymns in worship. The only 'pre-planned' elements are silence, ending with a handshake.[53] Although there is no 'service' during a meeting for worship 'ministry' may be given.[54] This can be spontaneous and a member or attender my simply stand and speak their ministry during a meeting unprompted, or there may be 'prepared ministry'. Prepared ministry is more often found at Business

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[51] Quakers in Britain, 'Our structures', accessed February 2021 https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures.

[52] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 'Meeting for Sufferings Essential Information', 8.

[53] Dandelion, *An Introduction*, 175.

[54] 'Ministry' is defined at fn 19.

meetings where an individual is invited to speak to a specific matter, but it is also a feature of funeral and wedding meetings for worship.[55] At Business Meetings individuals will be called upon by the clerk to speak. The Business meeting is where the regular 'Business' of the meeting is undertaken when decisions are required, and action is needed. These meetings are also treated as meeting for worship and the formal title of the Business meeting is 'Meeting for Worship for Business'. Business meetings are traditionally held monthly for this purpose. The traditional aim of the meeting is to discern the will of God on the matter at hand.[56] The agenda of 'Business' can encompass anything from decisions about the purchase of a new carpet in a meeting house, to the consideration of an individual's concern. The meetings, normally monthly, are 'worship' and so this can mean that as when giving 'ministry' as part of worship, individuals normally stand to speak, but will be invited to do so by the clerk. A short extract from *QF&P* may be read out by the clerk at the start of a Business meeting and the meetings generally begin and end with silence.

The 'clerk' is responsible for the administration of a Quaker meeting:

> 'The Clerk deals with correspondence, may give out notices at the end of the Meeting, and 'clerks' business meetings. This involves introducing matters of business which require a decision and guiding the Meeting procedurally… The Clerk writes a 'minute' to record the decision of the Meeting. This is read out to the group, who may then change it before agreeing it. As business meetings are treated as worship meetings, the minute is claimed to reflect

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[55] Arrangements for what may be required at a marriage service or at a funeral is found at *QF&P*, ¶10.12 and ¶16.52. Prepared ministry may include readings from 'Advices and Queries', *QF&P*, ¶1.05-1.06.

[56] This is affirmed at *QF&P*, ¶3.02

the 'sense of the meeting' as to the 'will of God' on the matter'[57]

Perhaps the single most notable feature of decision making in the Religious Society of Friends is that all decisions are taken without voting. Instead, a meeting must come together in 'Unity'[58]. If one person present, voices objection to a decision and no agreement can be reached, then the proposal is rejected, although it may return for further consideration at a later date. When agreement can be reached then it is the clerk's role to 'minute' this, so recording 'the sense of the meeting'. This 'sense of the meeting' can be described as the 'collective will of a Business Meeting as discerned by the Clerk in the writing of the minute'.[59] An account of Business meetings is given by Muers in her 'Afterwords'. She gives this helpful description of a 'Minute' that reflects more fully the way in which minutes are drafted by clerks.[60]

> Minutes in a Quaker business meeting are offered as a possible or plausible interpretations of a group process – including, but not limited to, what has been said and what individual experience and expertise had been offered. And most minutes are interpretations that take the form of action; 'We have heard' this, we have sat with it together, we have waited, and the action we now take is our

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[57] 'Clerk', glossary entry from Ben Pink Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis of The Theology of Quakers: The Silent Revolution',* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 363. Attenders are individuals who may attend a Quaker meeting for many years or at least regularly over a period. Attenders are not required to enter into membership. Within the Quaker movement, Attenders are largely treated as if they were Quakers for all purposes other than for certain post holding roles. They can attend Business Meetings, or the Yearly Meeting in Session with permission of the clerk.

[58] Michael J. Sheeran, *Beyond Majority Rule*; Jane Mace, *God and Decision Making: a Quaker Approach.* (London: Quaker Books, 2012). Unity here does not imply unanimity and a minority view may remain in spite of the achievement of unity. See *QF&P,* ¶3.06

[59] Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis,* 368. The responsibility of the clerk in discerning 'the sense of the meeting' is described in *QF&P,* ¶3.07, and the responsibilities of clerkship more generally at ¶3.12-¶3.21.

[60] Muers, 'Afterwords', *Testimony,* Loc.3537-3734 of 4070

response to what we have heard – our way of 'making sense' of it, …Typically, Quaker minutes do not just describe what has happened or report what is going on; they carry it forward and make the next move'.[61]

This Business Method is shared by all types of Quakerism and the pattern is very similar between local and national meetings in Britain. Individuals will generally stand to indicate they wish to contribute and can then be invited to speak by the clerk. Formally, there is no direct debate between those present, although informally some business meetings can become heated when addressing controversial issues. The influence of the clerk on these occasions is particularly important. More frequently, contributions may be interspersed with silence and interruptions are disapproved. The following extract from *QF&P* enjoins those attending business meetings to, 'be ready to listen to others carefully, without antagonism if they express opinions which are unpleasing to us, but trying always to discern the truth in what they have to offer.'[62]

While unity is required to produce a 'minute' during Business meetings, there is no necessity for uniformity of religious belief among Quakers. Notably there are no creeds that Quakers are required to profess. Dandelion claims that there is a behavioural 'orthopraxy', a lack of orthodoxy but an 'orthocredence' that suggests there is an approach to belief that is recognisably 'liberal' Quaker.

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[61] Ibid. Loc.3566 of 4070.
[62] *QF&P,* ¶3.05.

> The 'absolute perhaps' is a defining characteristic of the Liberal
> Quaker and is the key difference between these Quakers and the
> whole of the rest of Quakerism, worldwide today and historically.[63]

This theological 'absolute perhaps', allowing for 'the possibility of difference' has according

to Dandelion become 'a prescription': 'The idea of progressivism and of being open to new

Light has become translated into the idea that the group cannot know Truth, except

personally, partially or provisionally. Thus Liberal Quakerism is not just about the possibility

of seeking, it is about the certainty of never finding. All theology is "towards", a "perhaps"

kind of exercise.'[64]

Unprogrammed Quakers comprise only 15% of worldwide Quakerism[65]. In 2005 the Friends

World Committee for Consultation[66] released figures showing that Quakers worldwide

totalled 367,808. There were 18,362 in total in Europe and the Middle East in 2005, while in

Africa there were 157,153. There are greater numbers in South and Central America.[67] At that

time Britain Yearly Meeting comprised 15,772 members. By 2016 membership had fallen to

13,130 Members and 7,925 Attenders.[68] By the end of 2018 membership had fallen to 12,666,

Attenders to 7,433.[69] Although membership numbers have consistently fallen each year in

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[63] Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity: Towards a General Theory of Internal Secularisation.* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2019), 128-9.

[64] Ibid., 128

[65] Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press: 2007), 171.

[66] FWCC, http://fwcc.world/about-fwcc

[67] Dandelion, *An Introduction*, 177-179 Table 4.1.

[68] Francesca Eva Sara Montemaggi, 'A Quiet Faith: Quakers in Post-Christian Britain', *Religions* 9, (2018):313, doi:10.3390/rel9100313.

[69] Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 'Patterns of Membership: Including the Tabular Statement 2018'. (London: Britain yearly Meeting, 2019), 2, available at https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/all-meetings-1/yearly-meeting-2019-1 accessed February 2021.

Britain since 1991, British Quakers continue to attract new members and a third of all members have participated for less than 10 years: 67% of those who join cite lack of religious dogma as among their initial attraction to the group, 41%, 'Peace and social testimonies/political viewpoint'.[70]

Testimonies

Despite this approach to theology, there are key *Testimonies* that appear to operate effectively as *doxa* although not as *ortho-doxy*. Dandelion lists these as 'peace, simplicity, equality, integrity and community or stewardship'.[71] The Quaker Testimonies are currently set out at the website of *Quakers in Britain* under the page 'Our values' where it states: 'We believe our faith should translate into action. To help guide and challenge us to live this way, Quakers have a number of "Testimonies". These testimonies have changed over the years as we want them to reflect current society and its issues.'[72] The Testimonies are listed under four headings: Peace, Equality, Truth and Integrity,[73] Simplicity and Sustainability.[74] Some of

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[70] Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 130-131.

[71] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 221.

[72] Quakers in Britain, 'Our Values', accessed April 2017, (archived, updated, 2020); https://www.quaker.org.uk/about-quakers/our-values.

[73] For examples see Committee for Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs, *Questions of Integrity*, (London: London Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, 1993).

[74] See Quakers in Britain website 'Our Work', accessed April 2017, https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work. Testimonies are listed differently by Yearly Meetings around the world. Quakers in Britain website lists; Equality and Justice, Peace, Truth and Integrity, Simplicity and Sustainability; 'Our Values' https://www.quaker.org.uk/about-quakers/our-values. Quakers in Canada list their testimonies as; Truth and Integrity, Justice, Equality and Community, Simplicity, Peace: https://quaker.ca/who-we-are/testimonies/ Accessed November 2019. Friends United Meeting (FUM) is an essentially Christian and evangelising church in the US and Africa, their 'Core Spiritual

the literature on these Testimonies is relevant to the issue of concern, as a concern is most likely to be seen as being in keeping with an existing Testimony. Muers observes that the 'listing' of quaker Testimonies is a relatively new phenomenon. It proves difficult to simply 'assimilate' these as Quaker 'theology' and the value of them is hard to establish when the lists might equally be regarded as lists of secular liberal 'civic goods.' However, Muers is perhaps too optimisitic to suggest they can be readily agreed. As will be shown in this study, the Quaker Testimonies have a distinctly 'social' aspect that aligns them more comfortably with radical politics suggesting they would not be values '[e]verybody agrees with'.[75]

The Liberal consensus

Pink Dandelion is the most important theorist to promote the liberal thesis. Until 2008 little was published on 20th century liberal Quakerism but after the publication of *The Quaker Condition: The Sociology of a Liberal Religion,*[76] there was a general rise in references to the new interpretations of British Quakerism's liberal characteristics.[77] The sociological approach brought with it 'an atheological perspective more interested in social dynamics.'[78] Dandelion saw two phenomena as significant: 'post-Christianity', and the 'marginalisation' of belief arising from a 'caution' towards both 'given words' and theology more generally. He

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Experiences' reflect this: https://www.friendsunitedmeeting.org/about-friends/about-friends
Accessed March 2020.
[75] Muers, *Testimony,* loc., 439 of 4070.
[76] Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins eds., *The Quaker Condition: The Sociology of a Liberal Religion,* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008).
[77] Pink Dandelion 'Ten Years of Birmingham: An Extended Editorial' *Quaker Studies* 14, no.1 (2009): 9, https://doi.org/10.3828/quaker.14.1.5.
[78] Dandelion, 'Ten Years', 9.

concluded Quakers in Britain were sustained by a 'conservative' 'behavioural creed', providing unity and identity. Dandelion then identified the 'absolute perhaps' as representing the Quaker position towards theology, because 'Quakers know they can only be uncertain about their interpretation of experience within the religious quest.'[79] Dandelion has restated this as a generational desire by key Quakers at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries to be ' "of the age" and of the Society'[80] noting that in 1931 London Yearly Meeting adopted 'the phrase "be open to new Light"' which is 'taken by Liberal Quakers today as normative'.[81] Following the gradual modernising of Quakerism in Britain after the 1895 Manchester conference. Influential Quakers in Britain in the early part of the 20th century such as J.W.Rowntree,[82] ushered in four key 'modernist' features:

1. That experience was primary
2. That faith needed to be relevant to the age
3. That Friends needed to be open to 'new Light'
4. That new revelation had an automatic authority over old revelation and that God's Truth was revealed gradually over time: the idea of 'Progressivism'[83]

Dandelion identifies this modernist shift as a further extension of the earlier Liberal theology that developed in 19th century British Quakerism and labels this modernist approach liberal-

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[79] Ibid. 10
[80] Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 119.
[81] Ibid.
[82] For an examination of the Rowntree Quaker family involvement in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Liberalism and Quakerism see Ian Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism: The Rowntree Family, Quakerism and Social Reform' *Journal of British Studies*, 42, no.2 (2003): 236-257, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/345607; Alice Southern, 'The Rowntree History Series and The Growth of Liberal Quakerism', *Quaker Studies*, 16, no.1 (2011): 7-73.
[83] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 129-130, summarising Martin Davie, *British Quaker Theology Since 1895* (Lewiston, New York, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1997), 67-72.

Liberal. The characteristics of this form are its openness to intellectual, rational discourse and scientific advance, including Darwin's conclusions on evolution.

The Bible if read at all, is engaged with in an open interpretive fashion, and there is no attempt to regard it as literally true. Ongoing revelation is valued and can supercede past revelation so that, in Dandelion's words Quakerism is 'a religious enterprise always on the move' and 'pluralistic'.[84]

> For liberal-Liberal Friends, theology has become a story…God an option. Key parts of the tradition can be, and have been questioned as new sets of individual experiences / interpretations modify collective popular belief and over time. The collective orthodoxy is reframed by each generation in a revised book of discipline. Liberal-Liberal Quakerism is one in which belief is pluralised, privatised, but also marginalised: it is not seen as important. This kind of Quakerism is held together by form, by the way the group is religious, not by what it believes. There are Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist Quakers (Huber 2001), theist and nontheist (Rush 2003), agnostic and atheist. The second coming, for most, is no longer part of their story.[85]

Dandelion's representation of Quaker belief, as 'marginalised' while significant within Quaker and religious studies is not accepted without modification in relation to Quakers engaging in political activism. It is claimed here that 'beliefs' remain important to 21st century British Quakerism, and Quaker activists. This is supported in part by the work of Rachel Muers, whose examination of Quaker 'Testimonies' and their Christian roots suggests belief plays a larger

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[84] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 134. For the Quaker response to Darwinianism see Geoffrey Cantor, 'Quaker Responses to Darwin,' *Osiris* 16, (2001):321-342, https://www.jstor.org/stable/301991.
[85] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 134.

part in Quaker praxis than Dandelion allows.[86]

In the literature, the view of Quakerism as a 'liberal' religion is largely accepted both within and outside the movement, even if at times what constitutes that liberalism is unclear and varies over time.[87] Hugh Rock suggests that Quaker 19th and early 20th century 'social theism' was a religious liberalism at odds with the broader 'mystical tradition' of Christian liberalism. Rock claims, Rufus Jones (1863-1948), influential American Quaker writer and teacher engaged with the drivers of 19th century religious liberalism (science and rationality) and harnessed these for 'a rational religion and social gospel'.[88] Jones according to Rock, proposed an unusual and unclearly defined *'affirmative'* mysticism.[89] Rock sees this as Jones's way out of 'doctrinal religion'[90] but ultimately pointing the way towards a humanistic religion based upon Christian ethics.[91]

Others also apply the term 'liberal' to Quakerism and Quaker belief largely as a marker of its lack of dogma, and broad range of theist and nontheist belief. Giselle Vincett's examination

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[86] Rachel Muers, *Testimony: Quakerism and Theological Ethics,* (Norwich: SCM Press, 2015), Kindle edition.
[87] Martin Davie, *British Quaker Theology Since 1895,* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen,1997); J.William Frost, 'Modernist and Liberal Quakers, 1887-2010' in Angell and Dandelion, *The Oxford Handbook,* 78-92; Caroline Plüss, 'Analysing non-doctrinal socialization: re-assessing the role of cognition to account for social cohesion in the Religious Society of Friends', *The British Journal of Sociology* 58, no.2 (2007): 253-275; Hugh Rock, 'George Fox and Theological Liberalism', *Modern Believing* 58, no.1 (2017): 29-39. https://doi.org/10.3828/mb.2017.4. - Davie and Plüss are not Quakers.
[88] Hugh Rock, 'Rufus Jones Never Did Establish that Quakerism is a Mystical Religion', *Quaker Studies* 21, no.1 (2016): 61.
[89] Rock, 'Rufus Jones', 51-55.
[90] Ibid.,53
[91] Ibid.,60.

of Quagans (Quaker Pagans) suggests liberal characteristics in; 'dislike of creeds', 'limited contextual revelation', 'post-Christianity', 'openness', and silent 'listening' worship.[92] Susan Robson in commenting on the references to the spirit of Christ in an Epistle from Ireland YM noted it was not sufficiently 'liberal' or 'perhapsish' for BYM to have authored it.[93] This last comment, suggests that the 'liberalism' of Quaker belief has some perceived boundaries, and some normative content, 'acceptable' to some more than others. Dandelion argues a 'fundamentalist' permissiveness has arisen among liberal Quakers where normative belief is restricted to an 'absolute perhaps'.[94] This means that Quakers 'implicitly demand this certainty about non-certainty from their members.'[95]

Mark Read, in exploring the way in which Quakers 'do' belief in their workplaces rejected the idea that there is a contemporary radicalism among Quakers in the social sphere: Quaker 'modern-day, liberal reimagination has tended towards social orthodoxy.' [96] Perhaps because the 'liberal' label is so tenacious Mark Read concluded that his interviewees 'individualised' approach to 'making a difference' meant that 'they did not frame their everyday engagement as a co-operative venture with God or with the corporate Quaker movement. Rather, the

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[92] Giselle Vincett, 'Quagans: Fusing Quakerism with Contemporary Paganism,' *Quaker Studies,* 13, no.2 (2009): 220-237.
[93] Susan Robson, 'Grasping the Nettle: Conflict and the Quaker Condition', *Quaker Studies* 15, no.1 (2010): 79.
[94] Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 127-128; See also, Pink Dandelion, 'Research Note: Implicit Conservatism in Liberal Religion: British Quakers as an 'Uncertain Sect'', Journal *of Contemporary Religion* 19, No. 2 (2004):219-229.https://doi.org/10.1080/1353790042000207728; Pink Dandelion, 'The Creation of Coherence: The "Quaker double-culture" and the "absolute perhaps"' in Dandelion and Collins, *The Quaker Condition,* 22-37.
[95] Dandelion, 'Research Note', 225.
[96] Mark Read, ''Doing Belief': British Quakers in the Twenty-First-Century Workplace', *Quaker Studies,* 24, no.1 (2019) 142.

interviewees approached their workaday engagement from an individualised and pragmatic point of view.'[97] While some of Read's interviewees clearly achieved an 'accommodation' between the demands of their workplaces and their consciences, the very fact that an effort to improve ('mend') the world played a role in their rationalisation and alignment suggests that belief and an ethical joint enterprise influences these individuals. Read, perhaps because of the insistence upon an 'individualistic' and pluralistic nature of 'liberal' Quakerism concludes somewhat contradictorily that:

> the religious grounds for 'doing belief' were not considered important by the interviewees so much as participation in the collective effort to mend the world. For these research participants, the individual rather than ascribed religious categories or worldviews were primary in shaping workaday participation. What counts as Quaker is marginal relative to remaking a better world in the workaday.[98]

Read's interviewees were not directly engaging with 'concern', but it is clear their Quaker affiliation was influencing how these individuals lived out their Quakerism beyond the meeting house. For most individuals in the workplace who are neither in managerial positions, nor in trades unions this 'individual' living out is arguably all that is available in most workplaces. It is probable that being vegan in the workplace produces a similar 'individual' accommodation alongside a desire to see veganism promoted if possible. The utopian Quaker aim of 'mending' the world however, is distinctive.

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[97] Ibid.,157.
[98] Read, ''Doing Belief'', 157.

Despite an extensive consensus in the literature, it is one of the key findings of this study that the term liberal is inadequate to describe Quaker thought and behaviour when viewed through political philosophy and in particular when applied to Quaker political activism. The particular use of the term as a descriptor of religious organisations, is not consonant with political philosophy. While some commentators, including Dandelion have identified strands of anarchist or socialist politics in Quaker activism, in the recent history of British Quakerism none have taken this to its philosophical root, in the republican tradition in political philosophy. That is a key difference in this study which suggests that the 'orthopraxis' Dandelion deems 'conservative'[99] is part of this longer tradition of community self-governance through shared core values, and willingness to lay aside individualism for the benefit of the shared wisdom of the group.

In a recent flourishing of literature on the relation between Quakers and commerce, the 'Quaker Business Method' has proved to be one of the key interests to those engaged in the study of Business and corporate social responsibility noting:

> There is a shared responsibility to discern a shared understanding of the right way forward. Allen (2017, 134–5) connects this emphasis on shared responsibility for discernment with a practice of individual 'unknowing' – radically decentering the individual knower in order to foster 'a wider group-wisdom'; in the collective process of seeking unity, ideas put forward by individuals are 'tested, revised and woven together' to produce a result that is not recognizably the work of any of the individuals involved.[100]

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[99] Dandelion, 'Research Note'.
[100] Nicholas Burton, Juliette Koning and Rachel Muers, 'Organizational ethnography and religious organizations: the case of Quaker decision-making', *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 15 no.4 (2018): 357, https://doi.org/10.1080/14766086.2018.1496469.

This epistemological 'decentring' is achieved through a shared 'discernment' where the group mediates the individual's 'immediate' experience. While justifications for political positions and actions may arise from faith, and religious truth claims may be motivational behind these, it is clear that some form of decentring experience, is an element in the achievement of Quaker 'unity', 'truth' or simply 'the right way forward'.

Quakers offer reasons that might be regarded as generally acceptable in a liberal society because they frequently cite justice/injustice, or (on climate change) scientific evidence to justify their actions, but behind these 'secular' justifications is a process of shared ethical discernment. This precedes and underwrites their activism and exceeds the limits of political liberalism which relies upon a consensus towards secular 'political' goods, such as equality in voting rights, and the State's neutrality towards religion and religious organisations. There is the obvious point that religious liberalism is identified by an absence of dogma, while political liberalism aims at agreed constitutional laws to maintain stability in a pluralistic state, but there is still a failure in the literature to appreciate that religious comprehensive perspectives are 'accommodated' and 'tolerated' by liberalism rather than intrinsic to liberalism: liberalism being the proposed solution to the political problem of accommodating diverse faiths (alongside atheism) in such a way as to prevent religious wars within states. It might be thought the Quaker rejection of 'creed' and dogma makes their theo-philosophical position indecipherable, yet this is not born out in relation to Quaker political activism, which suggests there is still 'belief' at work. Quakers in the 20th century have drawn similarities between a Quaker approach to Truth, and the scientific approach to knowledge. The physicist and Quaker Arthur Eddington, whose work helped confirm by observation Einstein's theory of

relativity, showing that light was affected by gravity in the same way as mass, stated:

> Rejection of creed is not inconsistent with being possessed by a living belief. We have no creed in science, but we are not lukewarm in our beliefs. The belief is not that all the knowledge of the universe that we hold so enthusiastically will survive in the letter; but a sureness that we are on the road. If our so-called facts are changing shadows, they are shadows cast by the light of constant truth. So too in religion we are repelled by that confident theological doctrine which has settled for all generations just how the spiritual world is worked; but we need not turn aside from the measure of light that comes into our experience showing us a Way through the unseen world. Religion for the conscientious seeker is not all a matter of doubt and self-questionings. There is a kind of sureness which is very different from cocksureness.[101]

Despite the refusal to require adherence to a creed,[102] belief in a capacity to discern a 'constant truth' experientially will be shown to be a critical aspect of concern and an awkward disjuncture with the view of British Quakerism as having 'liberal' characteristics in relation to belief.

Research Rationale

Quakerism's absent political philosophy

The study of Quakerism in the contemporary academic context has largely been in three distinct areas of scholarship: history, theology and sociological investigations. There is also a growing interest in Business studies in the Quaker Business method.[103] Dandelion gives an

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[101] Arthur S. Eddington, *Science and the unseen world (Swarthmore lecture),* 1929, 55-56, reproduced at *QF&P,* ¶27.24.

[102] *QF&P,* ¶27.21 - 27.26

[103] Nicholas Burton, and Richard Turnbull, eds. *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility: Lessons and Cases for Responsible Management*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2019).

overview of studies in Quakerism, focusing largely on theological material.[104] His sociological

work on the internal secularization of religious denominations including Quakers offers

helpful constructs, notably his use of a 'flow' model of group interaction within the group,

and between the group, the world and the State. Dandelion addresses Habermas in relation

to his work on 'post-secularity' but does not tackle political theory in depth.[105]

Another source that suggests an absence of political theory in relation to understanding

Quakerism more generally is found in the refereed journal, *Quaker Studies*, published bi-

annually. Most articles explore Quaker history, theology or sociology. When a search for

'politic*' was put into the online Liverpool Press database for Quaker Studies it brought up

102 hits[106], but only around 5 of these appeared to address contemporary Quakerism and did

so from a theological or sociological standpoint. One addressed 'race and Quakerism' and this

relied upon an American 19th century case study.[107] A search for 'concern' returned 103

hits.[108] Only around 15 of these addressed contemporary Quakerism and those that did

considered specific areas of Quaker concern rather than a global discussion of the concept.

None appeared to take their theoretical approach from political philosophy. Only two

engaged with traditional philosophical theories and these related to Quaker epistemology

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[104] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* Box 1, 2 - 4.
[105] Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 140. Dandelion argues contra Habermas, that in respect of Quakerism, 'secular and religious citizens are the same people'.
[106] Search date 21.4.2017. – Search could not be updated following a change in the way in which the Liverpool University Press search option operates.
[107] Holly Genovese, 'Not a Myth: Quakers and Racial Justice', *Quaker Studies,* 19 no.2, (2015): 243-259.
[108] Search date 21.4.2017 – see note 59 above.

and virtue theory/quaker morality.[109] Contemporary Quaker concern has not been addressed

through political philosophy which suggests a need for a study of this kind.

Despite the absence of an in-depth consideration of the philosophical underpinnings of

Quaker political praxis, Quakers in Britain are significantly engaged with politics and political

activism. Among British Quakers there is a predominance of support for the Liberal, Green

and Labour parties. This liberal-left-green feature of British Quaker politics is not replicated

in other parts of the world where Quakers are found. In the UK general election of 2015, there

were 20 Quaker parliamentary candidates. Two were elected as MPs – both were for the

Labour party. Ruth Cadbury, Brentford and Isleworth, and Catherine West, Hornsey and Wood

Green. Of all 20 parliamentary candidates; 9 stood for the Green Party, 5 Labour (including 1

Labour-Co-operative Party), 4 Liberal Democrats, 1 Peace Party, 1 for the 'National Health

Action Party'.[110] The British radical political tradition is also in keeping with the corporate

behaviour of Friends in their decision-making processes and corporate decisions and

statements. While there have been two Quaker US Presidents both Republicans: Herbert

Hoover and Richard Nixon, there are currently no Quakers in Congress.[111] The last, Rush D

Holt of New Jersey retired in 2014.[112] In 2016 there were just over 21,000 Quakers in the UK.

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[109] Laura Rediehs 'A Distinctive Quaker Theory'; Jackie Leach Scully, 'Virtuous Friends: Morality and Quaker Identity', *Quaker Studies,* 14, no.1 (2009): 108-122.
[110] 'Quaker MPs. Quaker Vote: the EU referendum' Quakers in Britain website, accessed 13 October 2016, (http://election.quaker.org.uk/quaker-mps/ (page archived). For a very brief political picture among Friends in Britain and the USA see Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 158-164.
[111] 'Faith on the Hill: The Religious Composition of Congress', Pew Research Centre, Religion and Public Life, accessed May 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/01/03/faith-on-the-hill-116/.
[112] Ginger Pinholster, 'Retiring U.S. Congressman Rush D. Holt, Ph.D., a Scientist and Teacher, to Lead AAAS' American Association for the Advancement of Science, Nov 17, 2014, accessed Jan.2017,

ONS statistics give the number of UK parliamentary electors in 2015 as 44,722,000,[113] therefore to have had 2 MPs and fielded 20 candidates is a surprisingly high rate of political engagement comparative to numbers of Quakers in the general population.

Since 2015, British Quakers have made public statements and lobbied against TTIP[114], for affordable social housing, for recognition of anthropogenic climate change, against military action in Syria, against replacement of Trident, against proposals to scrap the Human Rights Act, and in favour of allowing safe passage for refugees.[115] They lobby for ethical finance and against austerity and the weakening of the social security system. On their webpage 'Building a better economy' they stated: 'Quakers have committed to work towards a different kind of economic system based on our fundamental human equality and respect for the Earth. While we are clear that a different type of economy is necessary, Quakers do not claim to have all the answers. We are still discerning what this "new economy" might look like and how we can take practical steps to build it.'[116] Quaker economic justice would not it is suggested be non-

https://www.aaas.org/news/retiring-us-congressman-rush-d-holt-phd-scientist-and-teacher-lead-aaas-worlds-largest-general

[113] 'Electoral Statistics, UK:2015' Office for National Statistics (ONS), accessed October 2016, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/elections/electoralregistration/bulletins/electoralstatisticsforuk/2015

[114] The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. 'Quakers say 'no' to EU-US Trade deal' Quakers in Britain, 18 May 2016, https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-say-no-to-eu-us-trade-deal

[115] Search made under 'Quaker Statements', Quakers in Britain website, 13 December 2016 http://www.quaker.org.uk/search?query=Quaker+Statements&sort=date&tag=Politics; repeated 29 May 2020

[116] Search of Quakers in Britain website, 13 December 2016, http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/economic-justice/new-economy (Page since updated)

regulatory, nor lead to a small State, except insofar as it would be envisaged that just economics would reduce the need for welfare necessitated by unjust economics.[117]

Quakers in Britain support political activism directly, not only among Quakers but by offering resources and training within and outside the Quaker community. Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) has a programme called 'Turning the Tide' (TTT) offering training, workshops and free resources for both discernment of, and activism in concern.[118] Among the 'Toolkits' offered free online by TTT are titles such as: 'Nonviolent communication roleplay', 'Quick decisions', 'Consensus handout', 'Making a group decision', 'Pillars of Power', 'Spirituality activism and me', 'What sustains me?' and 'Why do we obey?' The blog by Lyndsey Burtonshaw TTT GB Co-ordinator recounts in 2019 there was activism by 600 Quakers and others at the DSEI arms fair in London, involvement in the Stansted 15 immigration deportation protest and subsequent prosecution of activists (including two Quakers, one being Burtenshaw herself), plus support for Extinction Rebellion.[119] The unique methods of

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[117] Mike King proposes benign entrepreneurship is the response to unethical capitalism most in keeping with Quaker history and makes a passionate plea for ethical capitalism. He disapproves both 'left-wing' or 'Marxist' tendencies to State managed economies and a murderous capitalism void of ethical content as in the legacy of Friedman in Chile. King approves regulation to control unethical activity: Mike King, *Quakernomics: An Ethical Capitalism,* (London,New York: Anthem Press, 2014), 244.

[118] Turning the Tide GB (TTT) is a nonviolent social change programme funded by Quakers in Britain. 'We believe nonviolent approaches to social change can contribute towards a more peaceful and just world for everyone. What does Turning the Tide do? We connect with Quakers and civil society networks and organisations to create positive change through imaginative, active nonviolence and civil resistance… We work alongside people who want to find their own courage and power to take collective action to build peace through resisting and transforming violence', 'About us' Turning the Tide, accessed Feb 2020, https://turningtide.org.uk/about-us/.

[119] Lyndsey Burtonshaw, 'Turning the Tide: Setting intentions for 2020' Blog Jan.23, 2020 Turning the Tide, accessed, March 2020, https://turningtide.org.uk/2020/01/23/ttt2020/.

corporate decision-making and their 'corporate discernment' of concern is under-explored in political philosophy, even though it does enter debates in liberalism.[120] In consideration of the above it is clear that there is a gap in knowledge within Quaker Studies in relation to Quaker concern and political philosophy.

Sources for the study

Literature
The use of literature as a source for understanding Quaker belief may be considered problematic by some Quakers. Quakers reject the 'reduction' to language of the essentially experiential phenomenon of silent worship.[121] It ignores a 'truth' of British unprogrammed Quakerism, that each person's experience is different and that therefore to attempt to set this down produces merely one version which will be unrepresentative and reductive to a singular 'point of view'. In her exploration of the use of religious language by contemporary Quakers Rhiannon Grant observes two 'major assumptions' found in 'recent British Quaker texts' that words are secondary to experience and that the translation of experience to words is inadequate and reductive.[122] Fortunately, an aspect of Quakerism to survive from its early

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[120] Considered in Chapter 5.

[121] *QF&P,* ¶2.39, ¶2.41; Silence, and its religious relation to God, the world, and Quakerism is explored by Quaker theologian, Rachel Muers, *Keeping God's Silence: Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication,* (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) Kindle edition. Muers rejects a purely phenomenological account in favour of a communicative one focusing on 'cultural, social, and political' context, noting it is always important to ask '*who* keeps silence, and in relation to whom'; kindle loc. 166 of 3733.

[122] Rhiannon Grant, 'Understanding Quaker Religious Language in its Community Context', *Quaker Studies,* 19, no.2 (2015): 261-2. Bauman offers a significantly contrasting historical outline of the socially and theologically unifying and at times performative aspects to both silence *and* ministry in 17th century Quakerism: Bauman, *Let your words.*

period is the ready production of Quaker pamphlets and short books treating a variety of Quaker topics, such as the Pendle Hill pamphlet collection and the published Swarthmore lectures. Sections of BYM also produce their own literature, such as QPSW and even the offices of QUNO and QCEA produce leaflets for educational purposes. The rise in Quaker Studies at postgraduate level and the journal *Quaker Studies,* also provided source material.

Interviews
Chapter 2 contains extracts from interviews with British Quakers. The approach is qualitative. The method is broadly phenomenological, focusing on participant experience and understanding. The study is not intended to provide 'data' from which to attempt an 'objective' descriptive or predictive overview of unprogrammed British Quakerism, rather it is intended to identify aspects of Quaker thought and experience, relevant to political philosophy. The interviews, save for some illustrative extracts, are not appended to the thesis. The question of maintaining participant anonymity was a cause for considerable reflection.[123] The researcher recognised a variety of opinions in academic sociological sources that differed as to the treatment of interview data.[124] It was seen by some commentators to be important for credibility and identification of accuracy that interviews be retained and archived to allow for evaluation of the methods, ethical behaviour and conclusions of the researcher, while admitting that this might simply not be possible where time, finances and

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[123] Helpful criteria and approaches were found in Benjamin Saunders, et al., 'Anonymising interview data: challenges and compromise in practice', *Qualitative Research* 15, no.5 (2014):616-632, doi: 10.1177/1468794114550439.
[124] Shamser Sinha and Les Back propose allowing for greater transparency through participant co-writing: Shamser Sinha and Les Back, 'Making methods sociable: dialogue, ethics and authorship in qualitative research', *Qualitative Research* 14, no.4 (2014):473-487.

promises of confidentiality were constraints.[125] Others regarded the difficulties as more

notable for qualitative data than quantitative and commented on the 'ethical indeterminacy'

involved in archiving data.[126]

Given that Quakers in Britain are a relatively small community with many links and

connections and knowledge of each other through local, area and yearly meetings and the

plethora of committees they participate in, it became clear to this researcher that anonymity

was a significant ethical consideration.[127] Precautions have been taken to anonymise extracts

used in the thesis, and publication of entire interviews would compromise this effort. The

important advantage of achieving participant trust and confidence and a preparedness to

speak openly and frankly, would not have been achieved without offering anonymity to

participants. There would be a danger of loss of trust in making full disclosure of the interview

transcripts even where there was agreement by the interviewee to publication. Ultimately

the ethical desire not to lose this confidence and trust outweighed other concerns and

informed my decision not to append the interviews to the thesis. Nevertheless, exemplar

extracts are presented at Appendix III, offering opportunities to the reader to assess the

researcher's conclusions. Full versions of the interview transcripts were sent to interviewees

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[125] Erik Bleich and Robert Pekkanen 'How to report interview data' in *Interview Research in Political Science,* ed. Layna Mosley, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), 92-93.
[126] Annamaria Carusi and Marina Jirotka, 'From data archive to ethical labyrinth', *Qualitative Research* 9, no.3 (2009): 288. See also Liz Tilley and Kate Woodthorpe, 'Is it the end for anonymity as we know it? A critical examination of the ethical principal of anonymity in the context of 21st century demands on the qualitative researcher', *Qualitative Research* 11, no.2, (2011): 197-212.
[127] A comparison can be made with the ethical difficulties faced when interviewing members of a family: Galia Sabar and Naama Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, ''I'll sue you if you publish my wife's interview': ethical dilemmas in qualitative research based on life stories', *Qualitative Research* 17, no.4 (2017): 408-423, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468794116679727.

in anticipation of appending them, and for interviewees to retain. Audio recordings of their interviews were also sent to individual participants save where they stated they did not require these or their contribution was not included in the study. While there is a reciprocal confidentiality issue related to the researcher in doing this, because her words are also heard/reproduced, this was not a source of concern for this researcher. In the absence of the public availability of the interviews, having the interviews in print or audio form held by the participants themselves seemed an ethically acceptable compromise offering some ownership of the data by the participants.

Having outlined the area of the study, the reasons for its undertaking and research rationale, Chapter 1 Part II reviews Quaker literature on concern and relevant literature in political philosophy.

Part II
Literature Review of Quaker writings on Concern

Almost all literature that is related to concern is in essay or pamphlet form and falls into two sorts: descriptions of the experiences of those engaged directly in active work in a concern, some offering reflections or describing the stages and progress of an involvement[128] or, examinations of the Quaker process of decision making by *discernment* which is key to the recognition of a concern, corporately and individually.[129] *Quaker Faith and Practice* sets out the personal and corporate methods evolved by Friends for identifying concerns, both at the individual and the corporate level.[130] However, there is no connection made there with how concern as a phenomenon fits into political philosophy, although more wide ranging discussions of the nature of concern are available in several studies.[131] Throughout, Quaker

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[128] The following offer examples of particular concerns: David Blamires, *Pushing at the frontiers of change: A memoir of Quaker involvement with homosexuality,* (London: Quaker Books, 2012); Rachel Brett, *Snakes and Ladders: A personal exploration of Quaker work on human rights at the United Nations,* The Swarthmore Lecture 2012, (London: Quaker Books, 2012); Helena Chambers, 'Modern Testimonies: The Approach of Quakers to Substance Use and Gambling' *Quaker Studies,* 14 no.1, (2009): 93-107; Charles L. Cherry, 'Quakers and Asylum reform' in *The Oxford Book of Quakers Studies,* Stephen Q. Angell and Pink Dandelion, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Jonathan Dale, *Quaker Social Testimony in Our Personal and Corporate Life*, (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications, 2002); Brian Phillips and John Lampen eds., *Endeavours to Mend: Perspectives on British Quaker work in the world* (London: Quaker Books, 2006); Lisa Ann Smith, Lori G. Beaman, 'Displacing Religion, Disarming Law: Situating Quaker Spirituality in the 'Trident Three' Case', *Social Compass* 4, (2010): 503-520.

[129] Peter J. Eccles, *The Presence in the Midst,* (London: Quaker Books, 2009); Jack Kirk, *Kindling a Life of Concern*, (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications, 2009); Jeremy Knutsen, *Individual Spiritual Discernment*, (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications 2017); Patricia Loring, *Spiritual Discernment: the Context and Goal of Clearness Committees* (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications, 1992); Patricia Loring, *Listening Spiritually: Personal Spiritual Practice among Friends. Vol. 1.* (Washington: Opening Press, 1997), Patricia Loring, *Corporate Spiritual Practice Among Friends. Vol. 2.* (Washington: Opening Press, 1999); Mace, *God*; Sheeran, *Beyond*.

[130] *QF&P*, 'Concern: faith in action' ¶13.02 – ¶13.18. Example sections are reproduced at Appendix I.

[131] Meeting for Sufferings of the Religious Society of Friends, *The Nature and Variety of Concern: The Report of a Working Party,* (Quaker Home Service, 1986); Diana and John Lampen, 'Quaker Concern' in *Endeavours to Mend: Perspectives on Quaker work in the world today*, Brian Phillips and John

literature describes concern as a theological, personal, corporate and practical matter, albeit one that engages directly with the world beyond Quaker meetings

Concern, as a phenomenon, is recognised as following a specific pattern. All descriptions of concern agree that there are usually two broad key features: **personal discernment** and **corporate discernment**. A short pamphlet was produced by Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) in 1986: *The Nature and Variety of Concern: The Report of a Working Party*.[132] This resulted in some of the entries on concern in the current edition of *Quaker Faith and Practice.* In the 1980s, members of the working party prompted by MfS, originally believed it would be able to create a case history and a glossary of terms to try to define concern. The MfS working party is significant for its attention to concern as an essentially *theological* phenomenon in its own right, noting 'the term 'concern' among Friends has its origin firmly in our Christian heritage and presupposes, indeed testifies to, a *personal* God who seeks *personal* commerce with each of us.'[133] The authors expressed some consternation that the word concern had largely come to mean 'concern about' rather than the sense that a Quaker would feel something to be 'inwardly laid upon [him or her] by God'. The issue was to consider how Monthly Meetings (now called Area Meetings AMs), would bring these concerns to be 'tested as a true leading of the Spirit'– as suggested by para.861 of the 1968 'Church Government'.[134]

Lampen eds., (London: Quaker Books, 2006), 33-50; Brett, *Snakes and Ladders*, 2012; Jane Pearn, *The language of leadings,* 2017.
[132] MfS, Nature and Variety, 1986.
[133] Ibid., 5.
[134] Pearn, *Leadings,* 11.

The MfS working party put to Friends two questions which were theologically loaded and complex in structure as they sought to address the nature of concern and how it was treated at that time among British Quakers. After the working party's initial five meetings an 'Invitation to all Friends' was published in *The Friend*, the main British Quaker publication, on 19/10/1984.

1. Is 'obedience to God' in an explicit intent to cooperate with a wise and loving purpose, still generally accepted as the basis for individual Quaker living and decision-making? If for you it is the basis, how do you in practice seek to be obedient?
2. Do our present structures, such as Monthly Meetings, still function on such a basis and thus provide an appropriate means for 'testing' various kinds and levels of individual 'leading' and 'concerns'? If not, what alternative means have been found, or might prove to be more satisfactory?[135]

The group appeared to express disappointment in the small number of responses, receiving only 16 individual responses, 4 from meetings and 1 from a group within the meeting. The tone appears disconsolate in the observation that the failure to respond might either be because the advert had not been seen, that Friends were not moved to respond or that the lack of response was 'consistent with the recognition that more Friends today find it difficult to say what they believe'. The complexity of the Questions was not considered as a potentially off-putting factor.

The group then selected out for reproduction in the pamphlet what they felt was the 'most revealing statement' that had prompted them 'to examine the impact on concern of the

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[135] MfS, Nature and Variety, *Appendix* I.

diversity of personal religious belief among Friends' and which also appeared to indicate a 'dearth of expression of traditional Quaker concern'. The response, which came from a group of Friends in London stated:

> On the whole we hesitated to say that our way of life and decision-making were the result of 'obedience to God'. The concept of a personal God is not accepted by all and in any case the phrase could mean something different to each of us. Generally feeling we felt that 'obedience to God' was too grand a concept, and would prefer to say that any ideas or action taken are it is hoped the result of 'the promptings of love and truth in our hearts'.[136]

The forlorn sounding reference to 'hope' in this passage offers an opportunity for a brief introduction to the meaning of 'hope' within Quakerism. Its relevance at this point is its significance as a driver of Quaker engagement with concern from its earliest days. This is indicated by the reference to a phrase familiar to many Quakers - the 'promptings of love and truth'. This phrase quoted by the working group, indicates the motivational force behind engagement in concerns traditionally cited by Quakers.[137]

Hope

Hope is a key concept in this study developed at greater length in chapter 6. To provide some context for the developments considered later, this brief introduction provides some theological background to a particularly Quaker understanding of 'hope'. According to Gerard Guiton early Quaker Christianity formed part of a 'worldview' that encompassed the following equation of terms found in early Quaker writing:

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[136] MfS Nature and Variety, 7.
[137] ¶5 Quotation from postscript to the letter from the meeting of elders at Balby, 1656, as printed in William Charles Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism,* 1912, 331, reproduced at *QF&P,* ¶1.01.

Kingdom=Light= 'Christ's Doctrine' = the Christ=
the Life=Spirit=Love= 'in Jesus'=Truth=the Word=the 'Day'=
the Power=Virtue[138]

Quakerism's early practitioners, including George Fox, Francis Howgill and Isaac Penington believed they had rediscovered the presence of Christ's Kingdom available for all 'for their own time and for all time'.[139] Guiton claims this was a 'this-worldly reality and it opened up … for everyone the possibility of perfection (spiritual maturity) and thus salvation'. It brought 'wholeness and unity in God' when the individual became convinced of this Truth.[140] This 'wholeness' was accessible to all equally and its presence in the hearts of men and women would be reflected in the world they created around them. This earthly 'Kingdom' would be God's Kingdom insofar as it evinced 'a lasting and loving relationship between "all people" with its attendant unity, peace, truth, equality, simplicity, justice and compassion'. According to Guiton, they believed that 'separation from God, the early Quakers' understanding of the cause of sin, would be defeated'.[141]

> Rather than signifying a physical End time of Jesus' bodily Second Coming… the 'Day' was the birth from 'above', a messenger, a corrective, a mediator and was always revelatory…
> …if the heart were true, sin would be washed away … through the Inward Light of the Christ which the 'darkness' could not comprehend. [142]

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[138] Gerard Guiton, 'The Kingdom of God', Quakers, and the Politics of Compassion', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies,* edited by Stephen W.Angell and Pink Dandelion, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 223.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid., 218.
[142] Ibid., 223.

According to Guiton, Early Quakers, who were seeking to bring others to the same realisation, consciously adopted the mantle of 'Prophets'. 'Hope' as I have introduced it here, begins with this condition, because for Prophets in a sinful world, as the early Quakers believed themselves to be, there had to be an obligation to hope for the world's improvement through the revelation of the 'Truth', so that all men and women might *realise* (both cognitively and through their lived relations with each other) the 'Kingdom'. For early Quakers and for much of Quaker history 'hope…was for wholeness and unity with God' and this, according to Guiton implied a 'revolutionary politics of compassion'.[143] In this respect 'hope' was and remains for Quakers a moral obligation.

A further important strand of Quaker theology throughout its history is that of 'ongoing' revelation. A Quaker view that God continues to reveal Truth and 'New Truth' means that Quakers must continue to discern God's Will. 'Hope' as it features in this context suggests a degree of mild scepticism in Quaker thought. This is revealed in their peculiar 'hope so' response to any request to endorse a decision or approve a minute. 'Hope so' is the standard phrase for this used at all Business meetings in Britain, but what it reveals is a lingering acceptance of some weak scepticism: 'we may have made this decision in accordance with God's will but we cannot be sure, so the most we can do in endorsing this action or minute is to 'hope' we have' discerned rightly*.'* The dependence here upon 'hope' rather than 'knowledge' is an important point that will become developed in later chapters, however for the present the recognition of 'partial' or incomplete knowledge identified here points

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[143] Ibid., 230.

towards a mild epistemological scepticism in relation to personal discernment. While theist Quakers may believe there is a God with intentions for humanity, human capacity for error makes *knowing* the will of God with certainty problematic and forces reliance upon the 'hope' that God's will has been correctly discerned. Contemporary nontheist Quakers may also share this mild scepticism, if not in relation to God, then potentially towards 'Truth' claims more generally.

The MfS working group cited above concluded: '[i]n humility, we must recognize that what we may see as 'the will of God' is often carried out by men and women describing themselves as agnostic or even atheist'.[144] However, being a Religious Society, the Friends required the working group to focus upon the religious form of concern and did not offer scope to pursue its nontheist form. This approach to the concept reveals the tension found in British Quakerism between the 'liberalisation' of theology in Quaker thought and traditional theological language. It brings to light the complex impact on the way in which Quakers both experience religious phenomena and talk about these. In their conclusion they saw 'a correlation' between a trend towards greater ambiguity of religious identity in contemporary British Quakerism and 'the decreasing incidence of personal "concerns" as traditionally defined.' They concluded that it was 'not the nature of Quaker "concern" that has changed but our own faith and practice.'[145]

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[144] MfS Nature and Variety, 7.
[145] Ibid., 15.

On balance Quakers in the USA who have written on concern take a more traditional Christian religious approach and see discernment of God's will as in fact a daily activity for all believers as a way to live a life of faith. Jerry Knutsen regards 'spiritual discernment' as 'a basic tenet of [Quaker] beliefs', some seeing it as a 'gift' from God.[146] Knutsen takes it to be something that can be learned and studied. In the act of spiritual discernment the individual is 'listening to the thoughts in [her] head, observing external events, and focusing on the sensations in [her] body and seeking to understand whether the guidance or the information [they] are getting is coming from self, parents, peers, teachers, pastors, culture, or a Higher Power'.[147]

For Patricia Loring, spiritual discernment is about 'staying close to the root'. Listening through 'powerful attentiveness to the Source intimated within us, evidence through others, and discernible through the experience of life'.[148] Personal discernment is the 'experience and guidance of God, immediate as well as mediated': a 'gift' and not a personal attainment.[149] For Loring it is not for personal aggrandizement but for the building of community and relationship with God. Her key exemplar of 'a life lived under guidance' is John Woolman, whose initial discomfort at being asked to write a bill of sale for a slave in 1742 remained with him. However, it was not until 1753 he achieved 'clarity' thereafter asking to be excused when asked to include a slave as property in a will. Loring notes 'the concern arose and was further refined and clarified in each instance of encounter with a violation of Woolman's inner sense

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[146] Knutsen, *Individual,* 1.
[147] Ibid., 2.
[148] Loring, Listening Spiritually, 2.
[149] Loring, Spiritual Discernment, 3.

of rightness'.[150] His description of his concern was written in 1746 in 'Some considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', published 1753. In 1758 Philadelphia YM made slaveholding a 'disownable' offence and the YM finally minuted its 'Unity' on freeing slaves. As Loring observes, although behind Woolman, still 75 years ahead of many fellow Americans. Loring also notes that measurable outcomes of undertaking work under concern are not at the forefront of the minds of those following 'leadings'. She warns how techniques that serve secular business may not serve spiritual business as well. It requires leaving off other work an individual may also believe needs to be undertaken and leaving that to others. The process of coming to clarity about what a Friend is called to do can mean a 'prolonged period' of 'living with the disquiet'.[151]

There are a number of words used by Quakers to try to describe what happens to them in personal discernment. Jane Pearn refers to 'Nudgings, Promptings, Leadings and Concerns' but she concludes with a key connection between the personal experience and the communal:

> It begins when an individual (or group) feels impelled to take action. They may be clear what is required of them, or only that there is something they must do. It is a kind of insistent call that seems both to arise beyond and chime with something deep within. It is persistent: it will not go away. There is a feeling of rightness, which can be hard to explain or define. It is also about content – what is this concern about? The meeting gathers and listens, and it becomes clear that this is central to our identity, an area of witness that defines who we are. There is something in a Quaker concern that is inherently communal: there is a relationship between the individual and the

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[150] Loring, Listening Spiritually, 107.
[151] Loring, Spiritual Discernment, 9-10.

meeting, between personal leading and group discernment. So when we bring a concern to our meeting, it implies two questions. Am I rightly led? And am I right to believe that this is something that Friends own collectively? We speak about a 'tested concern' – the point at which the meeting accepts a degree of communal responsibility.

… It is the place where our inward calling and the outward expression of Quaker testimony meet. It is where two tributaries converge: the thing that gives cause for concern and the spiritual impulse to act. It invites collective discernment of the rightness of the call and of the course of action we feel it necessary to take. It is a response to circumstances rather than a reaction to events. It arises from our faith and is a manifestation of it.[152]

Pearn's description makes an interesting contrast with the overt Christian religious language of Loring, Kirk and Knutson and with the language used by British Quakers in the MfS working party report of 1986. The theoretical material drawn from social and political thought applied to Quaker concern in the last two chapters of this study, amplifies Pearn's description above.

The way in which Quakers progress concerns has varied over time. The 1986 report identifies a number of methods, all of which involve 'testing'. Early Quaker excesses created a danger of increased persecution for Quakers. James Nayler, who rode on a donkey into Bristol in 1656 was prosecuted for blasphemy and suffered brutal corporal punishment. His actions provoked a split with Fox, although the two men were reconciled before Nayler's early death. Loring believes these extreme individual acts encouraged Quakers towards communal spiritual discernment.[153]

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[152] Pearn, *Leadings,* 12.
[153] See also Lampen and Lampen, 'Quaker Concern', 37.

> Among Friends each person is the arbiter of her own sense of God's leading. Yet Friends have not been unaware that an interior spirituality without exterior checks carries risks. While affirming that there is that of God in every person, they have been well aware that there is a great many other things in every person as well.[154]

The testing process is a critical stage in moving a concern forward as a 'Quaker concern' and is a key focus in this study which considers the communal testing process as an example of a method of community self-governance. This community self-governance and acting under concern occur in a context where the testimonies of Friends are not always 'at home in the world' and according to Loring cause 'nearly unbearable pain and confusion as to where one's responsibilities lie'.[155] This sense of being at odds with society coupled with the understanding of a continuing revelation of Truth through time gives rise to a particularly Quaker understanding of the term 'prophecy'. It is not unknown for Quaker work under concern to attract the description 'prophetic'.

> Quaker tradition held the expectation that God would raise up prophets within the community to speak to people for the good of the community and the world. The prophetic role was seen as a matter of community concern, entrusted to the individual. The individual and the community were accountable to each other for it. The gathered meeting for business had the authority to authenticate a person's concern. When a community discerned that a leading was 'from God' it minuted its discernment. With that, the individual became accountable to the community which had embraced the leading as of God, to carry it out. In turn the community became accountable to the individual and to God to assist in whatever way was necessary to carry out the undertaking.[156]

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[154] Loring, Spiritual Discernment, 7
[155] Loring, Spiritual Discernment, 10-11.
[156] Ibid., 16.

It is notable also that Quakers associate the 'prophetic' aspect to concern as a leading towards agitation for policy changes at the governmental level in contrast to only undertaking pragmatic actions to help those suffering from injustice, war, inequality etc.[157] This can come into tension with what is perceived as the right approach according to 'the demands of efficient management'.[158] Quaker corporate discernment readily admits of non-rational processes that may not have any identifiable outcome yet are adopted to 'uphold' a concern. Loring notes this as a noticeable feature of John Woolman's desire to visit the indigenous American people in the 18th century[159] and it is also a feature of work supported in the 20th century in the Balkans where QPSW supported a young woman because of 'the inherent rightness of the step she and others were prepared to take, regardless of any immediate result'.[160]

> We must continue to insist with an obstinacy grounded in our faith
> that mere utility or effectiveness is never the sole starting point for
> any Quaker work.[161]

It is also clear that this aspect of the work leads Quaker activists into the arena of politics where personal discernment, and corporate discernment encounter conflict with the

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[157] Grigor McClelland, 'The Prophet and the Reconciler' in Phillips and Lampen *Endeavours to Mend: Perspectives on British Quaker work in the world today,* Brian Phillips and John Lampen eds*.,* (London: Quaker Books, 2006): 25-32; Diana Francis, 'Faith and Practice: Believing, Acting and Witnessing', in Phillips and Lampen, *Endeavours,* 104-117, 108-9.
[158] Lampen and Lampen, 'Quaker Concern', 45.
[159] Loring, *Corporate,* p.111.
[160] Brian Phillips, 'Quaker Global Witness in the Twenty-First Century', in *Endeavours to Mend: Perspectives on British Quaker work in the world today,* Brian Phillips and John Lampen (London: Quaker Books, 2006): 9-24, 21.
[161] Ibid.,20.

surrounding society. Diana Francis sums it up in relation to campaigning to effect policy

changes in pursuing the peace testimony:

> In any case, we are all involved, as citizens, in what is done in the
> world, at home and abroad, by our governments in our name. Our
> primary responsibility as citizens is to do all in our power to elect and
> persuade our political representatives to act in favour of the values
> we hold for society.[162]

> Do you remember that quotation from the Brazilian bishop Dom
> Helder Camera, who said, 'When I gave food to the poor, they called
> me a saint. When I asked why the poor were hungry, the called me a
> communist'? I believe that, like him, we must concern ourselves with
> the systems out of which violent conflicts arise, as well as trying to
> deal with their effects.[163]

Francis emphasises the need not to shy away from conflict but to pursue 'a dialogical

approach' that 'must be consonant with the care and respect that we want to uphold' even

when working in 'broad coalitions' where that is difficult.[164]

The move from personal to corporate discernment although described simply in the current

edition of QFP, can take several routes. Diana and John Lampen set out four potential

methods for development of a concern represented in the chart at Fig.1.1.[165] All begin with

the personal discernment by an individual that they are called to act by a 'leading'. What

follows may be one of the following; firstly, the 'traditional' process as set out in QFP Chapter

[162] Diana Francis, 'Faith and Practice: Believing, Acting and Witnessing', in *Endeavours to Mend: Perspectives on Quaker work in the world today*, Brian Phillips and John Lampen eds. (London: Quaker Books, 2006), 105.
[163] Ibid.,109.
[164] Ibid.,110.
[165] Lampen and Lampen 'Quaker Concern', 41.

13, seeking corporate discernment at local, area and yearly meeting; secondly, an individual finds other members of the Society interested to work together on the issue and sets up a self-appointed group which may then be recognised by a yearly meeting as a Quaker Recognised Body[166] e.g. QARN, the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network is such a group; thirdly, join as an individual an existing non-Quaker group in the area of the concern - Amnesty International, Oxfam, and more recently City of Sanctuary all had Quakers among their original founding members, and fourthly, simply act on the belief that the original 'leading' is valid and must be followed. An example of where this last method has occurred is where an individual's work may be contentious or time-constrained and require unobtrusive actions without delay. Victor Bewley, a Dublin Quaker was 'asked by republican paramilitaries to act as a conduit to British government officials', initially having them enter his home armed in the middle of the night. As noted by Bewley's daughter, 'sometimes the work is better done quietly by the person who has the concern'.[167] As part of this research interviewee 'F' reported that they did not seek further discernment from a group, in their case because by taking action they could face imprisonment and did not feel it right to ask another to take responsibility for such a decision on their behalf.

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[166] 'A QRB is an independent group of Friends (and others) who explore a common interest, seek affirmation or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker organisation because its Quaker roots are important to its identity': from Michael S Booth, 'Quaker Recognised Bodies', (London: Recording Clerk's Office, n.d.) available at: https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups. Quaker Recognised Bodies prior to 2015 were known as 'Listed informal groups'.
[167] Marian Helen Kennedy, 'The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Ireland: Sectarianism and Identity' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham Research Archive e-theses repository, 2016), 150, 216, 229, 255.
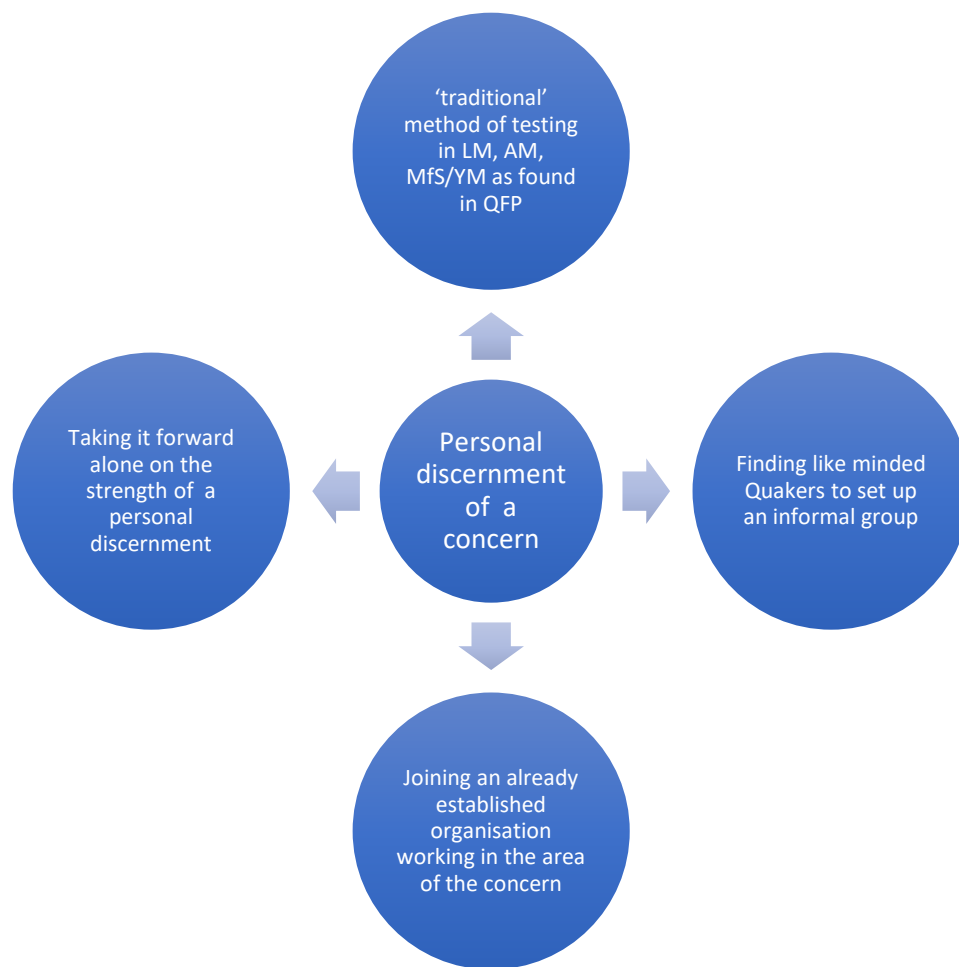
Figure 1 Four methods of progressing a concern

Jane Pearn's *The Language of Leadings* at over 50 pages is the longest piece of writing yet

dedicated to concern as a concept by a British Quaker.[168] Pearn summarises personal and

corporate discernment as follows:

The individual or group

o   feels an insistent and persistent sense of being personally called to act.
    …

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[168] I am grateful to Jane Pearn for allowing me to read a print-ready proof of her *The Language of Leadings,* 2017.

- has a sense of inner conviction, and of the rightness of this call. It may entail internal or external struggles: everything might fall into place easily, or the way can be fraught with difficulty. But the sense of rightness remains.
- is changed in some way by this experience. The change may be small or great; it may be gradual or radically different. It might be experienced inwardly and/or is outwardly visible.
- experiences some personal cost – however joyfully accepted, in inner or outer resources. The cost might be in terms of time, energy, effort or money expended. Or it might be in risk, respectability, employment, or relationships.

The meeting

- acknowledges some or all of these characteristics of a true spiritual leading
  and
- recognises a call to the meeting or to the whole Society of Friends. It supports the concern as an expression of our faith in practice undertaken by, with and for Friends.[169]

Pearn acknowledges that the 'corporate' aspect of discernment of a Concern can be challenging to Quakers today:

> This is an age where the individual is paramount. We prize diversity of spiritual experience and its expression. It is not easy to come with humility and trust to the guidance of the spirit and the collective wisdom of the group in channelling that guidance.[170]

Pearn considers the potential drawback of being 'unsupported' when individuals act without the discernment of a meeting. In response to an enquiry from a 2016 MfS survey on area meetings and tested concerns, respondents reported 116 Friends who they knew of acting on concerns individually. Although she had no evidence to show that those individuals did not have support, or that they had not tested their concern within their meeting, she was

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[169] Pearn, *Leadings*, 13.
[170] Ibid.,20.

concerned as to 'from where do they draw their strength, if not from their meeting?'[171] That

a number of Quakers 'go it alone' may be a product of the process involved in testing a

concern.

The process can often be long and slow. A 'Meetings for Clearness' may be convened to help

the process.[172] 'Meetings for Clearness' seek to establish through a small group discernment

whether the issue should be progressed and if so how. Meetings for Clearness can be

comprised of a small number of individuals specifically tasked with holding the meeting. A

member or attender may have asked for the meeting and it can be an informal arrangement

or formally organised by the clerk. Meetings for Clearness may be used to try to resolve

internal disputes,[173] but are also undertaken in anticipation of marriage to try to achieve a

high level of certainty as to the rightness of the marriage.[174] Individuals who believe

themselves to hold a concern, may request a meeting for clearness or be invited to participate

in one to seek clarity on the nature of their concern, to assess in the first instance whether

theirs is indeed a concern in the Quaker sense or merely something important to them that

is not a Quaker concern. They may also seek a meeting for clearness to help them establish

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[171] Ibid.,35.

[172] 'Clearness' is a condition that is achieved when the will of God has become clearly revealed to an individual or a group. It is cited by early Quakers as demonstrating a sense of certainty in their understanding. Isaac Penington describes it in his encounter with 'the presence of the Lord' which he discovered at a Quaker meeting: 'insomuch as my heart, in the certainty of light and clearness of true sense, said: "This is he; this is he; there is no other"' from 'An account of his spiritual travail' (1667), quoted in 'The Testimony of Thomas Ellwood', in Isaac Penington, *Works,* 1681, prelim. Leaves c3, c4; 1761 edition, vol.1, xxxxvii-xxxix; 1784 edition, vol.1, xliv-xlvii. The extract as printed is abridged and omissions are not indicated in the text reproduced at *QF&P,* ¶19.14.

[173] *QF&P,* ¶4.23.

[174] Ibid., ¶12.10-¶12.13, ¶12.22-¶12.25, ¶16.26. Meetings for Clearness may also be convened for those contemplating divorce.

the right way to progress their concern once it is established to be a Quaker concern. A Local Meeting may hold a 'Meeting for Clearness' to help a Friend come to a better understanding of their concern and may require more than one opportunity to consider the Friend's discernment. [175]

If an individual with a concern requires greater support to carry forward their concern or to have it recognised formally as a 'Quaker' concern, they may ask to have it put on the agenda of their LM's Business meeting. It may be their 'concern' is a new concern, or one that falls under existing testimonies, but which needs action on a regional or national level. If so, their local meeting may 'send a minute forward' to the Area Meeting. The 'minute' will be a written record from the Business meeting of its own discernment of the concern which it then sends to AM for further discernment. If this happens the concern will subsequently undergo discernment at an Area Meeting and the Friend may be asked to attend the AM to provide prepared ministry to speak to the concern which will have been put on the AM agenda. If an AM also then discerns the need for this concern to be forwarded to MfS they will do so in a similar fashion by way of a 'minute' forwarded to Meeting for Sufferings for their attention.

 After an initial consideration MfS, may appoint one of their officers to work with the Friend on their concern in anticipation that the Friend may be asked to present their concern to MfS, again through prepared ministry at one of the 5 or 6 meetings held by MfS each year. The process of discernment of a 'new' concern may take many months. Where MfS decides a

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[175] Ibid.., ¶13.01 ¶13.08, ¶13.11.

concern requires discernment at national level, it may be placed on an agenda at a Yearly Meeting or Yearly Meeting Gathering for discernment by BYM during meetings for Business at YM or YMG.

Unity is also not always a simple matter and as Pearn notes in relation to a proposed Minute for adoption by the 2011 Yearly Meeting on 'Boycott, divestment and sanctions (Israel/Palestine)' the Minute notes that: 'Although we unite in this decision, we recognise that Friends have different views, and we must treat one another tenderly.'[176] Pearn is concerned here for the corporate life for Quakers. She points to Christine Trevett's description of Isaac Penington's assertion of the importance of the communal experience where 'the gathered group was the fire itself, with Quakers 'an heap of living coals warming one another.''[177]

Pearn offers a metaphorical, lyrical approach to understanding and engaging with concern. Her work appears to represent a new confidence among Quakers in Britain with regards to concern, engaging both with the 'process' of identification of a concern, and in particular its relation to lived experience. Her text is shot through with individual voices and her own story is recorded as part of the conclusion. Pearn addresses the rise in individualism in Quakerism, explored and critiqued by Jonathan Dale who warns against 'individualism' that 'prevents us

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[176] MfS/11/04/4, cited by Pearn, *Leadings,* 33.
[177] Pearn, *Leadings,* 34.

learning from each other.'[178] This worry over individual atomisation is perhaps the most significant aspect of Pearn's exploration of the concept of concern, as it suggests both the centrality of the corporate role of discernment and the potentially isolating effect of individualism. It is the aspect of her study that is of greatest significance to this study. In the interviews undertaken for this study most participants appreciated the communal aspect of Quakerism and even in cases where corporate joint discernment was not sought, connections to Quaker testimonies were important for those acting under concern.[179]

Dale's and Blamires' contributions are unusual in making some directly critical comments on Quaker processes in relation to concern. Of works reviewed, Jonathan Dale's exploration of Quaker 'social testimony' stands out as an attempt at something more critical than a descriptive or historical account, offering discussion of what is meant by 'living out' a Quaker testimony in the world.[180] Dale considers concern as tied-in to 'action' and social activism and challenges the 'liberalisation' of Quaker thought. His writing appears at times both ascetic and evangelical in its emphasis upon social work in the heart of the wider community. The theological aspect in Dale's work on concern and Quaker political activism is its strong connection with the concept of Testimony – a connection also made by Pearn and Rachel Muers.[181] This is fundamental both to Dale's attempt to further the Quaker Social testimony

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[178] Ibid.,37. Pearn quoting Jonathan Dale, *Beyond the Spirit of the Age,* The Swarthmore lecture 1996. (London: Quaker Home Service, 1996), 95.
[179] See Chapter 2.
[180] Dale, *Quaker Social Testimony*; Jonathan Dale 'Quaker Understanding of Testimony', in *Faith in Action: Quaker Social Testimony*, eds. Elizabeth Cave and Ros Morley (London: Quaker Books, 2000, 2007), 15-116.
[181] Muers, 'Introduction' *Testimony*, loc., 414-427 of 4070.

in practice, and to his critique of the role of liberalism in Quakerism in the late 20th century.

Dale's *Quaker Social Testimony in our Personal and Corporate Life* (2002) and the essay that followed his Swarthmore lecture of 1996,[182] arose from a corporate process pursued by Britain Yearly Meeting under 'Rediscovering Our Social Testimony' (ROST) undertaken by British Quakers between 1994 and 2000. In a Minute from BYM of 1997 the Yearly Meeting made the following statement:

> Our Quakerism is shown first by what we do, rather than by what we say. Yet, while we express our testimonies in action, we do the job only in part if we do not engage with people at a deeper level, the level of their need and our need, and try to express our faith to people as we act.[183]

Faith in action lists six very broad areas of corporate '[c]oncerns in which Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting were involved' around the year 2000;

1. prejudice reduction and working towards the equal treatment of people regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability/disability, age, national identity;
2. care and support for those with specific disadvantages, prisoners, the homeless, frail and elderly, HIV positive, unemployed, refugees and asylum seekers, victims of crime, the mentally ill and those in areas of violent conflict;
3. working to provide directly and to ensure society provides for all, housing, work, access to legal advice, health services, community care, lifelong education
4. campaigning for integrity in public affairs, civil rights, freedom of information, better prison conditions and alternatives to prison, economic justice, preservation of the natural environment, animal welfare, international reconciliation, human rights,

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[182] Dale, 'Quaker Understanding'.
[183] BYM Rediscovering our Social Testimony Group (ROST), *Faith in Action: Quaker Social Testimony,* eds. Elizabeth Cave and Ros Morley (London: Quaker Books, 2000, reprint 2007), 11.

5. Campaigning against, gambling, the lottery, capital punishment, over-use of prisons, weapons manufacture export and use, taxation for military purposes, poverty and marginalisation

6. Developing models of new social relationship, mediation, creative conflict resolution, achieving social change by non-violent means, economic structures which serve people and planet[184]

Among other 'ways in which Friends upheld the testimonies' included; affirming and not swearing oaths, not using titles, living simply, not eating meat, getting involved in democratic politics, respecting and valuing all individuals.[185] Dale's essay that follows this list and opens *Faith in action* rejects reading the testimonies as liberal 'largely secularised abstractions', 'justice' 'equality' 'fairness', but Dale insists that the social actions undertaken by Quakers will be 'more sustainable when they are integral to our spiritual understanding'.[186] Dale's contributions on the role of *testimony* in British Quakerism offer arguments for Quakers to reconsider the role of 'liberalism'. He appeals for their testimonies to be regarded as the glue that makes Quakerism a communal, corporate and ethically united religious movement. Dale argues for the 'necessity' of political action and for Quakers to be active in 'public debate'. He cites Paul Oestreicher[187] on the need for radicalism to help politicians see beyond the horizons they have set for themselves: 'People and pressure groups are necessary to help them [politicians] expand the vision of what is possible'. [188] He sees this as a task of 'Christian prophecy'.

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[184] Cave and Morley, *Faith in Action,* 12-14.
[185] Ibid.14
[186] Dale, 'Quaker Understanding', 20.
[187] Oestreicher is an Anglican priest, Quaker and recognised campaigner of long-standing for peace and human rights.
[188] Ibid.,81*.*

Dale argues 'Liberal Quakerism overlooks the sense of testimony both as a religious truth claim and as a means of evangelism…. Somehow we must recover against the spirit of the times, something of the original sense of testimony and the testimonies. The especial importance of the testimonies in the practice of Quaker faith is that they form unbreakable bonds between spiritual insight and social action.'[189] For Dale, religious faith is not something grasped by the intellect alone. Citing John Punshon in *Testimony and Tradition* he quotes: 'Many people think they are practising religion when they are in fact only thinking about it. They do not realise that knowledge of religious truth comes only through practise and is inaccessible to thought alone'.[190] For Dale, when no aspect of life is 'outside' of faith, because everything a person does in life is *sacramental*,[191] it will be evident in the life of a person that they will live in accordance with their testimonies.

Dale, a lecturer at St. Andrews decided to sell his comfortable home in Scotland to move with his family to Manchester, at first to a relatively comfortable area and then to a hard estate, where even the estate agents could not comprehend why they should choose to move there. In his daily walk he picked up litter around the street near his house, he also worked in the local community, engaging in public gardening in a local park and reducing his own wage rate to reflect the area around him, he describes this as not only acting out his religious testimonies but a directly political act: 'In my way of life in Ordsall, money, time, skills,

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[189] Ibid.,20.
[190] Ibid.,44.
[191] Ibid.,64.

property have all been partially 'republicised'! It's a wonderfully subversive experience, running counter to all that the modern market economy seems to understand'.[192] Dale's is a 'lived out' critique of the impact of modern market economy.

Dale notes that over the past three hundred years God has been 'marginalised' and more than once, 'declared dead' – a process he describes as 'in very important ways, a liberation of reason, science and individual creativity from the shackles of superstition and absolutism'.[193] Dale recognises the impact on this revolution for those engaged in faith and action based upon *testimonies* that make a claim to *Truth*, because this revolution produces:

> …a more fragmentary, subjective view of truth: it replaced the authority of religion by reason; it subverted traditional wisdom by science and the individual's unfettered right to question. In the process all the old absolutes were undermined. Philosophically, these included truth and beauty and justice; socially they included the organised church, the institutions of justice and the ruling elite. It overthrew the divinely appointed order, replacing it with representative government and, later, democracy. Its political philosophy was liberalism and its economic order capitalist. And its tendency was always towards secularising human understanding.[194]

For Dale the impact of this historical change and its more recent manifestations in liberal Quakerism meant that Quakers had abandoned the sense in which 'Testimony is different from a secular form of value'.[195] In his *Quaker Social Testimony in our Personal and Corporate*

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[192] Ibid.,78.
[193] Dale, 'Quaker Understanding', 54.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.,19.

Life Dale addresses this more directly. Under the heading '*Liberal Quakerism's undermining of testimony: relativism, individualism and secularism*' he wrote:

> Liberal Quakerism [after the 1895 Manchester Conference in Britain] increasingly espoused a theology which made an understanding of testimony extremely difficult. The liberal view increasingly came to understand the inner light as a personal and individual faculty, rather than a divine light illuminating our condition. It was, therefore, relativist in its sense that each person sees things differently and that there is no sure way of choosing between them. Such a relativist theology went hand-in-hand with an individualism which undermined Friends' conviction that they could corporately discern truth in personal morality and public affairs…. Testimonies in these conditions become essentially abstract values – equality, truth, simplicity – rather than expressions of the very nature of the divine underpinning of the universe, which we need to embody in our lives and promote in our societies. As such their particularity and power are largely lost.[196]

Where early Friends were living against the spirit of their age, 20th century British Quakers had come to an accommodation that for Dale was 'blinding' them to the leadings of testimony, and found them living in a society where people were 'economic animals' with no sense of 'transcendence' in a society that was 'overwhelmingly materialist, individualist, and secular' the influence of which was difficult to escape.[197] Dale's plea for a return among contemporary British Quakers to the practice of living out Testimony, runs against the grain of contemporary 'liberal' Quakerism in which 'the absolute perhaps' appears to make all positions possible. This tension between liberalism, socially engaged Quaker activism and its

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[196] Dale, *Quaker Social Testimony*, 4-5.
[197] Ibid.,5-6.

connection with 'testimony' lies at the heart of Quaker concern. Dale's placing of testimony, at the heart of Quaker concern is a view taken up by this study.

Social and political thought relevant to this study[198]

In this section, the key concepts of liberalism and republicanism are introduced, and connections are made between Quakerism, political activism and political philosophy in Quaker History. Engagement with 'the world' or the *creaturely* in early Quaker language, varies across world-wide Quakerism. Political activism can be regarded as essentially *creaturely* in its direct engagement with worldly affairs. Dandelion notes not only differences between regions but also through time. The understanding of contemporary concern is informed by Quaker history. While 'the world' for first generation Quakers was a place of apostasy, that urgently needed bringing to Quakerism second and third generations in the 18th century turned to Quietism perhaps regarding Quakerism and their communities as requiring protection from the world.[199] In Dandelion's language they grew 'a hedge' around the Quaker community that was only slowly cut back over the next one hundred years[200]: 'In

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[198] The political philosophies of republicanism and liberalism introduced here are discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4.

[199] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 221-241. Quakerism in the 18th century was only later labelled 'quietist' as it appeared to reflect some of the characteristics of the continental religious movement of the same name emphasising individual mystical reflection. Quakers did not identify themselves as Quietist, this connection was introduced by Rufus Jones in the early 20th century: Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 59. For the relation between continental and British Quaker 'quietism' see John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A short history of the Quakers,* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1984), 120-122. While there was some influence from the continental movement, Punshon claims Quakers took spirituality to be a 'collective responsibility' and rejected justification by faith alone: Punshon, *Portrait,* 121.

[200] Dandelion, *An Introduction*, 62, 81-83, 113-114, 231.

most ways and in most traditions, Quakers joined the world in the nineteenth century.'[201] The 'hedge' could consist of different ways in which being a Quaker required adherents to 'mark' themselves out from society, peculiar 'plain' dress and speech, wearing no or little colour, and using special language, different names for days of the week, retention of the use of 'thou'. There were also prohibitions on drinking, gambling and for many years endogamy was required and those who 'married out' were sanctioned.[202] Rules were enforced by Elders whose means for effecting discipline, included 'naming' an individual in a meeting, and 'disownment' by the society. These methods have almost entirely fallen into disuse. In the twentieth century, of the number of British Quakers eligible to be called up to fight in WWI who chose to fight (33%) and of American Quakers called up in WWII who chose to fight (50%), none were disowned.[203] Loring describes the early 19th century requirement for notable 'outwards' observance as a 'perversion' of discernment and 'misconceived discipline'.[204] Holton regards 18th and 19th century Quaker 'Quietism' as essentially an aberration.[205]

While 18th century quietism may suggest an era of withdrawal from the world, Susan Holton and Jane E.Calvert suggest it also coincided, with ongoing activism. Calvert discussed the situation in America:

> in significant ways, Quakers became more, not less, political after
> their withdrawals from politics in 1756 and 1776: Where early on their

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[201] Ibid., 241.
[202] Ibid., 64.
[203] Ibid., 162.
[204] Patricia Loring, *Spiritual Discernment: the Context and Goal of Clearness Committees,* Pendle Hill Pamphlet 305 (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1992), 18.
[205] Sandra Holton, 'John Bright, Radical Politics and the Ethos of Quakerism', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 34,no.4 (2002):595.

stated cause had been spiritual equality of the poor, women, blacks, and other oppressed groups, it had now evolved into a conscious struggle for civil equality for these same groups. Quakers were the founders and among the most active leaders of the movements for civil rights in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[206]

This suggests a continuity of Quaker 'worldly' political activism throughout its long history and invites an appraisal of that activism in light of the political philosophy, and forms of liberal and republican constitutionalism that emerged in the same period.

Political Liberalism

David Held outlines the political aims of liberalism in marking out a political space for the state subject neither to the power of Church nor absolutist monarchism. Liberalism limited power to free the private and economic realms, and 'civil society' from the threat of domination from either quarter.

> Gradually liberalism became associated with the doctrine that individuals should be free to pursue their own preferences in religious, economic and political affairs – in fact in most matters that affected daily life. While different 'variants' of liberalism interpreted this objective in different ways, they were all united around the advocacy of a constitutional state, private property and the competitive market economy as the central mechanisms for coordinating individuals' interests. [207]

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[206] Jane E. Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Kindle edition loc.10925 of 14493.

[207] David Held *Models of Democracy,* 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 59. Republicanism as understood in the tradition of social and political thought is outlined by Held in Chapter 2 and in highly reduced form by Habermas 'Three Normative Models of Democracy' *Constellations,* 1 no.1, (1994), 1-10, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.1994.tb00001.x. Ian Hampsher-Monk offers a nuanced reading that does not reduce the complexities of the relationship between liberal and republican strands of thought especially as found in the founding of the USA. See Ian Hampsher-Monk, *The History of Modern Political Thought:Major Political Thinkers from Hobbes to Marx,* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 197-260.

William Penn (1644-1718) Quaker founder of the state of Pennsylvania and responsible for its constitution, intended to build a State on Quaker foundations, embodying principles of religious toleration that had also been proposed by John Locke (1632-1704). Early connections with the liberal tradition are claimed to exist through the friendship between, a Quaker residing in Rotterdam, John Furly, and Locke, who was given hospitality and the use of his library by Furly in 1687-88.[208] Despite this, Locke's attack on 'innate ideas' and religious enthusiasm in his 1689 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* are interpreted as directed towards Quaker and other dissenter 'excesses', illustrating that, suggestive as hospitality and friendship may be, it does not follow that philosophical connections were forged.[209] The separation of Church and State as a pre-requisite of liberalism was recognised by Quakers in Pennsylvania. However, the 'privatisation' of religious belief in liberal political philosophy, does not reflect the Quaker position on the 'abolition of the laity' cited in the literature, nor the Quaker desire to 'live out' religion in the world.

A phrase in Rawls' introduction to *Political Liberalism* points to a significant problem, 'political liberalism, rather than referring to its political conception of justice as true, refers to it as reasonable instead'.[210] Retention by Quakers of a discourse of 'truth', at least in relation to their social testimony makes 'fitting-in' with liberalism problematic. Their support of religious toleration since the 17th century however, and the ease with which they approach religious

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[208] Dudiak and Rediehs, 'Quakers, Philosophy and Truth', 510.
[209] Charles L. Cherry, 'Quakers and Asylum Reform', in Angell and Dandelion, *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, 395.
[210] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1993, 1996, 2005), xx.

diversity today within the Religious Society of Friends and in British society more widely *is* compatible with the acceptance of a pluralism of beliefs, which is a feature of political liberalism, as is their support for frameworks of human rights.

Liberalism and republicanism each have long histories and some shared genealogy. Republicanism with roots in ancient Democratic Athens and the Roman Republic, is the older of the two traditions however they are both regarded as related strands in the history of democracy. According to Philip Pettit, republicanism and liberalism are two traditions within the broader political idea of democracy:

> We might define liberalism – somewhat tendentiously, in view of the many meanings given to the term – as any approach to government that makes freedom as noninterference paramount or central. And in that sense it contrasts quite sharply with the republican approach in which freedom as nondomination plays the central role. Liberalism in this sense may be right-of-center, as classical liberals or libertarians generally were, making freedom as non-interference into the only concern of government. Or it may be left-of-center, making freedom as noninterference into just one of the government's goals: perhaps a goal derived from the broader concern with happiness, as in the case of utilitarians; perhaps a goal that is paired with a separate concern like equality, as in the case of John Rawls (1971; 1993; 2001), Ronald Dworkin (1978; 1986) and other egalitarians.[211]

Republicanism and Liberalism have shared features:

- Rejection of 'absolutist' forms of governance, monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy, theocracy
- A belief that sovereign power in a state should be in the control of the citizens
- The belief that every citizen has a right to participation in the governance process

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[211] Philip Pettit, 'Two Republican Traditions', in *Republican Democracy: Liberty Law and Politics*, eds. Andreas, Niederberger and Philip Schenck (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 175.

Benjamin Constant's 'The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns' set out the differences between what was to become categorised as political republicanism and liberalism, observing a problem at the heart of republicanism:

> But while the ancients called this *liberty*, they saw no inconsistency between this collective freedom and the complete subjection of the individual to the authority of the group. You find among them almost none of the benefits [*jouissances*] that I have just listed as parts of the liberty of the moderns. …All private actions were strictly monitored. No room was allowed for individual independence of opinions, or of choice of work, or—especially—of religion.[212]

Republicanism	Liberalism
Freedom as Non domination (Pettit)	Freedom as Non interference (Pettit)
A plebiscitary constitution which reflects the central authority or sovereignty of the citizens to legislate for themselves	A constitution where power of the citizens is expressed in a system in which the people's sovereign power is checked and balanced against other arms of government
(direct democratic form)	(representative democratic form)
Universal rights (reflecting non domination)	Rights as attributes of citizenship – reflect non interference
Law under the rule of the plebiscitary body	Rule of Law to guarantee the sovereign constitution and citizens rights
Emphasis upon duties owed by individuals in the public realm	Especially concerned to protect the private sphere, religious freedom and private property
A requirement for public virtues	

Figure 2 Features of Republicanism and Liberalism

Constant's characterisation of the despotic tendencies of republicanism are noteworthy yet

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[212] Benjamin Constant, 'The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of Moderns' [1819] Translated by Jonathan Bennett, 2017, 2. (Constant & Bennett (trans.), 2010, 2017) https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/constant1819.pdf

his description of totalitarianism as somehow innate within republican politics is a partial and incomplete rendering of republicanism. In the wake of the failure of both liberalism and soviet communism to prevent the rise of totalitarian forms of government in the 20th century, post-WWII Frankfurt school theorists and later thinkers such as Claude Lefort (1924-2010) and Miguel Abensour (1939-2017) evolved interpretations of the democratic tradition, rejecting both liberalism and totalitarianism. In particular Abensour returned to the republican utopian socialist tradition, epitomised by the triumvirate of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Robert Owen, to recover the libertarian impulse in the republican democratic tradition.[213] Abensour recovers a suppressed utopian tradition largely dismissed and overlaid by Marx and later socialist thinkers. It is the claim of this thesis, that contemporary British Quakerism fits comfortably in this tradition.

From a traditional Marxist perspective, religion has been characterised as an ideological structure that de-politicises the faithful who, concerned only with their Salvation, find solace from alienated life in a religious dedication to an absent transcendence.[214] This model barely describes the contemporary Quaker experience of Quaker concern or its historical manifestation. It is proposed here that British Quakerism retains a strong strand of radical republicanism, possibly from as far back as its inception in 1650s revolutionary England. [215] In

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[213] See the essays collected in *Utopiques II:L'homme est un animal utopique,* 2nd edition, revised and aumented (Sens&Tonka, [2010], 2013).

[214] Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' in *Early Writings,* Rodney Livingstone trans. (London: Penguin Classics, 1992), 243-5; Karl Löwith, *Max Weber and Karl Marx,* Tom Bottomore and William Outhwaite trans., (London, New York: Routledge, 1993)*,* 108-110; 'The Criticism of Religion' in *Marx on Religion,* ed. by John Raines, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 167-186, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bt016.

[215] Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972, 1975; Reissued Peregrine Books, 1984). A 'republican' connection in early Quakerism is made by Robert K.

the 17th century Quakerism emerged at a time of civil war. Numbers of 'Levellers' and soldiers on leaving Cromwell's model army became Quakers and Quakers remained suspected of radicalism both under Cromwell and upon the Restoration.[216] Christopher Hill regarded the theology of 'inner light' as a vital element (not unique to Quakers) in the development of radicalism. Its collectivity being expressed in the Quaker 'sense of the meeting'.[217]

C.B.Macpherson noted that the 'vision of human society as the ultimate good' pervades the writings of Leveller John Lilburne, a Quaker convert in later life.[218] Macpherson distinguishes the 'possessive individualism' of the Levellers as suffused with a 'Christian social ethic'.

> They brought in, over and above the individual right of self-preservation and self-advancement, a concept of 'human society, cohabitation or being' as 'the earthly sovereign good of mankind', with a consequent obligation on everyone to work for 'communicative Happinesse'. They wavered between a view of man's labour as a commodity and a view of it as the integral part of his personality. They asserted the right of individual appropriation of land and goods, but denied the rightness of its consequence, the greatly unequal distribution of wealth.[219]

Quakerism was attractive to radicals such as Lilburne and Winstanley[220] not because their

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Goertz, 'To Plant the Pleasant Fruit Tree of Freedom: Consciousness, Politics, and Community in Digger and Early Quaker Thought' (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1977). On the debate over the term 'radicalism' in 17th century contexts see, Philip Baker, 'Radicalism in Civil War and Interregnum England', *History Compass* 8, no.2 (2010):152-165. doi.10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00662.x.

[216] Hill, *The World,* 231-258.

[217] Ibid. 373. For an explanation of 'sense of the meeting' see page 18 above.

[218] Crawford Brough Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke,* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada, 2011),156-157.

[219] Ibid. 266-7.

[220] Winthrop S. Hudson, 'Gerard Winstanley and the Early Quakers'. *Church History* 12, no.3 (1943):177-194.

politics were the same but because they shared the Christian social ethic Macpherson cites. Christian ethics were absorbed by both liberalism and republicanism. The social strand has strongly republican associations and suggests that Quakerism belongs in the long Western political tradition that encompasses the Athenian *polis,* Rousseau's notion of a composite General Will, and the voice of 'Publius' as found in *The Federalist Papers,* being the collective expression of 'we, the people'.

Quaker engagement with society

Given the liberal label it would be easy to assume that Quaker ethical engagement in the world would amount to no more than acts of neighbourliness in keeping with Christian faith, and this is borne out in some recorded examples of Quaker behaviour. Memorably in the biography of the 19th century Quaker campaigner John Bright. The historian Trevelyan reports a story about Bright's father that illustrates this.

> [C]oming up the hill one day from town he found a neighbour in trouble on the road: a valuable beast of burden belonging to him had met with an accident and had to be killed. The onlookers were thronging round the poor man with expressions of sorrow; to one of the loudest of these Jacob Bright turned and said: 'I'm sorry five pounds. How much art thou sorry?' – and then and there raised a subscription.[221]

This practical 'neighbourliness' might be thought to be the extent that 'Christian' charitable behaviour demands, yet Quakers throughout their history have been engaged in activism beyond the boundaries of private Christian charity.

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[221] George Macauley Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright* (London: Constable and Company, 1913), 17-18

Late 19th century socialist, Eduard Bernstein, dedicated a Chapter to Quakerism in his book

on Cromwell and communism, addressing the persecution of Quakers and the methods the

Friends developed to assist their poorer members.[222] R.H Tawney noted that between 1660

and 1760, the century that coincided with the rise of liberalism there also arose an attitude

of 'unprecedented harshness' towards wage-labourers and the unemployed in England which

according to Tawney had 'no modern parallel except in the behaviour of the less reputable of

white colonists towards coloured labour.'[223] Quakers engaged at these times in relief work

and Tawney, remarks a page later:

> Firmin the philanthropist, and Bellers the Quaker, whom Owen more
> than a century later hailed as the father of his doctrines, were
> pioneers of Poor Law reform. The Society of Friends in an age when
> the divorce between religion and social ethics was almost complete,
> met the prevalent doctrine that it was permissible to take such gain
> as the market offered, by insisting on the obligation of good
> conscience and forbearance in economic transactions, and on the
> duty to make the honourable maintenance of the brother in distress
> a common charge. [224]

John Bellers (1654-1725) the Quaker reformist and activist on unemployment and education,

drew the admiration of Karl Marx who makes ten separate references to Bellers, at intervals

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[222] Eduard Bernstein *Cromwell and Communism: Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Revolution* [1895] trans. H.J.Stenning (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930,1963) Available at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bernstein/works/1895/cromwell/
[223] Richard Henry Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1922, 1926, 1938) 267, quoted in Dominico Losurdo *Liberalism: A Counter History*, (London, New York: Verso, 2014), 33 and fn.141.
[224] Tawney, *Religion,* 269-270.

throughout Volume One of *Capital*.[225] Some critics have suggested that neither Bellers, who was a Quaker, nor Robert Owen who associated with Quakers and whose ventures were at times financed by Quakers, could be regarded as egalitarians today.[226] Both appear paternalistic, or authoritarian, in their attempts to modify the behaviour of the poor and factory workers respectively. Barbara Arneil describes Owen's ventures as part of a 'home colonies' movement bearing the same paternalistic, authoritarian strands as colonialism, justified by the 'improvement' in happiness and productivity of the colonised.[227] For Bellers, the paternalistic desire to 'improve' the poor also consisted in education to make them act lawfully, 'helping children and adults alike submit more easily to rules and laws later in life'.[228] Nevertheless, criticisms levelled at each of these reformers underestimate their radicalism in the context of their times.[229] The Quakers and Owen parted company on a number of issues

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[225] T. Palmer Vail Jr., 'Religion and Ethics in the Thought of John Bellers' in *Truth's Bright Embrace: Essays and Poems in Honor of Arthur O. Roberts,* eds., Paul N. Anderson and Howard R.Macy, (Newberg: George Fox University Press, 1996),61-74, http://digitalcommons .georgefox.edu/truths_bright/15 ; Paul N. Anderson 'John Bellers (1654-1725): "A Veritable Phenomenon in the History of Political Economy"' in *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility : Lessons and Cases for Responsible Management*, eds., Nicholas Burton, and Richard Turnbull (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2019), 153-181. ProQuest Ebook Central.
[226] Punshon, *Portrait,* 169.
[227] Barbara Arneil, 'The Failure of Planned Happiness: The Rise and Fall of British Home Colonies' in *Happiness and Utility, Essays Presented to Frederick Rosen*, Eds., Georgios Varouxakis, Mark Philp (London: UCL Press, 2019), 269-288, doi:10.2307/j.ctvf3w1s5.18.
[228] Anderson, 'John Bellers', 162.
[229] Miguel Abensour explores the radical utopianism of Owen in 'L'Utopie socialiste: Une nouvelle alliance de la politique et de la religion', [1981] in *Utopiques II, L'homme est un animal utopique,* (Paris : Sens & Tonka, 2013) and in 'Lire Owen' [1986] in *Utopiques IV : l'histoire de l'utopie et le destin de sa critique'* (Paris : Sens & Tonka, 2016). Marx viewed Bellers as an early visionary of the negative effects of the division of labour. In his idea of the development of the human being there is some sense of a utopic vision of human potential. Marx quotes Bellers to the effect that the mind and body need full development not merely aimed to produce a worker capable of fulfilling a limited task. Marx noted the 'the partially developed individual, who is merely the bearer of one specialized social function, must be replaced by the totally developed individual, for whom the different social functions are different modes of activity he takes up in turn', Karl Marx, *Capital Vol.I,* transl. Ben Fowkes and Rodney Livingstone (London: Penguin Books/ New Left Review, 1996) 618, 619 fn.32.

which reveal the Quakers as theologically dogmatic at this time, e.g. their objection to the inclusion of music, dancing and military style drill in Owen's worker's schools.[230]

In the 18th century, when Quakerism went through its 'Quietist' period[231], their faith brought them into conflict with society and authority through their involvement in the anti-slavery movements in England and America.[232] Their political engagement on this front earned them the respect of the French Girondin, Brissot de Warville, who saw an affinity in Quakerism and the aim of *fraternité* in French revolutionary republicanism. Having encountered the Quakers during a visit to America, their engagement in abolitionism so impressed him that he was led to make the following observation:

> notwithstanding this ardour in the French to arm themselves in so holy a cause; they do not less respect the religious opinions of the Quakers, which forbid them to spill the blood of their enemies. This error of their humanity is so charming, that it is almost as good as a truth. We are all striving for the same object, universal fraternity; the Quakers by gentleness, we by resistance. Their means are those of a society, ours those of a powerful nation.[233]

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[230] George Jacob Holyoake, *The History of Co-operation in England: Its literature and its Advocates Vol. 1,* (London: Trübner & Co., 1875), 112; William Lucas Sargent, *Robert Owen, and his Social Philosophy,* (London: Smith, Elder and Co. 1860) 105.

[231] Dandelion, *An Introduction,*59; Punshon, *Portrait*, 120-122.

[232] Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 29-35*;* Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 77.

[233] Brissot de Warville, Postscript [1790] to *New Travels in the United State of America* [1788], 418-420, quoted in Peter Brock, 'Conscientious objection in Revolutionary France', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 57, no.2 (1995):166-182,169.

Although the 'Quietist' period of Quakerism in Britain is associated with a movement to seek greater 'purity' and more 'discipline' Quakers remained engaged and visible in humanitarian work.[234] In spite of their increasing respectability and growing wealth Bernstein observes:

> We find Quakers taking a prominent part in all great reform movements of the eighteenth century. Both in England and America they were the pioneers and the most indefatigable champions of the anti-slavery movement; they were in the forefront of the movements for the reform of the penal code and prison reform. Eminent protagonists of science and education, and subsequently also of political reform, issued from their ranks. We meet with Quakers in the Chartist movement, belonging, conformably to their doctrines, to the 'moral force' section, yet labouring assiduously for the cause, and we also find Quakers among the Owenites.[235]

The 'modernist' Quaker liberal movement started in Manchester in 1895. This consolidated the radicalism of Quakerism on the theological front. Yet even before this date, a radically 'scientific' approach observed by Bernstein was already present in Quaker charitable endeavours.

The Quaker involvement in the abolition of slavery is documented. Less well known perhaps is Quaker relief work in the mid-19th century Irish famines. It was the first example of its kind, combining the gathering of local and *international* aid through Quakers in America, and involved the setting up and running of soup kitchens. Even if the deeper motivation for action

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[234] Hamm, *The Quakers,* 33-36.

[235] Bernstein, *Cromwell and Communism,* chap.XVI. Bernstein, with an edge of antisemitism, compares the change in the fortunes of Jews in society, (described as the Quakers' 'rivals' in 'money-making pursuits') with the Quaker rise in wealth. This rise in Quaker status and wealth is traced through the lives of key 18th century Quakers in business by Punshon, *Portrait,* 109-115, and Mike King, *Quakernomics*.

more generally could have been personal salvation, some of those engaged in famine work had the opportunity to test their salvation rather sooner than they would have hoped as twenty of them died in the process, of exhaustion, famine related illness and typhus.[236] Christine Kinealy notes the high price many paid: 'Four leading Quakers, including Joseph Bewley, Jonathan Pim and Jacob Harvey collapsed and died from exhaustion. Sixteen other Quaker volunteers died from famine epidemics'.[237] Importantly,

> The Quakers were critical of both the British government and absentee landlords for failing to do more to help the starving people. They employed a variety of relief measures, including the provision of free soup, clothes and fuel. In the summer of 1847 when the British government decided to introduce soup kitchens throughout Ireland, it was the Quakers who provided the necessary boilers and cauldrons.[238]

Quakers later decided to discontinue relief and chose instead

> …to concentrate on indirect assistance to help bring about permanent improvements in Irish agriculture. Their withdrawal was a great loss to the poor of Ireland. In 1848, as emigrations, evictions and mortality remained high, the British government approached the Quakers secretly and asked if they would again assist in the provision of relief. The government offered £100 as an incentive. The Quakers refused this offer on the grounds that only the government 'could raise the funds or carry out the measures necessary in many districts to save the lives of the people'. They believed that private charity could not deal with a disaster of such magnitude.[239]

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[236] Rob Goodbody, 'Quakers and the Famine', *History Ireland* 6, no.1 (1998): 32. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27724534.
[237] Christine Kinealy, 'Private Donations to Ireland during the An Gorta Mór', *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* 17, no.2 (1998): 115, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25746804.
[238] Ibid.,114.
[239] Ibid.,114-115.

This suggests an early recognition by Quakers of the necessity of State intervention in welfare measures in times of crisis. The Quaker approach to relief was even in the 19th century distinctive. They did not proselytize except insofar as their actions, may have recommended Quakerism to those who benefitted from their help, but more importantly it was different in another way:

> Quaker philanthropy was indeed distinctive. Many groups and individuals struggled valiantly during the famine to alleviate the misery of those terrible years, but the Quakers were remarkable in that they combined their relief measures with painstaking investigation into the causes of Ireland's endemic poverty. There are rare references to God's will in their correspondence about the potato blight, but there are a great many more comments about the conditions which produced a destitute peasantry and a bankrupt landlord class. They set out to do something about an intolerable situation, overturning classic economic theory in the process. They drew on campaign skills honed in the abolition crusade, and although they could not realize the modern nature of their policies at the time, their methods became the basis for much of the work being done in this century in Third World development.[240]

While Christian 'religious' life may uphold established hierarchies, social and economic, through the conservative doctrine of obedience to authority, secular and religious, the Quaker example in Ireland illustrates that this had less purchase in the context of British and here Irish, unprogrammed Quakerism which exhibited a more critical approach to social problems.

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[240] Helen Hatton, 'Friends' Famine Relief in Ireland 1846-49' *Quaker History* 76, no.1 (1987): 18-32, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41947075.

In the 19th century, 'free and dissenting' churches stimulated a growth in British Christian Socialism.[241] Radical Liberals assisted the growth of the Independent Labour Party in its first decade. Quaker George Cadbury was a donor.[242] That Quaker 'capitalism' had a beneficent face does not suggest that Quakers in the 18th and 19th centuries were 'anti-capitalist'. Their success in business and commitment to trade suggests otherwise. The commitment to trading being in part necessity, because of exclusion from universities, holding State offices and some professions, but also to fund philanthropy.

An increasing interest in Quaker Businesses and Quaker Business methods is currently part of a wider search among Business studies academics exploring the working theories and praxis of 'corporate responsibility', 'business ethics' and 'environmental accountability'.[243] Recent scholarship explores to what extent Quakerism enhanced or inhibited Quaker commercial success. The material supports the view that Quakers were, at least in past times, at home in the context of political liberalism, active in capital ventures and industry. Although for the most part focusing upon case studies drawn from the 19th century, there is a real interest in finding relevance and applicability to contemporary business.[244] While this material is not

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[241] Carl Levy 'Introduction', in *Socialism and the Intelligentsia 1880-1914* ed. Carl Levy (London, New York: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1987)*,* 12.

[242] Carl Levy 'Education and self-education: staffing the early ILP', in *Socialism and the Intelligentsia 1880-1914* ed. Carl Levy (London, New York: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1987), 142,180.

[243] Established in 2004 the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion,* represents this rise in interest and focus. Jerry Biberman and Yochanan Altman, 'Welcome to the New Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion', *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 1:1, 1-6, (2004), doi.10.1080/14766080409518539. The journal's aims and scope are available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&journalCode=rmsr20

[244] John Punshon 'The English Quaker Firm' *Quaker Studies,* 22 no.2 (2017). https://doi.org/10.3828/quaker.2017.22.2.3 reprinted from Birkel, Michael L. and Newman, John

explored in this study, the emerging literature is cited as an example of how the utopic strand of Quakerism found in Quaker businesses is being re-worked for its ethical and practical worth by those engaging with the structural, social and economic conditions of contemporary capitalism, seeking 'insights for responsible business practice' and management education.[245]

Burton Koning and Muers', appraisal of 'organizational ethnography' as a method for study of Quaker Business method, soon encounters the epistemological 'truth' problem at the core of Quakerism and the apparent dichotomy between conservative praxis and the role of shared 'testimony'. They conclude that in Quakerism, '[t]ruth is practical, embodied, engaged, and situated, emerging in each particular context in which people live truthfully; it is neither internal to the knowing and acting subject nor indifferent to the subject.'[246] The interest in this study lies in the 'lack' this literature suggests exists in contemporary commerce. It suggests the absence of and difficulty of identifying agreed ethical 'goods', whereas often implicit in Quaker business organisation is a 'common' good.

The critique of 'functional differentiation' suggests, the separation of religion from politics and economics under liberal constructs of a State founded upon ethical 'neutrality', has

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W. (eds), *The Lamb's War: Quaker essays to Honor Hugh Barbour* (Richmond: Earlham College Press, 1992), 173–94.

[245] Burton and Turnbull, *Quakers, Business,* 1. Burton and Turnbull bring together a number of articles exploring both the historical and contemporary legacies of Quaker businesses. See also the themed Business edition of *Quaker Studies* 24 no.2 (2019) guest edited by Nicholas Burton. https://online.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/toc/quaker/24/2 and David Lingelbach, 'Finding your Bus: Conceptualising Contemporary Quaker Management Education' *Quaker Studies,* 24, no.2 (2019): 321-339.

[246] Burton, Koning, and Muers, 'Organizational ethnography', 361.

thrown up problems. In forcing the separation of religion and its ethical core from economics and politics, liberalism under functionally differentiated modern capitalism has simultaneously struggled to incorporate ethical norms, or to restrain effectively unethical and coercive practices by regulatory laws.[247] While liberal political philosophy centres upon a contractarian version of limited agreement around concepts of governance such as a 'separation of power' or 'secularism', it excludes the communal unity innate to utopian republicanism – a cosmopolitan universal 'fraternité' not founded upon nationhood, race or class - and favours instead a limited pluralism. It is not surprising that models of mutual recognition and solidarity central to the radical republican tradition are marginalised and forms of individualism, and religious, nationalistic, or class group definitions arise. This is not to suggest that 'individualism' is itself the problem but that there needs to be a rediscovery of 'the desirable values of individualism while discarding its excesses', to look for a 'repair' 'that would bring back a sense of the moral worth of the individual, and combine it again with a sense of the moral value of the community.'[248] That there should be interest from management and business studies in Quakerism is unsurprising given the capacity of global capitalism to produce large enterprises capable of producing vast profits alongside ethical vacuity and ecological indifference.

Far from suggesting the connection with liberalism, this literature marks out the Quaker distance from it, notwithstanding the 19th century Quaker John Bright's engagement in

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[247] Examples of the perverse fallout of liberalism and capitalism, for example in slavery, colonialism and exploitative manufacturing are recorded by Losurdo in *Liberalism: A Counter History.*
[248] Macpherson, *The Political,* 2-3.

Liberal politics and campaigns for free-trade during the era of 19th century empire and industrialisation. Small state 'Liberal' Quakerism waned in the 20th century and is of less significance in contemporary British Quaker political activism than emergent libertarian anarchism which expresses another form of scepticism about the State where new technologies of control in authoritarian regimes have emerged across the globe. As noted in a 2012 article in the Guardian including interviews with a number of prominent Quakers, the general view was that once the universities were opened up to Quakers, when the Universities Tests Act 1871 allowed non-Anglicans to attend university, there were more congenial options opened to Quakers. In the 20th century, in which more joined as adults, 'while they might have a business background they [were] more likely to be teachers or social workers. Today Quakers are very cautious about capitalism'.[249]

Connections in Britain between socialism, non-conformist Christianity and radical Liberalism around the turn of the 20th century have been established in a number of studies.[250] This autobiographical reflection in Tony Benn's account of his early life in a Victorian non-conformist family indicates one way in which this connection was forged:

> my mother [reading the Bible] …. distinguished between the kings of
> Israel who exercised power and the prophets of Israel who preached
> righteousness, and I was brought up to believe in the prophets rather
> than the kings […]. Dissenters think for themselves and claim the right
> to do so, even in matters of faith […].This of course was, and remains,
> a completely revolutionary doctrine because it undermined authority,

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[249] Ben Pink Dandelion quoted in Emma Kasprzak, 'Have the Quaker business leaders had their day?' BBC News: England, Mar 7th 2012, available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-17112572
[250] Levy, 'Education', 137-143 especially fn.12 citing studies by S.Pierson, Henry Pelling, K.D.Brown and D.W.Bebbington.

disturbed the hierarchy and was seen as intolerable by the powers that be in exactly the same way that, today, political dissenters are projected as trouble-makers and members of the 'awkward squad' whose advice would lead to chaos. The fact that dissenters may be right is ignored, although history often shows that their views may turn out to be the conventional wisdom of the generation that follows them. [251]

British Quakers in the early part of the 20th century were participants in socialist activities and the Salter lecture, named in honour of Ada Salter (1866-1942) is held annually at either BYM or YMG, hosted by the Quaker Socialist Society. Ada Salter together with husband Alfred were members of the Socialist Quaker Society (SQS) from 1913 onwards. Started in 1898, SQS encouraged reading of texts by figures such as Kropotkin, Morris[252] and Ruskin. In 1912, the SQS started its magazine *The Ploughshare,* but this was not welcomed in the wider Quaker community:

[T]here were many Quakers who could not bear to have the Society of Friends besmirched by association with the odious name of 'socialist'. Socialism was materialistic, it set class against class, and it pronounced equality, so undermining the benevolent role of the rich. When the SQS sent a letter to *The Friend* defending themselves from these charges, the anti-socialist editor, Edward Grubb, refused to publish it. By 1913, however, the Socialist Quakers were established, and active in the War against War movement.[253]

This correspondence between British non-conformist Christianity and socialism, undoubtedly created circumstances favourable to the radical historical legacy of Quaker discernment of

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[251] Tony Benn, 'Part One: My Faith', *Dare to be a Daniel* (London:Hutchinson, 2004), 5.
[252] An important figure in the utopian socialist project, imagining in *News from Nowhere,* an 'epoch of rest', which Abensour regards as a place where historical time is suspended: Abensour, *Utopiques II,* 253.
[253] Graham Taylor, *Ada Salter, Pioneer of Ethical Socialism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2016), 147.

concerns in the 20th and 21st centuries. In the work of Michael Löwy a similar socialist-anarchist connection is made in the late 19th and early 20th century between Jewish theology and the socialist ideal of fraternité, which bears an affinity with the connection here between Quakerism and socialist politics that will be explored in later chapters.[254]

Their affinity with the utopian socialist concept *fraternité* was manifest in the Christian Quaker activists' interest in community. According to her biographer Taylor, Salter was 'a pioneer of ethical socialism'. Inspired by her originally Methodist Christian upbringing (Salter became a Quaker in 1915), she went to work and live in the slums of Bermondsey and joined the Independent Labour Party, which was characterised by its championing of 'ethical socialism': '[T]he term "ethical socialism" seems to have been first used pejoratively against the liberal Marxism of Bernstein. [Keir] Hardie, like Mazzini, did not seek class hatred, but to "bind the classes into one human family". For Hardie and the ILP, the source of the socialist ethic was humanitarianism'.[255] The ILP expressed a distrust of 'centralised' State power, favouring a society built upon the idea of 'community'.

> The ILP envisaged an economy run by co-operatives, guilds and businesses, regulated by a framework of state control, not detailed central planning. ILP socialism would be run from the bottom up, as well as being guided from above. Society said Hardie would be 'one vast co-operative'.[256]

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[254] Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity*, trans. Hope Heaney, (London: The Athlone Press,1992).
[255] Taylor, *Ada Salter,*84.
[256] Ibid.85.

The alliance of co-operative, or community and guild socialism, bears comparison with the *Kvuza,* commune socialism praised by Martin Buber.[257] 'Guild Socialism' was also the subject of a book *Co-operation or Chaos?* by Quaker Maurice Rowntree (1882-1944).[258] It is notable that the ILP idea of socialist society bears a strong resemblance to the organisational structure of Britain Yearly Meeting, or as noted by Dandelion, to some anarchist groups.

Two major developments in the social Quakerism of the 20th century deserve comment. The first is the adoption in 1918 by London Yearly Meeting of the 'Foundations of a True Social Order'. [259] The 'Foundations' were the work of the War and Social Order Committee, specially arranged by the Quaker Yearly Meeting of 1915. It was not originally tasked with providing a programme but effectively it did and although Quakers kept the text for internal use by Quakers, Yearly Meeting approved the text and minuted that Quakers 'should continually test our life, individual and corporate by them'.[260] Founded upon a Christian base set out at the outset, point 1 of the foundations put equality at their centre in a 'brotherhood which knows no restriction of race, sex or social class'. The full development of the individual's personality 'man woman and child', 'should not be hampered by unjust conditions nor crushed by economic pressure'.[261] The point resembles Marx's condemnation of alienation and

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[257] Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia,* trans. R.F.C.Hull (Boston:Beacon Press, [1949], 1958) and G.D.H Cole, *Guild Socialism Re-Stated* (London: Leonard Parsons Ltd., 1920; reprinted by Forgotten Books, 2012).

[258] See profile at: https://quakersocialorder.org.uk/people/maurice-rowntree/.

[259] 'Foundations of a true social order', approved by London Yearly Meeting 1918, and printed in *London Yearly Meeting Proc,* 1918, 80-81. The 'Foundations' can be found in *QF&P* (print edition) at ¶23.16 and are reproduced at Appendix I. See also Dandelion *Culture of Conformity,*72.

[260] 'Reimagining a True Social Order' at https://quakersocialorder.org.uk/

[261] 'Foundations of a true social order', approved by London Yearly Meeting 1918, and printed in *London Yearly Meeting Proc,* 1918, 80-81, ¶iii reproduced in *QF&P* (print edition) at ¶23.16

exploitation in the 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' (1844).[262] Rooted in faith, point

5 expresses utopic optimism: 'The spiritual force of righteousness, loving-kindness and trust

is mighty because of the appeal it makes to the best in every man, and when applied to

industrial relations achieves great things'. To be freed from the 'bondage' of material goods

and to suggest that the ownership of 'land and capital should be so regulated as best to

minister to the need and development of man' reads very much in keeping with the

revolutionary sentiments of socialists at that time both in the UK and in Europe. Dandelion

cites Thomas Kennedy who noted these principles were 'Not far removed from the 'four

pillars' adopted by the Labour Party.[263] The second turning point was in 1996-1997 when BYM

initiated a 'Rediscovery of our Social Testimony.' These moves towards a strengthened social

engagement were challenging for some Friends and 'represented a moral aspiration rather

than a concerted political programme,' which according to Dandelion did not demand radical

change of individuals.[264] Members were left to make decisions for themselves as to the

choices and behaviour required of them to bring about change.

Anarchism and Quakerism

There are connections in Quaker history to suggest early affinities with American liberal-

anarchism.[265] Albert Weisbord considered 'American Liberal-Anarchism' as built upon the

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[262] In Karl Marx, *Early Writings,* (London: Penguin Books, 1973,1974,1975), 279-400.

[263] Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860–1920: the Transformation of a Religious Community,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 384, cited in Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 73. The four pillars adopted by the Labour party were '(a) The Universal Enforcement of the National Minimum; (b) The Democratic Control of Industry; (c) The Revolution in National Finance; and (d) The Surplus Wealth for the Common Good'. See Sidney Webb, *Labour and The New Social Order: a Report on Reconstruction [draft report].* (London: The Labour Party, 1918), 4-5, available at http://webbs.library.lse.ac.uk/563/.

[264] Dandelion, The Cultivation,73.

[265] Albert Weisbord, 'American Liberal Anarchism', in *The Conquest of Power,* Vol.1 Book 2, Chapter X, available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/weisbord/index.htm.

idea of the 'Sovereignty of the individual' and the conclusion that the best government is no government. Weisbord connected the arrival of anarchism in the colonies with the earliest settlers.

> Were not Mrs. Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dwyer in the seventeenth century perhaps the first Anarchistic persons to set foot upon this country? And what of the Quakers? In the nineteenth century, American Liberal-Anarchism simply broke its religious ties and stepped out in its own right.[266]

Shared strands of religious nonconformism and anarchism include; individual liberty, non-hierarchical organisation and (eventually) pacifism. Andrew Cornell cites Quakers as only one among a number of influential 'peace' churches. His chapter covering 1940-1948 observes the increased concern with 'spirituality' among anarchists as 'perhaps the most surprising development considering the centrality of atheism to classical anarchism'.[267]

In his initial sociological study of Quakerism, Dandelion observed that the Quaker concept of 'unity in diversity' was 'one of the basic and notable parallels with the anarchist movement which also maintains systems of rotated responsibility roles and voteless decision-making'.[268] Dandelion suggests that a direction of travel towards even greater fragmentation and pluralism of belief means that anarchists and Quakers would not only have some organisational structures in common but also philosophical. The relativization of God might

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[266] Albert Weisbord, 'American Liberal Anarchism'.
[267] Andrew Cornell, *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the Twentieth Century,* (Oakland:University of California Press, 2016), 207. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1xxwvq.10
[268] Pink Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis,* 303.

result in each Quaker 'dropping out of the collective and starting their own religion' and Dandelion notes that '[a] boundary crisis much more fundamental than the demise of Christianity would ensue. The liberalism which might have been perceived as preventing such a boundary crisis would have, in effect, precipitated it.'[269]

In a biographical video presentation, Dandelion records his own transition from being a left-wing activist, living in an anarchist group to becoming a Quaker.[270] For him the similarities between the latter and the former were in the emphasis upon individualism and the lack of hierarchical power structures (at 0.20/3.11). Following numerous arrests without apparent progress, and disappointed with the lack of revolutionary transformation of society in the early 1980s, when wider protests in society, including the lengthy miner's strike, had led many to believe change would follow, Dandelion looked for groups 'working within the system' (at 1.42/3.11mins). Having attended a Quaker school, he returned to Quakerism, partly because of its affinity with the principles of anarchism, a commitment to peace, non-voting, and no fixed leadership. Dandelion later had a 'spiritual experience' (at 2.20/3.11) that led to his full turn to Quakerism - this was 'a different experience'. He distinguished the difference in 'being *taught through* Quaker meeting that just wasn't true in the anarchist camp-fire meetings' (at 2.40/3.11). This 'distance travelled' between his anarchism and Quakerism suggests he encountered a different experience in Quakerism that sprang from a spiritual root. One interviewee also describes a difference between what some liberal individuals who join,

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[269] Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis*, 318.
[270] Ben Pink Dandelion, 'How I Went From Being an Anarchist to a Quaker' (Oct.6th2016), QuakerSpeak, Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ws047Cra4Pg

perhaps encouraged by posters emphasising individualism expect of Quakers and '*then* discover erm, that there is a communal way of thinking which they hadn't anticipated.'[271] It is one of the claims of this thesis that the communal experience of Quakerism exerts greater force than the 'liberalism' of its advertised 'individualism' would suggest. A communalism that retains and is nourished by republican philosophical elements.

Among contemporary and younger Quakers who are politically active, some are influenced by anarchism and British Quakers have also made explicit connections.[272] Artist and Quaker Chris Alton's 2018 Swarthmore lecture broke with the formal size and layout of the previously published lectures. The cover bears a photograph of his work *Still Anarchy* – a 'customized' studded black leather jacket, photographed in 2017. The large lettering arched across the back states 'Still Anarchy', below which, just above the waistband is added in red lettering 'IN THE U.K.' Down the right arm, in large capital letters, the word 'FRIEND' is visible surrounded by metal leather jacket spiked studs. Alton's jacket seems to suggest the connection.[273] However, Quaker activism since the Restoration onwards has not generally been characterised by calls for the overthrow or dismantling of the State, by violent or peaceful means. I suggest that contemporary Quaker activism on the whole falls short of anarchism

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[271] Interviewee B.

[272] 'Quakers in Britain' posted an article on Quakers 'and their anarchist allies' on their official Facebook page (7th May 2019): https://www.facebook.com/BritishQuakers/posts/2723242094359593 . This Australian article suggested anarchism met Quakerism in the Spanish Civil war when Friends went there to drive ambulances: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-05/from-eco-activists-to-anarchist-allies-meet-the-quakers/11078036. Also see the blog and recordings by 'Katherine' an anarchist Quaker in the U.S. Available at: https://soundcloud.com/friendlyanarchism.

[273] Chris Alton, *Changing Ourselves, Changing the World* (London: Quaker Books, 2018).

for a number of reasons. Due to shortage of space this assertion is not addressed at length however, here are some brief points:

- Quakers still seek to be accepted as loyal to the State, and obedient to its laws insofar as the State pursues just policies.[274] Their 'civil' disobedience is undertaken with the expectation of confronting law enforcement, not to overthrow legitimate law enforcement in the liberal democratic State, but to change the policies of those in power. In their civil disobedience there is an acceptance of punishment for breach of the law.

- While some Quaker activists may desire removal of elements of the State, such as the maintenance of armed forces, or an economic system that creates and entrenches inequality, activist Quakers, as both 'Prophets' *and* 'Reconcilers', are also pragmatists. They corporately recognise 'human rights' as protective mechanisms, and in so doing recognise the necessity of a State, or international structures such as the EU or UN to police these effectively.[275]

- Its origins as a Religious Society, militate against it sharing the 19th century anarchist anti-religious tradition expressed in phrases such as 'Ni dieu, ni maitre', whereas

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[274] *QF&P,* ¶24.04.

[275] Michael Bartlet, Philip Hills and Nigel Dower eds., *Nonsense on Stilts: A Quaker view of Human Rights* (York: William Sessions Ltd. 2008); Martin Leng, *The European Convention on Human Rights: A common endeavour in the name of human dignity.* (Brussels: Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2017). Rachel Brett's examination of the Quaker relationship to the liberal discourse of human rights connects this with testimony. In her reading, the language of human rights is simply a product of individual and corporate discernment in accordance with the testimony to equality. For Brett, identifying that of God in everyone supports the claim for human rights to be *inherent* in everyone and requiring protection. Brett, *Snakes and Ladders*, 82.

particularly in the British context, non-conformist Christianity is part of the foundations of the British labour and socialist movements.

While the above suggest some forms of anarchism and Quakerism are incompatible, there are other aspects that point to similarities. The structure of Quakerism is a web of meetings; local, area and Yearly meetings, Meetings for Sufferings, QPSW and other groups. There are layers of interactive structures, with discrete arenas of power. Without these structures coherence in British Quakerism would be difficult to attain. This strong organisational *arche* of Quakerism, is nevertheless 'in principle' non-hierarchical. By virtue of all decisions being taken by the Clerk's Minuting of the 'Sense of the Meeting', all decisions are discerned communally albeit in distinct structures. By virtue of this web-like structure Quakerism and anarchism might be considered comparable.[276] At the time of writing, while there are plenty of suggestive signs that political anarchism has its representatives within British Quakerism, in the quarter century since Dandelion's initial study, it has yet to fully emerge as a central feature of the movement in Britain. At present, as the scattered references cited here suggest, this can still only be described as a potential or emerging development for future study.

While the anarchist strand is too sporadic and tenuous to suggest its influence is widespread, political Liberalism is more pertinent to Quakerism in the 18th and 19th centuries, or applicable mainly to its theological use as a descriptor of non-dogmatic religion more generally. 'Marxism' is only slightly considered in the literature, with broad generalisation

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[276] Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis,* 303, 334.

being common and little analysis of its greater variety and there is no attempt to locate the 'Marxist' position within a wider critique.[277] The politically utopian element is under-considered in Quaker studies, which apart from a PhD study of the republican roots of Quakerism in the 17th century is effectively silent on contemporary political republicanism or its renewal in radical democratic political philosophy.[278]

Chapter conclusions

The chapter has outlined the gap in knowledge the thesis addresses and shown that, for the most part, Quaker political activism in Britain is undertaken in causes commonly promoted in broadly radical left and green political agendas, in arenas relevant to Quaker testimonies. Existing theory describes Quakerism in Britain as liberal-Liberal, and Quaker concern is largely examined descriptively, divided between its personal and corporate discernment. Reducing Quaker praxis to its liberal (and/or anarchistic features), does not do justice to its strong adherence to those philosophical elements of political republicanism with which it has an affinity. In particular, it appears in an attachment to the notion of 'common goods' in the form of 'Testimonies'. It is also found in the notion of 'truth' informing the direction of travel of the Quaker movement, and the influence of 'progressivism' in an open-ended process of continuing revelation discovered most notably in the discernments of concerns. These themes recur in later chapters. Chapter 2 explores extracts of interviews with contemporary Quakers and offers observations that suggest a much more communally minded Quakerism

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[277] An example of this 'broad stroke' approach is Mike King's 'Honey I shrunk the State' in *Quakers, Business and Corporate Responsibility,* eds. Nicholas Burton and Richard Turnbull, 79-94 and in his treatment of Marx in *Quakernomics.*
[278] Goertz, 'To Plant the Pleasant Fruit Tree'.

is discoverable than might have been expected from a reading of theological and sociological

sources alone which repeatedly emphasise the liberal and pluralistic nature of Quaker belief.

Chapter 2: Interviews with British Quakers on concern and their Quakerism

This chapter gives an overview of interviews undertaken by the researcher. It begins with a brief consideration of research methodology.

Research Methodology

When considering how best to undertake this research, a study entirely from extant published sources was considered, however looking at the available material it was apparent there was insufficient academic research available that addressed contemporary British Quaker understanding of concern. It appeared that without speaking directly to practising Quakers there would be few contemporary examples of British Quaker thought on concern; how Quakers perceive their experience, and how this is translated into social and political individual and/or joint action. The writer knows from the experience of attending a Quaker meeting for several years, that in keeping with their eschewal of proselytism, British Quakers are not automatically forthcoming with their personal beliefs unless asked directly. One way to ask them directly and ethically was under the terms of investigative academic research in the context of doctoral study.

The research design takes a qualitative approach utilising a broadly interpreted phenomenological methodology (semi structured interviews) and a flexibly adopted grounded theory. This permitted a theoretical framework to be constructed from the data as it was gathered. While some researchers maintain diaries, or memos this researcher made draft theoretical notes at intervals over the period of the research which although they do not refer directly to specific interviews, attempted to trace the trajectory of the theoretical

work in the context of the interviews.[279] These notes were subsumed into drafts of chapters in different stages and have been incorporated in the body of the thesis as written. There are three ways in which the analysis of the interviews subsequently influenced the research:

1. the consideration of a dialogical interpersonal process would not have been addressed specifically had it not arisen in interview

2. the impact on some individuals of concerns being dismissed or not picked up by their meetings, prompted a consideration of disunity

3. more generally the desire for community, revealed in interviews, is reflected in the decision to explore the republican and utopian nature of British Quaker work under concern, which became central themes of the thesis.

The aim of the interviews was exploratory, and the choice of questions allowed for broad autobiographical responses encompassing the experiences of participants and their thoughts on related conceptual issues, such as what they understood 'concern' 'truth' or 'God' to mean. Phenomenological qualitative research consists of in-depth interviews with individuals to uncover life experiences to establish what those experiences mean to the interviewee.[280] The use of focus groups and interviews with individuals, allowed exploration of how concerns are received both by individuals and by the corporate Quaker body. They augment the descriptive phenomenological approach, prompting analysis of responses to draw out

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[279] Robert Thornberg and Kathy Charmaz, 'Grounded Theory and Theoretical Coding' in *the SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis,* ed. Uwe Flick, (London: SAGE Publications, 2013),153-169.
[280] Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale eds., *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 3rd ed (Los Angeles, London: Sage Publishing, 2015), 30.

similarities and insights found in different sources.[281] Limitations included the shortage of time available for Focus Group 1, and technical problems with recordings that led to the researcher being unable to use one interview and having to transcribe from notes a second. It was also the case that effectively participants were self-selected. The researcher attended Quaker meetings semi-regularly between December 2008 and 2016, and so, in relation to the research methodology, it should be regarded as undertaken by a 'participant observer', which was enormously helpful in the facilitation of this study.[282]

Central to the phenomenon of concern are two decisions: the decision by an individual to act and the decision by a group of Quakers to recognise an individual's concern and support it. The corporate Quaker decision making process has been explored within studies in British Quakerism, but as noted, its applicability in the wider political context and the implications of this process for political philosophy have not been explored. [283] The initial 'leading' or 'prompting' through which British Quakers come to feel a concern has not been approached using a phenomenological qualitative method, which examines how an individual experiences and makes sense of their concern.[284] There are extant sociological studies of Quakerism that

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[281] Robert Thornberg and Kathy Charmaz, 'Grounded Theory' in *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs*, Stephen D. Lapan et al. eds., (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 41-67, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[282] James P. Spradley, *Participant Observation*, (Fort Worth, London: Thomson Learning, 1980); Samuel C. Heilman, 'Jewish Sociologist: Native-as-Stranger', *The American Sociologist* 15, no.2, (May 1980):100-108.

[283] Michael J. Sheeran, *Beyond Majority Rule*; Mace, *God and Decision Making*; Anthony Bradney and Fiona Cownie, *Living Without Law: An Ethnography of Quaker decision-making, Dispute Avoidance , and Dispute Resolution*, (Dartmouth: Ashgate, 2000); Pearn, *Language of Leadings*; Joycelin Dawes, *Discernment and Inner Knowing*.

[284] Pearn, *Language of Leadings,* 10-15; Jonathan A. Smith, Michael Howard Larkin, Paul Flowers *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. (Los Angeles, London:

are in large part qualitative,[285] however mixed method approaches also appear and rely upon the collection and reading of data strained through the quantitative lens of statistical analysis.[286]

The object of study, the phenomenological nature of what it means to hold a concern and its subsequent process of group discernment and endorsement is not assisted by statistical analysis per se. Furthermore, the use of data in this positivist way did not seem to be consonant with this study in which the philosophical framework is in the extended tradition of Frankfurt school social and political theory. This tradition develops concepts of alienated, or disenchanted, or bureaucratised life arising under capitalism, theorised by Marx and Weber respectively. In particular Adorno and Horkheimer regarded the rise of positivism and the analysis of human society and behaviour through statistics and quantitative approaches, as illustrative of the disenchantment of the modern world and its gradual containment under the rule of an instrumental concern for efficiency. State and systems within the State respond to the increased complexity of society by an increased use of predictive social science as

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SAGE, 2009); Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods,* (Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications, 1994); Amadeo Giorgi, William F. Fischer, and Rolf Von Eckartsberg, *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology*, (Pittsburgh:Duquesne U.P., 1971); Brinkmann and Kvale, *InterViews;* Herbert J. Rubin and Irene Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing : The Art of Hearing Data.* 2rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, London: Sage, 2005), doi: 10.4135/9781452226651.

[285] Pink Dandelion, 'Those Who Leave and Those Who Feel Left: The Complexity of Quaker Disaffiliation' *The Journal of Contemporary Religion,* 17, no.2 (2002): 213-228, Doi: 10.1080 /13537900220125190; Susan Margaret Robson, 'An exploration of conflict handling among Quakers' (PhD diss., University of Huddersfield, 2005), http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/5945; Caroline Plüss, 'Analysing non-doctrinal socialization: re-assessing the role of cognition to account for social cohesion in the Religious Society of Friend**s',** *British Journal of Sociology,* 58, no.2 (2007): 253-275; Zachary T.Dutton, 'The Meaning of Nonviolence: Exploring Nonviolence as a Cultural Resource for Liberal Quaker Subjects' *Quaker Studies,* 18, no.1 (2013):96-114.

[286] Hampton, 'British Quaker Survey'.

mechanisms enabling State administrative governance, which in turn expands and encourages a pervasive scientistic approach that reinforces disenchantment.[287] This meta-analysis of the role of predictive and quantitative scientific methods in the modern *polis* makes the choice of quantitative methodology problematic for the present study. The objections to this view are also clear: questions of reproducibility, representativeness, the validity of the findings and methods of analysis, and the dangers of bias both conscious and unconscious. It is suggested that these objections can be met by the observation that this is an essay about thought – this is not a study intended to amass a sociological base of information to reproduce '*what Quakers think*' or '*how Quakers do politics'.* Rather it aims to identify some philosophical aspects of the Quaker approach to politics in the British context and to interpret these through the lens of political philosophy.

Inevitably, the 'Quaker example' that is drawn out of this study, is the writer's own interpretation of the material. The analysis afforded by the application of political philosophy to the material is of necessity, speculative and exploratory. Whether or not the analysis can be accepted by Quakers themselves as describing how Quakers in Britain engage in politics through their concerns can only be decided once the thesis is tested in a public arena and subjected to scrutiny beyond the academy.

> Qualitative analysis is not about mere counting or providing numeric
> summaries. Instead, the objective is to discover variation, portray

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[287] See Weber, *Economy and Society* (1922); Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966) Adorno and Habermas, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1944, 1947] (1969)*,* Jürgen Habermas *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) and Axel Honneth's critical *Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory* (2009). For a contemporary reading of the tradition see Schecter, *The Critique of instrumental reason from Weber to Habermas* (2012)

shades of meaning, and examine complexity. The goals of the analysis are to reflect the complexity of human interaction by portraying it in the words of the interviewees and through actual events and to make that complexity understandable to others.[288]

Triangulation of the interview data is achieved by the awareness gained by the researcher of Quaker bodies engaging with concerns, further assisted by the presentation of a paper at Woodbrooke Quaker study centre to a group of students from a range of UK universities engaged in postgraduate Quaker study, many of whom were themselves practising Quakers. The researcher's unpublished paper 'Quakerism Through SPT' given at Woodbrooke Centre for Research in Quaker Studies, Birmingham, on 19 October 2017 elicited helpful responses. These occasions offered opportunities both formal and informal for the consideration of responses to the researcher's interim findings.

Participant selection and the process of interviewing[289]

The initial method of recruitment was by approach to the 'gatekeepers' of a Quaker meeting, their Business Meeting, by way of the clerks to the meeting. The meeting is not identified. Initially interviewees self-selected and volunteered to participate from the initial contact and the publication of an advertisement about the study in the meeting's newsletter. Further participants were recruited by direct approach to individuals who were identified as having direct personal experience of Quaker political engagement through concerns. Some

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[288] Rubin and Rubin, Qualitative Interviewing, 202.
[289] The documents pertaining to the research were approved through the system of ethical review undertaken by the University of Sussex and the documents as approved are appended to the study at Appendix II.

individuals chose not to respond or replied to the effect that they preferred not to participate. While the researcher herself participated in a limited way in the national Quaker group that promoted the support of asylum seekers and refugees during a period of the research (QARN). In order to remain true to her initial undertakings not to include information obtained at any meetings, no references will in fact be made to any information personally acquired by the researcher as a member of the group. The progress of the concern will be cited as a case study only in relation to documents and materials otherwise in the public sphere and published by Britain Yearly Meeting, posted publicly on Quaker websites, or posted on 'YouTube'.

The exact dates and locations of gatherings where focus groups took place are not disclosed. Those attending were made aware of the researcher's presence, the study and the opportunity to participate. Attendance at Quaker Yearly Meeting 2016 and the Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017, facilitated further opportunities for reflection upon the approach of BYM to identifying and upholding concerns.   As a result of participant recruitment, the researcher undertook in-depth interviews with seven individuals, and carried out three focus groups containing four, three and two participants respectively. Several more individuals responded, however it was not possible to follow-up all those who got in touch. Only those who were interviewed are included in the final study. The length of interviews varied greatly. One focus group was held in a noisy crowded restaurant and was cut very short by participants leaving to catch trains to return home after an event. In most cases a single interview was sufficient to provide data.

Participants were asked to complete a background data sheet (reproduced at Appendix II) to try to ensure participants broadly reflected the make-up of Quakers in Britain at the time of

the research. There were no black, Asian or minority ethnic participants. This lack of ethnic diversity was quite in keeping with British Quakerism which is almost exclusively white and middle class.[290] Tim Gee, giving the George Gorman lecture 2017, observed that '[u]sing the last available statistics I can find, UKIP's candidates for election are more ethnically diverse than the Society of Friends' (at approximately min. 25:00 of 39).[291] In a 2013 survey 99% of Quakers were white.[292]

Ten of the research participants were educated to masters level; a further two to degree level with additional postgraduate professional qualifications; two were educated to 'O/GCSE' and 'A' level respectively but also had vocational qualifications. One participant held a doctorate, another was a doctoral student. This reveals that those agreeing to participate have continued in education to a higher level than the majority of Quakers.[293] Of the sixteen participants, twelve were Quakers with length of membership varying between under one year, up to 39 years. Of this group, the least number of years attending Quaker meetings was 6 while the longest period of attending was 65 years. Of the four Attenders who participated in the study three had attended for a year or less and one for 7 years; three were under the age of 30 and one aged 61-65. From this it might be thought that the contributions of Attenders with limited years in attendance should be discounted from the study, however, as

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[290] Hampton, 'British Quaker Survey', *Appendix* B – bar charts titled: 'ethnic group' 'age' 'socio-economic group' 'highest educational qualification' and 'job-type after leaving education'.
[291] Quakers in Britain, YouTube, *Movement-building from stillness — George Gorman Lecture 2017 by Tim Gee.* (2nd Aug 2017) Uploaded 2nd Oct 2017: https://youtu.be/Btb4DjSdqqo.
[292] Hampton, *British Quaker Survey,* 21.
[293] Hampton, 'British Quaker Survey 2013', Appendices, 'Highest educational qualification' bar chart. Completed by around 80% of members, suggests close to 70% of Quakers hold degrees, including 20% with Masters and 10% with a doctorate.

these participants were present in focus groups their contributions are part of discussions in company with members. One participant disclosed living with a disability and a further participant disclosed dyslexia, one preferred not to say whether they had a disability or not. There was an even number of those self-identifying as men and those self-identifying as women with two participants self-identifying as members of the LGBT community.

For the most part the locations for interviews that were the most in depth and effective took place in the homes of individuals when it was impractical to meet in a neutral place. This was always at the invitation of the interviewee. Two focus groups took place in restaurants, with significant background noise, however confidentiality was not so great a problem as these groups were not held in the 'home' towns of the participants or of the researcher, so a high degree of anonymity was preserved. One interview took place for purely practical reasons by telephone. The concerns discussed ranged across several areas of Quaker political involvement: peace activism, mental health, issues of justice in international political relations, gender and sexual politics, economic fairness, inequality. Some of the interviewees, took their concerns to their meetings for discernment and support, while others were not yet at that stage, or had chosen to by-pass it entirely. Some would be classed by Pearn as experiencing 'promptings' or 'leadings'.

Only those who offered their prompting or leading for corporate discernment are considered as 'holding a Quaker concern' and only if that concern was formally recognised by the meeting or the wider body of British Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting. In the participating group – several were aware that their concern was already a 'Quaker concern'. These activists did not feel their activism needed further discernment by a Quaker meeting as the testimony was

already recognised as a Quaker testimony of long-standing. One whose 'leadings' prompted them to take the concern to their meeting admitted that the formal procedure set out in *Quaker Faith and Practice* was not known to them beforehand and that it would have been helpful to have had some knowledge of this before they had taken the concern to their meeting.

I analysed the interviews using a number of themes coded upon key concepts/words. In doing so I focused on key passages under the code headings 'Worship and silence', 'Ministry', 'God', and 'Concern'. 'Community' was the 'odd one out' that had emerged as a significant theme during the analysis process. Material incorporated later in the thesis all comes from material arising under one of those headings. Most of these appear in contexts that are connected, so God may appear in discussion of 'discernment', or silence in concern. Where this occurred, the researcher focused on the overall topic under discussion rather than the 'word' itself and distributed the quotations accordingly. These 'key term' codes used to analyse the interviews largely follow prompts in the semi-structured questions prepared by the researcher for the interviews.[294] The one exception to this is the concept of community which emerged as an important recurring concept raised spontaneously by participants and is the topic where lengthy interview extracts are retained for their relevance to the political theory developed in the study in response. Extracts of interviews are provided at Appendix III as examples of participant responses to questions on Quaker concern.

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[294] For interview and focus group prepared question see Appendix II.

The Interviews

In presentation of the interviews, identities of speakers are anonymised, de-gendered, sometimes blended with other voices. I have edited out repetitious colloquial or hesitant speech. Names and places are replaced with 'XXXXX'. Explanatory remarks inserted by the interviewer, and overlapping speech, are placed inside square brackets. Comments in round brackets describe non-verbal sounds also heard on the recording, and recording times are omitted for ease of reading. Some phrases or sections are redacted to preserve anonymity. I have also removed idiolectic expressions for the same reason. Omitted words are marked '…'. Letters eg (A), (B), or 'respondent 1', 'respondent 2' are used in place of names or other identifiers. Letter identifiers (A,B,C etc.) are not consistently applied to single voices. The pronoun 'they' is used throughout. The three focus groups are not separately distinguished.

Worship and silence

Interviewees indicated the importance of *shared* silence – its communal nature among Quakers emerged as one of the most important aspects of Quaker worship. The phrases 'other people', 'communal', a 'way of life', 'with other human beings', 'bond', 'gathering', 'being with other people', 'without any pressure' 'home', vied with 'frustrating' 'not thinking' 'busyness' in relation to the silence these participants experienced in Quaker meetings for worship.

Ministry

Interviewees were asked what they felt about ministry, firstly the ministry of others, but also whether they themselves gave spoken ministry in meetings. Initial responses to the question as to what they felt about ministry varied. The phrase 'speaks to my condition' was discussed.

This phrase is found in *QF&P* and is familiar to most Quakers from the passage reproduced from George Fox's *Journal* in which he relates hearing a voice speak to him saying: 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition'.[295] Vocal ministry is addressed in other places in *QF&P* where this phrase recurs: '[t]he Spirit will decide which experiences are relevant and which will speak to the condition of the meeting. If you have to decide whether it is right to speak, consider that it isn't. If your words are important the meeting will find them anyway',[296] and 'it is an excellent discipline for anyone who speaks in meeting to try to use words and ideas that can be understood by children, and yet speak to the condition of all present, because they arise from the profound depths which, in fact, produce things that are truly simple.'[297]

One participant described themselves as 'picky' when listening to the ministry of others, but then they also reminded themselves to 'listen for what they [*the person giving ministry*] are saying not how it is said'. Several said that ministry often did not really 'speak' to them, however they acknowledged that the same ministry may have held more meaning for others. When ministry was good and did 'speak' the descriptions were similar: 'I do remember ministry that's been particularly moving and quite often it's ministry that's been very brief but very meaningful'. One respondent described a powerful response to ministry that did 'speak' to them: 'I get a kind of physical response if I feel that it is something that is truly

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[295] George Fox, *Journal,* ed. J.L. Nickalls, 1952, 2-3 (entry for 1643), reproduced at *QF&P,* ¶19.02.
[296] Adapted by 1994 revision committee from 'Some thoughts from the weekend gathering on the fundamental elements of Quakerism' in *Young Quaker,* vol.32 no.2 (Feb 1986), 6, reproduced at *QF&P,* ¶2.60.
[297] George Gorman, *The amazing fact of Quaker worship (Swarthmore lecture),* 1973, 141, reproduced at *QF&P,* ¶2.74.

intuitive and truly channeled and that's very rare', 'My heart opens. And if it has touched a significant number of people, a great stillness descends on the meeting, and that's lovely. That feels like a true gathering.' One participant was affected by ministry addressing issues connected with a Quaker concern for peace, which expressed, 'those sort of things that are on their heart'. They reported they left those meetings feeling 'that was worth hearing that today'. This is an example illustrating that Quaker concerns also emerge in ministry shared communally in meetings for worship, which may help embed them in the wider Quaker group. This researcher has also heard similar spontaneous ministry responding to concerns.

God
The question as to what the phrase 'there is that of God in everyone' means to an individual was a pre-planned question asked in each interview. The diversity of views from Christian to nontheist and universalist was surprising in such a small selection and does not represent the diversity of outlook of Quakers in Britain in equivalent proportions. One notable aspect was the lack of desire for others to think the same as they each did and an apparent acceptance of others views as when a Christian expressed discomfort with the use of the word 'God' for the potential problems it would cause for nontheist Quakers and a nontheist who felt entirely comfortable with other people using the word God: 'I mean I'm not going to make a burden of it, if somebody says God, I'm perfectly happy. [...] I don't believe in...a somebody up there... I don't use that term, but I don't mind other people using it, and I don't have difficulty with other people using it'.

Community

Community was mentioned 57 times in the interviews and occurred spontaneously as it was not addressed by the interviewer in questions. Extracts from interviews concerning this issue

have been incorporated below. It is one of the remarkable facets of the individuals

interviewed for this study that no less than six appear to have sought out communities or

local societies in their communities to join and to support beyond their Quaker meeting.

Many who joined the Quaker movement described a process of looking for a community

which they could join before encountering Quakers. This is a surprising finding given Jonathan

Dale's 1996 observation, '[c]ommunity is a neglected testimony.'[298]

The groups beyond their Quaker meetings that these Quakers joined include small radical and

utopian communities promoting values such as equality or simple Quaker ways of living.

Others have worked with communities outside Quakerism, including local secular societies,

and interfaith groups. The interest in 'alternative' communities is a long-held interest among

Quakers across the generations from their support for early Owenite communities in both the

UK and the USA.[299] The abiding image is of individuals who quite contrary to the liberal idea

of the family as the nucleus of community, do look beyond the limits of family to a larger

group to which to belong and in whose company to seek to fulfill their goals. Quakerism offers

a structured way in which this is enabled:

> the Yearly Meeting's an interesting phenomenon you know, because lots of
> people don't go to any Business Meetings and lots of Attenders go and they're
> new and they see this [and] there is a Clerk, there is a committee on the table,
> there is, you know, minutes have to be done, there's a particular way of doing
> things and it's as though they're discovering laws and regulations which they

[298] Jonathan Dale, *Beyond the Spirit of the Age,* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1996), 99.
[299] T.D. Seymour Bassett, 'The Quakers and Communitarianism', *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association,* 43, no.2 (Autumn 1954): 84-99, available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/41944552.

haven't anticipated and they're really brought up, I know some people think it's wonderful, I thought it was fabulous when I first went (B)

This suggests that even in its contemporary form Quakers in Britain include individuals who value community and want to work with others to pursue shared aims. This supports the assertion that there is a powerful 'public-spirited' republican strand discoverable among British Quakers. The idealistically oriented communities supported by some participants have not been named in the study in order to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. However, in light of the stated support for these communities, it suggests this Quaker republicanism also has a utopian character.

It is startling that in relation to identifying a Quaker concern one participant identifies it as the realisation of being unable to carry on without doing something about the concern, because not to do so would threaten their sense of being an 'integrated person or integrated into society' (G) indicating the centrality of belonging and participating in a community. Importantly there is also recognition here of the appeal of a 'spiritual home' (E), a space for 'heart' and 'soul' (D), 'whole life' involvement, (Z) 'intimacy' (G) alongside outward looking activities for the individuals represented below. One felt that while in other 'groups' they had been part of they were sidelined, in their Quaker meeting they had been heard and supported sympathetically. The Quaker term being 'held' encompasses this. This participant described the experience as 'spiritual, … intimate and it's that visceral sense…I'd been looking for that without knowing it and I'd found it in a completely unexpected place of a spiritual group…a religious group and I'm not religious (G). Another individual spoke of approaching other religious communities in their city to try to 'have a dialogue with them… in as non-

confrontational a way as possible' (R). More than one participant noted the political nature of Quaker engagement in the wider society beyond Quakerism.

Extracts from participant interviews which cite the importance of 'community'

I attend because it 'fits' it is a 'grounding' and a 'part of my life'. It is almost instinctive - what I gain from it is community. I feel a sense of connection with those who share my approaches to life … I am individualistic I am an individual and I believe we are all individuals, but in coming together to solve practicalities it draws individuals together in community. (A)

I would put it, not intellectual sympathy but spiritual sympathy, I need people around me to form a community with me (B)

I went to stay at XXXXX community a few times some years ago - when I went there were probably six people living there at the time and because they'd been re-establishing the whole thing and setting it up again, they had to get to know each other and bond and the quality of those early morning worship gatherings and the evening ones was just spectacular (C)

some of us were talking about the evangelical churches and the outreach, the community work they do, it's often producing dinners for people of having children's groups or, that kind of caring thing - It's - doesn't seem to be what Quakers go for. We tend to go for the more, political, social justice and equality issues. (Q)

I welcomed a quite radical community of people and I think we're lucky in that XXXXX [local meeting] is quite different to a lot of smaller meeting houses…you've got …LGBT community, you've got a lot of academics and people who do social work and teaching and I'm sure a lot of those people are also Quakers in other parts of the country (D)

I was trying out a few churches - doing a bit of church hopping really 'cos I wanted a community to - belong to and I wanted to be with like-minded people…that was about XXXXX (almost 30 years) ago…
it's a community I feel part of - I feel I have a role there - when I first joined XXXXX meeting it was having some difficulties and a few of us pulled together to try to keep the meeting going so I feel like I've got an investment in that meeting. I'm also involved in quite a lot of things […] I feel like I'm investing quite a lot of my

life in Quakers (laughing) at the moment, but then I get a lot back as well because it's my community you know, it's my, it's my kind of spiritual home if you like (E)

(This participant is speaking about the decision taken by Britain Yearly Meeting to adopt Sustainability) Well I wasn't at the BYM when it happened - I've only read the minute and been involved in some of the activities since but my understanding of the way that it was worked up was the sense that as a community - if we were to have integrity as a community then we needed to take our influence over our environment seriously and it was a way of expressing that so in the same way that we are on the one hand trying to reduce our carbon footprint - we are also campaigning against extraction methods for fuels and we're looking at a number of different products around the country which support a more value based approach to our use of our environment (E)

I think it's part of living out your life within a Quaker community - I [am] just generally a bit more suspicious of overtly spiritual language because Quakerism's so diverse and there's nontheists as well that might find that uncomfortable - but I think that concerns for me, are that you're part of this community that has a certain ethics and way of doing things, and that it's the expression of their - of the community that you're part of - and whether you had that before…I was already very anti-nuclear […] it connects with other things…it's something that as part of the community I grew into and saw it as something that affects a lot of people and it raised my awareness that this was an important thing to do. (J)

what I'm interested in terms of the radical I guess is the whole hearted - whole life thing […] most of the radicals that I would consider radical are not necessarily doing any direct action but they're full-on in terms of they have their life committed to maybe a local community or a way of life that is about serving others and about trying to create - it's either about helping people survive under capitalism or creating things in the cracks of it … or something like that so - that's the kind of, I guess the essence of their radicalism (Z)

How is Quaker concern experienced and understood?

Extracts from interviews that directly addressed concern are reproduced as interview exemplar extracts in Appendix III. When I asked the participants what they understood a concern to be, two offered phenomenological experiential accounts. One spoke of the sense of being 'grabbed' - 'it grabs you, not you grab it'. Another spoke of the growth of the concern

within them: 'you're kind of watching it in yourself and then it comes to a point where you feel you've got to do something about it and that is often very personal and it often comes with a tremendous amount of energy and that *is* what I would call a spiritual response to an issue'. For one respondent the question for concern was very much a community matter and something which was a compulsion both for the individual *and* the wider Quaker community:

> 'as Quakers, we feel that there is an issue which we need to do something about - we feel compelled to do something about because we feel, you know, there [is] an injustice or a misunderstanding or there is something which we feel where we are a community we are not apart … we need to change something that we're doing … as if - we can't help but do it - we [can't] carry on and you know feel integrated as a society unless we tackle it […] you don't feel that you can carry on - it's a bit like that thing about not, you know, no longer wearing your sword[300] - that you carry on as long as you can and then you realise that you can't actually carry on and feel that you're an integrated person or integrated into society without doing something about that - and that's what I would consider to be a Quaker concern (G)

Two individuals looking back on their lives could see 'concerns' that they had not identified as such at the time but retrospectively they now understood them to be so. The experience of 'compulsion' was clear in some voices, while in others it appears pre-existing but reinforced by the experience of 'friendship' and community: 'I was drawn in through friendships and other people and experiences and that moved into that [concern]… as I became deeper involved in the community then I became involved in that one'. Being part of the community helped some individuals work with concerns without becoming 'overwhelmed'. One

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[300] *QF&P,* ¶19.47

described it as an 'augmenting' process carried on across the community: 'I carry a little bit of that puzzle - … when I find enough other people - who have other little bits of the same puzzle - because a concern is *so* huge - I can't address that on my own - so …they bring other pieces but the point where it becomes a concern for me is when enough of us have enough pieces - that go 'hello' this is a real issue- but we can address this in multiple ways'. This same participant indicated that there is a distinction to be made between a 'new' concern and those that are at the root of the existing testimonies. At the same time as recognising a concern can be 'new' it also suggests the sense of 'continuity' - the 'recognition' of a concern as part of an existing testimony as opposed to its 'discovery'. This 'discovery' and 're-discovery' experience of concerns that develop Quaker Testimony is reconsidered in Chapter 6. One participant (citing Wittgenstein's philosophy of language) confirmed the sense that whatever the 'concern' was, one way to recognise it would be if it was in line with the existing Testimonies, so any concern that was in contradiction to those would not be a concern: 'it can't contradict those baseline testimonies because those baseline testimonies are part of the assumed background to the language use […] there's a set of limits on what the community does and how the community habitually uses the word.'

A couple of participants had found, despite attending for some time they had never been truly introduced to the idea of concern and were initially unfamiliar with the term. One participant found that the coverage of concern in *QF&P* had not been flagged up to them when they started attending, even at the time they themselves brought a concern to their meeting. A participant with long membership of Quakers described how their views had changed about their certainty in being able to say what a concern was, but their response clearly indicated the strong connection between concern and ethics. They had the feeling that

a concern was always associated with the 'right' thing to do: 'I find it very very difficult I think more and more, my theology or my spirituality is one of not knowing, … I don't know, but it's as though you go ahead without even knowing at times, because you have a sense of the rightness of things, that phrase 'the sense of the rightness of things' might be my interpretation of whether this is a concern or not.'

One participant was present when the drafting of a minute on concern was specifically done 'in religious language' to receive better acceptance by Quakers. They strongly disapproved of this, but nevertheless acknowledged the difficulty sometimes encountered of distinguishing between what a 'Quaker' concern was and what was simply an 'idea' or 'conviction' of an individual. They asked: 'does it become a concern if Quakers as a group of people, like-minded people of very similar political and economic outlook accept it? I mean my own feeling is no, my own feeling is that it has to come from not just an intellectual roundedness, but a deeper place within the individual.'

I asked participants whether they were aware of the material on concern in *QF&P* and whether this was helpful to their understanding of concern. One participant felt that it seemed 'like very wise counsel' but felt there was a danger 'it will put you off ever doing anything because it's so cautious … it's written in such a way as to make sure that people don't run away with their heads'. The view of this participant was that the treatment of concerns in *QF&P* was not yet quite right and that it did not provide guidance for Quakers on what might be expected of them in relation to supporting and upholding concerns.

Roles played by Quaker formal and informal structures to discern concerns

The word Meeting occurs over 350 times in the transcripts of participant responses. Some participants identified the inhibiting effect of the corporate Quaker discernment process and its inconsistency, either in the process of seeking clearness in a meeting or in simply voicing a concern during a meeting for worship. One of those interviewed observed that it never occurred to them to go through any formal process as the concern they were involved with had already been discerned. In another example the formal method seemed restrictive as a group had arisen across several local meetings made up of those interested in the concern, but for it to go forward to Area Meeting a local meeting minute was required which seemed inappropriate as those members of the group were in several different local meetings. Overall, the impression from these contributions is that individual responses to the process are highly variable but in most cases among those interviewed for this study there had been some engagement with a Quaker meeting to advance a concern. The ability of meetings to take on concerns was raised by more than one participant who felt their meetings may have found the pressures too great on a small and ageing group who themselves may not have the personal resources of health and energy to support an issue. This appeared to cause a hesitancy to support a concern where they did not feel they had the personal resources available to uphold the concern in an appropriate or helpful way.

One participant reflected upon a 'meeting for clearness' in which they participated. This individual experienced not only a testing of their concern but felt that their expertise and knowledge seemed to prompt greater testing, partly *because* of their gender and sexuality. In spite of this they retained confidence in the process. Not wanting to 'shame' anyone

involved, they felt fortunate to have the skills to be able to identify unintentional prejudice. Nevertheless, it suggests that despite their intelligence, these Quakers remained totally unaware of their privilege, and unwittingly asked quite intrusive questions. Ultimately, for the individual the key impetus survived to '[d]o love's work'…'Life's too short. That's it…I wanted help - with the dropping away of the world…and it's precarious, I live a precarious existence (laughing) - but not as precarious as getting to the end of things and thinking if only I'd tried.'

One participant described the lengthy process of taking a concern through to Meeting for Sufferings for testing. Although often frustrated at the length of time this took and the amount of work involved, ultimately their membership of a Quaker meeting helped them to continue with it. They described the period after their concern was considered by MfS as being a kind of 'black hole' however it was through this period the way forward was worked out: 'I think the Quaker process supported us not to give up on it because we felt "Well we're holding our concern on behalf of Area Meeting,…and therefore we can't just drop it and do nothing with it even though it's not working out the way we thought it would" and we kind of felt because of our commitment to the Society … we've got to keep with this and make the best of it you know - and I think what we've got now is good'. This shows how being part of a meeting strengthened this participant's resolve to follow through on their concern. They had developed a community sense of obligation which became part of their motivation to continue.

The sense of 'struggle' that individuals sometimes faced when progressing a concern was evident in several responses. More than one mentioned the pain and difficulty they felt when their proposal was criticized by others in their meeting, or seemingly blocked by the influence

of their clerk. One felt at one point a desire to 'walk away' but ultimately remained and finally found the eventual decisions on what should be done about the concern by the meeting worked well.

The personal cost to the individual of responding to a discernment of a Concern

The emotional toll of engagement in concern could be high. For this speaker, whose concern was an extremely contentious and difficult political issue the emotional and psychological cost proved too high.

> I just felt - huh (sighs) to be honest with you I feel too fragile to pursue it at the moment …I just didn't feel it was doing me any good emotionally and psychologically because I get so upset by it (D)

The local meeting put the concern on hold. Later in the interview, asked if in their heart they had laid down the concern, they responded laughing 'I won't lay it down till I die'. Again, this underlines the deeply emotional attachment to a concern that individuals can feel.

Epistemological implications of the conjunction of personal and corporate discernment

The following extended quotation is taken from a focus group discussion and the voice is that of Respondent 3. This passage became a key for the later theoretical material introduced into the study and which is picked up in the closing section of the chapter. There is the sense that this individual identified something particularly odd about the way in which not only a concern is known but how they construct their understanding more generally, which blurs autonomy and heteronomy in the Kantian sense to produce a 'felt' and 'communal' experience of a moral 'knowledge' constructed in community with others that seems to reflect the Quaker approach to knowing a concern in a more general way.

respondent 3: I think for me it's - there's a level of conviction - and it might not be coming from the Quaker community it might be coming from other spiritual … whatever but this sense- and it might be coming just from personal - or just this sense that actually I - I *know* I *know* - and I'm - I know in such a deep way that my life - that I'll just keep doing it…I'm just going to keep doing this -

interviewer: I'm going to point to you - where do you know?[301] - (*respondent 2 laughing*) Where is it that you know? Point to the parts of you that know - that's what I'm (incomprehensible) (all laughing)

respondent 3 : yeah - eh yeah I mean it's probably here (*respondent 3 is waving a hand gently in front of their mid-chest area – but also moving it across the space in front of them between the speakers*) [**interviewer overlapping** : so you're pointing to your sort-of solar plexus]…yeah I mean I kind of - but it's also here (*waving a hand between them*)…it's actually

respondent 2: I was going to say it's outside of you

respondent 3: (*picking this up*) it's *outside* of me - I *know* - for example, I know because XXXXX (*name of activist*) knows, and I know because XXXXX (*name of respondent 2*) knows and I know because - my community knows, and [**respondent 1**: Mm] and -and then- and then I know so deeply now that... you start to see the fruit of a certain way of thinking - a way of life in your interactions … that you know…nothing's going to change this now right … there's no way I can be unconvinced

When the interviewer asked Respondent 1 for their view, they echoed the response of respondent 3: 'it comes from within and without and it's that combination of the two'.

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[301] Asking where the knowing came from arose spontaneously from the discussion as the interviewer tried to get the respondent to clarify.

Theoretical issues for discussion arising from the interview responses

Community and individual in shared responsibility

Participants repeatedly indicated the importance of communication, community and dialogue. Even those whose experiences of corporate discernment were frustrating or upsetting, or even unnecessary, found their Quakerism to be helpful in the experience of silent communal worship. Sometimes constraining, sometimes supportive, the value of shared moral responsibility for the carrying forward of concern by the Quaker movement is largely supported by the interviewees except where one individual felt it wrong to ask others to take responsibility for their potential lawbreaking and its consequences. These individuals also understood they had freedom to pursue their concern on their own, particularly when already in line with existing Testimony. The conjoined personal and corporate discernment towards finding the 'right' way forward is complicated by a number of potentially conflicting factors; 1) the condition and needs of the individual holding the concern, 2) the capacity of the local meeting to act and 3) the availability of people to carry concerns forward. The need for the Yearly meeting to be cautious in endorsing a concern was also recognised, because it might have to be supported through many years, which demonstrated the balancing of pragmatic and moral elements in discernment.

Knowledge of the 'rightness' of a concern being identified in the space between individuals and in relationship with others, was a powerful indication that there is something more fundamental at work in Quaker discernment than the straightforward 'personal' and 'corporate' distinction suggests. In rewriting the epistemic frame of discernment in the focus group exchange set out above in a far more encompassing and integrated way, these participants have shaped the theoretical examination that follows. Not only is the distinction

between personal/corporate discernment set aside but the relation of dialogical and Prophetic is also called into question. There is a blurring of the lines between what is 'Prophetic' and what is 'dialogical' in Quaker engagement.

Wolf Mendl in his 1974 Swarthmore lecture identified Quakers as falling roughly into two (non-exclusive) camps; 'prophets', boldly speaking truth to power and 'reconcilers' engaging in pragmatic action and focusing on 'concrete particulars'.[302] Reconcilers' 'natural conservatism and pragmatism also made them tolerant, kindly and humble', while prophets dedicating their lives to one cause almost to the exclusion of all else showed ' vigour, enthusiasm and combativeness…tempered by generosity, genuineness and gaiety'.[303] Mendl observed that 'to be a healthy and vigorous Society we need both and the tension between them, but not their ordering in merit.'[304] The material taken from interviews suggests that the Quakers who participated in this study engage in both approaches with equal seriousness, giving rise to the image of activist 'Prophets' who negotiate, and negotiators who demonstrate.

The obligations attendant on other-centredness

The interviews suggest that 'other-centredness' is a feature of those issues taken forward by Quakers acting under concern. In the group there is activism on ecological matters,

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[302] Wolf Mendl, *Prophets and Reconcilers: Reflections on the Quaker Peace Testimony,* Swarthmore Lecture (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1974), 8.
[303] Ibid.,9.
[304] Ibid.

homelessness and financial deprivation, mental health, armaments including nuclear weapons, the conflict affecting Israel and the Palestinians, and other conflict and post conflict zones. What is striking is the idea of *need* or *imperative* to act – the idea of a moral or emotional tipping point which is a longstanding idea in Quakerism and stems from the well reported but possibly apocryphal challenge by George Fox to William Penn to 'wear his sword' just so long as he could. This refusal to 'order' or command another to adhere to a doctrine, and to invite them to consult their own conscience appears as an early Quaker approach to political education, inspired by religious experience. It is referred to directly by the interviewee who said that there was a tipping point that moved their ethical position from one of emotional discomfort to the need to act. It seems there is no appetite in contemporary Quakers to recuperate the repressive 'Eldering' of the 18th century, as one interviewee observed, *'Can you imagine?'* The religiously inspired turn to the conscience derives from the earliest days of the movement and that, together with recognised Quaker practices, or 'orthopraxis', govern these contemporary Quakers' in their relations with others.

While Quaker activism appears utopically 'other-centered' in the arenas in which it is focused, this does not mean Quakers will not enter into conflict with groups and individuals whose values they oppose. While the testimony to truthfulness has throughout Quaker history enjoined them to 'speak truth to power', these Quakers have given a considerable amount of time to practical matters and discussing the possible pros and cons of their engagements, indicating that both at the individual and corporate level they are in a more traditional sense 'political'. They are extremely capable of coordinated and highly strategic thought and action: from rehearsing and anticipating objections in meetings, to in one instance acknowledging

that 'religious language' might be more likely to persuade others to the 'rightness' of their actions.

This co-existence of Quaker conflict, Quaker peaceableness and Quaker 'endeavours to mend' relationships, between themselves and in the world around them, is revisited in later chapters in which the discernment of a violent political reality is examined. The following Chapter explores what the existence of Quaker conflict and the problem of disunity among British Quakers suggests about the 'republican' element within Quakerism in light of the potentially coercive nature of republicanism.

Chapter 3: British Quakers and the dangers of coerced unity: the republican legacy and modernity

This chapter outlines theories in social and political thought that address the dangers for republican politics of a decline towards totalitarian and coercive forms. The chapter examines whether Quakerism also exhibits tendencies towards 'coerced' unity found in repressive republicanism and considers how Quakers in Britain handle disunity. Relevant theories of modernity in the work of Max Weber and Niklas Luhmann provide helpful analyses towards understanding forms of coerced unity in post-industrial societies.

The theoretical material used in the chapter's assessment of republicanism, and modernity is drawn from: 1) the general critique of republicanism's potential decline towards coercive centralised power, 2) Claude Lefort and Miguel Abensour's work on '*sauvage'* democracy, 3) Weber and Luhmann's respective analyses of administration and functional differentiation in modernity and 4) the Frankfurt school's critique of epistemic 'forced reconciliation' as a repressive aspect of modernity. The theory of insurgent conflict-based democracy developed by Claude Lefort and Miguel Abensour is considered for its relevance not only to Quaker political activism but more generally for Quaker political activism. Quaker activism is set alongside 'savage' (*sauvage)* democracy, as theorised by Abensour and Lefort to delineate its particular characteristics in Part 2 of the Chapter.

Throughout the chapter an examination of some examples of Quaker disunity illustrates the complexity of the process of achieving unity in discernment. This is not intended as a detailed

examination of Quaker disunity.[305] This chapter recognises that Quaker disunity is a clear feature of Quaker communities. However, democratic theory identifies conflict as innate and necessary to democracy and it is concluded that some failures to achieve uncoerced unity in practice does not necessarily indicate innately or widespread coercive praxis among British Quakers notwithstanding the dangers of a decline towards coercion.

An introduction to Quaker disunity

It is clear that conflict plays a part in Quaker discernment processes and in 'off-stage' inter-Quaker anti-sociality. The strongest critic of Quaker methods for dealing with conflict within Quaker communities in the UK is Susan Robson. In her PhD thesis[306] and subsequent independent research, she uncovers what she regards as an ongoing inadequacy. She dates the contemporary interest in internal conflict as dating from around 2000 with publication of the guide, 'Conflict in Meetings'.[307] In her research Robson was 'struck…most forcibly' by the tendency among Quakers to give greater attention to the wider world than to the workings of their own community.[308] While 'mending the world' had emerged as a Quaker 'buzzphrase' and despite the historical precedent of William Penn who produced a process for handling conflict within meetings, Robson claimed that 'conflict is endemic in Britain Yearly Meeting'.[309] Robson described an internal 'on-stage' Quaker space where conflict is

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[305] Quaker disunity is the focus of other studies: Dandelion, 'Those Who Leave'; Robson 'Grasping the Nettle'; Robson 'An Exploration'; Christopher Morrissey, 'Fighting Friends: Mitigated Stigma in the religious Society of Friends,' *Quaker Studies* 23, no.1 (2018): 47-65, https://doi.org/10.3828/quaker.2018.23.1.4.

[306] Robson, 'An exploration'.

[307] Robson, 'Grasping the Nettle,' 67.

[308] Ibid.,69.

[309] Ibid.,70.

suppressed only to find expression in social or 'off-stage' moments. This coexists with a refusal to acknowledge conflict and a failure to look for the reasons behind it, 'circumnavigating the real issues and painful feelings in the urgent need for resolution'. [310] Robson sees this 'aversion' to conflict, as an almost physiological reaction provoking 'distaste'.[311] Robson concluded this aversion to conflict produced a strain between the achievement of unity and the achievement of Justice, usually in favour of unity. She is not explicit as to what she means by 'Justice' in this context. She noted her personal communication with another independent researcher Olwyn Morgan.

Morgan suggested two poles of ethical behaviour between which Quakers tended to orient themselves in conflict situations. In Morgan's schema the first term represents approved Quaker behaviour while the second disapproved: Honesty — Mendacity / Restraint — Vehemence. Silence was often the preferred approach, central as it is to meetings for worship. One participant in her study 'pined' for the 'the Quaker tradition of plain speaking' that gave rise to heated exchanges.[312] The causes of conflict Robson identifies are mostly practical matters or identity issues and not theology. For example, disputes arise over the 'proper Quaker' way to handle an issue.[313] Conflict was often unarticulated. While Quakers would revert to 'silence' to restore peace they were less effective with each other at 'open-minded attention and responsiveness to the experience of the other. This may be another

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[310] Ibid.,71.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid.,72.
[313] Ibid., 72-3

way of describing Buber's "I-Thou" relationship.'[314] While Robson identifies the difficulties of achieving the 'proper Quaker' way to do it, there is underlying the difficulty a theory of social interaction and conflict resolution implied by Quaker structures and behaviours fundamentally based on the high value of community.

The perceived vitiating effect upon personal liberty and upon the espousal of personal truth feared by Robson, is not simply identifiable with injustice or totalitarian repression although it has the potential for both. To understand why engagement in a political community brings with it such dangers it is necessary to consider the ways in which this danger has been identified as a problem for republicanism.

Republicanism, forced reconciliation, and functional differentiation

This section addresses the issues within republicanism that suggest it is coercive in nature, then addresses the theoretical underpinnings of functional differentiation and forced reconciliation – two features of modernity that are the focus of a broadly Weberian Marxist critique of modernity. This theoretical groundwork permits contemporary British Quakerism to be assessed for its responses to these features of republican politics and the pressures of functional differentiation and forced reconciliation respectively.

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[314] Ibid.,74; Martin Buber, 'I and Thou,' trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, (s.l: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, 1986), Kindle edition.

Republicanism

Republicans find legitimacy for governance in some form of the political will of the people so that according to Rousseau: 'whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the entire body: which means nothing other than he shall be forced to be free.'[315] This presents a danger of 'coerced unity' in traditional political republicanism. In Rousseau's conception of the Sovereignty of the 'general will' the individual surrenders individual freedom to gain an enlarged freedom as part of the social compact where all others surrender in the same way.[316] The danger of governance on these lines is the potential for lack of consent, or vitiated consent that would jeopardise the legitimacy of decisions made by 'the people' or in their name. In republicanism lack of legitimacy may also result from a lack of informed deliberation and decision-making by the populace as a result of powerful demagogues or the press misinforming and misleading citizens. Unity or majority may be achieved by coercion; in effect creating a forced unity negating the autonomy of the populace and not in fact representing their will. Rousseau acknowledges that his form of governance would be difficult to achieve in large States and true democracy would in any event require 'a people of Gods' because 'so perfect a Government is not suited to men.'[317] The question of Unity is at the heart of Quaker decision making and is its strongest link with republicanism. The danger of forced unity is implicit in both.

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[315] Rousseau, *The Social Contract,* 53 [Bk.1, Ch.7 §8].
[316] Ibid.,49-50 [Bk.1, Ch.6].
[317] Ibid.,92: [Bk.III, Ch.4 §8].

The requirement for broad popular support inherent in republican forms of government has been associated with repressive state socialism in states such as the USSR, China, North Korea and the satellite countries of the USSR during the soviet era. Karl Popper in *The Open Society and its Enemies* offered partial readings of Hegel and Marx, which suggested that totalitarianism is innate to their political thought. His conclusions remain influential, regardless of criticisms of his analysis.[318]

Ben Berger claims there are more and less nuanced versions of the idea of republican 'unity' of purpose among citizens, citing Michael Sandel's (and his own) preference for the liberal republican Tocqueville over Rousseau's 'unitary vision'. According to Berger, Tocqueville,

> values individual autonomy, dreads excessive governmental involvement in citizens' lives, and, while he stresses the close relationship between individual and communal self-interest, stops far short of advocating a forced reconciliation or even forced public deliberation. Thus a republicanism rooted in Tocqueville … would resemble liberalism in most respect.[319]

With respect to Berger, if Tocqueville is read as a liberal then his value to republican thought is limited. It is the emphasis upon fraternity and solidarity that marks republican thought apart from liberalism, but how it can be non-coercively achieved must be addressed.

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[318] Richard Hudelson, 'Popper's Critique of Marx', *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 37, No. 3 (1980): 259-270, https://www. jstor.org/stable/4319371
[319] Berger, *Attention Deficit,* 129.

Philip Pettit argues that republicanism, unlike communitarianism, requires at least a

willingness to endorse the republican virtue of freedom as non-domination. In Pettit's version

of republicanism, the republican virtues associated with the French revolution (liberty,

equality and fraternity) are collapsed under freedom as non-domination and contrasted with

the liberal conception of 'freedom as non-interference.'[320] Pettit offers a version of

republicanism that requires the State not to be a source of domination, and in keeping with

its Roman heritage requires a general level of civic virtue in the populace so that fraternité is

read as solidarity. Liberty, equality and fraternité become fused in state and society united

around a common good of 'non-domination'.

> [T]here can be no hope of advancing the cause of freedom as non-
> domination among individuals who do not readily embrace both the
> prospect of substantial equality and the condition of communal
> solidarity. To want republican liberty, you have to want republican
> equality; to realize republican liberty, you have to realize republican
> community.[321]

It is suggested that Quakers, on the evidence presented in this study, are an example of a

community attempting this balance between a testimony to Equality, a commitment to

solidarity through 'Ffriendship' and their theological freedom from creeds. The balance

required between these features of Quakerism does not preclude the emergence of more or

less fixed or coercive structures in relation to each strand, but the constant return of Quakers

to their Business method of discernment provides a structurally similar feature to that of

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[320] Philip Pettit, 'Liberty, Equality, Community,' *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government,* (Oxford Scholarship online, 1999,2003), 110-126, doi: 10.1093/0198296428. 001.0001.
[321] Ibid.125-126.

deliberation in democratic forms. Discernment provides legitimacy in Quaker decision

making. Deliberation when done well strengthens the legitimacy of democracy, both in terms

of its participatory aspect and with regard to the quality of the decisions achieved. Just as

Rousseau observed the necessity of ethical probity among deliberating citizens, so for the

Quaker model to work well the ethical habitus of discernment (outlined in Chapter 4) provides

not only context but substance to the decisions made. While Rousseau pragmatically settled

upon the necessity of voting, the Quaker model eschews votes, suggesting even more strongly

its republican bias towards solidarity through seeking Unity.

If only the 'idealised' version of the model is considered, then nothing is learned from its

operationalisation. Despite the Quaker commitment to freedom of conscience, equality and

solidarity, Quakers do not always 'live up' to their Testimonies nor to the aim of Friendship.

Apart from personal failings at the individual level, there are also societal and economic

factors that place continual pressures on Quakers both at the personal and corporate level.

Susan Robson's and Penelope Cummins' research suggests the tension rebounds in 'offstage'

infighting and increased centralising bureaucratisation. There is no research to indicate

whether there is any correlative or causative relation between these phenomena however

these two issues provide potentially serious challenges for Quakers.

It was inevitable that early Quakerism in attempting to maintain its existence against a hostile wider society developed standards and rules for its members and created its own structures of discipline, set down formally in a 'Book of Discipline.'[322] Jane E. Calvert notes that:

> Fox wrote the first constitution of the Quaker church to control wayward Friends, and Barclay wrote the *Anarchy of the Ranters* in its defense to explain to radical Friends why they were about to be coerced by the new church government, and why this was part of God's plan for them. Subsequent Quakers in the Society and Pennsylvania government advocated a measure of coercion to achieve unity.[323]

Despite the later 18th century development of the discipline, dis-unity has as long a history in Quakerism as Unity and there are examples throughout Quaker history of individuals and groups who either separated themselves from the community or whose membership was terminated or limited.[324] Historically, in the case of individuals, the causes were various (criminality, sexual misconduct, drunkenness, disapproved artistic activities, gambling or behaviour that would bring the Society into disrepute, marrying 'out', carrying on business in incompatible trades such as the manufacture of armaments, maintaining slaves, or choosing to fight in wars).[325] While formerly 'disownment' was practiced, disaffected Quakers are now more likely to 'disaffiliate' themselves.

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[322] Punshon, *Portrait,* 133-138; Current reasons for terminating membership are found at QF&P ¶11.32.

[323] Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism*, Loc.11056 of 14493.

[324] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 80-128; Punshon, *Portrait,* 117-119; Hamm, *The Quakers,* 37-63.

[325] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 68-73; Eleanor Woodward, 'From the Archives: Faith and Disunity' 22 Mar, 2018, http://centralenglandquakers.org.uk/2018/03/22/from-the-archives-faith-disunity/; Morrissey, *Fighting.*

In 2002, Dandelion identified 6 types of contemporary Quaker disaffiliation across two areas; Practice and Belief. It is not really clear from the examples that all 6 'types' sustain a straightforward Practice/Belief dualism. Some examples under 'Practice' are ambiguous; idealistic individuals *disillusioned* with Quaker behaviour when compared with Quaker principles (lack of commitment to testimonies in a new meeting, a lack of spiritual depth, too much worldliness at Friends House, lack of interest in New Age thought). Some with Christian *theological* attachments felt 'left behind' by Quakerism with less Christian content. Some, could alternatively be described as personally frustrated in a personal project in which they were emotionally invested but which would not be likely to gain support; the desire to change Business procedure to voting, frustration at refusal to support a healing practice.[326] There are clearly Christian Quakers 'left behind' but to suggest the individual who wanted greater recognition for 'New Age' thought as being 'left ahead' seems too suggestive that emerging Quakerism has a theological 'direction of travel'. 'New Ageism' is perhaps not so straightforwardly assimilated to a Quakerism respectful of scientific method and 'progressivism'.[327] To show caution towards the broad catch-all 'New Age thought, need not be regarded as 'belief conservatism' so much as 'discernment' in the regular sense, distinguishing between theological innovations, that withstand the test of reason, and those that do not.

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[326] Dandelion, 'Those Who Leave', 219-223.
[327] Cantor, 'Quaker Responses'.

In this study in which the focus is making connections between Quaker experiences of concern and social and political thought, the phenomenon of Quaker unity (even when there is disunity), is taken as indicative that Quakerism, despite its 'liberal-Liberal' descriptor, reveals republican roots. This appears in its strong focus upon community, unity and a shared set of values in the testimonies. David Blamires noted that when considering the impact of disunity among Quakers over support for the decriminalisation of homosexuality, and the recognition of gay marriage, although some resignations occurred, there were no 'mass' departures suggesting Quaker attitudes changed in line with or ahead of the surrounding society.[328]

While there does not appear to have ever existed a violent method of retaining members even in the origins of Quakerism, there remains the potential for coercive measures to be applied through social and psychological pressure to conform to Quaker norms. Caroline Plüss examines a number of possible theoretical models of conformity to group norms, including 'social drift', produced when new members build up affects towards existing members, explaining why new members accept cognitive moulding to Quaker norms.[329] Plüss surveyed several approaches. She also considered it possible following Weber's view that 'individuals are thinking actors who have motives and who make choices,'[330] meaning that members shared a conscious understanding of their group involvement. A Durkheimian approach suggested to Plüss that group 'collective characteristics' rituals and symbols would mould

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[328] Blamires, Pushing at the frontiers,83.
[329] Plüss, 'Analysing,' 257.
[330] Ibid.,258.

behaviour.[331] Plüss lists five reasons Friends do not need to demand adherence to 'objective and authoritative' positions:

1) the affective influence on new members is sufficient to develop attachment and adherence

2) existing members engage in cognitive moulding in 'highly inter-subjective, non-authoritative' ways offering a wide range of subjective experience validation

3) the inclusive ethic of Friends is an effective 'intellectual' means of assuring unity

4) learning by novices of 'restricted' codes, that require insider knowledge makes sense of implied meanings

5) the emphasis upon silence forces novices to establish relationships with others to gain knowledge[332]

Given the 'diffuseness' of Quaker belief and the lack of direct participation of many in the teenage to late twenties age bracket, Plüss concluded British 'Friends do not apply much pressure on individuals to join the group.'[333] Plüss suggests that despite the dangers for cohesion and long-term integration, British Friends 'do not aggressively pursue … new members' nor once acquired direct their induction.[334] As noted by interviewee (B) for this study: 'most of the procedure I have learnt, I picked up from watching it done'.

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[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid.,269.
[333] Ibid.,263 fn.10 and 270, fn14.
[334] Plüss, 'Analysing,'267.

Historically, Quakerism, by dint of endogamy produced 'family' disagreements and dissent was complicated by this factor.[335] In modern Quakerism the potential damage to family relationships is less of an issue among a Quaker community predominantly made up of those who have joined by choice as adults, many of whom had no previous religious affiliation.[336] Although joining could potentially cause friction away from the meeting in the non-Quaker families of those who join. The term 'birth Quaker' has dropped from use. Modern British Quakers do not presume a child born of Quaker parents will themselves decide to retain their Quaker faith: 'Parents should try to recognise that their child may quite properly choose, in the light of the child's own temperament and experience, a way different from the one chosen on her or his behalf, even if that way lies outside the Society'.[337] Family although no longer a central feature of membership remains a powerful metaphor for community.

> Part of the creative experience of a community is learning how to deal with conflict when it arises, and Friends are not usually good at this. 'Speaking the truth in love' is a Quaker cliché, but 'papering over the cracks' is the principle more commonly acted upon. … We are a small Society. Clashes have always arisen, just as they arise in any family group. In one sense the members of a family know each other too well, in another sense not well enough. It is impossible to impress one's relations, but they can be a great stand-by in time of need, and

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[335] Dandelion notes the rise in SQIFs – 'single Quaker in families' in the 20th century: Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 131,

[336] 'I am part of the now 86 percent of Britain Yearly Meeting who have come in as adults, and one of the 50 percent of that number that came from no immediately prior religious affiliation'. Ben Pink Dandelion, 'Quaking with confidence' *The Friends Journal,* Dec 1, 2009*,* https://www.friendsjournal.org/2009133/.

[337] QF&P ¶11.14.

it is then that they come to know each other better, if the bond is strong enough.[338]

Interpersonal failings, if they are addressed, are more likely to be addressed at the local level – through the use of a meeting for clearness. Where a meeting is struggling itself to deal with a contentious issue, they may call upon the resources of personnel from Friends House to assist the group. One possible danger of turning for support to Friends House staff is the danger of a form of dependency evolving which could ultimately undermine the discernment process of the group itself. Furthermore, if individuals come to Quakerism as part of a desire for community, but then encounter systems that begin to appear organised along 'party' lines with an increasing emphasis upon a form of 'helicopter parenting' from Friends House, without strong interpersonal connections also being established laterally, then the community could start to decline more rapidly than it has even in recent years. A strength of the Quaker model of activism is its longevity, and that is endangered where community stagnates and deteriorates or is curated by proxy.

While in principle Quaker discernment permits a single voice to hold back, or require reconsideration of the rightness of decisions, in practice the picture is complicated. In a small community, the desire for future friendly relations is undoubtedly influential. This factor may affect a university department, but not a disparate group assembled for a large-scale direct action. Disagreement between Quakers affects individuals both at a national and at a local

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[338] London Yearly Meeting, *To Lima with love: the response…to the World Council of Churches document 'Baptism, eucharist and ministry'*, 1987, as approved by London Yearly Meeting 1986, 8, reproduced in *QF&P* (print edition) ¶10.2.

level. While Quakers share 'Friendship' through membership they are free to hold extremely diverse views. There would be inconsistency in allowing freedom of religious belief among members and not freedom of thought on political matters. Dandelion, in his more recent work on 'liberal' Quakerism regards this position on belief as a liberal Quaker 'orthocredence.'[339] In some respects this resembles a micro version of John Rawls' overlapping consensus, where the core political values of political liberalism are the only uniting feature in the liberal State. The uniting feature in liberal Quakerism is according to Dandelion, agreement around an essentially sceptical position on 'how beliefs are held' which rejects all theological truth claims.[340] Nevertheless, the broad consensus of British Quakers around issues of peace, sustainability and equality is notable. Schism in British Quakerism occurred in 1993 when a small group of Christian Quakers (the Friends in Christ, also styled 'Primitive Quakers')[341] broke with the main body of British Quakers to pursue a 'primitive' Christian Quakerism. Dandelion records tensions between Christocentric and universalist Friends in the 1980s and between theist and nontheist in the 21st century.[342] There were political divisions over Brexit. Some pro-Brexit Quakers felt hesitant to voice their preference in Quaker circles where 'Remainers' were more numerous and more vocal.[343] At the national level, some counselled 'bridge-building'.[344]

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[339] Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 128.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Friends in Christ webpage: https://plainquakers.org/
[342] Dandelion, *The Cultivation,*134.
[343] Information given to the writer in a private conversation.
[344] Paul Parker 'Why I am tired of just talking about Brexit', 18th Jan 2019. Accessed: 10th Oct 2019. https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/i-m-tired-of-just-talking-about-brexit

It is possible that what may also be in play is an unfamiliar form of 'authority' that arises spontaneously from a small community where some Friends voices may be perceived as 'weightier' than others and individuals place continuity of relations above the advance of a personal agenda. This carries the danger of reproducing unacknowledged prejudice and privilege if individuals do not 'fit' a white middle-class heterosexual, cis-gender norm. What is clear is that lack of formal hierarchical authority holds open a space for both conflict, and for pacificity – which is not *passivity.* I noted in the interviews the mutual concern between theist and nontheist Quakers to show sensitivity to one another's positions. In these circumstances, while conflict could occur through diversity of belief, both sides appeared unwilling to give offence to the other side. Holding a position of both reticence and openness through conflict while it may appear passive, 'weak' or even unjust to observers, may also be a critical means to retain room for dialogue when the stakes are high, in terms of interpersonal goodwill and community cohesion. On the whole however, it is suggested that conflict can be taken as evidence for the health of a political community not its weakness and where too much silence inhibits frank and honest exchange there is clearly the danger that it will mask significant disagreement and stunt the potential growth in understanding that could arise out of conflict positively handled.

There is an evident tension between the aim in liberal society for the individual to be free to pursue her own interests, and the aim of republicanism for the individual to uphold civic goods, such as liberty, equality and fraternity, in a community unified around these. The delicate balance that Quakers attempt might be more generously seen as only what is necessary for the achievement of community, which, as Arendt noted is, along with politics, founded upon human plurality. Power, in Arendtian terms is synonymous with both freedom

and politics. Power is only available to human beings through association, and in association there must be compromise. Arendt rejects the idea that Politics of a 'We' can be achieved through the extension of 'Aristotle's friend, Jaspers' beloved, Buber's Thou'. Political freedom for Arendt is a form of the 'I-can' which she contrasts with the nature of freedom in philosophy – the 'I-will'.[345] While the latter represents only 'the solitary business of thought', the former, the product of a 'We' that enables it, 'is always engaged in changing our common world'.[346] Interviewees in this study also expressed the necessity of joining with others for effective action: 'I am individualistic, I am an individual and I believe we are all individuals, but in coming together to solve practicalities it draws individuals together in community' (A).[347]   Another respondent argued that developing a corporate concern is like an 'augmenting' process each individual adding their own pieces to the puzzle. 'I carry a little bit of that puzzle – … when enough of us have enough pieces … we can address this in multiple ways' (N).[348]

This transition of individuals from 'I' to 'We' depends upon 'some form of consent, of which obedience is only the most common mode'.[349] This makes some sense of Rousseau's suggestion that compliance with the general will 'forces' the individual citizen to be free, if effective freedom is interpreted as the political agency envisaged in the 'I can' of acting with

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[345] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: One/Thinking, Two/Willing,* (San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Inc.,1978), 200.
[346] Ibid.
[347] 104 supra.
[348] 112 supra.
[349] Arendt, *Life,* 201.

others. [350] There is a large body of work on the idea of collective intentionality that attempts to theorise in detail the philosophical position of the transition to a 'we' identity. [351] Although Quakers attempt Unity and do use the plural pronoun 'we' in their minutes of decisions, the thrust of this thesis is that Quaker unity does not extinguish the individual in the creation of community and in joint decisions. When the discernment of concern is dealt with at often long monthly Business Meetings, internal strain may arise from overdependence on a committed few. The low involvement in Quaker Business Meetings by comparison with the numbers who could attend,[352] and the disproportionate burden placed upon a small number of active members who sometimes fulfil roles in more than one capacity and for longer than is normally recommended, is a problem.[353] While the Quaker structure of Local and Area Meetings, offers the opportunity of direct participation in decision making at the local level, representative legislatures in modern representative democracies, distance decision-making from the citizens, resulting in alienation and poor engagement with the practice of power.[354] This difference is extremely important and it must be remembered that many of the conflicts between Quakers are between those who, through their Meeting have a relationship with

[350] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings,* ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, [1762] 1997), 53 [Bk. I.7].
[351] The theoretical work on collective identity by Michael Bratman, Margaret Gilbert, Philip Pettit, Hans Schmid, John Searle, Michael Tomasello, Raimo Tuomela and David Velleman and others is not addressed here, but examination of the nature of Quaker community in the light of this theoretical work warrants future research.
[352] Bill Chadkirk, and Pink Dandelion, 'Present and Prevented: 2006 and 2008: Summary Report on the Survey of the 11 May 2008 and comparison with the survey of the 7 May 2006', *Quaker Studies,* 15, no.1 (2010):84-97.
[353] Personal communication by a Friend who has served as an Elder for twice the normally approved term of three years, extended to six years with the Friend's agreement. This Friend had served in total for 12 years as an Elder at different meetings.
[354] Ben Berger, *Attention Deficit Democracy: The Paradox of Civic Engagement,* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2011), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7src3.8.

one another which they may wish to maintain beyond their disagreement for future involvement in making decisions together at all levels in their meetings.

Robson's studies suggest that even if the process of discernment is carried out well – unity may not always result. In such a case the Quaker business method allows the decision to be put off to another occasion. Restrictions of time and having to engage in Quaker practices in a wider community unable to accommodate delay seem as significant an issue as the Quaker practice itself. Timothy Phillips, quoted by Mace, observes that it is necessary to 'park' everything by the door including 'preconceived ideas' and 'selfish interests':

> …what we are trying to achieve is unity. And we are trying to achieve it within a limited time. There isn't endless time, for any of us. That's a reality to be acknowledged.[355]

Robson's fear is that individual voices are suppressed by this. This is certainly possible. The contingent pressures, cited by Phillips, demanding prompt decisions for the sake of time and efficiency may also exacerbate this. Robson suggests that where democratic deficits in the wider constitutional settlement effectively induces individuals to be, not only conflict but 'politics' averse, they avoid heated discussion. A point picked up by Robson in comparing Irish Quakers to those in Britain where she believes a different political culture may be at play making Irish Quakers less conflict averse.[356]

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[355] Mace, God and Decision,64.
[356] Susan Robson, 'Grasping the Nettle,' 79.

Quaker disunity arising over concerns

The removal of individuals or schismatic sects from groups with stated political and ethical aims is fraught.[357] However, because Quakers view conscience and/or the will of God as significant, and because they have abandoned adherence to 'dogmatic' forms of doxa, their treatment of dissent is relevant in a more evidently philosophical and political sense than might otherwise be the case in organisations with written constitutions and clearly established rules and policies. The issue is, upon which boundaries Quakers can unite. Sometimes, the decision to act under concern, even in pursuit of a testimony can bring an individual into conflict with both wider society and Friends. In contemporary British Quakerism as in previous centuries, dissent from views held in the wider society is a well-established strand of Quaker thought and praxis, although by and large, other than in matters of conscience, Quakerism supports 'law abiding'.[358] Quakers like other religious groups have sought accommodation with their beliefs in the Laws of their country.[359] Even in relation to civil matters as in the position of Trustees in Quaker positions.

> The law may assume that authority for determining action passes to
> the trustees and the meeting may choose to do this. However, under

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[357] The difficulties faced by the British Labour Party in relation to antisemitism allegations in the years preceding the 2019 election is an example: Heather Stewart and Peter Walker, 'Labour splits exposed as MP is suspended over antisemitism remarks' *Guardian,* 27 February 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/27/labour-suspends-chris-williamson-over-antisemitism-remarks.

[358] See: *A just and righteous plea presented unto the king of England,* 1661, 24, in Edward Burrough, *The memorable works of a son of thunder,* 1672, 786, reproduced at *QF&P* (print edition) ¶23.86.

[359] I am grateful to Frank Cranmer for permission to cite his unpublished conference paper. Frank Cranmer, 'Jews and Quakers in English law: accommodating contrarian religious views,' at 'Jews and Quakers: on the borders of acceptability', University of Sussex, Dec. 13, 2017.

Gospel Order, the ultimate authority will still lie with the gathered
meeting. Yearly Meeting, 2005.[360]

One interviewee was aware their actions were not only breaking the law but were also

contrary to the wishes of others in their meeting. This respondent describes a period of

activism in the 1980s -

> for example - a number of us got arrested - it was at the time of
> Greenham Common and this divided the meeting - I mean there's no
> question that they complained that we're dividing the meeting well
> we *were* (laughing) well … it couldn't be said that what we were doing
> was expressing the feeling of the meeting we *weren't* we were
> *challenging the meeting* there's no question. (T)

While this respondent spoke confidently and with some humour, another found criticisms

from an individual hurtful:

> and I think I spoke out probably too harshly saying 'Look XXXXX … we
> really asked you if you wanted to be part of this, you said you didn't
> and I just feel to be honest with you, I feel it's unfair, … we have
> worked on this - for *months*, to then *suddenly* come out as an
> exocet missile to hear this out of nowhere,' … so, d'you see what I
> mean it evokes so many strong feelings (R).

The failure of a meeting to support a concern, even one later supported, prompted one to

reconsider their membership.

> that really difficult experience left me not wanting to be part of
> Quakers - wanting to reject the local meeting. Shake the dust off my
> feet and walk away (C).

Inevitably, personality clashes and 'the influential Clerk' crops up in the interview responses.

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[360] *QF&P*, ¶15.03.

… but there was one person there who was always resisting the concern and they'd been a major - as far as I saw it - major problem in the other situation - so it was a personality clash going on (Q).

I suppose the Business Method - it kind of relies on people to be well informed to be - to be kindly disposed and to be open minded and if they're not then it - it can stop people from doing what they need to do - or feel - what they feel they need to do, but … it also can be quite damaging for the community because, you know, on a personal level if you're very enthusiastic about something and someone is continually holding out against you - and for no apparent … good reason - that can sour relationships within a community and we're quite a small community … it *is* a good thing that we need to be - to be joined behind decisions that are done jointly but then part of that is that we have a responsibility to get to grips with the detail that would enable us to make an informed decision and sometimes I think that doesn't happen so it can cause some difficulty (E).

What is notable from these contributions and others is that for these Quakers, the views and feelings of their fellow members matter to them. Just as it was apparent from the interviews that a strand emerging from the material was the importance of community to those interviewed, so in respect of disagreement within a meeting there is the sense that unity is generally preferable. In the case of (C) reconciliation with the group decision was later possible. Disunity was not provoked by the subject of the concern but how best to progress it.

interviewer: Was the concern laid down?
respondent: Not as such, our actions that we decided to do, moved [to project 2]… [Project 1] was taken out of our hands [*by other organisations filling the role*] anyway because it had taken so long to get anybody thinking that it might be something we could pursue - It had taken us six months to get to that point so… (laughing).

The respondent described that the project they did take up had been sustained for a period of several years at the time of interview and this was a good indication it had in fact been a more manageable undertaking.

> My feeling about that is - all the things I've said to you - about the learning process of working with it and through the concern being accepted by the meeting, but also (laughing) I'm deeply grateful we didn't take on [*Project 1*] because I think it's been quite enough trying to do [*Project 2*] (C).

While personal discernment is at the core of the motivation to carry forward a concern, the desire to work with the meeting is also an element. The last contributor's observations illustrate also that while the principle of a concern may be shared, the best course of action to be taken forward can be the source of disagreement. Where a commitment to a concern is shared by a meeting rather than an individual acting alone, the discernment process has to be undertaken by the meeting together. However, the respondent in this interview noted that those who had objected in fact were not ultimately those who later participated in taking action on the concern. Given the Quaker testimony to integrity, it may be that Quakers in these situations suffer from a 'duty' overload, where the requirement to act with integrity upon discerned testimonies, is beyond their own emotional, financial and personal resources, creating feelings of inadequacy, possibly weakening faith, in God, 'the Light', or each other.

Regardless of the distressing effects of dis-unity upon some of those acting under concern, the interviews did not provide grounds to suppose coercive practices were at work in the taking of concerns to meetings or in their approval or disapproval. Emotional distress was a risk factor that could result from objections being raised to the progressing of the concern or its rejection. Frustration with progress being blocked or lack of understanding are clear, but

it does not appear individuals were actively coerced to change their personal stance. In this case Quaker Unity may warrant the description of being achieved by 'papering over the cracks.' The benefit of this position is that relations between the parties continue. It suggests that community solidarity is a work in constant progress. Where individuals remain in membership, the long-term benefits of community may simply outweigh the advantages of individualism and separation, giving the impression of a movement where community is valued highly by its members.

In a study examining the impact of Quakers choosing to fight in the US military, Christopher Morrissey, described the community response towards those who joined as one of 'mitigated stigma' and the identification of 'semi-spoiled identities.'[361] There was in spite of this, a non-judgmentalism:

> Culturally, the Friends' high valuation on and long history of tolerance seriously vitiates their ability to label, stereotype and separate (Link and Phelan 2001) Friends who present themselves as non-peaceful. Most often, this was expressed by my respondents as a lack of willingness to be seen as judging others. Quakers are deeply stymied by striving not to be judgmental. I asked a respondent to describe a good Friend and she answered this way:
>> Well, I don't know that I could tell you what a good Quaker is. I mean, we're a community and there's lots of different folks in our meeting (laughs) and, and ... I don't know, I don't know that I feel ... when I get to that point where I start saying, 'gee that's not very Quakerly,' I better centre myself and say 'who am I to judge that?' You know, I mean, I don't know, I would say right off the bat that I'm not a very good Quaker.

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[361] Morrissey, 'Fighting,' 48.

> Though apparently competent to judge oneself, this Friend was painfully shy of being perceived as judging others.[362]

Although Morrissey interviewed Quakers in California this researcher encountered similar responses in this study:

> Q: Do you feel that absolutism is 'unquakerly'?
> A: ….is that 'unquakerly'? Well I would like it to be like that but I feel uncomfortable with the term unquakerly. I am very relativist I do not believe in absolute truth. And I do not think if I can make others fit in with my message, understand my message,…. then I feel I am letting them down if I do not speak to them, where they are (A).

Oddly, while there is reluctance to use the term 'unquakerly' the use of 'Quakerly' is less readily rejected and more than one of the interviewees spontaneously used the term during interview.

> what I've found is I've become more involved in Quakerism and activism - Quaker led activism - is that I take the Quaker things I've learnt to other things - so I'm chair of a other campaign groups - not chair but y'know and facilitate …other campaign groups and I do that in a very Quakerly way to make sure everyone's heard - make sure there's reflection at the beginning and stuff like that so it really helps my other activism (X).

These examples suggest that although there are mechanisms for 'disownment' of members, and for Quaker disaffiliation, Quakers are reluctant to take these steps merely upon the grounds that there is disagreement either as to the rightness of a concern or as to the best way to proceed in respect of it. In cases of morally objectionable criminal behaviour by an

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[362] Morrissey, 'Fighting,'63.

individual Quaker the decision may be more straightforward, although it is easy to see how Quakers are in difficulty in the case of individuals who show remorse for their actions and change their behaviour. Presumably, the 'correct' Quaker response would be to re-admit the member while weighing up and balancing that against potential dangers to members in their meeting. The researcher notes the lack of research in this area and therefore the preceding observation is speculative.

The disinclination to label someone as 'unquakerly' suggests a strong sense of the continuing value of the individual to the Quaker community even when their views or behaviour are challenging and provoke internal conflict. It is suggested that although there is a strong habitus at work in what Dandelion calls Quaker 'ortho-praxy', there is also an affinity with the broadly understood Quaker premise of 'that of God in everyone' together with some acceptance that knowledge of 'Truth' is partial and awareness that certainty of one's own position is not sure – the foundations of Dandelion's 'orthocredence'. As no.17 of the current Advices and Queries in QFP has it: 'Think it possible that you may be mistaken'. It is suggested that these features provide Quakers with the effective means to evade coercive practices regardless of whether or not coercive practices are in fact avoided.

Functional differentiation and forced reconciliation

Coerced unity is not only associated with State domination, and 'forced' unity between governed and governors, but also as 'forced reconciliation' with the epistemic norms of social and economic relations. These hegemonising forces in the modern Western liberal State, were part of Weber's analysis of the increasing bureaucratisation and rationalisation of

society.[363] Weber identified the process whereby law, subjected to juristic positivism, was rationalized, and *ius,* was separated from its (formerly religious) source of authority and 'pass[ed] through an independent course of development into a rational and formal legal system, in which the emphasis might be either upon logical or upon empirical elements'.[364]

The hegemonising feature of instrumental reasoning first noted by Weber, is seen by some interpreters as serving an expansion of the capitalist economic form, organised towards the domination of a survival-threatening Nature. This configuration of political and societal development is infused with a vision of progress that values 'efficiency', productivity, regularity and reproducibility over qualitative factors, such as lifeworld experience, spontaneity, relationship, and sustainability.[365] How Quakerism negotiates this environment may determine its future trajectory of success in relation both to its continuing ability to pursue its Testimonies effectively in this environment and its ability to maintain 'orthocredence' without declining towards coercion around this theologically 'liberal' position itself. This section sets out the problem of functional differentiation and forced reconciliation through the critique of Weberian Marxism in order to set in context the possible impact on Quakerism of bureaucratisation and forced reconciliation. The rise of

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[363] Max Weber, 'Formal and Substantive Rationalization: Theocratic and Secular Law' in *Economy and Society, an outline of interpretive sociology,* vol. 2, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al., (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1978, 2013), 809-815 and 'The Power position of the Bureaucracy,' in *Economy and Society,* vol.2, 990-993.

[364] Ibid.,810.

[365] Michael Löwy, 'Figures of Weberian Marxism', *Theory and Society* 25, no.3 (1996):431-446, https://www.jstor.org/stable/658052; Darrow Schecter, *Beyond Hegemoney: Towards a new philosophy of political legitimacy*, (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2005); Darrow Schecter, *The critique of instrumental reason from Weber to Habermas* (London: Continuum, 2010, 2012).

bureaucratisation is part of the critique of Penelope Cummins and is suggested in the exploration of mutual theoretical interests between Quakers and academics in the field of management studies.

In modern European society, increasing complexity became endemic with the innovations that capitalism induced in the division of labour.[366] The energy of production released by this process multiplied social complexity and structural forms of governance no longer appeared merely to reflect older stratifications such as centre-periphery, kinship or nobility. Rather as Marx identified, social classes emerged upon the basis of property between those with the means to fund and own the means of production and those dependent for survival upon wage labour.[367] Weber posited that through the expansion of administration, power was increasingly distributed through systems that developed their own bureaucratised forms of power, discrete norms, and hierarchical structures for the organisation, control and administration of their specific functions. This systemic *functional* differentiation, which differed from previous differentiation emerged alongside the growing development of money economy and the rise in importance of consumer/producer relationships. Monetization of the economy required greater and greater amounts of capital input. In functional differentiation theorised most notably by Niklas Luhmann, 'each functional system determined itself what matters it would deal with, what rules it would apply to

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[366] See Durkheim's 1893 work *The Division of Labour in Society,* trans. George Simpson (New York:Free Press, 1933: reprint Digireads.com Publishing, 2013).
[367] Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Volume 2,* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2013),74-78.

communicating and thus what position it would assign to people'.[368] These systems included, the economy, government, family, education, law and religion. In spite of the complexity of advanced capitalism, the influences of global economic, political pressures, and diverse ethnic communities and cultures with varying levels of wealth and economic opportunity, it is claimed the epistemic norms that govern administration in these systems underwrite hegemony and dominate public reason in the bureaucratic modern state. This interpretation is part of a strand of political theory which Michael Löwy has characterised as 'Weberian Marxism', and features of it are most notably identified in work by Frankfurt School theorists, Adorno and Horkheimer.[369]

Adorno, Horkheimer and others explored the cognitive / epistemic aspect to modernity and its potential dangers. The underlying epistemic thread of Frankfurt school thought and the sociological analysis of social systems, particularly associated with the work of Niklas Luhmann, is a significant feature of the work of Darrow Schecter.[370] For Schecter, liberalism and modern capitalism induce functional differentiation in which in its present configurations, the ethical is marginalised in legal, political and economic institutions and efficiency is favoured. Democracy requires some form of unity between the governed and the governors, but in complex modernity this is mediated alongside and through the simultaneous

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[368] Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Vol. 2,* 84.

[369] Löwy, 'Figures'; Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London, New York: Verso, [1944] 1997); Max Horkheimer, "Reason Against Itself: Some Remarks on Enlightenment", Theory, Culture & Society 10, no. 2 ([1947], 1993): 79–88. doi:10.1177/026327693010002004.

[370] Schecter, *Beyond Hegemony*; Schecter, *The Critique*; Schecter, *Critical Theory in the Twenty-First Century* (New York, London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Darrow Schecter, *Critical Theory and Sociological Theory: On late Modernity and Social Statehood*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

emergence of institutions that manage governance in discrete spheres, subject to bureaucracies and their own paradigms of performance success.

The legal, economic and political institutions act upon the degrees to which individual autonomy (*and* solidarity) is achievable. This takes place in the context of an ongoing need to relieve humanity from scarcity, and political forms from instability, which may be achieved at the expense of democratic steering, and unity. Adorno and Horkheimer took the view that these drivers dominate individual life, against which only a 'negative dialectics' offered purchase.[371] The focus of their critical theory became the issue of whether it would ever be possible to avoid the reconstruction (through dialectical synthesis) of yet another 'ideal' model to counter the contradictions of the present, without producing only a continuation of domination under a new name. Adorno suggested in *Negative Dialectics* despite this that the possibility remained for some form of reflective resistance. Yet in doing so, he raised the spectre of a Marxism forever in opposition as a negative of totalitarian governance and epistemic forced reconciliation. As one participant put it in interview for this study – it's about finding the 'cracks' in capitalism and occupying them with an alternate, empathic, solidarity with those suffering under the system. Revolution is thus envisaged as small acts of 'doing',

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[371] Adorno and Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*; Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York London: Continuum, [1966], 2007). See Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* 48 & 406: 'All philosophy even that which intends freedom, carries in its inalienably general elements the unfreedom in which society prolongs its existence...The coercive character in our thinking can be critically known; the coercion of thought is the medium of its deliverance', 48, and '[i]t lies in the definition of negative dialectics that it will not come to rest in itself, as if it were total. This is its form of hope', 406.

of 'being' resistant rather than the grand project of 'action' envisaged by Arendt as the primary arena of politics.

Habermas regards rationally governed communication and publicity in a 'public sphere,'[372] and judicial constitutional checks on the State and its institutions,[373] as means to recalibrate a crisis of legitimation in the modern liberal democratic state. It does this by securing an 'extra-systemic' arena of lifeworld communication and reason as a buttress against a decline to totalitarianism.[374] The lifeworld in Habermas's theory is where lived experience, relation, and ethics can flourish, providing essential ethical and practical wisdom for human society and its vital public sphere. Individuals interacting in the public sphere participate in and inform political discourse and policy. Yet the lifeworld risks 'colonisation' by the same managerial positivism evident in society's administrative systems which in Habermas's view would diminish its un-systematic creativity.

Schecter connects the forms of forced reconciliation discussed. He identifies soviet style managed economic structures and their oppressive state domination as equally the product of deformed liberalism, so that the similarities between two seemingly different forms of rationality that govern both modern western liberal democracies and those of state socialism, share the same epistemic liberal roots that pervade capitalism. In both forms instrumental

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[372] See Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity, [1973], 1976, 1988); *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* trans. Thomas Berger (Cambridge: Polity, [1962], 1989) and *The Theory of Communicative Action,* 2 vols., trans. Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity, [1981], 1984, 1987).
[373] Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, trans. William Rehg, (Cambridge:Polity, [1992], 1996).
[374] Schecter, *Critical Theory and Sociological,* 24-5, esp. fn33.

reason is mediated through law. In both, subjectivity is mis-perceived: rationality (and legality) are seen as 'innate' characteristics of the 'liberal democratic individual subject or the state socialist collective subject'.[375] Finally, little account is taken of the understanding of human psychology afforded since Freud's ground breaking work, save insofar as this serves instrumental ends, i.e. the prediction and 'management' of behaviour.[376] Throughout these developments nature remains the unvanquishable 'other' against which the war 'for the sake of human autonomy is never won, since even the most apparently successful battles eventually turn out to be negative victories that ricochet as hierarchies, bureaucracies, discrimination and other examples of oppressive social relations'.[377]

These processes are threaded through the fluctuating mechanism of functional differentiation in the modern bureaucratised State across systems such as law, religion and bodies charged with steering the State. They have the potential to shape interpersonal relationships in a similar fashion to the de-personalised I-it relation between persons that Buber saw emerging in modernity. Buber's 'theological' concern with human relation, points to a 'blindspot' in systemic functioning in which interpersonal relations, and lifeworld communicative experience are at best marginalised, at worst disregarded and degraded.[378] It is to this 'gap' that the Quaker example has relevance. As will be seen in subsequent chapters,

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[375] Schecter, *Beyond,*156.

[376] This can be seen in the turn by government in the UK to behavioural science during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 see: 'The Role of Behavioural Science in the Coronavirus Outbreak' 14 March 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system /uploads/attachment_data/file/873732/07-role-of-behavioural-science-in-the-coronavirus-outbreak.pdf

[377] Schecter, *Beyond,*156.

[378] Buber's I-thou and I-it constructs are examined in the Chapter 4.

the Quaker model's ethical emphasis upon 'I-Thou' relations with others and attempts at solidarity beyond resemblance suggests that resistance to the pressures of instrumental reason, functional differentiation and forced reconciliation are still viable.

Some comments on bureaucracy, systems theory and Quakerism

Developments in 'Weberian Marxism' and systems theory, offer language through which to address the bureaucratisation of British Quakerism in the modern era. Moves between business management theory, Quaker business management theory, and Quaker religious 'discernment' as discussed in Chapter 1, indicates an instance of de-differentiation between the economic and religious systems, rubbing up against the boundaries of system functional differentiation in flux, as a result of stressors in both institutions; the economic seeking to insert found 'truths' into business management through the 'presencing' method, some Quakers perhaps seeking tools for greater 'efficiency' in discernment, by re-importing from management theory a structured form of discernment formerly alien to Quaker worship.[379]

It is clear that modern Quakerism appears increasingly professionalised. Staff are employed to facilitate the work of BYM in following through on discerned concerns and there is no doubt that 'forced reconciliation' may be a danger once concerns are 'corporate' matters in the

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[379] See Dawes, *Discernment.* The consideration of the role of inter-systemic flux between differentiation and de-differentiation is a theoretical development in Schecter, *Critical Theory and Sociological Theory.*

hands of a bureaucracy. The work of Penelope Cummins may point in this direction. In unpublished conference papers,[380] reported by Dandelion, this process is indicated:

> [She] has argued that some decision-making has become ceremonial, the Meeting 'rubber-stamping' a decision that has been made elsewhere (2017). She argues that Local Meeting practices follow the patterns set by Yearly Meeting. Quakers, in deciding to maintain their charitable status, have taken on the apparatus of trusteeship and in Cummins' analysis have lost sight of erstwhile processes of collective spiritual discernment (2018).[381]

Although there are no paid ministers, there are staff at Friends House in London, who are more than merely administrative, taking initiatives and leadership positions intended as facilitative. They are able to do this as experts available to local meetings as a helpful resource, anecdotally they are often much appreciated for their work, and in the experience of this researcher are individuals with evident integrity and a sense of service to fellow Quakers. However there remains the danger that they may also effectively steer, simply by virtue of their role as facilitators. This is not quite the same as the more traditional Quaker way of establishing through the experience of meetings over time, the 'weighty' Friends within the community, although in appointing, Quakers look particularly for individuals who have shown qualities in keeping with Quaker testimony and principled Quaker activism.

Previous forms of leadership and hierarchy among Quakers developed around old long-standing Quaker families with successful business profiles or greater public influence (such as

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[380] One paper has now been published. See: Penelope Cummins, 'After the Charities Act: Governance and Decision-making in Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)', *Quaker Studies* 24, no.2 (2019):299-318, https://doi.org/10.3828/quaker.2019.24.2.7.

[381] Dandelion, *The Cultivation*, 145

the Rowntree or Fry families). It has been a longstanding truism about Quakers that they did not abolish the clergy – they abolished the laity, preferring a 'priesthood of all believers.'[382] In its earliest days this created the potential for a highly democratised movement. Modern Quakerism could see a reversal of this shift, because as the movement declines in numbers the numbers of paid staff must increase to accomplish the tasks discerned as necessary by meetings.[383] A larger historical Quaker body had less need of this development, less requirement for 'efficiency' in discernment. The potential 'disunity' indicated, between 'laity' and 'professional' Quakers, would mark a different kind of 'disunity' than that formerly experienced in the history of Quakerism, and one which may be latent rather than evident in current structures.

A further indication of this process is seen in the introduction of business management theory into spiritual discernment. Joycelin Dawes gives a thorough overview of the contemporary understanding of Quaker discernment but she additionally offers a model for undertaking Quaker discernment through 'Theory U,' a management tool developed by Otto Scharmer and others.[384] Leadership models such as Theory U threaten to solidify a 'leadership' model. There is a danger that if the Quaker discernment process is too closely associated with the Presencing/Theory U process, not only will it be badly served by the philosophical

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[382] *QF&P,* ¶11.01; Dudiak and Rediehs, *'Quakers, Philosophy and Truth,'* 512.

[383] Dandelion noted that although numbers are falling recruitment also remains buoyant: Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 130.

[384] Dawes, *Discernment*; Otto Scharmer, *The Essentials of Theory U: Core Principles and Application* (San Francisco:Berrett-Koehler 2018); Peter Senge, et al., *Presence: Exploring Profound change in People, Organizations and Society* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2004, 2005); Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges, The Social Technology of Presencing*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009).

incoherence at the core of this model, but unprogrammed Quakerism might gravitate towards a new top-down formation with 'skilled' or trained 'professional' Quakers, in leadership.[385] The schism and conflict between BYM, Friends' House and local meetings that could arise in such a structure has not been observed by this researcher and is not a subject of enquiry in this study although it is a potential outcome of the changes discussed.

The increasing administrative bureaucratisation of Quakerism suggests it is not immune from forces of functional differentiation and forced reconciliation. However, it is argued that the Quaker epistemic frame (discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7), in conjunction with its normative interpersonal ethics (explored in Chapter 4), moderate the effects of forced reconciliation. Quakerism, whilst absolutely situated within a ubiquitous modernity and subject to the same pressures as those that prevail in the wider society, retains at its core a utopic and republican element. This still upholds the aim of 'unity' in its decision-making processes and distinguishes the Quaker approach from those practiced in the liberal State more broadly. It appears to some extent resistant to the pressures of modernity that steer democracy towards coerced unity/identity. It is for this reason that both social and political thought and Quakerism can be informed by the study of Quaker political activism through social and political thought.

The following section explores the theoretical response by Claude Lefort and Miguel Abensour to totalitarian developments in 20th century republicanism. It considers the

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[385] On the philosophical incoherences of Theory U see Peter W. Heller 'The Philosophy of Theory U: A Critical Examination'*, The Philosophy of Management* 18, (2018,2019):23-42, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40926-018-0087-0.

relevance of Quaker discernment processes, and radical activism for Quaker resistance to the development of coercive praxis within British Quakerism, and draws out a comparison between Quaker activism and *sauvage* democracy as interpreted by Miguel Abensour.

Republicanism, *sauvage* democracy and the Quaker model

The initial failures of democracy and liberalism to secure peace, stability and economic security between the two world wars, and the horrors of Nazism and Stalinism led political theorists to reconsider the nature of democracy, and its capacity to resist totalitarianism. The aftermath of WWII saw the establishment of charters of human rights and post war liberal theorists focused on devising constitutional settlements to protect individual liberty without inducing further inegalitarian injustice (the projects of Rawls and Habermas), largely retaining the 'neutral' rational liberal 'subject' of classical Liberalism.

Those in the Marxist tradition were forced to confront and re-evaluate the failures of revolutionary and Communist Party Marxism in the soviet system and its sphere of influence. Among those theorists Claude Lefort was an early champion of Arendt's critique of totalitarianism, and an exposer of soviet and communist party repression in Russia and Eastern Europe.[386] James D. Ingram in an article contextualising Lefort's thought noted that 'the fissure between liberal and radical democracy, central to the politics of 19th-century

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[386] Claude Lefort, *L'invention démocratique:Les limites de la domination totalitaire,* (Paris:Fayard,1981); Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society, Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism,* ed. John B.Thompson (Oxford: Polity Press,1986).

Europe, has re-opened in recent years on the academic left.'[387] Lefort, a key figure in 20th century French political theory after WWII, explored symbolism and phenomenology in politics. Abensour followed but departed from Lefort in significant ways, towards Marx, utopianism, and radical democracy.

Political theorist Miguel Abensour, developed his explorations of domination and democracy from a range of sources, in particular; Machiavelli, La Boétie, Lefort (on democracy), Arendt and Lefort (on totalitarianism), and the 'critique of domination' developed by the Frankfurt School.[388] Abensour re-examined utopianism in the radical tradition, of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Robert Owen.[389] His work recuperated the earlier hopes for republicanism and its claims for the emancipation of all persons through a democratic political settlement founded upon mutual equality and friendship. For Abensour, a central element of democracy is *sauvage* – wild, or 'savage'. A term Abensour carefully distinguishes from both orientalist ethnology's application to indigenous societies, and Hobbes' 'real or imagined war of all against all.'[390] Savage democracy is identified through forms of irruption, like wildcat strikes, spontaneous and 'independent of any principle.'[391]

> It is as if 'savage' connotes the inexhaustible reserve of turmoil that soars above democracy… In a word: to forge a 'libertarian idea' of democracy is to think it as savage.'

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[387] James D.Ingram, 'The Politics of Claude Lefort's Political: Between Liberalism and Radical Democracy' *Thesis Eleven* 87, (Nov.2006): 33-50.
[388] Ingram, 'The Politics', 44.
[389] Abensour's exploration of utopianism is addressed in later chapters.
[390] Abensour *Democracy against the state*, 105-6.
[391] Ibid.,106.

> Libertarian is he who dares to talk when everyone is silent, she who does not shy from contradicting the public, unafraid to break the wall of silence so as to make the unexpected voice of liberty be heard. [392]

Quoting heavily from Lefort's piece 'The Question of Democracy', Abensour continues;

> As a refusal to submit to the established order, as the 'dissolution of the bearings of certitude,' democracy 'inaugurates a history in which people experience an ultimate indeterminacy as to the foundations of Power, Law and Knowledge, and as to the foundations of the relations between *self* and *other* at every level of social life.'[393]

Ingram regards Abensour's idea of democracy as summed up in the following quotation from an early essay:

> Haunted by its recognition of a being that is indeterminate *par excellence*, democracy is that form of society in which [right], by its external relationship to power, proves to be always in excess of what is established, as if the instituting instance, once posited, reemerges . . . to reaffirm . . . existing rights and to create new ones.[394]

Ingram claims that for Abensour, 'democratic incompletion goes all the way down... it is the form of the political that provokes a specifically democratic politics that rises up to contest this regime itself.'[395] This suggests a paradoxically realist utopian idea that democracy will always remain an aspirational system the realisation of which is never and for all time accomplishable. In this respect it is clear to see that liberal judicial constitutionalism can never entirely express 'democracy' in its savage sense.

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[392] Ibid.

[393] Ibid.,106. Quotations by Abensour in this passage are from Claude Lefort, 'The Question of Democracy' in *Democracy and Political Theory,* trans. David Macey, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 19. Translation modified.

[394] Miguel Abensour, '"Savage Democracy" and "Principle of Anarchy"', trans. Max Blechman, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28, no.6, ([1994] , 2002): 709, quoted in Ingram, 'The Politics,' 41.

[395] Ingram, 'The Politics,' 41.

I adapt and apply Abensour's reading of *sauvage* democracy in the Quaker context, but in order to do so some adaptations and distinctions are required. Although most translations offer 'savage' for the French *sauvage*, this connotes a potentially 'violent' spontaneous event, not limited to pacific expression. It also connotes in English, orientalist and colonialist visions of 'barbarism' soaked in racist ideology. For this reason, I adopt the translation 'wild' as preferable when observing the irruption of this form of insurgent democracy within Quakerism. 'Wild' does not have a moral or racist connotation in English. A second reason for preferring 'wild' is that it may also be interpreted as peaceful. The proposed 'Quaker model' of this thesis suggests that a 'limiting boundary' of ethics, focused upon respectful interrelationships between persons and the natural world would express savage democracy in a 'pacific' form. The ethical limits that bound Quaker politics transform *sauvage* democracy. It is utopically mediated, not repressed. A utopic 're-wilding' of the political in this form allows for the constitution of a form 'un-administered' democracy, in which ethical relations between people are affirmed, effecting a de-differentiation between politics and ethics.

A non-coercive democratic community instantiating both plurality and fraternité, without excising from its core the contestatory nature of democracy is a challenging model for contemporary republicanism to envisage. It is this 'imagined' utopic pacific model that the conjunction of the Quaker model and Abensour's *suavage* democracy posits. Quaker democracy appears 'wild' both in its political engagement in direct action and at the 'micro' level of the embedding of spontaneous ministry, yet it is nourished in a communal holding praxis of silent listening, waiting, and expectation. Whereas Abensour's '*sauvage*' democracy irrupts on the streets, the irruption of concerns, emerges from within the Quaker community

and from within individuals. Britain Yearly Meeting as the 'arche' or holding structure in the Quaker community allows these concerns to surface: it channels and mediates conflictual voices, outside and against the grain of the wider society and the State.

In the Quaker example as manifest among British Quakers, when working well, Quaker democracy explores in ministry and then 'minutes' its corporate tensions openly. This was seen in the 'Minute' recording the very tense 'unity' achieved over the decision to support sanctions and divestment in protest at successive Israeli governments accused of facilitating illegal settlements. The work of Susan Robson and Penelope Cummins suggests Quaker democracy works poorly when tensions are either left unaddressed or are 'handed over' to a smaller group to steer. However, once what is 'just' is discerned, a nonviolent, oppositional, but conflict-embracing praxis may emerge. This can be seen from the 'upholding' of Quakers who break the law.[396] This model of political community recognises 'wild' democracy but also subjects it to discernment, both moral and pragmatic. This mediation marks both the model's similarities to and distance from anarchism. Abensour relates *sauvage* democracy to anarchism, which he argues still bears the (pre-modern) marks of metaphysically underpinned foundations - a factor shared in the Quaker model. *Sauvage* democracy represents not only the constant disruption of forms of *arche* and structure but exhibits four characteristics simplified here and set beside the Quaker model to draw out the contrast

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[396] See the blog entry at the Quakers in Britain official website: Tatiana Garavito, 'Quaker solidarity with the Stansted 15 human rights activists,' Dec 21, 2018, https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/quaker-solidarity-with-the-stansted15-human-rights-activists.

between Abensour's *sauvage* democracy and what I have called pacific 'wild' democracy in the Quaker model (Figure 3).

These comparisons show both the Quaker model's openness to the potential 'irruption' of 'new truth', and its mediation through shared discernment and shared ethics. Abensour conjoins two paradoxical terms 'savage democracy' and 'the principle of anarchy'. According to Abensour, a 'new ontology' emerges where 'permanent contestation' is not only a new 'political' but offers a 'perennial unveiling of the experience of being in time, at the center of which there is a human struggle that takes on "historical creation as a whole," or the complex and endless play of exchange and human struggle.'[397] The Quaker modified model of 'wild' democracy connects with this historical role primarily through engagement in discernment. It relies upon this as its own 'perennial unveiling' of struggle.

Abensour's s*auvage* democracy	Quaker model
1. *Sauvage* democracy occurs when the 'end of metaphysics' has created a crisis for all foundations (Progress, God, Nature, Order of the world).	The Quaker refusal of religious creed or dogma reflects this 'end of metaphysics' but is nonetheless embedded alongside 'orthopractic' behaviour and communally developed shared testimonies which are part of the model's 'arche' suggesting the Quaker model retains its 'foundation' in praxis and in discernment.

[397] Abensour *Democracy against the State,* 118. The quotation is from Lefort. *Le Travail de L'Œvre: Machiavel,* Paris Galliamard 1972, 426

2. In 'savage' democracy, the loss of 'imperative principles' produces an alternative way of thinking 'presence' and action: 'By virtue of being rethought as event, action is withdrawn from the forms of domination embodied by the One, and finds itself again its own element: what Arendt calls the ontological condition of plurality,'[398]	This is reflected in the individual freedom Quakers retain to act on their concerns on the authority of their conscience alone. Yet again the contrast is that although the '*domination* by the One' is avoided, unity remains. The Quaker model of Unity being characterised by plurality within Unity which maintains the ontological condition envisaged by Arendt.
3. No longer able to turn to first principles or foundations the political reverts to 'situating' clearing the way to 'free adventure.'	The Quaker model is distinguished in that it still corporately mediates free adventure through an ethical habitus of silent worship and discernment which place high value on pacific interpersonal relations: free adventure is less evident, but not intentionally repressed. The ways to 'free adventure' are not 'clear' but historically embedded in an ethical habitus.
4. Politics built upon 'foundations' limits the understanding of the emancipatory within its own terms. *Sauvage* democracy, founded upon the 'inaugural moment' makes no reference to this 'ideal and normative instance.'	Quakerism's recognition of the emancipatory is always in a process of 'catch-up' with Quaker praxis, and its discernment of 'new' truth. Creedlessness demands dependence on a plethora of 'inaugural moments' found in discernment, but in Quakerism a tradition of recording and recognising these has also given

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[398] Ingram, 'The Politics,' 115.

	rise to a persistent ethical ground marked out in the Testimonies. It is suggested these 'foundations' are different in kind to theoretical foundations based upon dogmatic forms of political or religious thought implied by Abensour, because these foundations have been jointly and individually constructed in community over decades of praxis.

Figure 3 Abensour's 'sauvage' democracy and the Quaker model

Abensour's interpretation of democracy places conflict at the heart of democracy. This democracy depends upon its own indeterminacy because each generation must struggle anew. In the 'orthocredence' model, Quaker discernment generates concerns of ethical substance because 'orthocredence' and the belief that 'new light' will be discovered through ongoing revelation shuts nothing out. This is distinguished from Abensour's 'savage' democracy by the fuller process of ethical sifting in the light of already discerned testimonies. In this way 'wild' democracy expressed through the Quaker model emerges as concern. This discernment process cannot be secured from conflict, and if it were it would cease entirely to discern 'new' truth.

 'Thick' democracy, as understood through Lefort and Abensour is by nature conflictual and for Abensour 'insurgent'.[399] While Arendt identifies power in politics as produced in

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[399] Abensour distinguishes conflictual democracy which occurs within the parameters of the State and the insurgent kind that erupts on the streets and beyond the recognised democratic fora. Martin Breaugh suggests Abensour sees the possibility of an institutional framework that could

'plurality', Abensour reads this in its more radical and phenomenological way as the momentous 'situation' or 'event' that creates the 'wildcat' response. This is a radical position because the same 'event' would be more likely to be seen through the eyes of political liberals as at best permissible as 'civil disobedience', and at worst as insurrectionist 'anti-democracy' threatening the democratic State. In either case the response would be the deployment of State apparatuses to neutralise the threat and uphold law. Radical 'events' of insurgent democracy and putschist politics such as the storming of the US capitol in the wake of the US presidential election must be distinguished here.

The potential for political violence is evident in both and Abensour does not address the question directly but instead following Lefort ties insurgent (*sauvage*) democracy to the perpetual struggle for human rights to be protected by law:

> [I]t is in and through the articulation of law – law no longer thought of as an instrument of social conservation but as a revolutionary instance of authority, that is, as the source, in the strongest sense of the word, of a society that constitutes itself in its quest for itself – that the idea of democracy takes on its fully libertarian meaning.[400]

Abensour claims Lefort's position is neither ethical nor individualistic it is a description of a restless democracy constantly in excess of the 'traditional limit' of post Enlightenment *État de droit* or *Rechstaat,* and the 'disappearance' of the 'body' of the Sovereign.[401] The

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accommodate democracy's insurgent forms. Martin Breaugh, 'From a Critique of Totalitarian Domination to the Utopia of Insurgent Democracy: On the 'Political Philosophy' of Miguel Abensour' *Thinking Radical Democracy: The Return to Politics in Post-War France*, eds., Martin Breaugh et al., (Toronto, London: University of Toronto Press, 2015) 234, Kindle.
[400] Abensour, *Democracy Against the State,* 107.
[401] Ibid.,108.

phenomenological and symbolic 'split between its *inside* and its *outside*' leaves the space of

the Sovereign's body empty – a symbolic space which mediates and returns society to itself

so that the 'split' can be known and felt although it is always exceeded by the democratic

'event'.[402]

According to Abensour, Lefort sees revolutionary democracy as engendering an encounter

with '*raw being*' through 'the flesh of the social'. This is primarily a phenomenological

understanding of democratic revolution that Abensour claims reveals the 'non-fulfilment'

(impossibility of fulfilment) 'of all things'.[403] In this way 'the flesh of the social' is 'in harmony

with the style of being of the human element, with its unpredictability and resistance'.[404]

Abensour asks whether 'proximity' (between the social and the 'being' of human being) allows

for a Levinasian reading. He asks whether this proximity is also a rupture with being, revealing

Levinas's innately ethical condition of the 'one-for-the-other'. Abensour suggests but does not

develop the thought that this reveals the responsibility for the other such that the 'human

element' is in fact 'otherwise than being' as Levinas posited.[405] Yet, from Lefort's

phenomenological reading, Abensour suggests the return to ethics through Levinas: 'Can we

consider that democracy – given its necessary relation to justice, to the responsibility of the

democratic person, and given its *non-indifference to those it does not know* – would fail to

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[402] Ibid.,109.
[403] Ibid.,110.
[404] Ibid.,120.
[405] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonse Lingis
(Pittsbrugh: Duquesne University Press, 1981,1997, here cited by Abensour, *Democracy Against the State,* 120

heed the "otherness" of the human?'[406] This ethical element to democracy – founded upon the struggle for rights – but fundamentally embedded in a solidarity with the struggle for *all* others' rights, distinguishes the putschist violence of the coup, from the irruptive violence of the demand for universal rights not tied to nationality, race or region. Abensour's reference to Levinas here is tentative, perhaps conscious of the precarity of the 'other' in the face of 'wildcat' action.[407] The relevance of Levinas's ethical phenomenology for Quakerism is considered in chapters 4 and 7.

The pacific model of Quaker 'wild' democracy explored in this study takes place against two persisting structures, epistemic and organisational. Firstly, Quakers habituated by the experience of Quaker orthopraxy and by their conscious or unconscious assimilation of the central Quaker tenet of 'that of God in everyone' must rationally accept that their knowledge of 'Truth' is partial and may be mistaken, characterised by Dandelion as 'orthocredence'. Secondly, the communal practice of Quakerism re-inserts the individual into 'community' whereby some individual interest and preference is laid aside in exchange for the power of association. These two filters, (epistemic and social) mediate the democratic impulse in Quakerism, and allow wild politics to emerge, denuded of its potentially murderous violence which could otherwise be fuelled by dogmatic certainties and sectarian impulses. Central to this process is the Quaker habitus in which listening in silence in meetings and attentiveness

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[406] Ibid. Italics added.
[407] Although not cited here by Abensour, Walter Benjamin's '*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*' (On the critique of violence) explored similar terrain and is relevant to the discussion. It is discussed in Chapter -

to the voices of others, speaking from their 'truth', enables unity in 'fellowship' or '*Ffriendship*' to exceed the importance of unity in *res*. Mace gives an excellent example of this in her report of the experience of Floe Shakespeare at the Yearly Meeting in 2009 in York when the subject of the discernment was same-sex marriage. Floe explained:

> I don't agree with marriage. I am a lesbian, I had come with a women's group and I'd spent the whole week arguing with my mates. So I went to the final session out of key with what seemed to be emerging. But what happened in the course of the drafting process, without me having to say or do anything, was a minute which expressed all of us. It was a magic moment. I felt somehow – I am part of this.
> At a later meeting (of Quaker Lesbian Gathering) I had the same sense of something decided that was right for the group even though it was not right for me. I know it was the knowledge that everybody had been listened to that gave me that feeling.[408]

The conjunction of mild epistemic scepticism and strong interpersonal community in Quakerism, appears to shape interpersonal relations quite differently to the liberal possessive 'individualism' of western capitalist societies in the modern era as examined by C.B.Macpherson and Charles Taylor respectively.[409] 'Individualism' appears differently modulated in Quakerism, so that what may seem 'typically' liberal in the free actions and freedom of thought among Quakers, perhaps has greater affinity with a form of self-hood, unfamiliar in contemporary society. It appears closer to a self-hood as imagined in a republic or commonwealth that might coalesce around civic virtues – equality, freedom and solidarity,

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[408] Mace, *God,* 64.
[409] See the elaborations of individualism offered by, C.B. Macpherson in Macpherson, *The Political* and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The making of modern identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

or for Quakers, around *friendship.*[410] In this form the 'ontological plurality' which Arendt opposed to political philosophy's emphasis upon *polis*, race, *or* nation, is preserved.

The future of republican unity and the Quaker model

Arendt and Lefort argued that attempting to achieve mediated unity in the state (between the governors and the governed) through spurious idealist symbols of 'identity' was at the root of totalitarianism. When 'essentialised' and politicised in ultimately destructive ways, 'race' or 'class' become deeply repressive concepts, due to the fact of actual non-identity of citizens under the concept. Twentieth century history proved that dependence on these 'identitarian' forms would lead in any event to non-identity in the political realm and the disempowerment of those outside the putative hegemonising concept. Yet despite its murderous potential, Adorno saw in the dis-alignment between the concept and its object an opening, a repository for a weak hope.[411] In the same way the Quaker model as set out in the following chapters suggests it is possible to not only imagine but also enact non-identitarian solidarity. It is this that makes the Quaker model of interest for social and political thought.

New forms of democratic organisation are needed that are better able to achieve and protect liberty and prevent want and instability but be less likely to decline to totalitarianism.

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[410] The ethical nature of Quaker friendship expressed in their activism on concerns is addressed in Chapter 4.

[411] For exploration of 'hope' in Adorno's work see; Timo Jütten, 'Adorno on Hope', *Philosophy and Social Criticism,* 45 no.3, (2019): 285-306, doi: 10.1177/0191453718794749 and Fotini Vaki, 'Hope in Theory and Praxis: From Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* to Benjamin's "Divine Violence" in *Hope Against Hope: Philosophies, Cultures and Politics of Possibility and Doubt,* eds. Janet Horridan and Ed Wiltse, (Amsterdam: Brill, 2010).

Schecter concludes his analysis of *Critical Theory in the Twenty-First Century* with the thought that 'The task of cross-systemic coordination can best be performed by overlapping constellations of active citizens affected by the relevant systemic operations, so that people may fully develop the economic, political, legal and aesthetic capacities and knowledge required to become non-identical equals.'[412] This critique has a bearing on this study in a number of ways. In later chapters it will be suggested that Quaker discernment and praxis of concern, offers a discrete model of how ethical rejection of and resistance to the repressive side-effects of the differentiation and bureaucratisation of systems can arise between politically engaged individuals and translate into non-coercive communal political endeavours.

Quakers provide one possible example of how active citizens expressing non-identical equality, or in the language of Miguel Abensour (after La Boétie) 'a political community of all individuals',[413] could be arranged. This notion of 'community' differs from the 'overlapping constellations' envisaged by Schecter. This study, points to the affective importance of 'community' for the participants in the study, which suggests there may be a persistent drive for community beyond the overlap of 'interests' under advanced capitalism which could also motivate the 'overlapping constellations' envisaged by Schecter.

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[412] Schecter, *Critical Theory,* 199.
[413] Miguel Abensour *La communauté politique de 'tous uns': Désir de liberté, désir d'utopie,* entretien avec Michel Einaudeau (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2014).

One further reason the Quaker model is of interest is found in the strong connection between testimonies, desired policies, and the co-ordinated action across dispersed individuals in different meetings. This resembles forms of 'guild socialism' with its local organisation and unifying ethical core. Given that 'guild socialism' had a significant but limited impact in the early 20th century and was ultimately overwhelmed by the growth of British Labour party politics, the persistence of active radical Quaker politics in a similarly devolved and ethically driven form warrants study. According to Schecter, G.D.H.Cole's work, *Guild Socialism Re-Stated,* deserves reconsideration in the face of a need to re-examine models of resistance under functional differentiation in the 21st century.[414]

Returning to the model of radical republicanism, if the triumvirate of liberty, equality and fraternity is again reimagined and if liberalism might be brutally simplified as freedom before equality (as in Rawls) and republicanism as equality before freedom, then Quakerism appears by contrast to lean to fraternity first. It envisages the possibility of solidarity across inequalities, possibly as a legacy of the universalised Christian love of neighbour, or in a universalised and de-Christianised 'there is that of God in every one'.[415] It presupposes the 'levelling' of all inequality in this fraternity, and the recognitive assumption of the autonomy of the other. The form of 'wild' democracy is not precluded from this polity. It is suggested in the actions undertaken by some of the first Quakers; disrupting church meetings, going

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[414] Schecter, *Critical Theory and Sociological Theory,* fn12 211.
[415] See Chapter 4.

'naked for a sign'.[416] These extreme and disruptive religious 'events' appear *sauvage* in Abensour's sense although the early struggles do not express the 'end of metaphysics' but rather the struggle for its renewal. The presence of Quakers in contemporary social and political movements such as, Occupy and Extinction Rebellion, illustrates the continuity of this 'wild' irruptive democracy in current practice. The ongoing tension in Quakerism between conflict and unity, structure and its absence, belief and unbelief, suggests a political Quakerism closer to the conflictual heart of radical democratic politics. It is differently expressed and structured to both that *sauvage* 'wildcat' insurgent kind imagined by Abensour and substantially different too to the 'party' politics found in most liberal representative democracies.

The Quaker model appears as standing in the space between *sauvage* democracy, anarchism and republicanism. In this study, it is claimed the 'holding' ground of Quaker structure, theological and organisational, draws it closer to a renewed utopian republican political form than an anarchistic one: a non-totalitarian republicanism in which 'wild' and even insurgent savage democracy has not been entirely suppressed. The following chapters trace this irruptive democracy to its source in the interpersonal ethical habitus of Quakerism (Chapter 4), and its mediation through Quaker discernment (Chapter 5) towards a radical utopianism. The capacity for 'wild' democracy to appear in this structure without destroying the Quaker

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[416] Kenneth L. Carroll, 'Early Quakers And 'Going Naked As A Sign''', *Quaker History* 67, no.2, (1978):69-87, http://www..jstor.com/stable/41946859. Although largely a behaviour recorded in Quakerism's early days, and rare thereafter, these types of incidents recurred in different forms through Quaker history. Carroll associates these with forms of apocalypticism.

structure in which it irrupts is one of the most interesting features of the nature of political

engagement observed among British Quakers. How British Quakerism fosters this potentially

disruptive politics within its membership is one of the key questions for this study.

Chapter 4: The ethical habitus of Quakerism and the interpersonal obligation of respect for others

Quaker Concern occurs in the context of an 'ethically infused habitus' of British Quakerism.

Habitus is a term adopted by Pierre Bourdieu. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* he defined it as:

> The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment … produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations. … [T]he practices produced by the habitus [are] the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations. [417]

The way in which Quaker worship is structured around two poles of silent listening for an inner voice and in communal worship for the voices of others, provides a ready structure in Quakerism for shaping prophetic and dialogical approaches to political engagement. The 'prophetic' and 'dialogical' can be seen as different responses to Quaker habitus and its structuring practices, which includes the 'expectant waiting' that occurs during the silence of a Quaker meeting. In a meeting for worship in the Quaker tradition, the individual listens for a voice that although felt to speak *inside* the hearer, when spoken as part of 'ministry', is not traditionally considered to be entirely *of* the speaker.[418] Listening for the *inner* voice in the

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[417] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72 in Omar Lizardo, 'The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu's *Habitus*' *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 34, no.4 (2004):378.
[418] See *QF&P*, ¶2.11, ¶2.12, ¶2.41, ¶2.60, ¶2.66, ¶2.69 for relevant extracts addressing silent worship, ministry and 'meeting'. Available at: https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/2/.

ministry of others in such a way as to cognise an instructive *otherness* reflects a Buberian dialogical approach. This inwards 'meeting' of something felt to be 'other', in the self or particularly between worshippers is described as a state of being 'gathered' so that out of the diversity of the meeting unity is experienced. A 'gathered' meeting does not arise simply by individuals worshipping independently alongside each other. This sort of worship would be unlikely to achieve the 'greater depth' aimed at in a 'truly gathered meeting' which becomes 'fused into something bigger than the sum of the parts'.[419]

> As a meeting 'gathers', as each individual 'centres down', there gradually develops a feeling of belonging to a group who are together seeking a sense of the Presence. The 'I' in us begins to feel like 'we'. At some point – it may be early in the meeting or it may be later, or it may never occur at all – we suddenly feel a sense of unity, a sense of togetherness with one another and with that something outside ourselves that we call God.'[420]

The inner and outer listening are recognised parts of 'silent worship' but neither is the object of a command or rule. Rather, these aspects illustrate a Quaker practice and ethics that exists in the doing rather than in the believing. Rachel Muers in her theological exploration of Quaker ethics writes:

> …we have to pick up on the idea of 'not words but a way', and carry it through to its conclusion at least as far as Quakers do. We have not only to say that the primary form of response to God is in life and action but also to think through the implications of that idea for how both ethical reasoning and theology are done. To some extent, we have to avoid assuming that the ethical life of religious communities is

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[419] Thomas R. Bodine, 'Does punctuality matter?' *The Friend,* vol 138 (1980), 277, reproduced in *QF&P* (print edition), ¶2.47.
[420] Ibid.

about 'putting belief into practice' and consider instead the implications of 'putting practice into belief'.[421]

Similarly in her interpretation of the role of 'testimonies' Muers identifies their particularly social and interactional aspect in Quakerism:

> Like the dense summary formulations of the creeds, they demand thought, application, debate and development over time. They are obviously and necessarily incomplete without interpretation, the interpretation that comes from individual and collective action and reflection. Looked at as aspects of a person's or a community's life, they set out not a closely specified plan for interacting with the world but a way of orienting oneself to the world, a set of habits or dispositions.[422]

Anthropologist Peter Collins' investigation of habitus in Quakerism concludes that over time individuals 'rewrite' or reimagine their motivations in line with Quaker ways of thinking. [423] Given the fact that most Quakers today become Quakers as adults this 'habitus' model appears a sound model to explain the acquisition of Quaker 'orthopraxy' and induction in Quaker testimony. The following diagram sets out the discernment of a Quaker concern in a model of a proposed ethical habitus:

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[421] Muers. *Testimony*, loc., 108-112 of 4070.

[422] Ibid., loc., 474.

[423] Peter Collins, 'Habitus and the Storied Self: Religious Faith and Practice as a Dynamic Means of Consolidating Identities', *Culture and Religion* 3, (2002):147–61; Peter Collins, 'The Problem of Quaker Identity', *Quaker Studies* 13, no.2 (2009):205-219; Peter Collins and Pink Dandelion, 'Transition as Normative: British Quakerism as Liquid Religion', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29, no.2, (2014):287-301, doi: 10.1080/13537903.2014.903663.
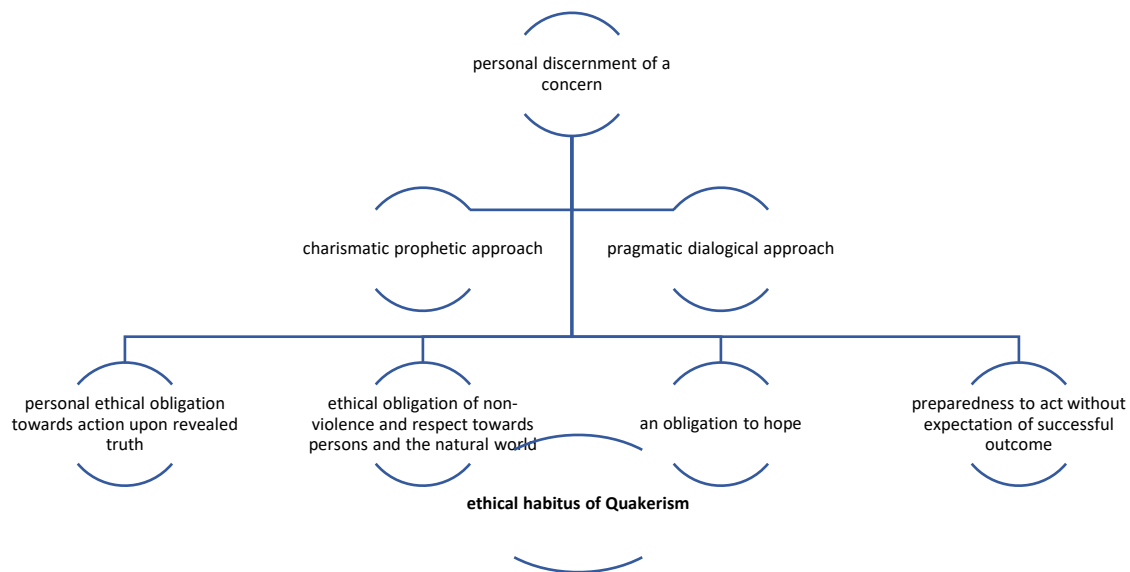
Figure 4 The context of Quaker concern within the ethical habitus of Quakerism

The prophetic and dialogical approaches are not behavioural or creedal obligations imposed by the Book of Discipline, they are practices, with authoritative status as ways of 'acting under concern'. The habitus of Quakerism provides the ethical ground in which both approaches operate. Discernment of concern is placed apart to indicate that this can occur either within or without the community, and before membership. The charismatic Prophetic approach is associated with that 'wild' democracy envisaged by Abensour, best imagined in the boldness, almost carelessness of self required to 'speak truth to power'. The dialogical is fundamentally other-centred, examined in greater detail below. The four obligations are implied by Quaker testimonies. From left to right: the ethical obligation to act, is embedded in the testimony to integrity; respect towards others and nature is implicit in all the testimonies, but perhaps most obviously in the testimonies to peace and sustainability; the obligation to hope arises with the prophetic sense of the experiential revelation of truth through time. To work without expectation of success when the *rightness* of a concern (such as peace, or equality) is recognised but there is no guarantee or clear path to its ultimate achievement is implied by a

conjunction of the testimony to integrity with an obligation to hope. It is suggested that theist and nontheist Quakers can coalesce around these interwoven ethical strands to form a peaceable uncoerced unity. Conflict cannot be excluded but is likely to be mediated within the ethical habitus. Ultimately corporate discernment may take a number of factors into account that limits the duty to act for pragmatic reasons, including capacity for action and its impact on other concerns.[424] Importantly the habitus does not prevent the emergence of 'new' and perhaps controversial truth from being discerned and published. Many Quakers join as adults and their discernment may have preceded joining or taken place outside the meeting house, illustrating the liminal nature of Quaker habitus and concern. Interviewee (P) realised years later that their open homosexuality had been a challenge to their meeting, and in retrospect felt it had been their concern in keeping with the testimony to integrity: 'one of my concerns has been that you change human beings ... your integrity as a human being changes other human beings'.

The prophetic and dialogical approaches may be more or less attractive to the individual, but they are not mutually exclusive. The need for both approaches is recognised by Quakers but has not been fully theorised. Whichever approach is taken Quakers are encouraged to exercise their reason to evaluate their methods. In 'prepared ministry' at YMG 2017, QPSW's Steve Whiting who facilitates activism as part of QPSW's 'Turning the Tide' (TTT) team asked,

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[424] Illustrated in the decision by MfS not to take up a concern over 'what Friends can offer in a "post-truth'"world'. Elinor Smallman, 'Meeting for Sufferings: What can Friends offer in a "post-truth" world?' Feb 7, 2019, *The Friend,* https://thefriend.org/article/meeting-for-sufferings-what-can-friends-offer-in-a-post-truth-world.

when those in power do not wish to listen or already know the truth but it does not serve them to respond to it, how should Quakers react? Whiting relied on both Noam Chomsky and Biblical references to argue for 'tying up the strong man' and 'robbing his house' in order to 'turn the tide' and 'change the power'. Whiting suggests Friends must bring their heads to the task of being not only 'gentle as doves' but 'as wise as serpents' indicating a clear acceptance of the need for rational instrumental thinking to determine effective (peaceful) methods to achieve political goals.[425] This instrumentality however would be mediated and restrained by the core ethical habitus of Quakerism.

An elective affinity between Martin Buber's dialogical theology and the Quaker 'that of God'

A key theme to emerge from the interviews is the centrality of interpersonal ethics for Quakers acting under concern. Martin Buber's dialogical theology, and Rachel Muers' contemporary reading of Quaker-Christian ethics offer relevant models. Although the application of Muers thought may appear quite in keeping with this study – she is a Quaker theologian engaging with a Christian theological tradition, some explanation is required to address why it is appropriate to apply Martin Buber's theology in the context of British Quakerism.

There are several Pendle Hill pamphlets by, about, or referencing Martin Buber: *Dialogue with the Other: Martin Buber and the Quaker Experience* by Janet Schroeder Pendle Hill Pamphlet

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[425] Quakers in Britain YouTube, 'Steve Whiting – Head: Speaking truth to power – Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017'. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QRgEFL0Biob

#192 (1973); *The Modern Promethean: A Dialogue with Today's Youth* by Maurice Friedman Pendle Hill Pamphlet #168 (1969); *The Covenant of Peace: A Personal Witness by Maurice Friedman*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #110 (1961); *The Way of Man According to the Teachings of Hasidism* by Martin Buber, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #106 (1960). Many Quaker meeting houses have libraries that stock Pendle Hill Pamphlets. They are an established source for Quakers exploring their Quakerism. The Friends bookshop stocks the series and makes it available at Yearly Meeting Gatherings, observed by the writer at YMG 2017. The bookshop is located in Friends' House at Euston where Yearly Meetings are held.

Michael Löwy notes that a number of Jewish theorists of the early 20th century including Martin Buber, made conscious connections between; Christian theology, Jewish Messianism, 'end-times' theory, radical Marxism, and anarchist, revolutionary theory.[426] Löwy notes the interest in Christian teaching among the Jewish intellectuals of the period of his study, focusing on a group of mostly German Jewish intellectuals born in the last quarter of the 19th century. For Löwy the term 'elective affinities' (*Wahlvervandtschaften*), was a helpful conceptual term for drawing the connections between the Jewish Messianic and anarcho-socialist traditions in the work of the intellectuals in his study.[427] This connective concept is also helpful in both understanding the relevance of Buber's dialogical theology for Quakerism

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[426] Löwy, *Redemption.* Löwy examines the generation born in the last quarter of the 19th century; Gustav Landauer, Franz Kafka, Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin and Georg Lukács, Leo Löwenthal, Ernst Bloch and Erich Fromm.
[427] Löwy *Redemption,* 6-13.

and for the affinity between contemporary Quakerism and radical politics. Löwy identifies four levels or degrees of elective affinity:

1. A 'simply affinity: a spiritual relationship, a structural homology…a correspondence'[428] [a static possibility that creates no necessity for convergence]

2. The *election* 'reciprocal attraction and active mutual choice of the two socio-cultural configurations…mutual stimulation and convergence'[429] [dynamic but separate structures]

3. 'various modalities of union' 'cultural symbiosis' or partial or total 'fusion'

4. The creation through fusion of 'a new figure'[430]

The affinity between Buber's theology and Quakerism fits best stages 1 or 2 of this schema, but the relation between Quakerism and radical libertarian and utopian politics addressed in subsequent chapters appears closer to 'cultural symbiosis'.

For Martin Buber, the crowd, the world and relation with Others is the location where the individual has relation with God, through a communally shared life. In *Ich-Du* Buber states 'in each *Thou* we address the eternal *Thou'.*[431] Buber contrasts this primal relation of *I-Thou* to that of *I-it* in which much day to day life is lived –not dissimilar to Augustine's realm of *uti* – the realm where things have their uses. Influenced by Kant and Herman Cohen, Buber adopts the imperative never to use another only as a means but also as an end in him or herself: 'If I

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428 Ibid.,11.
429 Ibid.
430 Ibid.
431 Martin Buber, *I and Thou.* Trans. Ronald Gregor-Smith. 2nd Ed. (n.p.:Charles Scribner's Sons. ([1923],1958, 1986) Kindle loc.177

face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I–Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things.'[432] Love is an aspect of this relation but not merely reduced to 'affect' or only feeling because '[l]ove is responsibility of an I for a Thou'.[433] Unlike the responsibility to reply when addressed by the transcendent, according to Buber, in the dialogic there is no imperative upon the person who is in the position of *Thou* to respond. In dialogical relations, a response cannot be demanded from the Other: 'It is not that you [as Other] *are* to answer but that you *are able*.'[434] For Kierkegaard the horror of the crowd/das Man, is its capacity for un-freedom, turning a man into a stick stuck in a bundle drawn through a stream.[435] For Buber the crowd while it *can* produce this condition, is nevertheless also where the Single One should find herself best able to experience freedom.[436] Buber's solution to the dampening effect of the crowd of 'untruth' is to instantiate relations with all others in that crowd in an *I-Thou* relation. The significance of 'the world' in Buber as the location where the religious experience is best realised has clear affinities with the Quaker view of 'living out faith in the world'.[437]

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[432] Ibid. loc.199.

[433] Ibid.loc.288

[434] Martin Buber *'*Section Three: Confirmation: Conversation with the opponent,' *Between Man and Man,* trans. Ronald Gregor-Smith, (London, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis e-library, [1947] 2004), 40.

[435] Buber, *Between,* 74

[436] Ibid.,76

[437] 'Yearly Meeting Focuses on Living out Quaker Faith' April 15, 2016, https://www.quaker. org.uk/news-and-events/news/yearly-meeting-to-focus-on-living-out-our-faith; 'How we act as Quakers goes together with what we believe' Accessed June 2020, https://www.quaker.org.uk/about-quakers/our-values.

Stuart Masters, makes this connection between the focus in both Judaism and Quakerism upon the demonstration of faith through a way of life, without a 'catalogue' of essential beliefs, and instead being focused upon 'deeds': 'Judaism and Quakerism have tended to be much more oriented to this life and world. The afterlife is of relatively minor importance in both faiths. The key concern is living God's way here and now.'[438]

A number of significant parallels have been drawn between Buber's theory of the *I-thou* relation and the theological implications of the Quaker view that there is 'that of God' in every-one. A theological stance that suggests an ethics of interpersonal relations recognises in the Other a person to be treated with a respect for their autonomy and perhaps with equivalent attention due to God. Among the interviewees three agreed a possible connection.

> I find God within, both in other human beings and in silence by myself …that leads me to a sense of how you treat other people…there's a divine quality in human life (P).
>
> I have real difficulty with seeing the God, seeing God in everyone…I think there's a *potential* for…goodness and the divine in us (D).
>
> I don't associate with words like 'God'…in terms of there being a spark of light and truth and goodness the capacity for good….it …reminds me to treat other people with respect even if I don't agree with them (E).

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[438] Stuart Masters, 'Abraham's Offering, Heirs According to the Promise' – The Quaker Way and the Gift of the Jewish People', 6 August 2016, http://aquakerstew.blogspot.co.uk/2016_08_01_archive.html .

It appears 'that of God' requires an attitude of openness towards others. In her Pendle Hill

pamphlet, which is an anecdotal piece of speculative thought, Janet E. Schroeder explored

some ways in which the Quaker approach to faith approximated that of Buber.

> What characterizes the I-Thou, as Buber explains it, is a readiness to
> meet the other, and accept him just as he is. You cannot really care
> for the other person until you can see from his side. This requires a
> genuine meeting of the other and standing your ground.
>
> …Buber makes a distinction between 'identifying' with the other, and
> 'imagining the real' in the other, which involves 'distancing' and does
> not imply being taken up into, or losing one's own identity in the
> other. One maintains the 'uniqueness' that is one's own.[439]

John MacMurray, a theologian who became a Quaker later in life, cited Buber as a theologian

whose thoughts (at least in relation to Kierkegaard) reflected his own.[440] MacMurray's most

important work is in the philosophy of education. His emphasis on the purpose of education

as first and foremost 'learning to be human'[441], is embedded in his educational theory and is

a broad theory of interpersonal relation:

> MacMurray (1956, 1960, 1961, 2012) suggests that people first live as
> *individuals* rather than as *persons*. Individuals are characterised by
> their dependence on others and by their egocentricity. In contrast,
> persons are characterised by their capacity to live in interdependent
> relation with others as well as their ability to focus upon what is other
> than them, and in particular, other persons[442]

Compare this with the following extract from Buber:

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[439] Janet E. Schroeder, *Dialogue with the Other: Martin Buber and the Quaker Experience*
(Wallingford: Pendle Hill Press, e-book Quaker Heron Press, 1973, 2014) loc.,383-398.
[440] John MacMurray, *Search for Reality in Religion,* Swarthmore Lecture 1965, (London: George Allen
& Unwin, 1965), 24.
[441] James Macallister, 'Education for Personal Life: John MacMurray on Why Learning to be Human
Requires Emotional Discipline', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 48, no.1, (2014): 118-136.
[442] Ibid.,121.

> Individuality makes its appearance by being differentiated from other individualities. A person makes his appearance by entering into relation with other persons. The one is the spiritual form of natural detachment, the other the spiritual form of natural solidarity of connexion.[443]

The echo of the *I-thou* relation is evident. In his Swarthmore lecture MacMurray's search for 'reality' in religion leads him to criticize the Idealism that came into Christianity through neo-Platonism and expresses 'grave doubts' whether 'idealism, in any form, is compatible with religion'.[444] He then criticizes the influence on Christianity of the conversion of the Roman empire which created a Church-Power-State nexus which, combined with the 'idealism' of Greek thought, ultimately led to a turning away from the world. For MacMurray this led Christianity into essential errors and created an open door for a Christianity of 'other worldliness', which he criticises stating 'Christianity is not for the sake of the Christians but *for the sake of the world'*.[445] Endorsing the centrality of community to religion MacMurray concludes by trying to understand what the Quakerism he had 'joined' represented, and while acknowledging its disavowal of creed and dogma, he nevertheless stated it should not be defined by an absence but represented by lived experience and praxis. A Christian Quaker MacMurray concluded that without '…the acceptance of an established creed or the assent to an authoritative system of doctrine…'

> [Faith] recovers its original meaning of trust and fearless confidence; and this spirit of faith is expressed in a way of living which cares for one another and for the needs of all men. Our Christianity is a practical

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[443] Buber, *I and Thou,* loc.857-859.
[444] MacMurray, *Search,* 59.
[445] Ibid.,64.

discipleship of Jesus in all the relationships of daily life. Our witness against slavery and war; our activities of social service at home and abroad are large-scale public manifestations of this spirit, by which the world judges the meaning and character of our religion.[446]

While the centrality of the 'discipleship of Jesus' is less evident today, there is the same relation between faith, ethics and action MacMurray envisaged. The connection between religion and ethical action in the world is underlined by Harvey Gillman in an extract reproduced in QFP, in which he stresses that there needs to be a connection between the religious and lived experience, found through 'openess to the world in the here and now with the whole of the self' and 'our attitudes to other human beings in our most intimate as well as social and political relationships'.

It must also take account of our life in the world around us, the way we live, the way we treat animals and the environment. In short, to put it in traditional language, there is no part of ourselves and of our relationships where God is not present.[447]

Gillman has written a number of times on the interrelation of Judaism and Quakerism. Below are extracts from his articles published in *The Friend* discussing Buber's theology.

Modern Jewish thinkers, like Martin Buber with his writings on the I – Thou experience, Emmanuel Levinas with his concept of finding God in the face of the 'other', and the wonderful Etty Hillesum who died in Auschwitz, have much to teach Friends today about answering that of God in the other, in the most desperate circumstances.[448]

Do we live in expectation of transformation? I would reply with Martin Buber: every true encounter is a revelation of the divine; every act

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[446] ibid.
[447] Harvey Gillman, *A light that is shining: an introduction to the Quakers,* 1988, 5, 2nd ed. 1997, 12 reproduced at *QF&P* (print edition), ¶20.20.
[448] Harvey Gillman, 'Quakers and Jews', *The Friend,* 25 November 2009. Available at: https://thefriend.org/article/quakers-and-jews.

potentially an act of redemption – not in a hoped for future, but in the here and now.[449]

 (How wise are the Jews who refuse to use the word God except in prayer and Martin Buber who wrote that the only real name for the divine is Thou!)
I am a person hence I express relationship in personal terms, but I do not assume that the divine is personal – nor yet impersonal. Thus, I am neither theist nor nontheist (or am I both at the same time?). As I stress relationship over definition, I am not an –ist, for I will not define myself either. I do not seek to possess mental knowledge of the divine, as if one could; rather I want to be in communion through the whole of self and through others on this journey.[450]

A critical connection is drawn from what Buber says in relation to the 'conversation with God' which is not above and beyond the every day. One of the main aspects of Quakerism, is the belief that faith, or ethical life, is not something for discussion and theorizing per se, but for the doing.[451] It is likewise not a way of being in a specific sacred space or in a specific time but present all the time. In 1923 Buber could see in modernity a latent crisis for a faith founded upon the idea of the interpersonal relation. This danger was the expansion of the world of *I-it*.

The history of the individual and that of the human race, in whatever they may continually part company, agree at least in this one respect, that they indicate a progressive augmentation of the world of It.[452]

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[449] Harvey Gillman, 'Words: Transformation, redemption, salvation' *The Friend, 30* October 2014. Available at: https://thefriend.org/article/words-transformation-redemption-salvation.
[450] Harvey Gillman, 'Called to be poets' *The Friend,* 31 July 2014. Available at: https://the friend.org/article/called-to-be-poets.
[451] Similar in thought to Marx's observation in the *Theses on Feuerbach* XI – while philosophy offers only interpretation, change requires action: Karl Marx, 'The Theses on Feuerbach', trans. W.Lough, (Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers,[1845] 1969; Marx/Engels Internet Archive 1995, 1999, 2002), https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm.
[452] Buber, *I and Thou*, loc.534-535.

Hence, in general, the world of objects in every culture is more extensive than that of its predecessor. Despite sundry stoppages and apparent retrogressions the progressive augmentation of the world of It is to be clearly discerned in history.[453]

Buber wrote that *true* relation in community could only come where mankind turned first to the centre to have relation with God first.[454] Only through that relation is the 'I' enabled to have relations with others. This is problematic under the conditions of modern British Quakerism where theists and nontheists sit side by side. Nevertheless – the centrality of community as revealed in the interviews for this study and the philosophical (if not sociological) diversity of contemporary British Quakers, suggests that their 'centre' can be viewed as the meeting itself and the space where communal discernment occurs. This interpretation sees in the Meeting the ethical impetus for the community to save the world by upholding one another, as a powerful point of contact between theist and nontheists in contemporary Quakerism, regardless of whether they share an image of God and faith at the centre or not.

In Buber, as Michael Theunissen notes, the answer to where the I-Thou originates is the 'originality of the between' where 'there remains no I any more that could precede the meeting' and for Theunissen this suggests a point of connection between a transcendental

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[453] Ibid., loc.545-546.

[454] *I and Thou,* Part Three and Postscript. This is emphasised by Maurice Friedman arguing against the view of Buber as an essentially secular writer: Maurice Friedman, 'On the Suspension of the Ethical' in *My Friendship with Martin Buber,* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 22-34, 26-7.

philosophy (Husserl, and Heidegger) and a dialogical (Buber, Ehrenberg, Rosenstock-Heussy).[455] Theunissen suggests that from Buber's thought, a transcendental philosophy of subjectivity emerges. It creates a human telos between the 'beginning' of 'my individual I' and the 'goal' – 'the self that proceeds from the meeting'.[456] This thought may be of assistance to nontheist Quakers seeking a concept of their relation to their community, and for theist Quakers seeking to understand the nature of the 'gathered' meeting. It also suggests a series of potentially conflicting 'responsibilities' towards one another.

For Emmanuel Levinas, human ethics, arises from *proximity* and the arrival of the '*tiers*' – the third party.[457] This third party requires the institution of justice and the State to provide adjudication between potentially conflicting ethical demands between persons. When Levinas introduces his 'third' person into proximity he suggests this does not displace the centrality of the two, but rather in the fashion of the interviewee speaking of the 'augmentation' of a concern by many contributors Levinas sees no 'degeneration of the one for the other', no diminution in 'anarchic responsibility'.[458] For Abensour the occurrence of interpersonal ethics is Levinas's justification for the foundation of the State. It comes into existence to limit the otherwise infinite duty to the other in order to do 'justice' between persons, which, Abensour points out, is a rejection of the founding premise of the Hobbesian

[455] Michael Theunissen, *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Buber,* trans. Christopher Macann (Cambridge, Mass., London: The MIT Press, 1986),366.
[456] Ibid.,367.
[457] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*,157-167.
[458] Ibid.,159.

state in which there is need for security in a violent 'State of nature' – a relentless war of all against all.[459]

> …the contemporaneousness of the multiple is tied about the diachrony of two: justice remains justice only, in a society where there is no distinction between those close and those far off, but in which there also remains the impossibility of passing by the closest. … It is then not without importance to know if the egalitarian and just State in which man is fulfilled … proceeds from a war of all against all, or from the irreducible responsibility of the one for all and if it can do without friendships and faces.[460]

If a 'self' proceeds from the meeting with the other, and Quakerism demands that all are approached equally in the 'I-Thou' relation then membership of a community in which each member at least attempts this ideal suggests a particular form of community that values both equality and diversity. It would then not only be 'ortho-praxy' and/or 'orthocredence' that unites Quakers, but a phenomenological condition that creates an obligation to the aims and intentions of each (non-identical) other. It cannot be stressed enough that this is not a set of community relations and obligations that 'trump' obligation to those not within the community, although they may be exercised more frequently between members because encountered through repetitive meeting. There is no hedge, that could be planted around such a community, only a free flow of membership and departure. The difference is in intensity of relation rather than in a unifying conceptual construct such as race, or nation.

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[459] Miguel Abensour, 'L'extravagante hypothèse' in *Pour une philosophie politique critique,* (Paris: Sens&Tonka, [2006], 2009),363-400.
[460] Levinas, *Otherwise,* 159-60.

The permeability of the Quaker community necessary for this extraordinary set of relations is indicated, largely *silently.* It is tacit in their inconsistent and occasional use of the term Ffriend, or Ffriendship. The Capital 'F' signifying those in Membership, the 'f' it seems, almost everyone else, but in particular Attenders and others with whom Friends work in concert. This small neologism indicates in a characteristically laconic fashion Quakerism's inclusivity and regular commerce with those outside their Society. It also indicates something about the nature of Quaker community, as an organism constructed both through and around but not confined to its formal Meetings for worship. The 'meetings' of Quakerism are themselves not confined to the Meeting House and are not merely bureaucratic but occur wherever the ethical habitus extends.

Quaker compassionate solidarity. How great is the demand of the Other?

In *Testimony,* Rachel Muers examines the legacy of 'compassionate solidarity' of early Quaker martyrs, James Naylor (1618-1660) and Mary Dyer (1611-1660).[461] She recounts the experience of Abdul Kamara, founder of the West African Quaker Peace Network. Muers recognises in his refusal to take part in the revenge killing of the member of an armed group responsible for his torture and the rape of his sister a *compassionate solidarity* – which Muers identifies as 'an extremely costly form of witness'.[462] The theological element with which she associates this action is the injunction on Quakers to 'answer that of God' in every one. In her chapter titled 'Religious Freedom and Solidarity: Quaker Martyrs and their Communities'

[461] Muers, *Testimony,* loc.2698 of 4070
[462] Ibid., loc.2701

she begins with a consideration of the lives and (martyred) deaths of seminal figures, Nayler

and Dyer. For Muers Dyer's martyrdom can be read as not only as a cry to 'publish the truth'

but equally as resistance to the 'persecuting spirit' in religious and political life – against the

demand for order at the expense of patience and charity, and against the fearful protection

of group privilege.'[463]

For Muers religious and ultimately Christian Quaker acts are not reducible to 'work', nor

theology to 'ethics and politics'. Nevertheless, it is suggested here that ethics, politics and

religion can without too great a distortion be reduced to how individuals 'live and act'. In the

case of Mary Dyer hanged in Boston in 1660, the words of one of her judges, which were

presumably originally intended as threatening, became positively emblematic for Quakers:

'She did hang as a flag for others to take example by'. Attributed to a member of the Boston

General Court in a Quaker account of Dyer's execution.[464] Muers, interprets the impact on

Dyer of the Quaker theology of 'that of God' in everyone in the following:

> [Dyer] has good reason to try to communicate with the people who
> make and enforce the laws – not because they are good, reasonable
> or nice people but because they are, individually and collectively,
> already within the scope of God's presence and work; testimony can
> 'answer that of god' in them. … The 'true witness of God' in *her*
> conscience and that of her companions is how they see what is going
> on and respond with compassion and solidarity; obedience to God is

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[463] Ibid., loc.2569 of 4070.

[464] Edward Burrough, 'A Declaration of the Sad and Great Persecution and Martyrdom […] (1661)'
Electronic Texts in American Studies 23, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska) https://digitalcommons.
unl.edu/etas/23; Joseph Besse, *A collection of the sufferings of the people called Quakers,* 1753,
vol.2, 206-207 and George Fox, *Journal,* ed. J.L.Nickalls, 1952, 48 (entry for 1649), 107 (entry for
1652), 237 (entry for 1656) cited at *QF&P* (print edition), ¶19.18; Muers, *Testimony,* loc.2477 of
4070.

inseperable from reading the world truthfully and responding to its calls and needs.[465]

This suggests that it is the universal existence of (or potential for) a God created 'conscience' in all that demanded development of the dialogical Quaker approach even towards those with whom one is in dangerous conflict. In her contemporary example, Abdul Kamara worked closely with ex-combatants including those responsible for attacking his family. Unsurprisingly, his actions created enormous family tension. His mother dubbed him 'a disgrace'.

> I found myself not knowing what to do, whether to continue with my conviction to build peace, or to do what my mother said. Thank God I did what my conviction asked me to do.[466]

For Muers 'compassionate solidarity' asks the Quaker 'witness' to respond to that of God in the other, even in the most extreme cases and these extremes she herself seemingly 'hangs as flags' illustrating the final logic of Quaker theology. It suggests a form of ultimate *fraternité,* that operates towards the enemy with equal generosity as might be expected towards the tortured self, or raped sister or the anguished mother. Clearly the extremity of this Quaker example provokes some questions. It seems equivocal - open to admiration and horror in the same degree, however for the purpose of the argument here, it puts down a marker for where the inclusivity of a Quaker interpersonal ethics extends at its most extreme limit. It shows a preparedness for sacrifice, elevating the Other above the self to an exceptional degree.

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[465] Muers, *Testimony*, loc. 2632 of 4070.

[466] Abdul Kamara, *This Light That Pushes Me: Stories of African Peace Builders* (London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 2014), 34, quoted in Muers, *Testimony,* loc.2699 of 4070.

Although it equally reveals in stark form the critique that Levinas offers by the introduction of his 'third' to the dialogical construct.[467] With the 'third party' comes the need for law to adjudicate between the otherwise incommensurable demands of Other(s).

In the interviews the ability to filter out the desire for 'revenge' or other directed violence is notable as an aspect of Quakers acting under concern. Consider these comments by participants in interviews:

> I suppose it's because of my own background and my own convictions that somehow there has to be this recognition of 'that of God' within all sides, even the oppressors as well as the oppressed (B)

> and I think we went on…a non-violent Quaker witness outside an arms fair…and one of the things that was interesting about that was…it was *very* Quakerly - it was very calm and middle class and lovely but…there was other groups who were non Quakers…a group which came and were much more verbally abusive of people going into the arms fair…and some of the Quakers reacted very negatively to that and said 'We must pull away' and some of us said 'Okay, well let's just at least have some conversations'(L).

(L) observed the challenge to Quakers of those who turn to violence and refering to Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted how although a pacifist Bonhoeffer 'ended up' in an assassination attempt of Hitler. This provoked a self questioning and need to confront difficult questions.

> I want to be in that tension ground where we're pro peace but actually that doesn't mean we sit on the comfortable side of

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[467] Levinas, *Otherwise,* 157. I am grateful to Josh Lawes for our discussion of Levinas' ethics following his presentation on Levinas at the University of Sussex Philosophy PhD research lunch on Tuesday 5th Feb 2020.

things necessarily...are we willing to have difficult conversations and are we willing to build coalitions with people who are going to do stuff which we aren't comfortable with but actually are in the same cause?

The theological importance of 'that of God in everyone' is mentioned only by one interviewee directly but although it is not directly cited by others the ethical obligation of respect of the other is implicit in the approach of these contemporary British Quaker activists. If this is an example of a Buberian or even Levinasian ethical relation, situated before the 'face' of the other, then to try to understand this in terms of a theist Quaker approach, (not specifically Christian or Buberian although strongly suggested), the Divine in the other calls for elevation from the perspective of the person who would sacrifice themselves for the other's sake. Jeffrey Dudiak suggests Levinasian ethics proposes that when two paradigmatically opposed positions meet in two people, the solution is not greater *logos,* more rationality, but 'that I be "more good"' offering per Levinas a 'non-allergic ethical relationship with the other.'[468]

There were two interviewees who acknowledged they were not pacifists, who believed that in some circumstances it was necessary to engage in open war. Both were aware of the difficulty this poses for Quakerism and were aware of the historical precedents when some Quakers did fight: against slavery, or against the British in the American war of Independence and subsequently in the first or second world wars. They were aware their position is not a generally accepted Quaker view. Their position however does not offer support for Carl

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[468] Jeffrey Dudiak, *The Intrigue of Ethics: A Reading of the Idea of Discourse in the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,* Fordham University Press, 2001), xii, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0500.12.

Schmitt's assertion of a certain psychological naturalism in the Friend/Foe duality based as it was for Schmitt on the 'essentially' 'different' 'other' 'alien' 'so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible'.[469] Schmitt claims the Friend/Enemy distinction is consonant with Matt.5:44 and Luke 6:27 which enjoins 'love of your neighbour' because it only applies in the political sphere rather than the private, which is the only sphere in which the injunction to 'love one's enemy' makes sense to Schmitt. The traditional Quaker understanding of Friendship and *Ffriendship* entirely rejects this reading. Here the statement to Charles II is clear: 'All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever'… [so that] … 'all people, out of all different judgments and professions might be brought into love and unity with God and one with another, and that they might all come to witness the prophet's words, who said, 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Is 2:4; Mic 4:3).'[470] From this it is clear early Quakers did not distinguish the private and the public in the way Schmitt envisaged, nor have Quakers corporately changed their testimony, however diverse individual Quaker views are on pacifism.

> these are *really really* difficult issues I cannot condone monstrous movement, for whatever reason they came into being and so on I cannot just 'turn the other cheek' when it comes to that, I have to take up arms…because *it is* an existential threat not just to me but to *so* many people,…so when you've got something that is as perverse and as evil as these people had become [*speaking of the Nazis*] and I can't understand how some of these people went home to their families,

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[469] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* trans. George Schwab, (Chicago, London: University of Schicago Press, [1932] 1996,2007),27.

[470] From *A declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God called Quakers, against all plotters and fighters in the world,* 1660, 1-3 reproduced at *QF&P* (print edition), ¶24.04. In *QF&P* (print edition), 'Sources and References' it is noted: '[t]he extract as printed is considerably abridged and omissions are not indicated in the text', 648.

were good fathers and so on and (laughing with disbelief) family members and…yet could turn around and go to the camps treat people in such a bestial way… not even animals, you know animals don't normally do that (R).

In spite of this passionate expression of horror at human behaviour during the holocaust, and the thought that an 'existential' threat must be fought through armed conflict this interviewee neverthelesss celebrated the capacity for those with strong moral authority to set an agenda of peace. The 'extraordinary' authority of Nelson Mandela and others like him looking for 'a peaceful way forward' in South Africa averted a potential 'bloodbath', revealing the influence those with moral standing could have (R).

For some contemporary Quakers, the religious language of concern is problematic. it is difficult to comprehend concern in the context of the evolving and loosening of Quaker concepts of God and to conclude how God, (whoever or whatever Quakers mean by that term) is supposed to direct and intervene in Quaker decision making. This is reflected in the interviews:

> particularly if you don't use the word God - like I don't - if you're struggling with the language anyway - it's quite easy to see the passages that refer to concerns in *Quaker Faith and Practice* as quite - erm - (sighs) what's the word - is it - erm - (sighs) not exactly off-putting.. *restraining.* (E)

Yet it is clear dialogue is at the heart of the activism of participants in this research and part of the motivation towards dialogue is informed by the theological observation made by Fox that there is 'that of God' in everyone, or for nontheist Quakers perhaps the phrase might be offered as 'that of truth' in everyone.

Where, as will be explored further below, Quaker *Ffriendship* has the cast of universal *fraternité* and dialogue, then peaceableness towards the other follows, even the enemy. Indeed dialogue happens with others inside movements as much as with those outside as is clear from the comments of (L) above. In this sense *Ffriendship* can be regarded as exceeding the boundaries of those closed groups of members and attenders within the Quaker movement and the term *Ffriend* might be regarded as a universal Quaker designation for all others, at least potentially if not always in fact. This willingness to encompass the 'enemy' as potential *Ffriend* offers evidence for the claim that Quakerism accepts the non-identity of individuals in their community and is nevertheless able to unite with them through recognition of their autonomy and capacity for conscience, 'revelation', and the discernment of 'truth'. So far the study has broadly covered the social and political context of the study, including the Quaker ethical habitus and the contributions of interviewees. The next chapter examines the Quaker example as it appears in liberal political philosophy.

Chapter 5: Quaker discernment, deliberative democracy and political liberalism

A number of key features of contemporary Quakerism relevant to social and political thought have been established to this point:

- British Quakers have a history in the 20th and 21st centuries of supporting causes that reflect a broadly radical or green political agenda (Chapter 1).

- Contemporary Quakers value community; their political activism under concern is both an individual and a communal undertaking (Chapters 1 and 2).

- Quakerism in seeking unity in decision-making has an affinity with the republican tradition; mild epistemic scepticism and a normative habitus of interpersonal ethics strongly informed by its theological heritage reduce the risks of coercive unity (Ch.3 and 4).

This chapter picks up the thread of Quakerism's connections with and distance from political liberalism and considers the difficulty for liberal democracy of revelatory discernment as justification in a diverse society. It explores the reasons why liberal theory finds the incorporation of narratives of 'truth', particularly those from religious traditions, difficult to assimilate and addresses the utopic nature of Quaker discernment explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters. Quakerism attracts criticism from those who regard religious experience as unable to satisfy a requirement for rationality in the giving of reasons in the public sphere. For some this might present an insuperable problem and void their religiously discerned 'goods' when Quakers seek to promote these in wider British society. Additionally, those espousing 'truth' claims (not only religious ones) may be regarded as 'unreasonable' by liberals if they are intolerant towards 'truths' espoused by other religious and non-religious

groups in society.[471] This chapter considers these questions and how liberal political philosophers in the 20th and 21st centuries have considered the 'quaker example', to explore what their comments suggest about the relationship between Quakerism and political liberalism. First, some key features of deliberative democracy are considered.

Deliberative democracy and political liberalism

Deliberation is a key factor in effective democracy and the theoretical material on this is predominantly concerned with its role in legitimating the liberal State.[472] In the late 20th century, a crisis of legitimation was identified in liberal democracies. Jürgen Habermas's *Legitimation Crisis* addressed the structural effects of modernity and advanced capitalism in the public realm in part anticipated by Max Weber. These changes allowed 'administrative decisions to be made largely independently of specific motives of the citizens', operating 'through a legitimation process that elicits generalized motives – that is, diffuse mass loyalty – but avoids participation.'[473] Generally informed discourse in the public sphere outside of institutions declined in influence. For Habermas this leads to a democracy which enables '*prosperity without freedom* … no longer tied to political equality': 'Democracy no longer has the goal of rationalizing authority through the participation of citizens in discursive processes

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[471] For an overview of the 'inclusivist'/'exclusivist' debates prompted by John Rawls's political liberalism see the collected essays in Tom Bailey and Valentina Gentile, eds. *Rawls and Religion,* (New York, Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2015). See also, John Rawls, 'The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,' (1997) in Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* 440-490.

[472] See Elstaub and McLaverty's overview of deliberative democracy in political theory. Stephen Elstaub and Stephen McLaverty eds., *Deliberative Democracy: Issues and Cases,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014),1-16.

[473] Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Cambridge: Polity,[1973] 1976,1988),36.

of will formation. It is intended, instead, to make possible *compromises* between ruling

elites.'[474] This was viewed as creating both a democratic deficit and a legitimation crisis.

Theoretical developments in deliberative democracy occurred in the 1990s with interest

among political scientists examining potential mechanisms to bolster the legitimacy of the

liberal state.[475] The UK 'Brexit' referendum and Ireland's pilot citizens'

assemblies/referendums have prompted more recent studies.[476] Voters, to make the best

possible decisions in elections require at least a free press and a level of political education.

When 'public reason' appears incomprehensibly confused or lacking, questions are raised as

to the bases on which public judgement is made. In the wake of the Brexit referendum there

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[474]Ibid.,123-124.

[475] Paul J.Weithman, 'Contractualist Liberalism and Deliberative Democracy,' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24, no.4 (1995):314-343, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2961932; Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson 'Disagreeing about Deliberative Democracy,' *The Good Society* 7, no.3 (1997):11-15, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20710828; James S.Fishkin and Robert C.Luskin, 'The Quest for Deliberative Democracy,' *The Good Society* 9, no.1 (1999): 1, 4-9, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20710913. For a critical 'agonistic' view of the project of deliberative democracy see Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?' *Social Research* 66, no.3, (1999), 745- 758, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40971349.

[476] David M.Farrell et al., 'Deliberative Democracy in Action Irish-style: The 2011 *We the Citizens* Pilot Citizens' Assembly,' *Irish Political Studies* 28, no.1 (2013): 99-113, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2012.745274; Jane Suiter et al.,'When do deliberative citizens change their opinions? Evidence from the Irish Citizens' Assembly,' *International Political Science Review* 37, no.2 (2016):198-212, doi: 10.1177/0192512114544068; Johan A.Elkink et al., 'Understanding the 2015 marriage referendum in Ireland: context, campaign, and conservative Ireland,' *Irish Political Studies* 32, no.3 (2017):361-381, doi: 10. 1080/07907184.2016.1197209; Simon Susen 'No Exit from Brexit' in *Brexit: Sociological Responses* ed. William Outhwaite (London, New York: Anthem Press, 2017),153-182, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1kft8cd.15; Jonathan Hearn, 'Vox Populi: Nationalism, Globalization and the Balance of Power in The Making Of Brexit,' in *Brexit:Sociological Responses* ed. William Outhwaite (London, New York: Anthem Press, 2017), 19-30, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1kft8cd.5; Jane Suiter et al., 'La Première Convention Constitutionnelle Irlandaise (2013-2014): Un Dispositif Délibératif à Forte Légitimité?' *Participations* 1, no.23 (2019) :123-146, Cairn.info; David M.Farrell et al.,'"Systematizing" Constitutional Deliberation: the 2016–18 Citizens' Assembly in Ireland,' *Irish Political Studies* 34 no.1, (2019):113-123, https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2018.1534832.

were bad tempered exchanges over the Remainers' view of the 'uneducated' or 'duped' condition of Brexiteers, which did little to further discussion of the wider question of the quality of information available to the population and the political literacy needed to interpret it. Allegations were levelled that Brexiteers were less intelligent or less well-educated, or poor.[477] The information available to citizens, and political literacy however are not the only factors affecting the quality of decision making in liberal democracy. There is also a more precisely epistemic issue. Habermas, following Rawls, observes the 'Kantian concept of the citizens 'public use of reason' and the starting point of the discussion is the assumption that citizens in a democracy should offer each other reasons.'[478]

The liberal State is founded upon the separation of Church and State. It attempts neutrality between competing religious truth claims for the sake of stability in a society with plural interests. Political philosophers rightly identify a difficulty if decision-making by dint of its democratic element produces either irrational policy which is the product of faulty reasoning, or, offers reasons that could not be generally accepted, which could lead either to injustice, political instability or both. Religious reasons are a prime example of reasons that could fall into this category. The role of religious reasons in the liberal public sphere is therefore problematic.

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[477] Brendan O'Neill, 'Brexit voters are not thick, not racist: just poor,' *The Spectator,* July 2, 2016, https://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/07/brexit-voters-are-not-thick-not-racist-just-poor/ ; Matthew Weaver, 'Facts Support MP's claim that better-educated voted remain,' *Guardian,* 30 October 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/oct/30/facts-support-mps-claim-that-better-educated-voted-remain-pollster.
[478] Habermas, 'Reply', 371.

The 'quaker example' and the debate in liberal political philosophy on the role of religion in politics.

There is a continuum along which thinkers divide over the extent to which religious reasons may be given by citizens on constitutional issues, matters of justice, the use of coercive laws, and more generally in the liberal political sphere. Some limit the acceptance of religious reasons to restricted arenas. John Rawls argues that on constitutional issues, specifically the 'political conception' of the constitution and of 'justice as fairness', for the sake of 'unity and stability' there must be an 'overlapping consensus of *reasonable* comprehensive doctrines'[479] [italics added] : 'Only a political conception of justice that all citizens might be reasonably expected to endorse can serve as a basis of public reason and justification'.[480] Nicholas Wolterstorff identified this as an example of an epistemological restraint on the religious citizen participating in political debate in a liberal democracy.[481] Wolterstorff defined the liberal governmental 'ideal' in the following:

> Liberal democracy is that mode of governance that grants to all people within the territory of its governance equal protection under law, that grants to its citizens equal freedom in law to live out their lives as they see fit, and that requires of the state that it be neutral as among all the religions and comprehensive perspectives represented in society. Equal protection under law for all people, equal freedom in law for all citizens, and neutrality on the part of the state with respect to the

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[479] Rawls, *Political liberalism,* 133-134; see also Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues', in Robert Audi, and Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square : The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996), 69-110. ProQuest e-book. For an overview of the disagreement between Rawls and Habermas on this issue and the legacy of the exchange, see James Gordon Finlayson, 'Religion within the Bounds of Public Reason Alone', in *The Habermas-Rawls Debate*, (New York; Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2019), 213-42, doi:10.7312/finl16410.13.
[480] Rawls, Political Liberalism, 137.
[481] Wolterstorff, 'The Role of Religion', 76-78.

diversity of religions and comprehensive perspectives — those are the core ideas. Along with them is one immensely important addition: The governance of society is ultimately vested in the normal law-abiding adult citizens of society, and at the point of ultimate vesting, each such citizen has equal voice. Normally this voice is exercised by voting for office bearers and for options in referenda.[482]

This does not settle on what basis decisions should be made in the liberal democratic state. 'Comprehensive' religious or atheistic viewpoints shared by different individuals or groups can produce different and incompatible reasons for supporting one policy or another. What status religious viewpoints should have, given that one religious group may find the religious reasons of another unacceptable, and secular atheists, might find all religious reasons irrational or unreasonable is unsettled. In these debates Quakers have come to the attention of some of the most important political philosophers of recent years, notably, Nicholas Wolterstorff, John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. Each makes limited and diverse references to a version of the Quaker/quaker example.

Habermas's thought on this question has developed over a number of years.[483] Habermas recognised a legacy in his work from a Christian, even Quaker, ideal of 'communicative

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[482] Ibid.70.

[483] Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality, Essays on Reason, God and Modernity,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) Wiley Kindle; Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion,* trans. Brian McNeil, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005,2006); Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays,* trans. Ciaran Cronin, (Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, 2008); Judith Butler et al., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, (Chichester, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); see also, Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, *Habermas and Religion,* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013).

practice' in an interview with Eduardo Mendieta.[484]

> I would not object to the claim that my conception of language and of
> communicative action oriented toward mutual understanding
> nourishes itself from the legacy of Christianity. The 'telos of reaching
> understanding' – the concept of discursively directed agreement
> which measures itself against the standard of intersubjective
> recognition, that is, the double negation of criticizable validity claims
> – may well nourish itself from the heritage of a logos understood as
> Christian, one that is indeed embodied (and not just with the Quakers)
> in the communicative practice of the religious congregation.[485]

Habermas was careful to qualify this passing observation with a restatement that

'methodological atheism' was a necessity for any 'serious' philosophy, nevertheless it is an

acknowledgement that Quakers have a philosophically relevant 'communicative practice'.[486]

He has expressed the view that religious comprehensive doctrines are valuable to liberal

society:

> Religious traditions have a special power to articulate moral
> intuitions, especially with regard to vulnerable forms of communal
> life. In corresponding political debates, this potential makes religious
> speech into a serious vehicle for possible truth contents, which can be
> translated from the vocabulary of a particular religious community
> into a generally accessible language'.[487]

He added the requirement that they face a 'filter' before 'formal proceedings' in 'political

bodies'.[488] A significant issue that affects Habermas's desire to include religious experience in

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[484] Jürgen Habermas and Eduardo Mendieta ed. 'A Conversation about God and the World: Interview with Eduardo Mendieta' in *Religion and Rationality*, 147-167.
[485] Habermas and Mendieta 'A Conversation,' 160.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Jürgen Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere:Cognitive Suppositions for the Public Use of Reason', in *Between* Naturalism, 131.
[488] Ibid. For a longer analysis of Habermas's 'filter' argument see Finlayson chap.8.

deliberation in the public sphere while simultaneously excluding religious reasons from the political institutions, may be influenced by Habermas's view on how '[r]eligiously rooted existential convictions' are held.[489] Habermas assumes that for the religious citizen by dint of continuous exposure -

> certainties of faith are interconnected with fallible convictions of a secular nature; they have long since lost their purported immunity to the impositions of modern reflexivity...[490]

However he suggests it is more difficult for those with 'religiously rooted existential convictions' to be open to '*unreserved* discursive examination to which other ethical orientations and worldviews...are exposed' because they refer to the 'authority of an inviolable core of infallible truths'.[491] Habermas believes that while there is a 'necessary *institutional* separation between religion and politics', the liberal state cannot make demands upon religious individuals' that act as barriers or impose a '*mental and psychological* burden' upon them when engaging in the public sphere.[492] However these same citizens do need to recognise that 'political authority must be neutral towards competing worldviews' and that '[t]hey may express themselves in a religious idiom only on the condition that they recognize the institutional translation proviso'.[493] Any 'truth contents' derived from 'religious contributions' are only admissible 'when the necessary translation occurs...in the public sphere'.[494]

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[489] Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', 129
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Ibid.130
[493] Ibid.
[494] Ibid.131.

In *Political Liberalism*, John Rawls' imagined liberal polity is stabilised through the idea that citizens, whilst they may have widely differing 'comprehensive' doctrines for their lives incorporating their broad religious or other views, must as individual citizens, overlap upon the absolute minimum of 'the same public conception of justice' in order for the state to be stable and 'well-ordered'.[495] In the political sphere there would be the need for citizens to offer each other reasons that could be generally acceptable to all. Rawls restricts this realm of 'public reason' to judges, public officials and candidates for office.[496] However he applies an *ideal* moral duty of public reason beyond this frame to citizens who hold public officials to account.[497] While claiming that the reciprocal use of public reason by citizens imbued with 'civic friendship' does not prevent citizens holding to their comprehensive views, it is nonetheless incompatible with the promulgation of 'truth': '[p]olitical liberalism views this insistence on the whole truth in politics as incompatible with democratic citizenship and the idea of legitimate law'.[498] In similar fashion, Habermas suggests that '[r]eligious contributions have to be translated into a generally accessible language…before their content can enter into the deliberations that make legally binding decisions',[499] and should not cross the liberal institutional threshold unless they have met the 'institutional translation proviso'.[500]

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[495] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 38-39.
[496] Rawls, 'The Idea', 443
[497] Ibid.,444-445.
[498] Ibid.,447.
[499] Jürgen Habermas, 'Reply to my Critics', in *Habermas and Religion,* Ciaran Cronin trans. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., (Cambridge, Malden: Polity, 2013),371.
[500] Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere',130.

Both Rawls and Habermas respond to Wolterstorff and Audi on the role of religion in the liberal state.[501] Audi, a secular liberal, suggests a religious person as citizen of a liberal state has additional epistemic obligations of civic virtue in respect of political debates proposing the introduction of coercive laws or policies. Audi largely endorses Rawls' position in *Political Liberalism* but adds that religious people should provide at least one secular reason for a coercive policy or law, in addition to any religious reasons they may have. Audi has little problem with religious people being religiously *motivated* so long as the reasons offered to others for a policy also includes a reason that a secular person could reasonably endorse. Wolterstorff rejects this additional requirement. During the debate Wolterstorff raised the example of the 'quaker meeting' ideal in his criticism of Robert Audi's 'liberal position' with respect to religion.[502] Firstly Wolterstorff distinguishes between what he calls a *'parliamentary session'* in which the majority prevails and *'a quaker meeting'* which he claims 'operates by consensus'.[503] Wolterstorff refines his version of Quaker consensus by noting that in his understanding this is based upon *'agreement,* not *acquiescence'*.[504] Wolterstorff clarifies:

> In the actual meetings of actual Quakers, a proposal is regarded as adopted by the body if no one says 'no' to the proposal. What this means, in practice, is that the failure to say no to the proposal represents, on the part of some, acquiescence in the proposal rather than agreement with it. What I mean by a quaker meeting is a body that operates by consensus, that is, by agreement —not by agreement plus acquiescence.[505]

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[501] Audi and Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square*.
[502] Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Audi on Religion, Politics, and Liberal Democracy', in Audi and Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square,* 132-147.
[503] Wolterstorff, 'Audi on Religion', 137.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Ibid.

Wolterstorff claims that Audi suggests all citizens must achieve some form of consensus on coercive laws and policies which requires of them a 'quaker' meeting by his definition. Wolterstorff claims this produces a '*malformed* liberal democracy' in Audi's own terms. This is because for Audi, a liberal democracy resorts to coercion '*only where necessary and not simply on the basis of majority preference'*. [506] Wolterstorff points out that it is almost impossible to find any major law or policy legitimating coercion to which all could agree in the 'quaker' meeting fashion: *all* decisions in a liberal democracy will be by parliamentary majority vote.[507] Wolterstorff is using the 'quaker meeting' example to illustrate that it is innately alien to the modern liberal political context. He makes an immanent critique of Audi's liberalism, claiming it would not be in keeping with liberalism itself to require religious people to modify their reasoning to participate in political debate on issues of coercive law. Wolterstorff's utilisation of the 'quaker' meeting example implies it is innately unsuited for decision making in a liberal state of competing views and interests.

It is not proposed here to summarise all the positions in the role of religion debate within liberalism, however one significant line of critique has recently arisen that has a bearing on the question of 'truth' or the idea of social goods in liberalism. A modern 'Foucault inspired post-secularist genealogical' and post-colonial line of theory has arisen in response to the

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[506] Robert Audi, 'Liberal Democracy and the Place of Religion in Politics', 16-17, quoted and italicised by Wolterstorff, 'Audi on Religion', in Audi and Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square*,138.
[507] Ibid.

largely secularist debate on religion in politics.[508] While Jean L.Cohen believes liberal states

are insufficiently secular and impartial, the 'genealogical post-secular critique' suggests that

political liberalism ultimately 'generates discrimination against religious minorities' and

reifies religion targeting it with regulation and privatisation: 'Political liberalism is an ideology

for the nonneutral political formation of secularized Christianity—the modern Western

state.'[509] Cohen observes that liberalism and secularisation now mean 'anti-perfectionism' in

relation to the policies of the State.[510] Civil and coercive law cease to be representations of

'truth' or paths to moral improvement and ultimately religious citizens must accept this

'differentiation' and non-religious and religious people must be mutually accommodating. By

contrast, Wolterstorff, notwithstanding his observation on voting, claims that liberal politics

is misrepresented if reduced to competition between interests decided by majority vote. For

him, the 'proper goal' of liberalism is *'justice'* and the social good, presumably open to ethical

arguments. To these arguments religious citizens should according to Wolterstroff, have the

same right to contribute as any other citizen; free of epistemic restraints and without

requirement to provide additional secular reasons.[511]

By turning to the 'quaker' example, Habermas thinks Wolterstorff 'ridicules' the 'idealizing

assumptions' of the liberal constitutional state that appears to aim at the 'Quaker meeting

ideal' but Habermas claims Wolterstorff does so, notwithstanding that 'the Quaker *principle*

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[508] Jean L. Cohen, 'On the genealogy and legitimacy of the secular state: Böckenförde and the Asadians' *Constellations* (2018): 1, 1-18, doi: 10.1111/1467-8675.12360.
[509] Ibid.,2.
[510] Ibid.,3.
[511] Wolterstorff, 'The Role of Religion', 132.

of unanimity is not typical of the democratic process' [italics added].[512] Neither Wolterstorff nor Habermas appears to have fully explored the nature of the unity aimed at by Quakers, although Wolterstorff comes closer to an understanding of it.

It can be suggested by contrast that in this study, the contemporary ideal of Quaker 'unity' includes an interpersonal and shared recognition of the autonomy of each rather than an attempt to achieve 'unanimity', as Habermas suggests. 'Acquiescence' in this context need not mean that individuals are overtly or covertly pressured to accede to something they dislike. Rather, the probity and practical wisdom of the group prevails as in the experience of Floe Shakespeare in the decision on gay marriage described above, which led her to set aside, or 'de-centre' her personal preference out of recognition of the autonomous needs of others in a non-identical community. The co-importance of the Quaker testimony to 'integrity' would (in ideal conditions) require those with principled objections to a proposal to make their position clear. The very enormity of this power suggests Quakers would use it sparingly. Sometimes silence is 'acquiescence', but the achievement of Quaker 'unity' is, on the whole, more complex. Clerks may get it wrong, but they are enjoined to be sensitive to the danger that silence masks disagreement.

> seek to assess the value of individual contributions. Do not forget
> that the silence of some is often of greater significance than the
> speech of others.
> Be aware, however, that silence does not necessarily mean consent.
> When conflicting views have been expressed, leave time and
> opportunity for those who have previously disagreed to indicate

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[512] Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere,'134.

whether they are ready to unite with the minute.[513]

In relation to Wolterstorff's preference for the majoritarian vote, where loss in a vote results in the minority having to say 'I do not agree, I *acquiesce* – unless I find the decision truly appalling',[514] Habermas is concerned as to how 'the political community should not be in constant danger of disintegrating into religious conflicts' were this to be the case.[515] The problem here is that Habermas forces a false distinction between 'public goods', upon which all parties must reach a compromise, and 'competing 'goods of salvation'' upon which they cannot. Whether religious or other ideological differences scupper compromise, the 'competing goods of salvation' are equally likely or unlikely to enable citizens to achieve or fail at reaching compromise. In reality, this is why the Quaker position is such a difficult one for liberal constitutionalists to theorise. Their non-dogmatic approach to theology and openness to nontheism means that British Quakers do not have 'competing' goods of salvation, they have alternate ones. Yet, as noted, they rely upon discerned 'testimonies' which guide their political activism which still retain a discernment of 'truth'.

Rawls picked up more effectively on the complexity by looking at the Quaker example of pacifism:

> So, Quakers, being pacifists, refuse to engage in war, yet they also support a constitutional regime and accept the legitimacy of majority or other plurality rule. While they refuse to serve in a war that a democratic people may reasonably decide to wage, they will still affirm democratic institutions and the basic values they represent.

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[513] *QF&P*, ¶3.16.
[514] Wolterstorff, 'Audi on Religion', quoted by Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', 135.
[515] Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere' ibid.

> They do not think that the possibility of people going to war is a sufficient reason for opposing democratic government… This illustrates how political values can be overriding in upholding the constitutional system itself, even if particular reasonable statutes and decisions may be rejected, and as necessary protested by civil disobedience or conscientious refusal.[516]

While this appears in keeping with the constitutionalism of early Quakers described by Calvert, Rawls' appreciation of Quakerism is an already secularised version. Quakers do not have 'political values' per se, they have 'testimonies'. Rawls was also perhaps unaware of Quaker activists in the US in the 1970s, some of whom, had taken lessons from Dutch anarchists in how to live a 'revolutionary' life. The 'Movement for a New Society' (MNS) which grew out of a Quaker Action Group in the late 1960s were seeking a New Society, albeit non-violently and attempting a revolution in American social, economic and political life, suggesting a more radical response to the political settlement than imagined by Rawls above.[517]

In a sense both Habermas and Rawls are right. Quaker religiously motivated political activism could give rise to conflict that would disrupt the stability of the state, and indeed this has

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[516] By contrast Max Weber viewed Quaker pacifism as a fundamental weakness making Quakers unfit for government. Weber argued that promulgating a 'pure ethics of conviction', the 'Sermon on the Mount' produced 'the radical pacifist sects, one of which experimented in Pennsylvania with a state that abjured force in its relations with other states. The outcome of the experiment was tragic, however, inasmuch as the Quakers could not take up arms on behalf of their own ideals'. Interestingly, Weber contrasts this position unfavourably with 'Normal Protestantism' in which he says Luther, 'relieved the individual of ethical responsibility for war and placed it on the shoulders of authority': Max Weber, 'The Profession and Vocation of Politics', trans. Ronald Speirs, in *Weber: Political Writings,* Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs eds.,(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1919],1994), 364.
[517] Andrew Cornell, *Oppose and Propose: Lessons from Movement for a New Society,* (Oakland: AK Press/Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2011).

been the intention of some Quaker activists, always predicated upon non-violent means. It is problematic for liberals seeking consensus upon the founding principles of the liberal democratic state, if Quakerism, which is pacific also turns out to be 'revolutionary'. Rawls is right that, historically Quakers have been disrupters of the State not its enemies. One interviewee for this study observed that Quakers generally would not engage in tax avoidance because 'the State needs support and most Quakers would want to pay tax'(A). Nevertheless, the argument remains open as to what sort of State Quakers today would create if they were faced with the choices facing constitution framer William Penn. There is no guarantee they would devise a liberal State settlement favouring 'freedom as non-interference'. It would be more consonant with Quaker concerns for it to prefer the social goods of equality, and community, to effect 'justice' and 'freedom as non-domination', i.e. it would have essentially republican features. How this might incorporate the high respect Quakers have for *individual* conscience, is addressed in later chapters exploring the 'utopic' in Quakerism.

Even at the time Rawls wrote his observations above, not all Quakers were passive before the constitutional settlement. George Lakey, a founding figure in MNS and a respected veteran Quaker activist, advocated 'nonviolent revolution'. Asked to define the difference between that and pacifism, Lakey responded:

> Pacifism is hugely influenced by conflict aversion. It really shows its middle classness in that way. There is a tremendous level of yearning for harmony because many pacifists see conflict itself as a problem. On the other hand, nonviolent revolutionaries welcome conflict, depend on it, and see polarization as absolutely essential. ...and then of course, lots of pacifists are OK with capitalism, and nonviolent revolutionaries are not. They are strongly anticapitalist, and often

antistate.[518]

As suggested in earlier chapters, the contemporary Quaker approach to certainty and Truth and the profound influence this has on Quaker political praxis, alongside the Quaker interpersonal ethic, normatively governs their relations with others and makes sense of their simultaneous willingness to embrace conflict, even revolutionary conflict, through pacific methods. In liberalism, protection of individual rights is achieved by the institution of bills of rights. Pragmatically, Quakers welcome these however, the testimonies and the importance of egalitarian fraternal interpersonal ethics, suggest that Quaker republicanism presumes the exercise of civic virtue by Quakers. Rights are needed as shields against those not exercising this virtue.

As noted in previous chapters, approaches to enabling 'mediated unity' in the State have a tendency towards identitarian tactics (forging unity on ideal and transcendental, symbolic orders such as race or class). Rawls' requirement for overlapping consensus on 'political' constitutional primary goods has less purchase when the centrality of constitutional forms to achieve mediation, and effective steering is de-centred away from purely political control and is shared across functionally differentiated institutions. A recognition of this might obviate the need for contortions over acceptable and unacceptable reasoning in the public sphere because a framework that embraced Schecter's 'constellations of non-identical citizens' interacting directly with the differentiated branches of state institutions would have to

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[518] Cornell, *Oppose,* 64.

accommodate their diversity.[519] This would not clear the path for a return of theocracy, which functional differentiation in complex liberal western states appears to preclude in any event. It would, however, allow for the de-privileging of the hollowed-out 'ideal' 'liberal' reasoning subject and admit the lived lifeworld experience of individuals in a more 'truthful' and fundamentally democratic, and interconnected fashion – open to conflict over beliefs and values but neither suppressing nor provoking it.

It seems fair to make a number of claims on behalf of Quaker decision-making that may contribute to the debate within liberalism on the admittance of religious reasons to the political sphere:

- Quaker religious belief specifically allows for acceptance and to an extent endorsement of the religious beliefs, or nontheism, of others.

- Their own mild scepticism in relation to their own beliefs makes them less likely to tend towards violent rejection of others' beliefs creating less danger to the stability of the liberal State more broadly, in spite of their principled civil disobedience in a number of policy areas.

- They are corporately comfortable with scientific discovery including Darwinism and the theory of evolution,[520] giving them a better chance of translatability within the

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[519] Schecter, *Critical Theory in the Twenty-First Century,* 199.
[520] '[B]y the early 1880s there was little opposition by Quakers to the theory of evolution' by the mid 1880s, a younger generation 'a group of Quaker naturalists' emerged who supported evolution. Most of these had been educated at Quaker schools. Geoffrey Cantor, 'Quaker Responses to Evolution' in *Quakers, Jews and Science:Religious Responses to modernity and the Sciences in Britain, 1650-1900,* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 284.

public sphere.[521]

- They support equality, human rights and individual autonomy.

- Discernment, which is often 'inspired' by a religious experience among theist Quakers, is often mediated by group testing as a supplementary but essential adjunct if a concern is to be recognised as a Quaker concern. Quaker corporate decisions and policies are not only the product of spiritually discerned truth however important this is to Quakers who still regard discernment as a spiritual inquiry to discover God's truth, they are also mediated by discourse albeit in the reflective context of a diversely constituted 'Meeting for Worship' where spiritual discernment is subject at some levels to tests of rationality and reason.

- Even for Quakers with profoundly held religious beliefs, the Truth achieved in discernment remains open to future development and ongoing discernment which tempers Quaker 'certainty' and encourages greater openness to new and future discovery.

All these reasons suggest that Quakerism would pass the translatability test Habermas has in mind. The example of the Quakers illustrates in some respects the difficulty of drawing the distinction in a liberal democracy between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' reason, and how this is mediated through discourse in the public political sphere.

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[521] 'By the mid-18th century, it seems to have been widely accepted by Friends that the principal source of knowledge of the created world was the created world itself, and the tools for the task of gaining that knowledge were the human senses and, to varying extents, human reason.' Geoffrey Peter Morries, 'From Revelation to Resource: The Natural World in the Thought and Experiences of Quakers in Britain and Ireland 1647-1830,' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2009), 313.

Quaker discernment as deliberative democracy

Quaker discernment may appear from a liberal viewpoint, to be consensus-seeking by Quakers, or perhaps a form of thick democratic participation, but it is not simply aimed at arriving at agreement as a basis for consent, but on the discovery of the *right* action for the *right* reason. Joycelin Dawes at the outset of her book on Quaker discernment describes three 'complementary' ways in which discernment is discussed in the literature; 'as an activity of 'being discerning'', as a 'method of collective decision-making' and 'a precise stage in decision-making – testing the validity of inner knowing which is recorded as a decision and validated through action'.[522] At the outset Dawes sets out her own interpretation, in part informed by participation in a workshop on individual and corporate concern led by Michael Hutchinson. It is a 'practical' approach that describes discernment as 'making a decision for the best' although Dawes herself qualifies 'for the best' as meaning 'a decision or choice that is not based on self-centred preferences, bias or prejudice, nor favouring narrow sectional interests' – it is rather 'best for the whole' echoing the idea of a collective good familiar to traditional republicanism.[523]

Quaker discernment offers a relatively discreet example of a tried method of corporate decision-making. 'Clerked' and immediately 'Minuted' Quaker meetings, where silent reflection is built-in, allow for decision-making that is highly deliberative even in the absence of voting. Following discernment, a proposed Minute is drafted in silence by the clerk,

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[522] Dawes, *Discernment*, 7.
[523] Ibid.,6.

amendments from the meeting are incorporated, the Minute is then read out to those present at the meeting and they are asked if the Minute is acceptable. There will be a silence and if there is no objection someone present (and then usually others) will say 'hope so', and the Minute is recorded. When Quaker unity is operating at its best it offers an example of collective reasoning that effectively resists the privileged liberal epistemology of positivism and instrumental thought which dominates the use of public reason in the bureaucratic administered State. It is also worth noting that the liberal ideal of 'public reason' is seldom dispassionate or value free. It can be an ideological construct co-opted by politicians or adopted by governments to justify policy decisions. In its current guise, it is rooted in a liberal conception of the political. Vatter's analysis of public reason in Schmitt and Rawls concludes that 'public reason, rather than providing the essential response to the "fact of oppression," may be instrumental in preserving it.'[524] This is because, in Vatter's memorable phrase, the 'strongest reason...tends to be the reason of the strongest.'[525]

For Quaker Business meetings, material for consideration is circulated to all Members and regular Attenders prior to group discernment, this means that even if an individual chooses not to attend, they have at least been offered the opportunity to consider the relevant material. Actual attendance however makes a difference. Deliberative methods where

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[524] Miguel Vatter, 'The Idea of Public Reason and the Reason of State: Schmitt and Rawls on the Political', *Political Theory* 36, no.2 (2008):260, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20452626.
[525] Ibid.,259. The policy of 'austerity' in post 2010 Britain and Europe is in some senses its clearest ideological manifestation. For an overview of the critical discussion around austerity as ideology see Mark Blyth, 'The Austerity Delusion: Why a Bad Idea Won Over the West', *Foreign Affairs* 92, no.3 (2013):41-56, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23526835 and Mark Blyth, 'Austerity as ideology: A reply to my critics', *Comparative European Politics* 11, no.6 (2013):737-751, Palgrave-journals.com.

individuals are offered first-hand *experiences* of others, provide greater possibility for the *conversion* of participants to alternative points of view.[526] The opportunity for hearing the first person 'experience' of another is critical and was arguably central to the Quaker acceptance of homosexual relationships and gay marriage.[527] In the BYM sessions for discernment on the question of gay marriage the individual testimonies of those in same sex relationships were heard by all those present, resulting in the 'groundbreaking' decision to perform marriage ceremonies for gay couples.[528] The Guardian Leader described their decision as 'trailblazing' and noted that Quakers would 'ask the government to change the law to allow its officers to register same-sex partnerships as marriage. But legal recognition is secondary. The exploration of radical concepts is more important, as is the belief that there is good in everyone.'[529] This process reflects research finding that deliberators go through a number of processes in response to evidence that either strengthens or modifies their views as a result of being provided with greater knowledge and information on an issue. Significantly that 'for participation to work participants need to be exposed to the views of those who are unlike themselves. In other words, some basic disagreement appears to be a prerequisite for good deliberation.'[530] One feature Suiter et al. found to be significant was 'openness.'

> Openness refers to the willingness of people to make adjustments to
> existing attitudes and behaviours once they have been exposed to
> new ideas or situations (Digman, 1990; John, 1990)… Those who have
> high scores on this dimension tend to be less risk averse and more

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[526] Suiter et al., 'When do deliberative citizens change their opinions?'
[527] Blamires, *Pushing at the frontiers.*
[528] Leader, *Guardian,* 1 August 2009, quoted in Blamires, *Pushing at the frontiers,* 90-92.
[529] Blamires, *Pushing at the frontiers*, 92.
[530] Suiter et al., 'When do deliberative citizens change their opinions?' 208.

willing to consider opinions that are different from their own (e.g. George and Zhou, 2001; Lauriola and Levin, 2001; McCrae, 1987). …[I]ndividuals who are more open actively seek opportunities to learn about new ideas that challenge conventional wisdom (McCrae, 1987).[531]

This appreciation of the 'experience' of 'others' is critical. Quakers are enjoined in *QF&P* Advices and Queries to; 'live adventurously', 'welcome' diversity, '[r]espect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships, and [r]efrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others'.[532] Quakers are to some extent made conscious that they make decisions on less than the full facts, because *QF&P* enjoins them to make inquiry.[533] This encourages an understanding of the importance of being well-informed even if in practice not all Quakers have time to prepare for or even attend monthly Business meetings. The 'hope so' endorsing a decision, in the minds of some at least, and in particular nontheists, must suggest an assumption of incomplete knowledge, but a belief that for the time being the decision taken is 'for the best' because achieved on the best available information albeit subject to the variety of energy and appetite of those present to engage with it.[534]

Traditionally it was recognition that only God 'knew' God's intentions and the best human beings could do would be to 'hope' they had discerned these correctly. This has clear epistemological implications relevant more generally within democracy where there is a

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[531] Ibid.,201.
[532] *QF&P*, 'Advices and Queries', §1.02 at ¶27, ¶16, ¶22, available at: https://qfp.quaker.org. uk/chapter/1/
[533] *QF&P*, 'Advices and Queries', §1.02, at ¶15, ¶33, ¶34.
[534] Dawes, *Discernment,* 6.

tension between two paradigms of legitimacy: that of the participation of the populace entitled to autonomously govern themselves and the legitimacy conferred on a decision by its 'correctness'. 'Correctness' potentially supplied by two features:

- an epistemic justification grounded on the rationality of the decision taken in the light of appropriate and relevant evidence, and

- a justification on the basis of the 'good' at which the decision aims.

This knotty problem is described as lying between decisionism and deliberation according to Bonnie Honig in her 2007 appraisal of theoretical approaches. Reading Seyla Benhabib on democratic legitimation she notes, '[d]emocracy's regulative fiction affirms the sovereignty of the people but also limits or shapes its actual manifestations by requiring that it aim toward a collective good.'[535] Although not 'fixed' as 'doxastic' it may fairly be suggested that Quaker testimonies, which have been subject to repeated and ongoing discernment over many decades, or centuries, are for Quakers their 'collective goods'. That these testimonies are expanded and reshaped by Quakers through ongoing collective discernment over time is one of the key points of interest in Quaker discernment for this study. It is in this arena that the utopic is relevant to Quaker discernment and will be explored in detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

Traditional Quaker constitutionalism

As Quaker *discernment* was used by Quakers historically to discern the will of God, and today is still directed towards finding '*Truth'* or 'rightness' before agreement, it is not foursquare

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[535] Bonnie Honig, 'Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory', *The American Political Science Review* 101, no. 1 (2007):4, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27644422.

with consensus.[536] However this does not necessarily result in inflexible politics. In her study of early Quakers in America, Calvert argues for the uniqueness of the Quaker approach to politics in relation to the amendability of the constitution. Quaker thinking was originally prompted by their theology.

The early Quaker view was that man's purity had not been destroyed entirely by the fall, indeed 'man originally lived without formal government'. Which Penn described in 1682 as a time when '[t]here was no need of Coercive or Compulsive means; the Precept of Divine Love and Truth, in his own Bosom was the Guide and Keeper of his Innocency.'[537] Quakers did not believe in original sin. This tended to give them contra Hobbes, a positive view of human nature. While sin may be inevitable, perfection was still possible, 'mendable' and 'amendable' rather like the constitution itself.

> Thus Quaker civil government, like their ecclesiastical government, was not instituted by God primarily for coercing and punishing man. On the contrary, civil government was 'as capable of Kindness, Goodness, and Charity as a more private Society.'[538]

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[536]In one analysis of new political movements the 'Quaker' method of 'consensus' adopted by them is critiqued for its 'sanctified' religious status: L.A.Kauffman 'The Theology of Consensus' *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, May 26, 2015, http://berkeleyjournal.org/2015/05/the-theology-of-consensus/ . Online Quaker commentators were quick to challenge Kauffman's interpretation of Quaker 'consensus'. Martin Kelley 'A reply to the Theology of Consensus', 29 May 2015, https://www.quakerranter.org/the-theology-of-consensus/ ; David Summerhays, ''Trading one superstition for another': Should we really abandon consensus-based decision making?' *Uneven Earth: where the ecological meets the political*, 10 July 2015, http://uneven earth.org/2015/07/trading-one-superstition-for-another/.
[537] Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism,*loc.2381 of 14493.
[538] Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism,* loc.2412 of 14493.

While unity was important it should not be produced by coercive means as 'Safety in Unity' for Quakers meant liberty as dissenting protestants.

> Unity (not as the least but greatest End of Government) is lost
> for by seeking an Unity of Opinion (by [coercion][539]) the Unity
> requisite to uphold us, as a Civil Society, will be quite destroy'd.
> And such as relinquish that, to get the other (besides that they
> are Unwise) will infallibly lose both in the end...[540]

They did not believe, as did many Englishmen, that political differences and potential conflict were inevitably problematic. Similar to Machiavelli, theirs was rather a philosophy – religious and political – that depended on an amount of disagreement, dissent, and competition of ideas in order to flourish, so long as there was always the fundamental agreement that the unity of the body was paramount. In their way, Quakers promoted debate, deliberation, and the search for truth among the people at a time when many did not believe that popular discourse was possible or relevant.[541]

Early Quakers believed in *synteresis* the direct immediate revelation of God's will. According to Calvert it influenced Quaker attitudes to both law and constitutional settlements and is largely what sits behind the Quaker appreciation of the individual within the group. Because for Quakers, all have equal access to this Light, all have equal potential for the discernment of Truth. For Calvert this determines the early Quaker approach to law change and civil disobedience, yet because of the Quaker experience of 'unruly walkers' it also instituted the initial form of their mediating structure, of leadership and governance through elders. The

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[539] The text in fact says (by the ways intended) but refers to an earlier segment: 'Experience has told us. [...] What *Reproach* has follow'd to the *Christian Religion,* when the Pro|fessors (sic) of it have us'd a coercive Power upon Conscience. And lastly, That *Force* never yet made, either a *Good Christian* or a *Good Subject.'*, William Penn *The great case of liberty of conscience* [...]. (London: s.n.) 1670, 28. Available at Early English Books *https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/ A54146.0001.001/1:10?rgn=div1;submit=Go;subview=detail;type=simple;view=fulltext;q1=Civil+Soci ety*

[540] Ibid.,29, quoted in Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism,* loc.2439 of 14493.

[541] Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism,* loc.2450 of 14493.

constitution (in the broad sense of the laws, the formal organisation and practices of the State) may be a representation of God's will, and deserved to be respected, yet was still subject to ongoing revelation. As such the constitution, had to remain as open to future light as the Quakers themselves were.

As Quakers believed all had equal access to truth and the duty to publish it, then pacific and principled open civil disobedience should be naturalised within the State. The critical factor for Quaker democracy was that direct control of the government must lie with the people themselves. According to Penn

> … the English people had at once time exercised a direct control over the government and had themselves handed it over to their representatives when the population grew too large. […] In the ideal constitution, he wrote, there is 'no Transessentiating or Transubstantiation of Being from People to Representatives.' We might understand this as the problem of virtual, as opposed to actual representation. Christ and his power are with the people, Penn clarified, not the representatives. The potential for Light in all men meant the political responsibility was on individuals to participate in some capacity. Accordingly, in the first two civil constitutions that Quakers drafted, most if not all of the legislative powers were given to the people.[542]

While the history of Quaker governance in West Jersey and Pennsylvania may have contradicted their initial aims, with Fox allowing more power to Penn than Penn had first stated he would claim, nonetheless the principles were accepted. Calvert notes, this diffusion

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[542] Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism,* loc.2533 of 14493.

of God's 'sovereignty' among the people suggests, that governance was not only within 'the people' but the entire population.

In contemporary Quakerism this is echoed in the idea of *Ffriendship* as a horizontal distribution of authority among all. The same potential for perceiving the 'truth' and for being a 'friend' applies to Quaker and non-Quaker alike. The founding contract envisaged by Locke was, for Quakers, subject to continual review. While it may have appeared contradictory that Quakers declared loyalty to the constitution or King, but protested against and broke laws was, Calvert suggests, absolutely in keeping with their overall political theology and not inconsistent.[543] Three hundred years later, Quaker approaches to constitutionalism do not appear to have changed. 'Liberal' Quakers are not generally associated with attempts to overthrow the State, but those acting under concern may still break the law.[544]

The following chapter attempts to forge a critical understanding of Quaker concern through the encounter in concern with a violent reality at odds with a world as it should be. This uncovers a critico-historical aspect to concern, facilitated by the reinterpretation of Quaker discernment of concern through the theologico-political writings of Walter Benjamin. The material presented in chapters 6 and 7 support a fresh interpretation of Quaker concern as a utopic democratic praxis.

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[543] Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism,* chap.2.
[544] *QF&P*, 'Advices and Queries' §1.02, at ¶35,¶36.

Chapter 6: The utopic gap in permanent catastrophe

> *I cannot form a concern, - but when a concern cometh, I endeavour to be obedient*.
> John Woolman, 1772 (Woolman, Kindle Loc. 75-76)

The ethical sense of obligation towards action experienced by Quakers who 'hold a concern'

is, in many, if not all cases provoked by a state of the world.

> I felt you couldn't; become aware of it and not do anything … I kind
> of felt well as Quakers - we have integrity - we think things through
> - if we feel moved to do something we do it we don't just sit on our
> hands (E).

The discernment that one is 'called to act', prompted by a perceived difference between the

world as it is and the world as it ought to be, is an innately utopic position. Muers observes;

'[t]estimony is located at the point of confrontation between the truth of God and the

paradoxically dominant untruth of the world-opposed-to-God.'[545] Discernment reveals a

potential right or just alternative, imperilled by inaction. This utopic and Prophetic thought

has a decidedly different cast from the more general conception of History as Progress found

in Enlightenment thought, or overly simplified historical materialism. Some connections with

Messianism are clear. Messianism in Judaism, according to Gershom Scholem is a

'redemption…which takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community'

rather than an 'individual' 'inner' transformation as in Christian theology.[546] As applied in the

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[545] Muers, *Testimony,* loc.827 of 4070.
[546] Gershom Scholem, 'Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism,' in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality,* trans. Michael A. Mayer, (London: George Allen & Unwin,1971), 1.

Quaker context, the 'prophetic' anticipates this 'Messianic' alternate reality. In this formula, the *Messianic* is a global concept. It encompasses prophecy, catastrophe and the utopic state of justice that instantiates the fulfilment of ethics and justice, although in its Jewish origins the activity of mankind cannot 'bring' this about. According to Scholem the Jewish redemption is 'spontaneous'.[547]

Michael Löwy in his study *Redemption and Utopia*, outlines the difference between history as envisaged by the libertarian Jewish thinkers of his study, enthused by the radical potential of *Messianism,* and that of Enlightenment conceptions of history as progress.[548] What Löwy calls 'historical messianism', 'brings a qualitative, non-evolutionary perception of historical time, in which the detour through the past becomes the necessary point of departure for the leap towards the future.'[549] In this and the following chapter, the discernment of concern, is viewed as a critical-historical process with prophetic and messianic qualities. This is done through the lens of Walter Benjamin's messianic political theology, which, like Quakerism has a strong connection with the utopian republican tradition. Benjamin's theory, difficult to reduce to any simple analysis, offers uniquely apposite terminology through which Quaker discernment can be read, as to:

1. be in keeping with its deeply *theological* roots,

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[547] Scholem, 'Toward',10-11.
[548] Löwy, *Redemption,* 203-204
[549] Ibid.,204.

2. show how this process, - in the Benjaminian notions of *Stillstand,* (or *Stillstellung*)[550]

and *Jetztzeit* – reflects a radical utopic praxis.

For Löwy Benjamin's 'Jewish messianism and libertarian utopianism led to an authentic *fusion* – that is, a dawning of a new way of thinking, which could not be reduced to its components …it implied a new way of perceiving historical temporality'.[551] The liberatory potential of this different temporality, the opening it allows to the 'utopic conversion' that demands action and the hope required to see this through are the main themes of this chapter.

Walter Benjamin and the theological-political

> XIV
>
> *Origin is the goal*
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> - *Karl Kraus, Worte in Versen Vol.1*
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> History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]. Thus to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history.[552] [*…die er aus dem Kontinuum der Geschichte herausgesprengte.*]

Benjamin's theological-political writings theorise the relation between a Divine and a profane world. His reliance on theological tropes is intrinsic to his philosophy of history and the revolutionary critic's response to it. In his concept of *Jetztzeit,* [lit. '*now-time'*] there appears

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[550] Elaborated in chapter 7.

[551] Löwy *Redemption*, 95

[552] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations* 253, trans. Harry Zorn, with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, (London: Jonathan Cape.,Pimlico, ([1955] [1968], 1970,1999), 253; Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', *Gesammelte Werke: Essays, Aufsätze, Satiren, Kritiken, Autobiografische Schriften* (n.p: e-artnow, 2014),kindle loc.30219 of 990738.

a strong affinity with the Quaker moment of discernment of testimony. Muers from a theist position claims that Quaker testimony 'emerges in the dramatic "here and now" of the inbreaking of God's light in the world… at the leading edge of the history of salvation and revelation'.[553] Benjaminian *Jetztzeit* is a revolutionary moment when 'a true history' is revealed that permits revolutionary praxis (by the proletariat). Richard Wolin describes Benjamin's critical project as a recuperation of the moments of '*Jetztzeit*' – Messianic moments against the grain of mythic cyclic 'profane' history. Several works by Benjamin are particularly relevant: 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy' (1917 or 18)[554], the 'Theologico-Political Fragment' (1920-21)[555], 'The Critique of Violence' (1921)[556] and 'On the Concept of History' [Also translated as 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'] (Feb-May 1940).[557]

There are conflicting views on the importance that should be attached to religion in the work of Benjamin.[558] On the one hand, critics such as Margarete Kohlenbach whilst acknowledging

[553] Muers, *Testimony,* loc.805 of 4070.

[554] The Bullock and Jennings edition dates the 'Program' 1918, however the Kindle edition of the *Gesammelte Werke* dates this 1917. Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926* Marcus Bullock and Michael W.Jennings, eds., (Cambridge, London: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 1996),100-110 and 'Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie', in *Gesammelte Werke: Essays, Aufsätze, Satiren, Kritiken, Autobiografische Schriften*, (n.p:e-artnow) Kindle, Loc.33071-33292.

[555] In Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz, 312-313, (New York:Schocken Books, 1978, 2007).

[556] Walter Benjamin, 1978 pp.277-300

[557] unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime: In Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings; Volume 4, 1938-1940,* trans. Harry Zohn, Howard Eiland and Michael W.Jennings eds., (Cambridge, London: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 2006)*,*397.

[558] See secondary literature on both Benjamin and the early Frankfurt school's engagement with religion: Gillian Rose *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays,* (London, New York: Verso, 1993, 2017); Jacobson, Eric. *Metaphysics of the profane: the political theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, (New York, Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2003) Kindle; Kohlenbach and Geuss eds., *The Early Frankfurt School and Religion,* (Basingstoke, NewYork: Palgrave Macmillan,

that Benjamin committed himself to producing the union of religion and philosophy in his work, concluded that ultimately, he was unsuccessful in his efforts. She suggests that Benjamin's attempts were in this respect not only futile but that religious philosophy was then (as now) 'impotent' to authorise political forms of action or indeed to even inform philosophy more generally in the modern age, being just as Benjamin had characterised it in his 'On the concept of history'; 'the ugly dwarf theology on whose hidden service the "materialist" must rely'.[559] Michael Löwy is less dismissive of the relevance of the theological, citing the revolutionary potency of 'liberation theology' but acknowledges the distance between a revolutionary Christian religious thought infused with Marxism, and Benjamin's variant, imbued with Jewish mysticism.[560] This does not seem problematic to me in relation to contemporary British Quakerism. Connections between contemporary Quakerism and influential strands of Jewish thought have already been traced in this study.[561]

For many critics Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence' written early in his career was troubling for its apparent sanctioning of an anomic structureless violence to counter the law making and law preserving violence of the State. Through his narrative he weaves the story of two kinds of violence – the 'mythic' arbitrary violence of the ancient Gods – and the Divine law which

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2005); Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons eds., *Walter Benjamin and Theology,* (New York:Fordham University Press, 2016); Ari Hirvonen, 'Marx and God with anarchism: on Walter Benjamin's concepts of history and violence', Continental Philosophy Review 45, 2012):519-543, doi.10.1007/s11007-012-9234-9.

[559] Maragarete Kohlenbach, *Walter Benjamin: self reference and religiosity,* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 188.

[560] Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* (London: Verso, 2005), 28-29.

[561] See Chapter 3: significantly, Buber is among those thinkers integral to Löwy's study and also to Miguel Abensour's recuperation of the utopic.

instantiates justice. The essay has received considerable critical attention.[562] Throughout it

interweaves the ideas of the 'profane' and 'Divine' interacting through history and in the lives

of human beings, while simultaneously attempting a radical deconstruction of the uses of

violence in the making and breaking of law, both by States and radical activists.[563] According

to Löwy, Benjamin's historicism is misunderstood by Habermas, who only sees him as trying

to shoe-horn an incompatible ''anti-evolutionary conception of history'' into or onto historical

materialism.[564] Löwy notes that Benjamin's actual position was a more nuanced and complex

response to the de-humanising forces of modernity:

> What he rejected – with passion and tenacity – was the life-
> threatening myth that technological development would of itself
> bring about better social conditions and freedom for mankind,
> or that in order to establish a free society, socialists merely had
> to follow the inexorable course of material progress.[565]

The thinkers Löwy examined in *Redemption and Utopia,* varied widely in their relationships

with religious and philosophical messianism and historical materialism.[566] He noted key

differences between the idea in some forms of Messianic thought of the *restoration* of the

world, (through the Jewish religious concept of *Tikkun*), the History-as-Progress model of

enlightenment thought, and the dialectical view offered by Hegelian and Marxist thought. He

describes the 'fusion' of 'libertarian prophecy' and 'revolutionary *restitutio in integrum*' as

the product of a particularly 'raised social temperature': 'It is at that precise moment that a

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[562] see Valerie Whittington, Walter Benjamin's Zur Kritik der Gewalt: reception, relevance, and a mis-
diagnosis?' *Studies in social and political Thought,* 28, (2018):44-62.
[563] Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', in *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Peter Demetz,
ed.(New York: Schocken Books by arrangement with Harcourt Inc. 1978, 2007),277-300.
[564] Löwy, *Redemption,* 111
[565] Ibid.,110
[566] Löwy *Redemption,* 201

new form emerges, a structure of meaning that is irreducible to its parts.'[567] While this Chapter focuses on the prophetic and *Messianism* as significant utopic elements in Quakerism, it must be clear that Quakerism offers a different 'fusion' of the religious and political to that identified by Löwy.

It is critical at this point to repeat that this thesis despite the presence of interview materials, is *not* intended to be primarily an investigatory sociological enquiry. It is an investigation in social and political thought. In this chapter I must be clear that I am not representing 'what Quakers think' not even 'what some Quakers think' but my own interpretations of concern and discernment. The position I take is a response to the interview and secondary materials taken as a whole. The interviews do not provide evidence that Quakers *already* believe the views in this thesis applicable to their experience. The testimony of individual participants did not provide direct evidence for the theory. I will argue that in spite of the general silence on the Messianic, it is connected with a deeply *prophetic* utopic strand in Quakerism that can best be understood in relation to the Benjaminian Messianic model.

An important juncture between the Benjaminian model of Messianism as laid out here and Quakerism is the critical role of discernment as a process for the discovery of utopic truths in a counterfactual surrounding reality. 'Truth' was largely only introduced into interviews by my prompting although once introduced it elicited a number of relevant observations. Interviewee (A) noted that perhaps in meetings 'less than half actively discern the Truth.'

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[567] Ibid.,

Interviewee (B) identified a complex mix in contemporary Quakerism between what it means to be 'led by the spirit' under a Quaker concern and an otherwise understandable social and personal conviction for justice and truth. They felt that the Society with its sometimes 'very low concept of the divine' allowed for a 'religious patina' to be put on personal convictions so as to make these 'more strategically acceptable.' In this focus group there was a strong sense of the two in conjunction:

> Respondent 1: the truth that I think underlines - well for me underlines all my Quakerism and all my activities is equality - and the equality - the value of each human life and I think that underlines much of the activism I do and I think whilst that will lead to certain pluralisms about how to achieve that and how to make the kind of society based round that I think that pervades all the things I do and … I don't think it's uniquely Quaker …there's lots of groups that have that have that sort of thing at their centre but I think from a Quaker activist … that should always be central

> Respondent 3: in terms of theological stuff … I believe in reality that there is (*tapping table*) this reality and that actually the spiritual journey is and Tich Nhat Hahn is a Buddhist who talks about meditation as seeing deeply and I believe that we can engage with reality truthfully and untruthfully and deeply and undeeply and I think … the essence of theology and spiritual activism and all that is engaging with reality very deeply… [respondent 1: Mm] - and I think the deeper you look at stuff the more you come to things like equality, … but also the deeper you come to stuff like anti-capitalism … and for me my spiritual experience has been actually that the deeper I've come to experience reality the more I've come to see that actually in some mysterious way which holds all this paradoxical fact that - evil is dominant and - there's fragility and there's children in - tied to beds in orphanages in Thailand and all of that that actually there's a love that underpins it all and that is mysteriously working and is calling us to more, to engage in these kind of things so that it does - to me that's about reality, that I've come to experience that as real

While interviewee (B) expressed concern about whether contemporary Quaker 'testing' of concerns would effectively distinguish between the individual *will* and being *led* under a

concern, the conjoined responses of the interviewees above suggest a genuine complexity arising from the fusion of the two positions. Respondent 1's position does not seem too far from a secular position. Respondent 3's is theologically driven, not only informed by Buddhist but also (in previous comments) Christian thinkers. It is remarkable how the violence of the world enters the thoughts of several interviewees who variously speak of; 'oppressors as well as the oppressed,'(P) 'there are 65 million people and counting [*referring to refugees*][568]who are facing just dreadful situations so that needs to be a concern that ties in with, poverty and homelessness'(R).   Respondent 3, in keeping with other observations made in interviews, experiences a violent or unjust 'reality' and the 'call' to engage that emanates from it. More precisely the other's pain in a world dominated by evil, where *domination* itself dominates demands response. Human *fragility* subsists under subjection and demands justice.

There is a paradox in the 'divine' revelation of the gap between the violent 'present' of the world and the 'reconciling spirit' of a world as it should be, because it is brought to the mind through an encounter with worldly or 'profane' violence.[569] This profane violence of the world is in danger of collapse into nothing more nor less than Divine violence itself. It appears akin to the unjust 'mythic' violence Benjamin sees in the treatment of Niobe by the Gods. Justice

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[568] Since interview this figure has increased. Approaching 80m in 2019 according to the UNHCR: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/statistics/unhcrstats/5ee200e37/unhcr-global-trends-2019.html?query=worldwide%20displacement%202019.

[569] In his 1996 Swarthmore lecture Jonathan Dale describes a similar 'gap' what personal conduct 'is and what it might be'. This gap 'which creates guilt', is where the conscience resides. It is for Dale 'at the heart of religious experience' and 'the source of the prophetic voice': Jonathan Dale, *Beyond the Spirit of the Age; Quaker Social Responsibility at the end of the Twentieth Century*, (London: Quaker Home Service, 1996),60.

that is cruel because arbitrary and unpredictable even if it creates a 'new' law.[570] Benjamin

for this reason distinguishes Divine violence as that which instantiates justice, but in the

profane world he is unclear how this might manifest itself. While the suffering of others in

the discernment of a concern is empirically observable, the presence of 'love' may be less

apparent. Paradoxically, 'love' only suggests the *potential* for, but does not guarantee an

alternative world order. Its absence reveals the gap between the real as it is and the real as it

might be, and this is where a utopic space emerges. Acting upon a concern, requires Quakers

not only to occupy that space, but first to hear through discernment the 'call' for 'love's work'

(E). To perform in another sense their own 'critiques' of violence.

Walter Benjamin's response to the life of the revolutionary Blanqui, from a nontheist

perspective, shares in many respects the vision of suffering reality and its utopic alternate. A

nontheist among the interviewees expressed the 'cost' demanded of Quaker activism under

concern, illustrated in the example of Jesus. This marks the extent of this obligation for this

Quaker activist and its primacy over duty to abide by the laws of the State:

> I have to say that for me this distinction between what's illegal and
> what's legal isn't an important distinction - I mean - the law is - the
> (sighs) some laws are bad laws! quite simply and...I remember
> thinking...that civil disobedience is a form of prayer that...perhaps it
> should involve sacrifice I think is the point - that is you're prepared to
> be vulnerable - you know a whole lot of things about peace and
> disarmament are about vulnerability and...if you're *not* prepared to
> accept a measure of vulnerability it seems to me it's difficult to be a
> Quaker - difficult to be a Christian - difficult - I mean for goodness sake
> - Jesus on the cross was the ultimate symbol of vulnerability -
> nobody's more vulnerable than that - nobody!...if we call ourselves

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[570] Benjamin, 'Critique',294.

followers of Jesus then - you can't say (laughing) I will never - will never - well - well you can't say - you have to say - 'I'm prepared to suffer - for - for my beliefs' - and that's part, part of - what you accept isn't it (T).

The discernment of unjust law in this example arises in the encounter with unjust reality. Reflection and the discernment that results are mediated by the moral terrain of Quaker testimony and orthopraxy. Through *discernment* the present is perceived historically. There is a 'socio-cultural dynamic'[571] in play that holds just enough space between the *will* of the individual and what is (in religious terms) seen as the *Divine will,* so that a gap presents itself.[572] For Miguel Abensour, Benjamin's last work, 'On the concept of History', is haunted by the tortured, revolutionary spirit of Blanqui, who according to Goffroy his biographer, unlike religious saints and martyrs, consented to pain and suffering, unconsoled by any promise of future life. Despite Blanqui's 'stubborn sacrifice' (*sacrifice obstiné*) without hope of recompense,[573] Abensour argues that, one can read Benjamin's theses 'On the concept of History' 'as the protocol of a truly spiritual exercise faced with "the state of exception"'.[574] Blanqui stood as a symbol for Benjamin of the radical human condition, always at risk, in danger of incarceration entombment, enclosure, yet retaining a revolutionary hope in the midst of a perpetual catastrophe that rather than fading with a decline of superstition, (religious or secular) seems to intensify with modernity. The words of Georg Büchner, writing

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[571] Löwy *Redemption*, 200
[572] For those who do not believe in a Divine will and for whom all will is ultimately personal, it is still possible to distinguish between a will that is self-directed towards action and one where there is a sense of feeling 'pushed' towards it.
[573] See Goffroy quoted by Abensour *Les passages Blanqui, Walter Benjamin entre mélancolie et révolution* (Paris : Sens&Tonka, 2013), 28. [All translations from this text – VW].
[574] Ibid.,20.

in 1833, quoted by Abensour:

> We reproach the young for the use of violence. But are we not in a state of perpetual violence? Because we were born and have grown up in a dungeon, we no longer notice the pit (*la fosse)*, where we are, with irons on our hands and feet and a gag on our mouths.[575]

This idea of 'perpetual violence' produces a melancholy hopelessness resulting in the pessimism of a Blanqui viewing history as a string of defeats.[576] There is an apparent permanence to the catastrophe that produces 'l'éternelle défaite du prolétariat' where the catastrophe has become the rule and not the exception.[577] Even when, ultimately Blanqui's apparent *'fantasmagorie de la repetition',[578]* reproduces the cyclic myth it critiques, Benjamin, according to Abensour, understood that this 'organisation du pessimisme'[579] had to metamorphose into a negative utopianism - 'utopie négative.'[580] Blanqui, as a counter to positivism and the Hegelian view of History as Progress (and Totality), helped Benjamin reach the thought that '[i]t is necessary to found the concept of progress on the idea of catastrophe.'[581] Abensour sees this expressed in this phrase from Benjamin's book on Baudelaire: 'Rescue (*le sauvetage*) hangs on the tiny flaw, or hole (*la petite faille*) in permanent catastrophe'.[582] Respondent 3 also appears to recognise the 'rescue' of the 'gap'. For them, a 'radical' is someone who is 'whole-hearted' 'full-on' in terms of their commitment

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[575] Ibid.,36-7
[576] '1830, 1839,1848, 1871', Abensour *Les Passages Blanqui,* 50
[577] Ibid.
[578] Ibid.,56
[579] Ibid., Abensour here adopts a phrase by Pierre Naville.
[580] Ibid.
[581] Ibid. Abensour quoting Benjamin: 'Il faut fonder le concept de progrès sur l'idée de catastrophe.'
[582] Ibid.

to change through working with others:

> maybe a local community or a way of life that is about serving others and about trying to create - it's either about helping people survive under capitalism or creating things in the cracks of it.

The political here is *prophetic*, anticipating in the 'cracks' of permanent economic or environmental or social catastrophe a potential *messianic* alternate reality.

'Utopic' conversion

The experience of a 'politicising change' within individuals produced by discernment, is regarded as a form of *conversion* not restricted to the religious sense but in a broader phenomenological sense. In Miguel Abensour's reading of Levinas, this is a *'conversion utopique'*.[583] Benjamin's concept of *Jetztzeit* has an affinity with both Abensour's moment of utopic conversion, and the revelation of Quaker discernment of concern. If moments of personal discernment are so interpreted, then the following passage reproduced by Wolin from Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' defining the '*Dialektik im Stillstand*' seems to speak precisely to these 'critical' moments, when an individual, or a class, understands their relation to history:

> Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration[584] pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes it into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters this monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of the messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for

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[583] Miguel Abensour, *Emmanuel Levinas l'intrigue de l'humain: Entretiens avec Danielle Cohen-Levinas,* (Paris : Hermann, 2012), 49-50.
[584] *Konstellation* in the original: Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Werke* (Kindle: e-artnow) Loc.3024.

the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the life work.[585]

Benjamin understands these '*Jetztzeit*' 'now-moments', achieved in the historical materialist's reflection upon History through a theological language appropriate to Quaker concern. The length of the 'moment' of discernment, whether instantaneous or the product of steady realisation produced by evidence over time is irrelevant to the analogy as in either case there is an instant of the joining of the critical and the ethical with the historical. The Arendt/Zorn edition of *Illuminations* adds this footnote to the term '*Jetztzeit*': 'Benjamin says '*Jetztzeit*' and indicates by the quotation marks that he does not simply mean an equivalent to *Gegenwart,* that is, present. He is clearly thinking of the mystical *nunc stans.*'[586] Dennis Redmond's 2005 translation of Benjamin's 'Theses on the Concept of History' has the following translator's note:

> 'Jetztzeit was translated as 'here-and-now,' in order to distinguish it from its polar opposite, the empty and homogenous time of positivism. Stillstellung was rendered as 'zero-hour,' rather than the misleading 'standstill'; the verb 'stillstehen' means to come to a stop or standstill, but Stillstellung is Benjamin's own unique invention, which connotes an objective interruption of a mechanical process, (rather like the dramatic pause at the end of an action-adventure movie, when the audience is waiting to find out if the time-bomb/missile/terrorist device was defused or not). Stillstellung in the original has alternatively been translated as 'zero-hour'.[587]

[585] Benjamin 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' XVII reproduced in Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption.* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press,1994), 50.

[586] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History,' *Illuminations*, trans.Harry Zorn, introduction by Hannah Arendt, (London: Pimlico, 1970, 1999), 253.

[587] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Concept of History,' trans. Dennis Redmond. Available at Marxists.org, 2005. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm.

In this thesis I retain the original term *Stillstand* or *Stillstellung* for the greater affinity with the 'nunc stans' cited by Arendt in relation to the related temporal term *Jetztzeit* and because it is clear that for the stillness and silence of the Quaker discernment through worship, it is a better 'fit'. Neither 'zero-hour' nor 'here and now' are able to incorporate the religious senses that these messianic terms suggest.

Benjamin's thought thus provides a theoretical language that can accommodate the 'prophetic' and embeds this religio-political language (and the dialogical relation between the divine Messianic and the profane), in an epistemic framework and a theory of history. History, for Benjamin offers a chance to recuperate the Messianic (and prophetic) past. The *nunc stans* moment, opens the way to *re-cognising* the past in such a way as to liberate the present. Benjamin's use of the word - *sprengen* – the blowing, or blasting, even the detonating of the cognizance, suggests its violence. Recognising the 'historical' nature of this process is to understand that emancipatory 'truth' has been revealed in the past, so the discernment of new truth is simultaneously confirmation of past discoveries and a form of 'keeping faith' with the tradition. Particularly a 'truth' silenced in the past, such as homosexuality, as one interviewee noted in relation to their choice to be open about their sexuality: 'I suppose it was a concern for the unspoken'(P). Another interviewee also observed the power of the 'unspoken *sense* in the meeting and then it's spoken, and then links are made and sometimes meetings can be just amazing in terms insights and in terms of shared experience, not always, but sometimes'(D). The praxis of discovery and insight is recurrent even if the 'truth' discerned seems new, 'truth' itself appears eternal as its discovery recurs again and again.

In Quaker discernment, there is not only a religious practice but an opportunity for critical historiography, and the cognition and *re*-cognition of present, past (i.e. historical) and continuing injustice. Individuals whose political praxis is informed by the 'silent waiting' experienced in a meeting, whose 'habitus' requires a meditative listening to both inner and outer voices and who are to some extent committed to the ethical fabric of Quakerism, in particular the ideas of equality and non-violence, are in some sense already 'out of step' with the present time and approaching *Stillstand*.[588] Their discernment, when experienced as a collision of *presence* and the present, in the 'gathered' meeting, shares with Benjamin's critical historian, the sense that their 'own time is far more distinctly present to [their] visionary gaze' obliging them to 'see the present' whether or not they choose to do so. The traditions of expectant waiting, reflection and 'gathering' in meetings offer opportunities for Quakers to 'keep a weather eye open' for what is happening in the profane world of the present. It has given rise to the adoption of radically pacifist and egalitarian 'testimonies' that I suggest, arise *out of this process*, quite as much as through their early reading and interpretation of Scripture. In this sense the recognition of *present* injustices is also within a tradition of recognition of past injustices.

In his related writing, the 'Paralimpomena to "On the Concept of History"', Benjamin's paragraph XVII, is expanded in XVIIa. Benjamin welcomed it as 'good' that Marx 'secularized the idea of Messianic time' in the classless society[589] but bemoans how it is interpreted by

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[588] Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Concept of History* (Redmond translation).
[589] Walter Benjamin, 'Paralimpomena to "On the Concept of History"', in Eiland and Jennings eds., *Selected Writings: Volume 4,* 401.

subsequent theorists for whom time becomes the 'anteroom…in which one could wait for the emergence of the revolutionary situation with more or less equanimity'.[590] To be passively seated in the 'waiting room' of history is to miss the point, made clear in the two following extended passages both from the 'Paralimpomena': -

> In reality there is not a moment that would not carry with it *its* revolutionary chance…. For the revolutionary thinker, the peculiar revolutionary chance offered by every historical moment gets its warrant from the political situation. But it is equally grounded, for this thinker, in the right of entry which the historical moment enjoys vis-à-vis a quite distinct chamber of the past, one which up to that point has been closed and locked. The entrance into this chamber coincides in a strict sense with political action, and it is by means of such entry that political action, however destructive, reveals itself as messianic.[591]
> …
>
> 'The Now of Recognizability'
>
> ….the historian turns his back on his own time, and his seer's gaze is kindled by the peaks of earlier generations as they sink further and further into the past. Indeed the historian's own time is far more distinctly present to his visionary gaze than it is to the contemporaries who 'keep step with it'. The concept of a present which represents the intentional subject matter of a prophecy is defined by Turgot – not without reason – as an essentially and fundamentally political concept. 'Before we have learned to deal with things in a given position,' says Turgot, 'it has already been changed several times. Thus, we always find out too late about what has happened. And therefore it can be said that politics is obliged to see the present.' It is precisely this concept of the present which underlies the actuality of genuine historiography…Someone who pokes about in the past as if rummaging in a storeroom of examples and analogies still has no

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[590] Ibid.,402
[591] ibid. p.402

inkling of how much in a given moment depends on its being made present.'[592]

While Turgot's observation is reminiscent of Hegel's metaphor of the owl of Minerva that only flies at dusk, there is in Benjamin's interpretation the clear intention to place the emphasis upon the moment of reflection – *in that present moment, reflecting on the present,* the door of radical and revolutionary *historical* understanding springs open, *only because* it is understood through the prism of the present. For Quakers, the habitus of Quaker silence speaks to both theist and nontheists: David Boulton, writing in the Guardian in 2007: 'Silence is not negative, an empty room is not empty.' Artists know that. So do Friends. You need a still place in which you can find your voice and a springboard for effective action.' [593] Also, this from Lyndsay Burtonshaw in a TTT blog: 'I remember a conversation a couple of years ago when I was new to Quakerism. A Friend told me something about our community that stuck with me, "We sit still and quiet, in order to do the work out there that is needed."'[594]

In the *Theologico-Political Fragment* Benjamin imagines a dual reality: a dominion where the divine and the profane despite appearing to pull in opposite directions provide an essential symmetry and fulfil each other's ends. Benjamin claims the 'quest of free humanity for

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[592] ibid p.405

[593] David Boulton, 'Face to Faith' *Guardian,* 22 September 2007, https://www.theguardian.com /commentisfree/2007/sep/22/comment.religion?CMP=share_btn_link accessed October 2019. Boulton is the author of 'Godless for God's sake' (ed. David Boulton) : a collection of essays by 27 nontheist Quakers . See also the poster collection prepared by BYM for their 2016 'Quaker Week' each of which carried the headline: 'Beginning with stillness my faith becomes action'. Images available at https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/babd7f4a1f6ce 552b7818e31b71bc3c3c040347ef508817b098ded7cc84f and also those for 2013 which carried the line: 'Stillness, Reflection, Connection' https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/ 0ffdeef53d5ec867f972bac6e494f893112700c53c383e0fb16223bc8244.

[594] Lyndsey Burtonshaw, Turning the Tide 'Blog' Jan.23, 2020.

happiness runs counter to the Messianic direction'[595] however 'just as a force can, through acting, increase another that is acting in the opposite direction, so the order of the profane assists, through being profane, the coming of the Messianic Kingdom'.[596] The individual goes through suffering, but there is a fulcrum - history - mediating an imagined spiritual immortality alongside the 'eternity of downfall' reflected in worldly politics.[597] This twin frame of profane and divine is interrelated and is reminiscent of Quakerism's nexus of 'Presence' and the present.

The divine presence or the 'Light' in Quakerism is a continual presence, accessible without 'church' or priesthood, without ritual or creed. Quakers deem all persons capable of discerning the 'Light' or the 'inner light,' and of experiencing the (not-uniquely-Quaker) 'presence in the midst'. A phrase derived from Matthew 18:20: 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'[598] 'Presence' in this study refers to its uses in the Christian tradition out of which Quakerism arose but is also figured in 'the originality of the between,' Michael Theunissen's phrase for Buber's sense of 'meeting'.[599] Phrases familiar to Christian Quakers refer to the presence of God or the 'Holy

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[595] Benjamin, Reflections: Essays Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings 1978 p.312
[596] ibid.
[597] Benjamin, 1978.p.313.
[598] Matthew 18:20, King James Version; also, Epistle of YM 1765, reproduced in *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London…from 1681 to 1857,* 1858*,* vol.1, 338 cited at *QF&P* (print edition), ¶2.43. The concept of 'presence' is also a core concept of business management 'Theory U', albeit in a different form to that commonly understood in Christian theology, or indeed in theist Quakerism. Theory U, suggested as a model for Quaker discernment in Joycelin Dawes' *Discernment,* is avoided here because of its philosophical incoherence identified by Heller: see Heller 'The Philosophy of Theory U'.
[599] Theunissen, *The Other,* 367.

Spirit' or the 'indwelling Christ.' In Quakerism the association with the *presence* of the divine

and the *present* moment, is particularly strong. It is also expressed as being experienced in

the 'gathered' meeting. In this extract God's presence in the suffering world is at odds with

the present and demands response:

> God comes to us in the midst of human need, and the most pressing
> needs of our time demand community in response. How can I
> participate in a fairer distribution of resources unless I live in a
> community which makes it possible to consume less? How can I learn
> accountability unless I live in a community where my acts and their
> consequences are visible to all? How can I learn to share power unless
> I live in a community where hierarchy is unnatural? How can I take the
> risks which right action demands unless I belong to a community
> which gives support? How can I learn the sanctity of each life unless I
> live in a community where we can be persons not roles to one
> another? [600]

In this passage the sense of the presence of God (which in nontheist terms could be replaced

with a constellation of ethically infused terms - justice, equality, relationship, personhood,

community) challenges the individual to reflect on the profane world in which 'divine'

community appears absent. It is unlike a Christian religious language in which 'suffering' itself

partakes of a shared suffering with the Christ figure and in which faith in Christ alone is

redemptive. The 'unmet need' in this passage is not identified as the need for religious faith.

In this text, the idea of suffering is not valued in and for itself, bringing persons closer to the

divine, drawing them away from the happiness and pleasure offered by the profane world.

Suffering in this example is more particularly the 'unmet need' for the instantiation of the

terms cited above – justice, equality, relationship, personhood and community – or for a

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[600] Parker J. Palmer, *A place called community (Pendle Hill pamphlet, 212),* 1977, 27 reproduced at
QF&P (print edition)*,* ¶23.48.

divine agenda of a community reflecting God's will. [601] Here too, the idea of what might constitute human freedom in the profane realm is brought into focus.

Significantly, this discernment of the 'gap' between the self-will of the profane world and the 'Divine' will, reveals the central agenda of 'community' as an aspect of the Divine will. 'The world' was an untrustworthy realm in early Quakerism.[602] It was the place of temptation and sin, offering the distraction of status and unbridled consumption, yet in this passage it is the location where the divine ends are pursued: *if* human beings could live under conditions that would permit them to give up ideas of personal status and encourage them to curb their consumption, so resources might be more fairly shared, and people might meet each other as 'persons'. The two forces (profane and divine) that appear to be pulling in opposite directions seem here to be *urging* the activist towards the same end – freedom through full participation in autonomous self-governance in community unhindered by inequity. Only the vision of a 'gap' between the *violently unjust* profane world gives access to this *prophecy* of utopic alterity by its dissonance with what is understood here through discernment to be *right:* that community is needed for God's world to come to be. This, for each individual, constitutes the moment of utopic conversion indicated by Abensour.

In early Quakerism the term 'conviction' was preferred to the more recognisable 'conversion.' The individual in being 'convinced' was profoundly aware of their sin, often associated with

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[601] One participant in this study identified 'truth' and 'justice' as 'in themselves…spiritual values' for some people suggesting that separately categorising the ethical and spiritual was problematic (B).
[602] Dandelion, *An Introduction,* 64-68.

the experience of a 'long night of the soul' during which they 'convicted' themselves of their ungodliness. Arising out of this experience Quakers described themselves as 'convinced,' people – having undergone the experience of 'convincement'.[603] Quakers today largely reject the idea that human beings have a 'corrupt' or fallen nature, however the world, in spite of this, retains the marks of error and there is a language of needing to 'mend' it. In their appreciation of the *Jetztzeit,* Quakers, as noted, are affected by the violence of the world and their 'convincement' is mediated through the *Stillstellung* of Quaker discernment, worship, community and habitus. The following example is illustrative.

> The discernment of Yearly Meeting in 2009 was that love and truth compel Friends to solemnise the marriage of same-sex couples equally with opposite-sex couples.
> The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 in England and Wales and Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 have enabled Quakers in these jurisdictions to follow the discernment of Yearly Meeting 2009 that the quality of the relationship of the couple is crucial, not whether they are opposite sex or same sex.[604]

This 'new truth' came after a long process of discernment. Fifty years previously the groundbreaking *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* (1963) had radically shaken up Quaker attitudes. The Guardian newspaper quoted directly from the text when it reported in 2013, how Quakers were celebrating the 50th anniversary of the publication:

> '*An act which expresses true affection between two individuals and gives pleasure to them both, does not seem to us to be sinful by reason alone of the fact that it is homosexual*.'

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[603] The term is still current in Quakerism the OED entry recognises 'convincement' as akin to 'conversion' among Quakers.
[604] *QF&P*, ¶16.07.

> The text comes from *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*, a pioneering and, at the time, hugely controversial book from the religious society, which provided perhaps the very first faith-based affirmation of gay equality and went on to be hugely influential, selling 500,000 copies.

> While focusing most closely on homosexuality, which was then still three years away from being decriminalised, the publication also took decidedly liberal attitudes towards premarital sex and adultery, prompting praise from agony aunt Marjorie Proops in the Daily Mirror but predictable shock in the News of the World.[605]

Quakers (and others) who assert moral, (deontological) grounds for the breaking of norms, rules, and laws, act on the conceptual ground, just as according to Benjamin God is taken to do on the transcendental plane through Divine violence.[606] Haker sees Benjamin's argument for Divine violence (which she calls, 'justified *Gewalt'*) quite differently 'to what Judith Butler has called "ethical violence," which in her understanding is involved in every moral judgment'.[607] For Haker Benjamin's Divine violence is a 'normative, orienting force of morality, rooted in justice, which indeed may, in cases of "last resort," involve violence.'[608] However this does not explain *how* 'justified *Gewalt'* is recognised. Benjamin's identification of this 'creative' aspect of rupture, grounds the claim here that in Quaker discernment and acting under concern, as for secular political philosophy and praxis, the collision of Presence

[605] Peter Walker,'Religion: Quakers mark 50 years since gay rights affirmation' *Guardian,* 13 September 2013. Available online at: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/sep/13/quakers-50-years-affirmation-gay-rights

[606] Walter Benjamin, [Zur Kritik der Gewalt] 'Critique of Violence', in *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz, (New York: Schocken Books by arrangement with Harcourt Inc. 1978, 2007),277-300.

[607] Haker, 'Walter Benjamin and Christian Critical Ethics – A Comment', in Dickinson and Symons eds., *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, loc.7078 of 7946.

[608] Ibid.

and the present time is transformative. This can be seen in the phenomenon of consciousness that in other circumstances brings people onto the streets, and in the sense of 'moment', for example in the crowds that gathered in 1989 to witness and participate in the fall of the Berlin wall, or in those who take to the streets in Hong Kong. These 'events' even when planned and organised are nonetheless examples of 'wild' democracy, and *prefigurative* direct action, where individuals come together to 'act out' or embody the freedom and justice they seek.[609]

 'Present' time in these examples, by the addition of 'presence' exceeds 'linear' historical time. The hesitancy of Quakers, identifying and holding the new before committing to it, as much as in the case of 'sudden' revolt, or spontaneous tumult is equally possible in Benjamin's vision. These moments of *Jetztzeit* are often resonant with the sense that something rotten must fall. That its *rotteness* is simultaneously encountered in its fall. For State actors these will be the moments of greatest fear for systemic rupture and change – moments when revolutionary consciousness is uppermost in minds and when the State might direct coercive violence towards its citizens for its preservation. At this point Abensour's 'extravagant hypothesis' which he ascribes to Levinas, suggests this self-preserving Hobbesian State violence is ideological, obscuring the alternate State of justice and its 'community of all individuals.' Benjamin observes in his critique of 'law-preserving' violence Reason needs to

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[609] See Jonathan M.Smucker, 'Can Prefigurative Politics Replace Political Strategy?' the online *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 7 October 2014, Available at: http://berkeleyjournal.org/2014/10/can-prefigurative-politics-replace-political-strategy/. Smucker notes that Wini Breines in her studies of the New Left, introduced the prefigurative as an alternative model to strategic politics in her text *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968: The Great Refusal*. (New York: Praeger 1982).

be 'resolute' to withstand this prospect. His observation on the death penalty stands for all

law which acts to destroy the end-in-itself nature of the human being.

> ...in this very violence something rotten in law is revealed,[610] above all
> to a finer sensibility, because the latter knows itself to be infinitely
> remote from conditions in which fate might imperiously have shown
> itself in such a sentence. Reason must, however, attempt to approach
> such conditions all the more resolutely, if it is to bring to a conclusion
> its critique of both lawmaking and lawpreserving violence.[611]

Benjamin's resoluteness required of reason goes to the heart of the practice of critical theory,

the conclusion of which demands fulfilment in action. Resoluteness demands the critic should

neither flinch from taking issue with law, nor from challenging its legitimacy when its

'rotteness' is revealed. This is also manifest in the Quaker experience of concern.

The writing of *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* (1963) reflects this drawing towards violent

injustice and meeting it with Reason:

> Keith Wedmore, now 81 and a retired barrister based in California,
> was among a group of 11 Quaker authors, also taking in psychiatrists,
> psychologists and teachers, gathered together by the Cambridge
> zoologist, Anna Bidder, in 1957 to consider issues surrounding
> homosexuality. Wedmore, then aged just 25, was himself bisexual and
> deeply aware of the pressures facing gay people after having
> discovered, several years earlier, the body of a fellow undergraduate
> who had gassed himself.

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[610] A phrase also picked out by Jacques Derrida for attention in 'The Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"' in *Acts of Religion,* edited by Gil Anidjar (New York, London: Routledge, 2002), 273. 230-299.
[611] Benjamin, 'Critique', 286

Wedmore told the Guardian the group spent seven years meeting once every two months in the comfortable surroundings of the University Women's Club in central London.

'We examined each issue completely freely, and you don't often get a chance to do that.'

The initial remit of homosexuality soon widened, he said: 'We realised we couldn't do that in isolation. They, we, aren't some kind of strange breed where the rules apply to them alone. So we started thinking: what is a relationship, what is bad and what is good, and came to this famous conclusion.'

…The book argued: 'Surely it is the nature and quality of a relationship that matters: one must not judge it by its outward appearance but by its inner worth. Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection, and therefore we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse.'[612]

The 1963 conclusion of the group formed in 1957 was not merely a rejection of the law and previous teachings, but the re-examination of what determines a 'good' relationship in toto. Wedmore's discovery of a fellow student driven to suicide is mentioned almost 'in passing' in the Guardian article, yet it must have been a powerful encounter with the violence and 'rottenness' of injustice.

Despite the positive statements about homosexuality in *A Quaker View of Sex,* Blamires noted that in the 1950s and up to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967 the views of Quakers varied as much as the general population.[613] Almost fifty years later the 2009 BYM

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[612] Walker, 'Religion,' *Guardian,* 13 September 2013.
[613] Blamires, *Pushing at the frontiers*, 19.

Minute endorsing gay marriage was also the source of conflict before it was finally accepted, but significantly upon its acceptance there did not appear to be a great exodus of membership, suggesting there were few who were not either reconciled to the changes, or more positively 'convinced'.[614] It is clear to see why this concern and its progress would attract the label 'liberal'. Clearly the rights and needs of the individual are brought to the fore. Yet it is much more than merely 'liberalisation'. The encounter with 'rotteness' in the law led to the assertion of a *positive* value of ethical and committed *relationships between individuals* that 'liberalisation' – which prioritises ever greater liberty for the individual does not. In 2017 the Quaker movement at its Yearly Meeting Gathering held a special interest group attended by the writer, addressing LGBTQ issues where local meetings working towards improving inclusion for trans members were a focus of discussion. Among Quakers there are some (as in the wider community) who question what Trans inclusiveness means for women who have been continuously identified as women from birth, (women whose biological sex has been female since birth and are either lesbian or cis-gendered women) and it is anticipated this will be an ongoing source of internal conflict.[615] It will be interesting to see whether Quakers will undertake a leisurely discernment similar in style to that which preceded *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*, or whether a policy approach towards inclusivity will prevail. As suggested in this study, democracy is conflictual, and discernment seeks decisions achievable in unity. How

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[614] Ibid.,71-83
[615] *The Friends Quarterly* 48, no.2, (2020), contains articles addressing Trans inclusion expressing a range of views.

Quakers will achieve unity in this will provide a testing ground for the current condition of the Quaker testimonies to integrity and equality.

Persistent Hope

In the following article by Sam Donaldson published in *The Friend* on 26th January 2017. He, along with a number of other Quakers was arrested and put on trial for obstruction after gluing themselves together to try to prevent access to Burghfield Atomic Weapons Establishment.

'*Success is not one of the names of God'* - Martin Buber

On 13 December I was sitting on a train heading down from Hull to Reading to stand trial, alongside Hannah, Ellis, John and Gillian, for our nonviolent direct action against Trident at AWE Burghfield. We were pretty certain that, barring some kind of miracle, we would lose.

The loss we faced, though, was tiny in comparison to the landslide vote in the House of Commons earlier in the year, where 'the powers that be' chose to spend £200 billion-plus of our taxpayers money on renewing Trident. But this significant loss is tiny in comparison to the constant losses suffered by countless human beings, animals and mother Earth herself, under the reign of imperialist, white-supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy, now with Donald Trump as its figurehead.

Loss after loss after loss…

What does my Quaker faith have to offer in this kind of hopeless situation?

For me, our Quaker way, committed as it is to nonviolence and justice, cannot be founded or driven by success, or even the hope of success. We need a deeper kind of foundation, something far more challenging, far harder-won, a kind of 'hopeless hope' that has less to do with optimism than a harsh truthfulness about the state of our world and our complicity in it. We need a deeper grounding in the mysteriously silent unconditional love that beats on and on at the

heart of our cosmos, suffering loss after loss after loss along with us.[616]

Many Quakers engaged in political activism have been able to sustain lifelong commitment to activism in their particular calling – be it supporting communities in the aftermath of war, refugee and asylum support, matters of economic and social justice, peace activities, or sustainability – what they lack in numbers they make up for in commitment and it is the source of sustenance of this commitment that is partly sought in this enquiry.[617]

Donaldson's words raise the question as to how Quakers invoke hope when this must be sought in a context of what Donaldson identifies as 'loss after loss'. Modernity sets the context: it is in the 'modern' world that Buber believed the interpersonal relations of an *I-Thou* nature are most absent, threatened and structurally marginalised. This is the context for Quaker 'hopeless hope'. 'Hope' endures, not only where 'love' 'calls' for it, but also because of some confidence in the ethical 'rightness' of discerned testimony. This is so even in the face of catastrophe, when it might otherwise be difficult to find motivation to act, or to identify the most instrumentally effective approach. Quaker hope it should be clear is not aimed at personal future reward. 'Hope' for personal salvation, offers no answer to the ethical 'categorical imperative' laid on all those who come after Auschwitz, 'to arrange their thoughts

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[616] 'Witness at Burghfield : Sam Donaldson writes about putting his faith into action' *The Friend* 26 Jan 2017. https://thefriend.org/article/witness-at-burghfield/ (subscription content)
[617] For the disproportionate impact of Quaker peace activism in relation to their numbers see: Martin Ceadal, 'The Quaker Peace Testimony and its Contribution to the British Peace Movement: An Overview', *Quaker Studies* 7, no.1 (2003): 9-29.

and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen.'[618]

Genocides and ethnic cleansings have continued, recently in the abuses suffered by the Rohingya in Myanmar,[619] and the Uighurs in China.[620] From these examples, perpetual human-made catastrophe appears intractable, everywhere apparent. Yet it is not capable of entire and complete 'totality'. *Hope* as imagined in this construct is a condition that holds the door open even if it can neither close it on one side to seal catastrophe out, nor quarantine liberation from catastrophe. Benjamin's work in this context remains prescient and important and Quaker 'hope' needs to be understood for its ability to endure in a hostile environment. For some Quakers this endurance is clearly found through the support of their meetings. During the period of lockdown during the COVID-19 outbreak this Quaker takes her reflections on injustice to the compost heap:

> I wonder what to do when I'm short on resilience and long on loss. I dig and I dig, finding leggy white roots and shoots, deprived of light, yet sturdily alive in their underworld of darkness. I examine these subterranean survivors, mulling over the divide that grows between the enfranchised and the poor.
>   …
> In … Meeting's Zoom this morning, Friends remind me that any human utopia is in itself a kind of composting, a place of radical transformation. In Islam and in Christianity, if paradise was a garden, the thing we might most need from it is its compost heap: that

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[618] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* 365.

[619] 'Rohingya crisis: The Gambia accuses Myanmar of genocide at top UN court', BBC Asia News, 11th November 2019 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-50375739.

[620] 'China accused of genocide over forced abortions of Uighur Muslim women as escapees reveal widespread sexual torture', Independent 6 October 2019: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-uighur-muslim-women-abortions-sexual-abuse-genocide-a9144721.html

powerhouse of change, the place where hope like a live writhe of worms breeds.[621]

Hope is a critical element in Quaker epistemology, because it relies upon discerned 'truth' even when this is obscure, or uncertain. Truth, despair and hope, operate within an historical narrative as Rachel Muers indicates in her meditation on the impact of postmodern 'post-truth' on national identity. She indicates the importance of truth when oppression is hidden within narratives of history as progress.

> Stories of progress, apart from anything else, beg the question of at whose expense the progress has been made...If in the brave new world there is only my truth and your truth, what becomes of the demand for justice for those who suffered under the old order? What becomes of the painstaking rediscovery of the histories to which I referred earlier[622] – the concealment of which, one might wish to say, would not be 'another form of truth' but a lie?
> Another way of telling, or reading, this story of modernity and postmodernity would lead it into despair. By the end of it, on such an account, there is no way in which the truth, should it be spoken, can be heard. More than this, it is hard to see any way of regaining a 'ground under our feet',[623] a safe common space within which people

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[621] Dana Littlepage Smith 'Waiting may well be the compost in a life of prayer,' *The Friend,* 21 May 2020, https://thefriend.org/article/waiting-may-well-be-the-compost-in-a-life-of-prayer.

[622] Previously silenced voices of women, black and colonial subjects.

[623] Muers' point of theological reference throughout this passage is Bonhoeffer writing in the 1940s: 'One may ask whether there have ever before in human history been people with so little ground under their feet – people to whom every available alternative seemed equally intolerable, repugnant and futile, who looked beyond all these existing alternatives … Or perhaps one should rather ask whether the responsible thinking people of each generation that stood at a turning-point in history did not feel as much as we do, simply because something new was emerging that could not be seen in the existing alternatives.' From Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison,* ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. John Bowden et al., (London: SCM.,1971), 3, quoted in Rachel Muers, 'New Voices, New Hopes' *Towards Tragedy/Reclaiming Hope: Literature, Theology and Sociology in Conversation,*

can encounter and interact with each other without recourse to brute force or the imposition of muteness.[624]

Muers seeks the 'common space' through perceiving God offering a new 'place to stand' that does not depend on silencing or suppression, enabling 'hope' and through hope, action. It is asserted here that this 'new place to stand' is offered in the utopic gap, in which the dissonance of a violent reality is most keenly perceived.

The area 'not their own' in Muers's interpretation is provided by God, in this study it is the product of discernment. In the words of the Quaker activists quoted above, the certitude of *love,* or the *rightness* of equality, in a world dominated by evil are paradoxical. Yet *hoped for* certainties can sustain their activism however perilous this is for all generations 'after Auschwitz'.[625] *Prophetic* moments are at risk of being lost entirely under the totalising view of history either as the inexorable progress of Reason, or the dialectical inevitability of historical materialism or even in the model of 'permanent catastrophe' itself, always in danger of sliding towards nihilism through repetition and descriptions of its sameness.

Dandelion et al., (London, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2016). Available from: vbk://9781351878418 (no pages).

[624] Muers, 'New Voices'.

[625] Echoing a passage in *Prisms* in which Adorno stated poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. A thought he later revised in *Negative Dialectics:* 'Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream,'362*.* The expression 'after Auschwitz' is seen as problematic by Abensour. Abensour notably dedicated his 1986 piece 'Persistante Utopie' in *Utopique II: L'homme est un animal utopique,* (Paris: Sens & Tonka, [2010] 2013), to the children and teachers of Izieu, deported and murdered at Auschwitz in April 1944. Troubled by being asked to write a piece '*after Auschwitz'* to be given at Izieu, Abensour (for other reasons), never wrote the planned paper. But it had seemed to him wrong when the word 'after' effaced the faces of the murdered in too complete a way. Asked if he would ever write the piece he noted he would have to change the title to beyond (*au-delà)* to prevent the leaving behind, or effacement of the victims of the past: Abensour, *La communauté politique,* 372-3.

Abensour reading Benjamin, (through Adorno), recognised the critical necessity to hold the state of emergency in mind, for '[t]o think of Fascism from the point of view of the victims (Jewish or proletarian) of the state of emergency is to construct a permanent place for barbarism in history'.[626] Abensour suggests Benjamin's final meditation 'On the concept of History' is echoed in and answered by Adorno in his piece 'Don't exaggerate' in *Minima Moralia:* [627] 'Horror consists in its always remaining the same … but is realised as constantly different, unforeseen'[628]…'The identity lies in the non-identity, in what, not having yet come to pass, denounces what has. The statement that things are always the same is false in its immediateness, and true only when introduced into the dynamics of totality.'[629] The escape from *totality* (and repetition) becomes the priority for critical historical analysis, because it is the only place where an otherwise impossible hope could be fulfilled. Levinas notes in his introduction to *Totality and Infinity*: 'The moral consciousness can sustain the mocking gaze of the political man only if the certitude of peace dominates the evidence of war.'[630]

Abensour was influenced by the route taken towards the *evasion* of totality by Levinas. For Abensour, marking the wounds of the past is critical for the discovery of a *paradoxical* utopianism.

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[626] Abensour *Les Passages Blanqui*, 44 quoted here from Löwy *Redemption*, 112.
[627] Abensour Les Passages Blanqui, 44.
[628] Adorno, *Minima Moralia:Reflections from Damaged Life,* trans.E.F.N.Jephcott, (London:Verso,[1951], 1974, 2005)*,*234.
[629] Adorno *Minima,* 234-5. I have here amended the quotation Abensour relies upon to extend it to take in Adorno's comment on the concept of totality.
[630] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, *An Essay on Exteriority,* trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, [1961], 1969) 22.

> The time of history is not an empty, homogenous material, it always carries inscribed within it, in spite of forgetfulness, the wounds of the past, ineffaceable traces of caesura. That which signifies, that the emancipated society, if emancipated society there is, if there is to be one, will necessarily bear the mark of sufferings of past generations, the trace of suffering inflicted, lives broken, annihilated. Out of that, perhaps there is the paradoxical chance of access to a persistant *utopie* under the sign of non-sovereignty.[631]

Hille Haker traces a similar line in Benjamin's conjunction of redemption and history.

> [H]appiness is the promise of opportunity, a potential, but seen only from the historical perspective of the "future of the past," and exactly not as the "future of the present": happiness is a memory, entailed in the past's dreams of the future. And yet, this potentiality and opportunity is "the weak messianic power" of every generation; from the historical perspective, it is this future of the past, the past's unfulfilled momentum (or longing) of happiness that puts a claim, as much as an endowment onto the present.[632]

For Abensour the 'persistent utopian' is not annihilated by the sovereignty of the dominant catastrophe – rather its very persistence illuminates both its own *and* the dominators non-sovereignty. Hope persists in remembrance, but cannot determine the utopic outcome with certainty, which would extinguish the need for hope itself. In these circumstances, if 'hope' is to persist, the one who hopes must accept at the outset its 'non-sovereignty' precisely in order for hope to be hope and not decline towards the closure of absolute certitude, which could induce the dogmatic and identitarian thinking associated with coercive behaviours and forced reconciliation.

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[631] Abensour, *La communauté politique*, 373. [All translations from this text – VW.]
[632] Hille Haker, 'Walter Benjamin',loc.6891 of 7946.

Redemption and Utopia and the gap between

> 'then we are conscious of a gap between what is and what might be.
> …This experience is at the heart of religious experience and it's the
> source of the prophetic voice.'[633]

In the remainder of this chapter I return to Walter Benjamin's work and Michael Löwy's

reading of it in order to show how Quakerism offers a 'micro' working example of a

community engaging in radical utopianism that has roots in the republican tradition. Löwy

forges a new term to try to describe the disparate fusion, or continuum he identifies in the

thought of authors as diverse as Scholem, Landauer, Bloch and Benjamin: 'Historical

Messianism' or a 'romantic/messianic conception of history'.

> Uniting the *Tikkun* and social utopia, this configuration reinterprets
> the messianic tradition in light of romanticism, and charges
> romanticism with a revolutionary tension – the result being a new
> modality of 'philosophy of history'. A new version of the link between
> past, present and future.[634]

However grand and totalising this visionary stance appears Löwy is careful to distinguish it

from the grandly totalising narratives of fascist political-theology. It is an 'impersonal'

messianism that rejects 'worship of an infallible Leader' and evades the worst forms of

'political religion' by virtue of an Enlightenment inheritance of values 'liberty, equality,

tolerance, humanism, *Vernunft* (reason)'.[635] Twenty-first century Quakerism in Britain shares

these values, however the important strand of German Romanticism that Löwy discusses in

his study is missing from the Quaker mix with its seventeenth century puritanical roots. Löwy

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[633] Dale, 'Beyond the Spirit', 60 quoted by Dale in 'Quaker Understanding', 105.
[634] Löwy, *Redemption*,201
[635] Ibid.,202

sees in Romanticism a drive to 're-enchant' the disenchanted world of modernity. For Quakers as inheritors of a live religious tradition there is no discontinuity with the enchanted world. However, Quaker 'enchantment', has conversely been influenced by scientific discovery. Liberal Quakers in the 19th century sought expansion and 'grounding' of their 'enchantment' in the 'real' to counter the dangers of being 'too inward-looking.'[636]

As noted throughout this study, the observabl*e* and reported source of the pain that provokes action under concern, is for the most part the unjust and violent condition of the world, yet in a world replete with images of suffering what makes Quaker discernment different? One suggestion is its grounding in the experienced present. Its ability to evade the 'cloak of invisibility' thrown over the world by epistemic orders of economy and instrumentality. Schecter locates Benjamin's work both in its theoretical and historical context as part of a much longer narrative of the critique of instrumental reason as it functions in modern economic orders. Benjamin's theologically inflected historical-philosophy, invokes not merely destructive violence, but also that 'transformation of life and the creation of new values and knowledge'. It is the spring from which legitimacy draws its source, but which 'is suppressed for the sake of the preservation of what Benjamin refers to as "mere life", and marginalized by what Marx analyses as the self-legitimating power exercised by the "dull compulsion of economic relations"'. [637]

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[636] Geoffrey Cantor, 'Quakers and Science', in Angell and Dandelion *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, 520-531.
[637] Schecter, *The Critique,* 90.

It is clear that in some sense the discernment of Quaker concern releases the suppressed, or brings into the discursive light, aspects of the life of a society that are otherwise made invisible and marginalised in the 'pre-reflective background' the 'taken for grantedness' of the 'lifeworld' within which epistemology, political structures and society are grounded.[638] Habermas quotes Wittgenstein to illustrate his point on the 'deepseated, implicit knowledge *about* which we normally know nothing because it is simply unproblematic.' It is what makes communication possible because all speech acts fall within it. He quotes Wittgenstein observing that belief that stands fast may do so 'not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing; it is rather held fast by what lies around it.'[639] To translate this to some lifeworld examples; homeless people in doorways, casual sexism or homophobia in the workplace, the images of starvation in news broadcasts, images of war. Once these experiences and images that are 'in full sight' but somehow not cognised or having been suppressed are brought into conjunction with Presence and are not merely present, so that they can be fully 'received' there is violence done to the persons who discern. Quaker discernment is transformative in that functionally differentiated 'others' normally perceived as roles (the homeless, the starving, immigrants) predetermined by the fixity of economic forces, become 'persons'. Those who are rendered invisible in a pre-reflective lifeworld, through the experience of *violent revelation* come to be partners in a dialogical relation in which they too have agency.

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[638] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* vol.1, trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Cambridge:Polity, [1981], 1984),335-7.

[639] Ibid.,337, quoting Ludwig Wittgenstein. (Edition cited here is *On Certainty,* trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M.Anscombe, (Oxford,UK, Cambridge, USA: Basil Blackwell, 1969),¶ 103).

It would be surprising if the violent experience of that recognition did not bring expiation in its wake.

In 1997 Rex Ambler started a movement among Quakers in Britain called 'Experiment with Light.' What Quakers seek in the experiment and in worship more generally is Truth as 'reality'. Here is Helen Meads description of the process:

> The core steps in the process are: 'mind the Light' (that is, pay attention to what the conscience shows); 'open your heart to the Truth' (look at the reality shown by the conscience in an attitude of receptivity); 'wait in the Light' (look at what is shown in a detached manner, distancing oneself from it); and 'submit to the truth' (welcome the insights and accept what is shown).[640]

Although the process differs from that which takes place in a regular meeting for worship (MfW) the practice of 'expectant waiting' for Truth as *reality* to break-in marks a difference between Quaker silence and Buddhist approaches to mindfulness or meditation. It is far from an overcoming of the mind's distractions and can include close attention to the mind, the sensible present moment and anything else that may enter the thoughts. It is 'expectant waiting'.[641] Images arise from this that are then expressed in ministry which discloses the discernment of the individual to those present. Stuart Masters, recording John Punshon's contemporary understanding of British Quaker worship, observes that 'worship is held in anticipation of transformation' and although Punshon warned against its 'idol-isation' Masters remarks the importance of 'silence and stillness [that] enables the Spirit to do its

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[640] Helen Claire Meads, '"Experiment with Light" in Britain: The Heterotopian Nature of A Contemporary Quaker Spiritual Practice'. (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2011), 9.
[641] *QF&P*, §1.02, ¶8.

work within the human conscience'.[642] Both ministry and 'the discipline of waiting in silence gives time for germination and for the process of discernment.'[643] Quaker Business meetings have a special role: 'They are a sign and an example to the world of how we could all live in a reconciling spirit. They are the first place to which the concerns laid upon individuals are brought. They train us to hear the kernel of truth in the utterances of others as we learn to look through complications and distractions with a simple eye.'[644]

The purposeful aim of encountering 'reality' in religion is a long standing theological and philosophical question.[645] In the interview extracts above it is indicated by respondent 3 tapping the table, indicating the present and the material as the real. I suggest 'reality' in Quaker concern, is primarily encountered via a response to an affective rupture – a caesura to use Abensour's term - caused by the 'reality' of violence, in the present or in historical memory. *Believing* in equality and undertaking work to uncover and combat inequality, is not the same as encountering a rupture that *pushes* or *leads* the individual to act and which is felt as coming from another place than the self-will. The radical utopic potential for 'conversion' understood by Abensour in a phenomenological, Levinasian sense, emerges in this gap between 'self-will' and 'divine-will' in the Quaker discernment of reality.[646] While an interpersonal dialogical relation of respect for the other may be pre-requisite, for *action* to

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[642] Stuart Masters, Guided by the Light, Living God's Justice:The Theological and Spiritual Writings of John Punshon', *Quaker Studies* 22, no.2 (1917):211.
[643] Masters 'Guided', 211.
[644] Masters, 'Guided',212 quoting John Punshon, *Encounter with Silence: reflections from the Quaker tradition*, (London: Quaker Home Service, 1987),99.
[645] For John MacMurray relation to God, was only 'real' as found 'in our relation to our neighbours': MacMurray, *Search,* 72.
[646] Miguel Abensour, *Emmanuel Levinas,*49-50.

follow, a conversion in this context must involve both the recognition of, or experience of injustice, and the realisation that it need not be so. Only a utopic sense of what might take the place of the unjust present can ultimately offer sufficient motivation to act.

Abensour is careful to say that when he talks about 'la conversion utopique' he is not talking about a religious sense of conversion. He has in mind a Levinasian moment of épochè which offers a model of the 'how' it occurs. Echoing Kant, Abensour regards the conversion moment as that which wakes one from dogmatic slumbers, operating along two paths: 'à savoir l'épochè phénoménologique d'une part, et l'image dialectique, fruit d'une metamorphose de l'utopie, de l'autre; Levinas et Walter Benjamin'[647] Critically Abensour sees a passageway thrown between the two in this phrase of Levinas, from *Of God who comes to Mind:* 'La face visible de cette *interruption ontologique* – de cette *épochè* – ne coïncide-t-elle pas avec le mouvement 'pour une société meilleure'?'[648] In the move between épochè and utopia, you find how épochè is manifest, and when you move from utopia to épochè, you perceive how utopia functions, or '*the how*' of the utopian conversion: 'D'un côté, quand on va de *l'épochè* à l'utopie, on découvre comment *l'épochè* se manifeste, apparâit; de l'autre côté, quand on va de l'utopie à *l'épochè* on perçoit comment l'utopie fonctionne ou le *comment* de la conversion utopique.'[649] In this study the shock of violence and its dominating presence, is a critical element of the Quaker discerns of injustice, be it in relation to homelessness, the

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[647] Abensour *Emmanuel Levinas,* 52.
[648] Emmanuel Levinas, *De dieu qui vient à l'idée*, 2nd edition, (Paris: Vrin, 1986, 1992), 25-6, reproduced in Abensour *Emmanuel Levinas,* 52.
[649] Abensour, *Emmanuel Levinas,* 52.

conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the arms trade or forced migration. Concern requires a discernment from within épochè that brings conversion, both pacific and utopic. In the religious usage it opens a gap between self-will and Divine will and makes the gap between both these, *and* between the present, past and possible future, cognisable as a route of escape. This is the critical-historical mediation at work that connects experience of the violent and contingent 'present' with its 'other', a pacific utopic 'Presence'.

Throughout the thesis the claim is made for a republican strand in Quakerism. This has been addressed in previous chapters through identifying; the arenas for Quaker political activism and its methods, the corporate and democratic nature of Quaker discernment, the principle testimonies, *Ffriendship* more generally, and fraternité and equality in particular. To identify these strands it was necessary to rely upon conventionally accepted markers of republicanism such as the core principles of popular democracy with its optimistic aim to unify the governors and governed and its reliance on a citizenry imbued with fraternity and publicly engaged. The final chapter departs from this more classical model and takes a more speculative look at what the Quaker example suggests for future developments in republicanism which will need to be worked through more fully elsewhere. Tentatively it is suggested that Quakerism indicates a potential direction of travel for republicanism under modernity, in order to evade the dangers of coerced unity and forced reconciliation, not as a prefigurative community in microcosm of a putative larger whole, but as prefigurative of certain features that are now prerequisites of democratic intervention in the modern functionally differentiated state. Among these features are; the need for individual experience and autonomy in democratic engagement to be equally valued, the open nature of community not united upon identitarian principles, the embedding of ethics arising in lifeworld experience through

community discernment, epistemic restraint produced by mild scepticism, and openness to

'wild' democratic and utopian tendencies as signals marking arenas for urgent political action.

Chapter 7: A radical utopic community of all individuals

> May we go forth and reshape the world. May our exploits be worthy
> of the first blockbuster film to tell the tale of a civilisation that averted
> climate change, of a people who dismantled entrenched social
> inequalities of class, race, gender, sexuality, and more; a people who
> learnt to live in peace with the needs of all, catered for within the
> limits of our planet. Let it tell a story not of heroes, but of communities
> that forged our future anew. We must imagine this future, for, if we
> cannot imagine it, we cannot speak it into existence. --- Chris Alton.[650]

La Boétie's *Le Discours de la servitude voluntaire* [1549] has been read by commentators as claiming that people desire to be dominated and their domination is a form of *voluntary servitude*.[651] Miguel Abensour claims however that a close reading of La Boétie reveals an immanent critique of power, domination and servitude, and that La Boétie recognised humankind as a being-for-freedom: 'a political animal destined to establish a *polis* in order to '*live well' [bien-vivre] '*in a space of freedom, under the sign of friendship [amitié].'[652] Central to this freedom for Abensour is the notion of plurality.[653] Abensour contrasts Hegel's view, in which the State produces the people; Marx's in which the people produce the State and proposes that La Boétie's formula is one in which a combination of all individuals are opposed to the single entity of the whole 'tous Un': '"tous uns" au pluriel, oppose au "tous Un" au

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[650] Chris Alton, *Changing.*

[651] Abensour discusses the reception of La Boétie in *La communauté,* 101-118; Miguel Abensour, 'Is there a proper way to use the voluntary servitude hypothesis?' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 16, no.3 (2011):329-348, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2011.607299 (modified translation of an earlier article of the same name that appeared in *Réfractions* in 2006) and Miguel Abensour, *La Boétie*, *prophète de la liberté,*(Paris: Sens and Tonka, 2018).

[652] '[U]n animal politique destiné à instaurer une *polis* et à y '*bien-vivre'* dans un espace de liberté, sous le signe d'amitié', Abensour, *La communauté,* 106. Trans.—VW.

[653] Abensour, *La Boétie,* 25-29 ; Abensour, *La communauté,* 108-10.

singulier'.[654]   The formula 'tous uns' appears in La Boétie's discourse in a lengthy passage

where he indicates the gifts nature has bestowed on humankind. La Boétie observes that

although there are differences between men, nature did not put them all in a locked field so

the stronger could act like brigands to feast on the weak, but for those with greater strength

to give assistance to others in need, as all occupying the same house. The gift of speech was

for men to get to know one another and spend time together, share their thoughts and

desires and so tighten the bonds of society. For La Boétie this was not for the purpose of

making a unity of mankind but a togetherness of all individuals; 'qu'elle ne vouloit pas tant

nous faire unis que tous uns'. [655] From this one could not doubt that men were naturally free

and naturally companions, nor should anyone take from it the understanding that nature put

anyone in servitude, as 'we are all put in fellowship'- '*tous mis en compaignie*'.[656]

Abensour cites Arendt as having understood the significance of this plurality in the resistance

to Totality, but also Levinas 'that other great thinker of plurality' in his expression 'les moi's'

[sic] in the plural.

> The ontological condition of plurality in Hannah Arendt's terms,
> defines the form of relation that connects us *with* our singularities,
> *through* our singularities, without being contrary to, in denial of, or

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[654] Abensour, *La Boétie,* 38.

[655] Étienne de la Boétie, *Le Discours de la servitude volontaire* (1549) transcription by Charles Teste (1836), 57, available at Les classiques de sciences sociales, Université de Québec à Chicoutimi http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1522/cla.lae.dis. [A variety of English translations are available. Of the two consulted neither marks out 'uns' in such a way as to note its unique difference but appear to suggest the opposite: see, Estienne de la Boétie, *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude [1576]* trans. Harry Kurz (1942), 10, available at The Online Library of Liberty (September 2011) http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2250; Etienne de La Boetie, *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, trans. James B.Atkinson and David Sices, (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012), 9. Kindle.]

[656] Ibid.

stifling them or doing violence to them. Relationship that expresses itself at intervals – between acquaintance [*l'entre-connaissance*] – and that can be described by reason of that 'between', *inter esse* – as a binding separation [*de séparation liante*].[657]

It is important for Abensour's position to propose a contra-Hobbes view of humankind. Hobbes claimed that human beings in a state of nature would revert to a war of all against all and that the preservation of human life against other human 'wolves' required the existence of a single sovereign power to maintain order.

Pierre Clastres' work on 'pre' political societies that exist before the 'malencontre' (misfortune or misadventure) of the birth of the State suggested these early 'primitive' societies, often viewed as *pre*-political were in fact deeply political. They engaged in constant conflict against each other that prevented the emergence of a singular entity – the all-dominating Unity or 'one' of the State. This suggests a more complex balance at play in communities without States that for periods of time prevented the emergence of a single unity of domination within the community. Clastres work also offers reason to reject a Hegelian idea of the emergence and continuance of the State as a 'progression' of freedom, or its concretisation.[658] The State model in most western liberal democracies today is neither Hobbes' leviathan nor Hegel's concretisation of freedom. Rather it attempts to steer a variety of functionally differentiated but often bureaucratic and self-governing institutions which can, particularly in relation to the economic sphere dictate State actions rather than be responsive to democratic authority vested in the elected legislative and executive branches. This too is an anti-Hobbes position in

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[657] Abensour, *La communauté,* 108.
[658] Abensour, *La communauté,* 78-83.

which the political State negotiates its own functionally differentiated role alongside and against the self-determining actions of surrounding systems. These processes can be regarded as undermining democratic control and, ultimately, the legitimacy of the State, which cannot guarantee its electors a 'seat at the table'.

In order to deal with this complex arrangement of mediations Schecter has suggested the need to theorise a 'framework in waiting'.[659] This chapter considers what elements of the Quaker example given here contribute to that project. It argues for the necessity of 'utopic' and ethically infused political engagement by citizen political activists in exactly the styles prefigured by Quaker action under concern. Before moving onto that it is also worth making one final observation on de la Boétie's *Discourse.* There is another important concept at work in the *Discourse* not discussed by Abensour as such but implicit in his understanding – equality. While calls for equality are not always associated in the liberal mind with the idea of liberty or freedom, there are nevertheless grounds for La Boétie to say that without equality there is no freedom because for La Boétie there is no friendship without it. The society of domination and servitude is unequal, and the tyrant is excluded from friendship exactly because of his position in a hierarchy which closes him off from friendship with others.

> it would be difficult to find true friendship in a tyrant; elevated above others and having no companions, he finds himself already beyond the pale of friendship, which receives its real sustenance from an equality that, to proceed without a limp, must have its two limbs equal.[660]

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[659] Schecter, *Critical Theory and Sociological Theory,* 184.
[660] La Boétie, *Discourse,* trans. Kurz, 24.

Quaker Douglas Gwynn's observation that '…equality is the mode of community. But community is the fulfilment of equality' has an immediate connection.[661] Although the Quaker community of equals grew from a desire for Christian community, Gwynn concludes the 'social implications of Quaker practice remain much the same' in modern Quakerism. [662]

Saul Newman impressively argues for La Boétie's political theory to be viewed as 'anarcho-republicanism,' however his conclusion is close to what Abensour described as an 'anarcho-spiritualist'[663] response as Newman concludes freedom is understood as an 'an ontological condition of the subject, rather than as something dependent on external conditions.'[664] Abensour suggests this reading of La Boétie is possible – answering 'self-servitude' with 'self-emancipation' but ultimately 'plurality' as defined by Abensour and Arendt gives rise to a different form of freedom to the ontological – the political.[665] Abensour marks out La Boétie's suggested 'self-emancipation' and the choice it provokes between an 'anarchist-spiritualist' interpretation that calls for an internal 'change of souls' versus a political emancipation that requires a critical analysis of the 'internal causality' of servitude so that we 'understand that it depends on us taking care of our emancipation'.[666] Newman claims La Boétie's republic is a republic of friends who are also equals and imbued with civic virtue. Newman does not

[661] Douglas Gwynn, 'Enacting Truth: The Dynamics of Quaker Practice' in *Befriending Truth: Quaker Perspectives,* Jeffrey Dudiak ed., (Longmeadow, Philadelphia: Friends Association for Higher Education, 2015), Kindle.loc.3113 of 5130.
[662] Ibid.
[663] Abensour, 'Is there', 346.
[664] Saul Newman, 'La Boétie and republican liberty: Voluntary servitude and non-domination', *European Journal of Political Theory* 0, no.0 (2019): 17, doi: 10.1177/1474885119863141. Journals.sagepub.com.
[665] Abensour, 'Is there', 346.
[666] Ibid.

theorise the relation with plurality discussed by Abensour nor how his reading would lead to the political engagement he suggests (civil disobedience) but it is clear from this important work that the emancipatory reading of La Boétie is now well-established. This combination of friendship, equality and liberty of conscience are keystones of Quaker political activism. Pettit's observations of the interrelated nature of these three political features of republicanism are supported in La Boétie's *Discourse*.

Some conjectures on the State

For Abensour La Boétie's discourse offers the reader a chance to discover plurality and freedom in a 're-politicized' civil society in contrast to the State – a 'totality closed on itself:' 'The true place of the conflict is not between the social and the political (the civil society and the state) but between politics and statism. Such a distinction is all the more precious in that it enables us to decrypt difficult texts, such as Marx's manuscript of 1843, the 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', where one sees the spectre of the opposition between politics and statism in the form of 'true democracy' against the state.'[667]

As previously noted in chapter 5 liberalism struggles to deal with combining ethics and policy in a diverse society and yet regulatory frameworks depend on ethical content for legitimacy which in turn is underwritten by democratic input. Abensour in developing his anti-Hobbes position finds in Levinas, a contrasting fundamentally ethical State, that comes into existence to limit an otherwise infinite Levinasian responsibility to the other.[668] Abensour imagines two

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[667] Abensour, 'Is there,' 346.
[668] Abensour, 'L'extravagante'.

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forms of the State: the first, a 'centripetal' 'State of Violence' concerned to limit violence by holding, as Weber suggested, the monopoly of violence, the second, 'the State of Justice' subjected to a double focal point of 'exteriority' with a centrifugal logic such that even when it acts as a State it does not forget the condition of 'proximity' between individuals, which by its limitless duty, affords a way out *beyond* the State. Its ineffaceable relation with proximity (which it exists to limit) is never forgotten. It gives birth to, or revives, an *an-arcic* [*an-archique*] that 'escapes all archè.'[669] The Quaker idea of an amendable State appears conformable to this concept of a State that escapes arche without disintegration and that depends upon ongoing discernment. Quaker discernment, which draws its strength from personal and reflective lifeworld observation, tested in the company of others has a powerful record of identifying and recognising injustice. Its deliberative characteristics are already replicated in some citizen consultation processes, although these processes are largely prompted, and managed by professional academics or bureaucrats. The autonomy and longevity of Quakerism is not matched in these for a. Yet, similar communities are imaginable that, like Quakers, might determine and address their own autonomously discerned concerns in a framework where 'sovereignty' would be similarly horizontally distributed.

Abensour resorts frequently to the Levinasian term *intrigue.* This is difficult to translate and can literally mean plot, storyline, or sometimes problem. In this case Abensour echoes the Levinasian notion of 'intrigue' and in keeping with his usage intrigue is retained throughout, although italicised here to indicate its Levinasian usage. For Levinas intrigue is experienced in

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[669] Abensour, *La communauté,* 87.

the originary encounter with the Face of the other and out of that Levinas's ethics of responsibility towards the other arises.

> [Archè is] power, but also beginning and commandment. The an-archic *intrigue*, before beginning, before commandment, the original immemorial *intrigue*, disrupts clock-time and historical time. An-archic *intrigue* is not to be confused with anarchism which rests on a principal – the predominance of reason over authority. There can be no principle of *an-archie*. *An-archie* does not rule, insists Levinas…It prevents the closure of the State into a centripetal totality, shut in upon itself. It radically disturbs the political, right to the roots, and admits the arrival of moments of negation that do not transform themselves into affirmation, as if they were implementing a negative dialectic. The path to the 'One', to the State is barred and this disturbance points to a new disorder, that is not an order in the making.[670]

A possible route out of totality through negative utopianism is found in a form of *an-archie* in which the State and totality are never able to be fully achieved, and yet where the State does not fall apart. Although Levinas insists upon an 'irreducible primordial fraternity', [*l'existence d'une fraternité première irrédictible*], Abensour, (through his reading of Clastres, Lefort , Levinas, and Arendt), suggests a just non-coercive State is thinkable based upon multiples, communities and the plurality of individuals.[671] There is a danger here of a fraternal utopian 'nowhere' where individuals are merely 'bound' by their differences, – their 'séparation liante' - both from each other and from the controlling powers in their State. Schecter makes it clear that simplistic attempts at mediated unity are of limited value, and this weak

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[670] Abensour, *La communauté,* 87.
[671] Abensour, *La communauté,* 85. Abensour cites the distinction between a violent and just State in part from Levinas's distinction between an Athenian (and Roman) *polis* as opposed to that imagined under the signifier Jerusalem:Abensour 'L'extravagante',384-386.

connectivity across differences appears even less likely to succeed than more obviously

identitarian attempts around class or nation. Nevertheless, the Quaker example does indicate

at least a version of mediated 'non-identity in community' is possible. As noted in the

interviews the *desire* of individuals to be in community (particularly at this historical juncture

when community is made problematic by precarity, transience and the dispersal of more

traditional associations around church or neighbourhood) at least suggests there may be

viability for Schecter's 'overlapping constellations of active citizens'.

A political community of all individuals but not anarchism

Adapting La Boétie, Abensour envisages the Just polity that might arise through *an-archie* as

a 'communauté politique de tous-uns' - a political community of all individuals.[672] For

Abensour, this is the root of a true democracy and is marked by both conflict and anti-Statism.

The significance for this study of Quakerism are the marked similarities between Quakerism

and this *an-archic* structure. 'Limitless' duty to the other through 'proximity' is suggested in

chapter 3 in the obligation to acknowledge 'that of God' in every person. The adherence to

the principal of individual conscience within a plurality of consciences joined in community

and the adherence to testimonies without restriction to 'creeds' suggests the permanent

openness of the epistemic frame of Quakerism. This frame maintains all individuals under one

community made open and permeable by the idea of *Ffriendship.* However, this an-archism,

does not suggest that Quaker politics is anarchistic although the conjunction of loose

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[672] Abensour, 'Is there,'; Abensour, *La Boétie,* 46 – 58 ; Abensour *La communauté,* 107-118.

organising principles cited by Abensour as applicable to political anarchism has echoes in Quakerism. Neither does it imply that Quakerism is somehow 'friendly' in an uncomplicated way.

Anarchistic features may be made out in contemporary Quakerism, but as noted in Chapter 1, they are less significant than those features suggestive of republicanism. Despite the rejection of creed or 'orthodoxy', the 'organising principles', or values, of Quakerism, its ethical *arche,* are the testimonies Organisationally, the importance of community uncovered in the research suggests that Abensour's 'community of all individuals' is a theoretical model in sympathy with Quaker structures.[673] While the Quaker 'arche' of BYM is singular, in respect of each local meeting it is also probably right to say these are each 'communities of individuals' too. Abensour's republican preference for 'community' in the singular may need some reconsideration. While applicable to Quakerism, the possibility for a single community in the republican State seems both far-fetched and in some respects redundant, because if Schecter is right and citizens must engage differentially between different institutions to bring democratic (and normative) influence to bear then the effectiveness of a singular democratic 'mass' electorate is called in question.

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[673] For example, further work in this vein might usefully address the relation of Quakerism to 'savage democracy' and the paradoxical 'principals of anarchism' considered by Miguel Abensour, following readings of Claude Lefort in *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*, Polity Press, 2011. See 'Appendix: ''Savage Democracy' and 'Principle of Anarchy''' pp. 101-124.

Final remarks

Despite the elements of sociological study this is a thesis in social and political thought. It is fundamentally a thesis concerned with utopian democratic theory and as such is ultimately exploring an *idealised* version of a utopic Quaker example, not simply attempting to delineate Quakerism as it is practiced. There is no intention to say Quakers uniformly achieve the religion's ideals however, there are elements of Quaker praxis that can be regarded as valuable and offer possible models for radical democratic politics. These are among the core findings of the study and are what makes the Quaker example of interest to theorists of democratic republican thought.

The following comments are an attempt to set out why the version of Quakerism I have presented here has relevance for contemporary social and political thought. It must be understood that this thesis is not intended to be a 'defence' of Quakerism as it exists and is practised by British Quakers. My research has considered in chapters 6 and 7, how the *ideal* version of Quakerism, implied by Quaker testimony and some Quaker praxis as delineated in earlier chapters, has significance for the reincorporation of utopian thought into political philosophy, after Abensour. In spite of the organising *arche* of the Religious Society of Friends and its religious origins, I suggest that Quakerism as it is described here, can be characterised as *an-archic* in Abensour's sense (as developed from Levinas). It is so to the extent it is non-coercive and only where the underlying 'proximity' of fraternity remains paramount.[674]

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[674] Abensour, *La communauté,* 86

As noted in the work of Robson *Ffriendship* in practice is not always achieved and conflict remains possible – indeed it is to be expected in a community of individuals. However, in the interviews it was clear conflict does not always imply or necessarily produce coercive practices. Abensour regarded conflict to be at the heart of democracy: it also provides the potential for violence and harm. The researcher did not interview any Quakers who had left the movement. Their views may have thrown greater light on this underexplored area of Quaker research. Future studies may discover if the number who disaffiliate each year represent a significant trend in disenchantment that would undermine the utopic model presented. This would prompt a reconsideration of the conclusions of this study

The ideal Quaker community imagined in this thesis might be said to extend 'au-delà', beyond its structure preventing the tendency of structure to reify and stultify the *inter homines esse*[675] by being a place of 'tous uns'.[676] In opposition to the 'malencontre' that gives birth to the dominating Hobbesian State, there is the potential for 'une bonne rencontre' – the manifestation of relationship, which ultimately produces a more 'political' society in that it challenges and stands up to the centripetal State.[677]

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[675] This locus of power 'between men' is discussed by Arendt in 'The Great Tradition: Law and Power': 'This in-between, common to all and therefore of concern to each, is the space in which political life takes place': Hannah Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister*, (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2018). Kindle Edition. Loc 1518 of 10323.
[676] Abensour, *La communauté,*97.
[677] 'Ce que j'ai voulu montrer dans *La Démocratie contre l'État*, c'est qu'on peut concevoir l'existence d'une communauté politique qui est d'autant plus politique qu'elle se dresse contre l'État.' Abensour, *La communauté*, 98.

As noted, the Quakers I have studied do not consciously stand up to or against the State at all, but the very form of their organisation and their reservation of the right of judgement in relation to the 'justice' of Law, does pose a challenge to State power. More significantly the Quaker approach to political engagement shows that as individual activists under concern, Quakers take their lifeworld ethical experience - their 'utopic conversion' – into their struggles against specific State and economic institutions, such as, the Home Office/Immigration detention system and the arms industry, in both direct and indirect ways, from demonstrating and obstructing, to buying shares in security firms. These are exemplary behaviours of a utopic democratic praxis that I suggest have relevance beyond Quakerism and are not unique to it. This is not a wholesale endorsement of Quakerism. It is merely the identification of elements that should be of interest to political theory, but that might otherwise be dismissed by political theorists of democracy because they arise in the context of a small religious sect declining in numbers.'

The individual autonomy of Quaker activists is an incredibly important feature of their activism which is nonetheless supported *within* the Quaker community in Britain. While the Yearly Meeting endorses statements and even concerns on behalf of all Quakers in Britain, there is nevertheless an anti-hierarchical approach to the location of sovereignty which occurs in a more complex horizontality than in the vertical hierarchy of traditional models of power. In theory the power of the corporate bodies, is kept in check by the idea that the individual *within* community remains sovereign. As has been discussed this is potentially problematic, for unity or stability within Britain Yearly Meeting, nevertheless, stability is, for the most part what British Quakers achieve. Disunity is not ultimately as fatal to Quaker

corporate unity as might otherwise be expected, because the Quaker *arche* is also structured around several epistemologically significant features:

- actions do not require consensus, nor a majority in support, for individual Quaker activists to engage in them. Having their concern 'tested' by a meeting is not obligatory for individuals willing to act independently.[678]

- **The individual conscience remains sovereign even during corporate decision-making.** The refusal of Quakers to set a general rule for all to abide by, makes the uniform imposition of 'discernment' unachievable through coercion. [I do not intend this to apply to 'formal' Quaker activities which may or may not be – in the Quaker phrase - 'in right ordering'. Although open to revision there are 'right' and 'wrong' ways of joining, leaving, getting married in, and clerking Quaker meetings.]

- all Quaker decisions are carried with the endorsement of 'hope'. Accepting that none can *know* even after their best efforts at discernment (both individually *and* corporately) that the Truth, or God's will, has been accurately discerned.

- **Scepticism over the ability of humans to discern Truth with *certainty*, and appreciation of ongoing revelation militate against coercive practices**. For British Quakers at least, this also explains the hesitancy over proselytism of any kind. Celebration of Quakerism is acceptable, but not active attempts at conversion.[679] The *arche* of Quakerism might most helpfully be thought of in the term adapted from La Boétie and I suggest that Abensour's 'communauté

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[678] Although potential exclusion from a meeting is possible, it is rare although information on this is not readily available in the public domain due perhaps to data and privacy protection.
[679] Meant here in the traditional religious sense.

politique de tous uns' – a political community of all individuals' offers a descriptor for the kind of (political) community found in British Quakerism.

The 'in between-knowledge' or between-understanding envisaged by Abensour in 'entre-connaissance' can be seen as the sense of 'mutuality' of the utopic Quaker 'community of all individuals'. I suggest the phrase 'the joint and several sovereignties of conscience' covers the nature of Quaker 'obligation' to action by allusion with the obligation model of joint and several liability in the common law. It contains a model of autonomy (as sovereignty), that acknowledges the individual's *rightful* power to determine their actions, and the community's equal role to recognise that rightful autonomy, just as the individual recognises the autonomy of others and the sovereignty of the community.

Conscience is at the heart of concern as the mechanism for both 'conscious' recognition of injustice and its powerful effect upon the 'discerning' individual or community. Individual and shared responsibility for the discernment is implied but has no 'location' beyond the holding community of those present. The communality envisaged here is not a 'totality' but is permeable and subject to conflict and tension. It is plural of necessity because the epistemological frame in which it operates, is not capable of complete closure, only the 'hope' of closure. If this does in some way describe the Quaker experience, then it might also offer an explanation why British Quakers have throughout their history been at the forefront of radical political activism even where they may have been divided on an issue. A culture of engagement with 'new' political movements is evident in British Quakerism but it was also a feature of Quakerism in the past, particularly in the historical recognition of injustice: against slaves, women, the socially excluded, the mentally ill, prisoners, refugees, and in more recent

times, the planet and non-human life. This is the case even in spite of the behaviour of individual Quakers many of whom were slow to recognise the causes espoused by those Friends (then as now) who act under concern.[680] Individual Quakers in Britain today are free to pursue their own discernments unhindered, but it will not be a 'Quaker concern' until the truth of their discernment is also discerned by others in the Quaker community and taken up by that community. This interviewee describes how Quakers obtained work inside a prison following the imprisonment of one of them for civil disobedience.

> Quakers had nothing…to do with XXXXX prison until … went in there as a prisoner [*as a consequence of civil disobedience in pursuit of a concern*] and then it - they started thinking well shouldn't we be and - and so one… became a Member of the Board of Governors…one joined the education service - in the prison and one become - became a prison nurse (T).

This description of a 'joining' of the individual discernment to that of others is an innately political engagement and a possible pattern for engagement in political activism in a functionally differentiated modern society in which institutions operate as centres of bureaucratised power only marginally tractable to democratic control. It is a model of activism that Quakers have been engaging in throughout their history. Seventeenth century Quaker William Penn forcefully rejected religious 'withdrawal' from the world. He is cited by Quakers as an early exponent of living out faith in the world. The following extract from

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[680] e.g. John Woolman's initially frosty reception and poor treatment at the hands of Quakers in Britain: Woolman, John, *The Journal of John Woolman, Quaker (and Other Selected Writings)* Fallen leaves press (TM) and Ignacio Hills press (TM) Ignacio Hills Press.com. Kindle Edition. Locations 2372-2388.

Bridget Walker's 'prepared ministry' to YGM at Warwick in 2017, on 'Quiet and noisy solidarity with others' illustrates this:

> we seek the movement of the spirit [to act] in the stillness of meeting
> for worship and we take that silent witness out of our meeting houses
> and into difficult places[681]

In her case to both Faslane nuclear submarine base and to regular demonstrations outside Campsfield immigration detention centre where she was an active demonstrator throughout its time of operations until its closure in December 2018. Although still protesting every month outside the centre she was also part of a group accepted bi-annually inside the centre to discuss its management. Walker also bought shares in the private company running the centre in order to attend their AGMs and in her concluding remarks she cites Penn:

> I think we're very familiar with William Penn's conviction that true
> godliness doesn't turn us out of the world but enables us to live better
> in it and excites our endeavours to mend it, but how often do we go
> on to the last part of that passage, 'Christians should keep the helm
> and guide the vessel to its port not meanly steel out at the stern of
> the world and leave those that are in it without a pilot to be driven by
> the fury of evil times upon the rock or sand of ruin.' [682]

Her example illustrates a balance; a co-existence between the prophetic and the dialogical in Quaker political engagement. Although Quaker concern is so often born of a response to violence Quakers nevertheless respond in peaceable and sometimes even 'cheerful' and witty ways.

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[681] Quakers in Britain, YouTube, 'Bridget Walker – Hands: Quiet and noisy solidarity with others – Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QRgEFL0Bio
[682] Ibid.

Quaker peaceableness is reflected in the *Herzenshöflichkeit,* the friendly courteousness of their civil disobedience. *Herzenshöflichkeit* is the friendly civility that Benjamin identified in the peaceful and dialogical alternatives to violent struggle in *Zur Kritik der Gewalt*.[683]

'Cheerfulness' is something Quakers were enjoined to have by the key founder of the movement George Fox.[684] Given all the reasons for despair offered by the apparent failures and setbacks encountered in acting under concern, Quakers persist in activism with civility and 'cheerfulness'. Quaker Christian Liberalism from the late 19th century to pre WW1, is remembered for its 'cheerfulness'.[685] There is humour in Bridget Walker's account of her good fortune in being a 'birdwatcher' with her binoculars on hand at Campsfield detention centre allowing her to read the detainees signs held at windows. More flamboyant is the counter demonstration group formed by Chris Alton to meet the English Defence League with their own 'EDL'. Alton's 'EDL', the English Disco Lovers, demonstrated opposite the English Defence League (EDL) in colourful disco outfits, disco balls on sticks, wearing wigs and holding signs such as: 'Fewer Xenophobes, More Disco Strobes', 'Don't hate, Gyrate'. With an invented motto, *Unus Mundus, Una Gens, Unus Disco* and accompanied by disco music and dancing, this inventive activism drew Alton four or five death threats a week.[686] Small victories when they come are welcomed. Having escaped conviction and possible prison by dint of

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[683] Translated as including '[c]ourtesy, sympathy, peaceableness, and trust'. Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence'. In *Reflections,* translated by Edmund Jephcott and edited by Peter Demetz. (New York: Schocken Books, 1978, 2007), 289.

[684] Quotation from 'Exhortation to Friends in the ministry', from Launceston prison, 1656, in George Fox, *Journal,* ed. J.L.Nickalls, 1952, 263 reproduced at end of *QF&P* (print edition), ¶1.02.

[685] Southern, 'The Rowntree History Series', 8-9.

[686] Alton, *Changing,*11.

police incompetence, Sam Donaldson and his Quaker co-defendants cheerfully headed to the pub.[687]

I have suggested in these final two chapters that Quakers exhibit sensitivity to the disruptive and alienating force of violence in their discernment, in both secondary writing and in the interviews for this study. Benjamin's theological political theory provides a conceptual framework within which the violent discernment of concern can be interpreted. There is a similarity of 'despair' or grief at the condition of the world echoed in the melancholic passages of Benjamin/Blanqui, and as in the messianic tradition, Quakers see the world as in need of 'mending'. Quaker discernment of concern is prompted by a response to experience of an unjust and often violent world which is cognised in the joining of *presence* and the present; through a reflective critical historical approach, a *Stillstellung,* facilitated in the silence of Quaker meetings.

The *Stillstand* of both worship and discernment offers a critical opportunity for the *Jetztzeit* moment between the present injustice and the not-yet justice of an alternate society to be recognised. It suggests a limiting 'totality' can be evaded by way of this utopic alterity to which paths of escape can be found in ongoing discernment. Discernment of concern is experienced as a utopic *conversion* towards action. Not for the repetition of struggle and suffering, but for the perpetually 'new' that takes its inspiration from past 'escapes' remembered in testimonies. Radical law-breaking is necessitated by discernment of lawful injustice in the

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[687] Donaldson, 'Witness'.

light of new truth. The influential habitus of Quaker ethics and epistemology enjoins 'hope' rather than certainty as a preventive to dogmatism and violence as much as its principled preference for *Herzenshöflichkeit* dialogical approaches. This framework channels and holds the discernment of Quaker concern, encouraging Quakers towards a radical utopian republicanism, a pacific utopic politics in which Abensour's 'community of all individuals' is utopically prefigured, even if in practice not entirely achieved.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

As outlined in **Chapter 1**, for the most part existing literature, mostly theological or sociological, describes Quakerism in Britain as liberal or even liberal-Liberal and Quaker concern is examined descriptively divided between its personal and corporate features. This thesis has shown that there is an unacknowledged strand of republicanism in Quaker concern, not least because Quaker political activism in Britain is undertaken in causes commonly promoted in broadly radical left and green political agendas, in arenas relevant to Quaker testimonies, particularly to equality and truth.

In **Chapter 2**, the importance of community to the Quakers interviewed was discovered to arise spontaneously in conversation, demonstrating that these Quakers place a value upon a central element of traditional republicanism, the importance of membership of *a Society* with shared values and purposes.

In **Chapter 3**, while Quaker disunity was found to be evident in the study, the Quaker response to it was not characterised by coercion. The danger associated with coercive politics in the republican tradition and the pressures of functional differentiation and forced reconciliation under modernity were shown to be more readily resisted by Quakers on the basis of the ethical content of their Testimonies, scepticism as to their ability to know 'truth' with certainty, and because ongoing discernment holds open the possibility of future discovery. A comparison with *sauvage* democracy and the Quaker model revealed a Quaker democracy that although exhibiting 'wild' elements, retained republican characteristics.

Chapter 4 established the nature of Quaker dialogical praxis within the ethical habitus of Quakerism suggested by the testimonies and the prophetic and dialogical approaches to Quaker activism. The relation to the Other in Quakerism was compared to a form of *universal*

fraternité within a broadly utopian socialist political sphere, as expressed in the term *Ffriendship*. Quaker martyrdom and self-denial in the face of overwhelming threat, historically and in contemporary conflicts, provided examples of the extreme limit of Quaker interpersonal ethics in which the 'enemy' in spite of their antagonism is regarded as potential *friend*.

Chapter 5 explored the limited use of the Quaker example by some political philosophers in the liberal tradition in the 20th and 21st centuries. For the most part, and with the notable exception of John Rawls, these authors were unable to comfortably incorporate Quaker discernment into political liberalism. The 'quaker' meeting example was largely found to be problematic in the literature of 'liberal' political philosophy.

In **Chapter 6** Quaker discernment was explored as a radical critical-historical process. An 'elective affinity' between Quakerism and radical politics in contemporary Britain was identified, similar to that described by Michael Löwy between 20th century Jewish intellectual *messianism* and radical utopianism. Walter Benjamin's politico-theological writing provided a unique theoretical terminology: *Stillstellung, Stillstand* and *Jetztzeit* through which to conceptualise the critical-reflectiveness in the discernment of concern. *Jetztzeit* in particular suggested the historical conjunction of the *present* and *presence.* For Quakers it offers a theoretical language for cognising the 'utopic' gap between a world as it is and as it might be, inspiring 'hope' and political praxis aimed to bridge that gap. 'Hope' functions in the epistemic frame of Quakerism not merely as 'wishful thinking', but as the means to prefigure an alternate non-violent society.

In **Chapter 7**, Miguel Abensour's concept of a 'community of all individuals' ['la communauté politique de tous uns'] was applied to the Quaker example. The high value Quakers place on individual conscience and autonomy, within a self-governing non-hierarchical community of

consciences, suggests Abensour's 'community of all individuals' is not merely a theoretical utopic political form for a framework of democracy under modernity, but one that might have expression in Quakerism. It was also notable that Quakers have pursued a 'peaceable' even 'cheerful' activism. Changing political conditions under modernity as detailed by Schecter continue to alter the roles and relations of State and allied institutions, suggesting that as the political State itself is changing and its power is decentred so republican democratic practice must adapt. It was suggested that the utopic Quakerism outlined in this study offers a prefigurative model of these emergent democratic and renewed republican forms.

This study reconstructs a Quaker political praxis in the utopian egalitarian republican democratic tradition, restored and disentangled from both repressive models of republicanism and from the liberal political tradition. The recourse to the breaking *for the re-making* of Law suggests Quakerism as described here is profoundly republican in nature, by its dependence upon the State to secure (ultimately, and after struggle) the *right* Laws. Quakers do not generally call for the overthrow of the State but its reform. Quakers seek reform through law-breaking, civil disobedience, lobbying, and awareness raising - which suggests they are radicals rather than revolutionaries, notwithstanding some apparently *an-archic* strands in some Quaker activism. *Maintaining* conflict within dialogue and working within sites of conflict to bring about change is a key marker of Quaker radicalism but promulgates the renewal of the Republic rather than its downfall or destruction. Concern is a praxis central to this engagement.

Quakerism has been described as a *liquid* religion. [688] This study suggests, as it is presented here, it produces *liquid* politics, responding to newly discerned injustices as these are brought to consciousness and conscience through a 'utopic conversion'. The ethical habitus of the testimonies supports the Quaker endorsement of the republican virtues of liberté, égalité and fraternité through engagements with human rights, equality and friendship, peaceableness and sustainability. Quaker seeking after 'truth' but refusal of dogmatic certainty tends towards peaceful and non-violent engagement. This innately *utopic* practice gives the lie to the idea that Quaker politics is liberal in its contemporary form. The use of the term liberal from the study of comparative religion and as applied to 'liberal religions' may be accurate. That Quakerism was politically Liberal in colour by the 19th century and early 20th century is subject to historical record, but in the terms of *political philosophy* liberalism writ large does not truly best represent the contemporary Quaker approach to concern laid out in this study. Many Quakers will be positive towards the liberal principle of individual autonomy and the idea that totalitarianism can be prevented by the institution of a constitutional separation of powers and a law of human rights, but in practice they clearly do not rely upon this liberal settlement to instantiate the Just state but led 'under concern' take steps to bring the change they have discerned is called for.

While the 'anarchistic' element in Quaker activism, may be regarded as a potential 'direction of travel' quietly suggested by the work of the Quaker artist, Chris Alton and others, it is anticipated that new forms of activism will emerge as Quakers respond to the changing State

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[688] Dandelion, *The Cultivation,* 100-113.

settlement under modernity. This shifting settlement is one in which functional differentiation has de-centred power and is changing the relations between democratically accountable actors and those that are currently unaccountable. Quakerism has the means to remain relevant and radical against the pressures of modernity so long as Quakers in sufficient numbers engage in continuing discernment both of existing testimonies and of new areas of concern in a critical-historical fashion such as that imagined by Walter Benjamin in *Stillstand/Stillstellung* and *Jetztzeit*. With a theoretically grounded critical-historical understanding, strong ethical base in Quaker testimonies and the communal solidarity of *Ffriendship,* the Quaker model of activism through concern appears for the most part equipped to anticipate and continue to operate within changing paradigms of political democracy. For these reasons, the Quaker praxis of concern outlined in this study, should be of interest to theorists in social and political thought who are attempting to imagine a non-coercive radical and utopic democratic politics.

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Appendix I

Extracts illustrating the Quaker usage of the term concern

1) **Historical Examples of the Quaker usage of the term concern from the 2015 OED entry:**

1680   W. Rogers _Christian-Quaker_ Pref. to Rdr. sig. (A)ᵛ,   So great a Concern of Conscience lyes on many, to encourage the Publication hereof.

?1680   _Antichristian Treachery Discovered_ 3   One under a Godly concern to promote the honour of Truth.

1699   _Epist. to Friends_ 15   A great concern came upon several of us in a spiritual Travel for the Honour of God.

_a_1723   G. Whitehead _Christian Progress_ (1725) i. 21   A weighty Concern came upon me to leave my Father's House and County of Westmoreland.

1772   A. Hunter _Let._ 18 Mar. in P. V. Fithian _Jrnl. & Lett._ (1900) 22   Our orations are put off lest they should do some harm to some under concern.

1875   H. B. Stowe _We & our Neighbors_ xv. 172   If your friend Sibyl should have a 'concern' laid on her for your Mr. St. John, she would tell him some wholesome truths.

1949   _Friend_ 17 June 495/2   Love (as God loves, not as man loves) for other people, linked with a sense of responsibility—not such responsibility as John Smith can feel but as God's hands and feet can feel—that is 'concern'.

1966   E. H. Jones _Margery Fry_ v. 46   She did not..experience in Meeting or elsewhere that spiritual communion which was supposed to nourish 'concerns'.

2013   J. L. Scully in S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion _Oxf. Handbk. Quaker Stud._ xxxvi. 539   The Meeting may decide to support the Friend's concern in whatever way is appropriate, or may respond that the issue is not one on which the Meeting is united.

2) **Extracts from the Journal of George Fox on his Concerns**

Two extracts from _The Journal of George Fox_ – a text originally compiled from Fox's own dictation and additional various sources by Thomas Ellwood and a committee 1694. The version reproduced here is the Norman Penney edition of 1924.

> In this time of my imprisonment I was exceedingly exercised about the proceedings of the judges and magistrates in their Courts of judicature. I was moved to write to the judges concerning their putting men to death for cattle, and money, and small matters; and to shew them how contrary it was to the law of God in old time; for I was under great suffering in my spirit because of it, and under the very sense of death;

but standing in the will of God, a heavenly breathing arose in my soul to the Lord. Then did I see the heavens opened, and I rejoiced, and gave glory to God.[694]

Now the Lord had shewed me, while I was in Derby prison, that I should speak in steeple-houses, to gather people from thence; and a concern sometimes would come upon my mind about the pulpits that the priests lolled in. For the steeple-houses and pulpits were offensive to my mind, because both priests and people called them the house of God, and idolised them; reckoning that God dwelt there in the outward house. Whereas they should have looked for God and Christ to dwell in their hearts, and their bodies to be made the temples of God; for the Apostle said, "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands": but by reason of the people's idolising those places, it was counted a heinous thing to declare against them…[695]

3) Extracts from *Quaker Faith & Practice: the book of discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain* [QFP]

Examples from Chapter 13 of *Quaker Faith and Practice* subsections on "Concern: faith in action" 13.02 – 13.18 which set out a detailed description of the corporate method adopted by Friends for taking up concerns brought to a meeting by a member

13.05 Achieving clarity about a concern is a particular exercise in discernment. It is a process that begins with considerable private reflection and the asking of some tough questions. Is this a desire that someone else do something or is it really a call to act oneself? Is this concern in keeping with the testimonies of the Society? Is it genuinely from God?
The discernment process is not confined to solitary reflection. As a Religious Society we are more than a collection of people who meet together – we meet as we do because we believe that gathered together we are capable of greater clarity of vision. It is therefore the practice in our Society for a Friend who, after due consideration,

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[694] George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox,* ed. Norman Penney, (New York: Cosimo Inc., 1924, 2007), Kindle edition, Loc 723 of 5589.
[695] Ibid., Loc 908 of 5589.

believes that he or she has a concern, to bring it before the gathered community of Friends. This is both a further part of the testing process and an expression of our membership in a spiritual community. It is a recognition of mutual obligations: that of a Friend to test the concern against the counsel of the group and that of the group to exercise its judgment and to seek the guidance of God.

13.07 'Concern' is a word which has tended to become debased by excessively common usage among Friends, so that too often it is used to cover merely a strong desire. The true 'concern' [emerges as] a gift from God, a leading of his spirit which may not be denied. Its sanction is not that on investigation it proves to be the intelligent thing to do – though it usually is; it is that the individual ... knows, as a matter of inward experience, that there is something that the Lord would have done, however obscure the way, however uncertain the means to human observation. Often proposals for action are made which have every appearance of good sense, but as the meeting waits before God it becomes clear that the proposition falls short of 'concern'.
Roger Wilson, 1949

13.10 When a Friend has laid a concern before an area or local meeting, there should be a chance for questioning and elucidation, after which it is normally the practice for the Friend to withdraw while the matter is being considered. If the concern is recognised the Friend may be given a minute with which to go forward. It may be determined that the concern is not in harmony with the testimonies of our Society. It should be remembered, however, that:
It is with individuals rather than with communities that new truth originates... While corporate guidance is of great value in controlling individual extravagance, it is a source of great danger to the church if it is opposed to a genuine individual concern.
William Charles Braithwaite, 1909
Both individual and meeting should pay heed to the advice: 'Think it possible that you may be mistaken

23.16 **Social justice**

The war of 1914–18 made Friends more vividly aware of the close connection between war and the social order. Nine months after the outbreak of war London Yearly Meeting was impressed by the words of John Woolman: May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions*. After three years' exercise of mind eight 'Foundations of a true social order' were adopted. They were not intended as rules of life but as an attempt to set forth ideals that are aspects of eternal Truth and the direct outcome of our testimony to the individual worth of the human soul. Though they proclaimed the ending of 'restrictions' of sex, they spoke of God as Father and human beings as men and brothers, as was conventional in their time.*

i.   The Fatherhood of God, as revealed by Jesus Christ, should lead us toward a brotherhood which knows no restriction of race, sex or social class.

ii. This brotherhood should express itself in a social order which is directed, beyond all material ends, to the growth of personality truly related to God and man.

iii. The opportunity of full development, physical, moral and spiritual, should be assured to every member of the community, man, woman and child. The development of man's full personality should not be hampered by unjust conditions nor crushed by economic pressure.

iv. We should seek for a way of living that will free us from the bondage of material things and mere conventions, that will raise no barrier between man and man, and will put no excessive burden of labour upon any by reason of our superfluous demands.

v.   The spiritual force of righteousness, loving-kindness and trust is mighty because of the appeal it makes to the best in every man, and when applied to industrial relations achieves great things.

vi. Our rejection of the methods of outward domination, and of the appeal to force, applies not only to international affairs, but to the whole problem of industrial control. Not through antagonism but through co-operation and goodwill can the best be obtained for each and all.

vii. Mutual service should be the principle upon which life is organised. Service, not private gain, should be the motive of all work.

viii. The ownership of material things, such as land and capital, should be so regulated as best to minister to the need and development of man.

Appendix II

Research Documentation

Ethical review certificate of approval

Advertisement for interview participants

Participant Information Sheet

Consent form for Participants

Individual Interview Question Schedule

Focus Group Question Schedule

Participant Background data sheet

Note: The proposed title of the thesis was amended pre-submission in light of the research and after the completion of the interviews. On the documents reproduced below the title given is the proposed thesis title. The letter of approach to 'gatekeepers' of a meeting has not been included as this would have required considerable redaction to preserve anonymity.

University of Sussex

Certificate of Approval

Reference Number	ER/VAW22/1
Title Of Project	Acting upon a concern:British Quakers and the theoretical implications of Quakerism for the deliberative democratic tradition in social and political thought.
Principal Investigator (PI):	Valerie Whittington
Student	Valerie Whittington
Collaborators	
Duration Of Approval	n/a
Expected Start Date	02-Nov-2015
Date Of Approval	30-Oct-2015
Approval Expiry Date	31-Jan-2019
Approved By	Jayne Paulin
Name of Authorised Signatory	Janet Boddy
Date	30-Oct-2015

*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:

Amendments to protocol

* Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.

Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects

* Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.

Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events

* Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

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ADVERTISEMENT FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS
TO BE PLACED IN QUAKER NEWSPAPERS/NEWSLETTERS

Interviewees and focus group members wanted: Can you help?

I am an attender who has been attending Quaker meetings for several years. I am also undertaking a DPhil in Social and Political Thought at the University of Sussex and my research is into how Quakers come to hold or act upon a concern, and how these concerns may be upheld by Quakers as a corporate body, through local and area Business meetings and in other ways.

Have you ever felt you personally held a concern?
What was your concern?
What did you do about it?

Were you part of a Business or other Quaker meeting asked to uphold a concern?
Or were you part of a meeting that decided to act on a concern of an individual Friend or of the meeting as a whole?

If you would be interested to discuss your experiences and to contribute to this research, then please contact me in the first instance by email for more information. I am happy to speak to anyone who thinks they may be interested in participating and will send you an information sheet and consent form to allow you the opportunity to consider what would be required of you as a participant in this research:

Val Whittington
v.whittington@sussex.ac.uk

University of Sussex

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

STUDY TITLE

Acting upon a concern: British Quakers and the theoretical implications of Quakerism for the deliberative democratic tradition in social and political thought!

INVITATION PARAGRAPH

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is an exploration of the experiences of Quakers holding 'a concern'. The study aims to clarify what Quakers mean by 'a concern'; what sorts of things arise as concerns and how concerns are identified and experienced by Quakers. The material gathered in the study will be analysed. This analysis will then be used to test and to further understanding of certain ideas and concepts found in social and political thought.

The period of data gathering will run for two years from July 1st 2015.

Your participation in the study may take one or more of the following forms:
- You may be one of up to 15 individuals who will participate in face to face interviews with the researcher lasting for around 1 – 2 hours over one or two sessions. With the agreement of the participant these sessions will be audio recorded.
- You may be part of a focus group discussion, which (provided all present agree) will also be audio recorded. You will be taking part in discussion with the researcher and up to 5 other participants. (Please note that separate information sheets will also be supplied specifically for focus group members and should be read in conjunction with this information sheet).
- Finally you may be attending a Meeting for Worship, or Meeting for Worship for Business at which, with the prior agreement of the local Quaker meeting the researcher will be present not only in the capacity of an Attender, but also as a researcher and observer.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been invited to take part, as someone who has come forward and identified that you are a person who has had experience of holding a concern. Alternatively you may have come forward because you have identified yourself as being, or having been, part of a

Acting Upon a Concern: British Quakers and the theoretical implications of Quakerism for the deliberative democratic tradition in social and political thought.
V.1: 15/4/2015

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corporate body of Quakers, either at local, area or national level who has taken part in considering a concern for action or support in a Quaker meeting or Meetings for Worship for Business.

It is also possible that the researcher has approached you because someone else has recommended that she contact you, for the reason that you are someone known to have held a concern, or for having been involved at the corporate level in addressing Quaker concerns.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Just because you may have shown an initial interest in the study, or because your name has been suggested to the researcher as a possible participant it does not mean that you are obliged in any way to go on to participate.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason in accordance with the limits set out on the consent form.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IF I TAKE PART?

As indicated above your role in the study could take one of three forms, as individual interviewee participant; as focus group member; as attender at an observed meeting.
If your involvement is no more than being present at an observed meeting then your involvement will not take any additional time beyond the reading through of this sheet and the consideration and signing of a consent form.
A focus group participant might expect to attend a single two hour session, but the greatest commitment is being asked of individual interviewees who would be asked to attend a maximum of two interviews lasting no more than one to two hours each.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES AND RISKS OF TAKING PART?

Agreeing to participate in research can be inconvenient and time-consuming and requires a willingness to give up some of your own time to answer questions or join in a discussion.
As an individual interviewee participant this may mean giving up between one and four hours over two sessions to discuss the study topic.

If your experience of the study topic was a difficult one then taking part may remind you of this. You may want to seek additional support or counselling if the experience of talking about it were to prove upsetting.
If you were also to disclose to the researcher serious illegal behaviour (terrorism for example) or behaviour that endangered a child or vulnerable adult, then the researcher would be unable to guarantee your anonymity due to laws that would require her to disclose suspected serious threats to vulnerable people or children.

Disadvantages of participating in a focus group might be that you would feel that your relationships with other focus group members would be damaged by potential disagreements during discussions.

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Finally as a Quaker attending a meeting for Worship, or a Meeting for Worship for Business at which you are aware there is a researcher present. you may feel that this intrudes on your privacy and inhibits your ability to benefit from and fully contribute to that meeting.

If you have any of the above concerns then you should think carefully before agreeing to participate. Were you to agree to participate, then change your mind about participating then you would be able to withdraw from the study at any point, however once the researcher had completed and submitted her study to the university, you would not then be able to withdraw data gathered from you from the study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

On the positive side, taking part in the research gives you as a participant an opportunity to reflect on experiences that you may feel you would like to share and discuss with others. Simply talking about your experiences may be satisfying and allow you to develop a fresh perspective on what you experienced. You may discover you have different or new insights into your experience and this can be very satisfying.

For others, particularly those in focus groups it may be useful to have the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of Quaker corporate actions in talking and thinking about concerns. It may also be interesting and informative to hear the views of others present.

Finally for some people it might be satisfying to know that they are helping to advance the knowledge and understanding of Quakerism and that this study may ultimately introduce Quaker practices to a wider audience.

WILL MY INFORMATION IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The researcher undertakes to collect and store any data gathered with your assistance in a secure way so as to protect your identity and your anonymity within the study. All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations mentioned above regarding illegal actions and potential dangers to children). Measures to protect your confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. include the storage of your data on a removable hard drive that can be detached and stored in a locked cabinet; use of pseudonyms by the researcher to protect individual identities both during data gathering, and in the creation of composite responses in the final study that give an accurate representation of the ideas expressed but that may combine and disperse individual responses between several 'persons' in the study.

The researcher will store the data gathered in line with rules found in the Data Protection Act. The researcher may also seek to have this data retained and stored in a repository so that future researchers may have access to data which may be useful in future studies. If it is stored in an online academic research repository all the data will be anonymised and individual participants should not be identifiable.

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WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I WANT TO TAKE PART?

To take part, sign and return the Consent Form to the Researcher and wait for her to contact you to discuss the next step: (interview schedule, focus group arrangement etc.).

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY?

The competed study will be part of a doctoral thesis and may be published. Provided the thesis is approved by the university and judged to successfully meet the requirements for the award of a Doctorate in Social and Political thought (SPT), the final completed study will be lodged with the University of Sussex, for consultation by subsequent students and outside researchers. To obtain a copy of this document or a link providing online access you should contact the researcher (details below) to find out how a copy of the study could be obtained.

WHO IS ORGANISING AND FUNDING THE RESEARCH?

Valerie Whittington is conducting the research as a postgraduate doctoral student at the University of Sussex in the School of History Art History and Philosophy (HAHP). the name of the lead supervisor is Dr.Darrow Schecter. The research is being funded by the researcher from her own funds.

WHO HAS APPROVED THIS STUDY?

The research has been approved by the University of Sussex Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) ethical review process.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you require further information or wish to ask further questions about this research then please contact the researcher, Valerie Whittington, either by email at vaw22@sussex.ac.uk or by telephone on 07977-483946.

Were you to have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, then in the first instance, you should contact the doctoral supervisor, Dr.Darrow Schecter,: Arts A, A 165, School of Social and Political Thought , HAHP, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RH, Telephone: 01273 606755 ext. 2070. Dr Schecter is the supervisor responsible for overseeing this research. You should also be aware that the University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

THANK YOU
Thank you very much for taking the time to read through this information sheet.

DATE
April 15th 2015

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University of Sussex

CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE: Acting upon a concern: British Quakers and the theoretical implications of Quakerism for the deliberative democratic tradition in social and political thought

Project Approval Reference:

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for my records.

Please tick as appropriate the boxes that apply to you.

☐ **I understand that by agreeing to be personally interviewed or to participate in an individual interview or a focus group that I am willing to:**

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow my interview or focus group interview to be audio taped and for a transcript of that tape to be made and retained by the researcher.
- Make myself available for a further interview should that be required

☐ **If I am not the subject of a specific interview or of a focus group** but am attending a meeting at which the researcher is undertaking observation then I agree to allow my contributions to group meetings to be noted by the researcher in an anonymised fashion and for these to be included in the research findings.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential and that steps will be taken to anonymise my participation and to prevent my identity from being made public by the researcher or by any other party. My identity may be protected by my contributions being attributed to an identity created for the purpose, and more than one person's responses may be combined in this way to anonymise multiple participants.

I understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for information which I might disclose in a focus group interview.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before being included in the write up of the research. I further consent to the use of anonymised transcripts of any audiotapes made of interviews and/or focus groups to be included in publications.

I consent to the audiotapes being heard by other researchers and interested professional parties who are assessing and supervising this research on behalf of the University of Sussex.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

Please be aware that once the final project is ready for submission to the university for assessment it may not be possible for your data to be removed at that point. The researcher undertakes to seek your agreement to transcript data in sufficient time for your withdrawal of consent to be effective prior to submission of the research for assessment.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Future Research permission request:

I understand that the data gathered might be useful for future research and analysis, and for it to be available to the current researcher or other researchers in Quaker Studies and or Social and Political studies in future.

I agree that the information provided can be used in further research projects which have research governance approval as long as my name and contact information is removed before it is passed on. My permission is sought here for future researchers to have access to the anonymised transcripts of my interviews / focus group participation alone which will not identify me by my name or other uniquely identifying features.

Name: _____

Signature _____

Date: _____

Please provide contact details so that transcripts of data may be forwarded to you for your consideration.:

Postal address _____

Email _____

Telephone: _____

If you expressly do not wish to read transcripts of recordings prior to inclusion then please sign here to indicate that you have waived your right to do so:

Signature_____

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Introductory comments. The interviewee will have been given an information sheet beforehand and a consent form. I will also collect some brief 'person' data on an initial tick box style data sheet which I will ask participants to complete either at the beginning or the end of the interview. This sheet will contain data asking participants to self identify themselves in categories of age, occupation, class, education, religion at birth if any, place of birth, ethnic origin, gender and sexual orientation. I will collect the sheet and ensure they have read the information sheet and are happy to begin the interview. I will start by stating the aims of the research as broadly as possible and thanking the participant for their willingness to take part. I will state how long the interview may last and remind the participant that they may stop at any time, and that they need only answer questions they are entirely happy to answer. I will check they are happy with the arrangements regarding the storage and use of the interview, reminding them that they will be anonymised in the final report and that they can read a transcript of their interview to check they are happy with it. I will also say they may have an audio file of their interview as well.

1.Can you tell me a bit about how you first came to attend a Quaker meeting? (Narrative)
2. Why do you attend now? (Evaluative)
3. A phrase sometimes cited by Quakers is the phrase 'there is that of God in everyone'. How do you feel about that phrase? What meaning if any does it have for you? Does it influence your view of other people or how you interact with them? (Descriptive - evaluative)
Probes: Would you use the word God? Who or what is God for you? Do you consider yourself to have a religious faith? Would you call yourself an atheist?
4. Quaker meetings for worship vary a great deal but all do generally involve silence. I wonder how you experience the silence? (Descriptive - evaluative) *Probes: What sort of things do you find yourself thinking or feeling in the silence? Are you conscious of other people being silent around you? How do you experience the silence of others around you? Have you practised meditation? Is this different? How is it different?*
5. How do you respond to spoken ministry in meetings? (Evaluative) *Probes: Have you given spoken ministry? Do you remember it? What was it about? What was it like to speak to the meeting? Do you remember the spoken ministry of others? Has any spoken ministry particularly 'spoken to you and your condition'?*
4. You will know that this research is to aid the understanding of what it is for a Quaker to hold a concern. I wonder if you could describe to me what you understand by that. What is a 'concern' for you? (Descriptive) *Probes: What sort of things do you think Quakers hold as concerns?*
6. Have you personally ever felt an awareness of a concern? Where and when did you come to feel that you had a concern and what was it you had a concern about? How did it come to your attention and what did you feel, or think about it? (Narrative)

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7. Did you share your concern and if so why did you decide to do so and how and with whom did you share your concern? (Narrative)

8. Have you been aware of other members' concerns? What have they been and how did you find out about these concerns? (Descriptive) Do you feel that members of a meeting do share their concerns and if so how do you think they do this? (Evaluative)

9. Do you currently have concerns? What are they about? (Narrative - descriptive)

10. Are you engaged in activities outside of the Quaker meeting that reflect your concerns. If so what are they and how are you involved? (Narrative - descriptive) *Probes: Have you joined any organisations or groups reflecting your concern? What do you do to address your concern? Do you talk to other people to let them know your concern? What do you say, how do you raise it with them? Do you discuss attending a Quaker meeting with others who share your concern?*

11. How do you experience your Quakerism in your day to day life and interactions? (Evaluative) *Probes: Do your family and friends know you attend a Quaker meeting? Does your Quakerism affect how you react to people you meet? What effect does it have?*

12. How if at all does your local meeting uphold you in your concerns? (Descriptive) Do you think the meeting is a good forum for the sharing of concerns and for upholding the concerns of members and attenders? (Evaluative) *Probes: In your view is the meeting a good place to discuss concerns of the sort you have? What are the strengths and weaknesses of sharing concerns in your meeting?* !

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<u>FOCUS GROUPS: organisation and key questions</u>

Focus groups would be used with the aim of addressing the question of how Quaker business meetings achieve agreement on action, and what they experience of 'unity'. The group would also be asked to discuss how Quaker meetings deal with Quakers and Attenders who approach the corporate body of the meeting (Meeting for Worship for Business) with a concern and how Meetings for Worship for Business themselves address concerns 'of the meeting'.

The membership of the focus groups would be sought among Quakers who had experience of participating in Business meetings. It would be hoped to hold three focus groups (two at the local meeting where the study would be based, and one at a different local meeting and/or at Britain Yearly Meeting to offer a comparison). It may be necessary to hold two meetings per focus group to address the two separate areas of inquiry that are for discussion. The size of focus group would be no greater than five members in any one group.

As will be done for the individual interviews the members of the focus group will have been given information sheets in advance and consent forms. The interviewer will gather basic 'person' profiles by tickbox data sheets in advance to allow the analysis of the responses of each focus group in relation to this information regarding the age, self-identified gender, occupation, class, ethnicity, place of birth, education and religion at birth (if any), plus length of involvement with Quakerism.

The interviewer will welcome and thank the group at the outset for having agreed to participate and remind them of their right to read a transcription of the meeting and to have a copy of their contributions as recorded by me. They will be reminded of the procedures for the keeping of the recording and its future use. They will be reminded that all names will be anonymised in the interviewer's report and that they are asked to abide by the agreement which they will have been asked to sign in advance regarding the confidentiality of their participation and the need to respect the confidentiality of the group's other participants. They will also be reminded of basic ground rules of allowing each person to speak without interruption and to allow everyone to speak who wishes to do so. They will also be reminded that they may withdraw from the discussion and from the study at any point.

SCHEDULE OF KEY QUESTIONS:

DISCUSSION PART I – the question of UNITY

1. Would everyone like to briefly introduce themselves: give a brief resume of their involvement in Quaker Business meetings, any roles they have held and the length of time they have had involvement with Quakerism and with Business meetings?
2. Can anyone describe how decisions are taken?
3. What in your view is the significance, if any, of silence to the decision making process? (This will hopefully allow a discussion to take place as to

the variety of members' views on the question of whether members who identify as Christian, or theist see themselves as 'seeking the will of God' in Business meetings, and likewise what non-theists believe is effected by holding short silences at the start of Business meetings).

4. Can you take a moment to think about what 'unity' means to you? Can you say whether you have experienced 'unity' during a meeting? What does unity feel like and how do you identify it?
5. Are you aware of disunity in business meetings?
6. Would anyone be willing to describe an experience of disunity? Was it resolved, and if it was resolved how did this happen? How long did it take to resolve?
7. Does anyone have experience of unresolved disagreements in Business meetings? (There is no need to identify a specific incident or those present – the question is really directed to how you experienced the disunity, how was it expressed and how did you feel about it). How was the matter left?
8. How do you feel that you 'hear' the views of others present at Business meetings? Do you feel that you are heard?

Discussion Part II – CONCERNS

9. How would you describe a 'concern'? What does this term mean to you?
10. Have you been present at a Meeting for Worship for Business when there has been an individual member's concern raised before the meeting? If so how was the Business meeting asked to address this concern?
11. What was the feeling in the meeting about the concern raised?
12. Was there any action taken, or decisions taken about the matter? Did the meeting contact or engage with any outside organisations regarding this concern? What were these organisations and what was the nature of the contact with them?
13. What are your concerns? Why are these important to you? Would you share these with others in a meeting? Have you taken a concern to a business meeting? Why did you do this and what was the response from the meeting?
14. Is it important for Quakers corporately to address individual concerns? Should they do so?
15. Are there corporate 'Quaker' concerns? If so what do you think these are?
16. What do you think of the stated 'concerns' as identified by different groupings of Quakers in Britain, such as the concern for peace, or social justice? (referring to stated concerns given at www.quaker.org.uk

The following would be printed on handouts for those present to read and consider to help them respond to this question.

[*"**Truth and integrity,**
Quakers try to live according to the deepest truth we know, which we believe comes from God. This means speaking the truth to all, including people in positions of power. Integrity is the guiding principle we set for ourselves and expect in public life.
Justice, equality and community

Quakers recognise the equal worth and unique nature of every person. This means working to change the systems that cause injustice and hinder true community. It also means working with people who are suffering from injustice, such as prisoners and asylum seekers.

Simplicity

Quakers are concerned about the excesses and unfairness of our consumer society, and the unsustainable use of natural resources. We try to live simply and to give space for the things that really matter: the people around us, the natural world, our experience of God.

Peace

Perhaps Quakers are best known for our peace testimony. This derives from our conviction that love is at the heart of existence and all human beings are equal in the eyes of God, and that we must live in a way that reflects this. It has led Quakers to refuse military service, and to become involved in a wide range of peace activities from practical work in areas affected by violent conflict to the development of alternatives to violence at all levels from personal to international.

New testimonies: the earth and the environment

Quaker testimonies are not a set of words, but an expression of our spirituality in action. In attempting to live out our testimonies, we are holding up an alternative vision of humanity and society, centered on meeting real needs rather than ever- changing desires." http://www.quaker.org.uk/testimonies

17. Are you aware of any actions taken by Quakers in Britain and overseas to address 'Quaker' concerns? Is anyone willing to say whether they disagree or have doubts about the stated concerns that are referred to in the five Quaker testimonies or over the methods that Quakers use to engage with these?

18. Are you involved with other organisations outside of Quakers that you would describe as addressing your 'concerns' or Quaker concerns? Why did you get involved with these outside organisations? Are the other participants in these organisations aware that you attend a Quaker meeting?

DISCUSSION: Participants' Closing remarks (to be done at the end of each focus group meeting)

Finally, I would like to invite everyone individually to offer closing remarks and observations. Is there anything arising out of this meeting and our discussion that has arisen as a result of this process of reflection that you would like to share with this group before we finish?

Participant Background Data sheet

Please note: This data is only for use to try to ensure that participants broadly reflect the wider make-up of Quakers in Britain at the time of the research. It will not be personalised nor will it be kept with your responses / interview.

What is your age? Please circle as appropriate:

18 –25   26-30   31-35   36-40   41-45   46-50   51-55   56-60   61-65   66-70   71-75   76-80

81-85   86-90   91-95   96-100   100+

How do you self identify in terms of gender?

_____

Country of birth:_____

Religion of parents (if any):_____

Are you a Quaker Member or and Attender?:_____

Length in years of membership:_____

Length in years of attendance:_____

What is your nationality?:_____

Are you a person with a disability?   YES / NO

Do you self-identify as coming from a particular ethnic background or would you use a particular description based on colour or origins: eg black British, Irish etc:

_____

At what age did you leave education to begin work?
_____

Please tick which of the following educational qualifications you hold:
O levels/GCSEs
A levels
Degree
Masters
Doctorate
Professional qualifications (please specify)
Vocational qualifications (please specify)

Please state your current occupation:

Appendix III

Exemplar Extracts from Interviews

This Appendix contains some example extracts from interviews. All the extracts relate to understandings of what is meant by concern and the experience of holding a concern in a Quaker meeting. The extracts are anonymised in order to protect the identity of participants. The responses of nine individuals are represented in the extracts below.

What is a concern?

> I mean - in terms of what causes it, what creates it, well that can't be verbalised…I mean I don't mean just - it's something that happens to you not something which you say 'Oh I think I'll have a concern', or, or 'I think I've got a concern' well you can say 'I think I've got a concern' but… you can't generate a concern, it - it grabs you not you grab it.

> concerns spring within a person from…from the light if you like you hold within you isn't it so…a concern will develop as result of - of a spiritual response or…you know a sort of a value based response to a set of circumstances…and usually it's something that grows over some time,…and you're kind of watching it in yourself and then it comes to a point where you feel you've got to do something about it and that is often very personal and it often comes with a tremendous amount of energy and that *is* what I would call a spiritual response to an issue, to people or to a situation…and so you know, as close as I can get to God is - is - is actually talking about that kind of spirit of energy and love and truth that pushes us to do things

> what I understand by a Quaker concern is where, as Quakers, we feel that there is an issue which we need to do something about - we feel compelled to do something about because we feel, you know, there [is] an injustice or a misunderstanding or there is something which we feel where we are a community we are not apart (incomprehensible) or we need to change something that we're doing … as if - we can't help but do it - we [can't] carry

on and you know feel integrated as a society unless we tackle it - so at the most profound level you know, we can't carry on without for example tackling our issue around carbon, because we didn't feel that we could stand up and be counted and still continue to live the way we used to live given that what we know about … the use of carbon in our world and I suppose that's a very big one but other concerns would be the same in the sense in that you don't feel that you can carry on - it' a bit like that thing about not, you know, no longer wearing your sword[696] - that you carry on as long as you can and then you realise that you can't actually carry on and feel that you're an integrated person or integrated into society without doing something about that - and that's what I would consider to be a Quaker concern

[*At this point the Focus Group discussion was addressing how Quakers discern in a corporate way the difference between a 'Quaker concern' and something someone is just concerned about.*]

respondent 1: I actually think of it as an augmenting process - which is - so I carry this thing - I take it to a meeting for clearness and I have a discussion - having had lots of teas and biscuits with lots of people (laughing) and they go 'Mm that's really interesting' so that's take an example - one person has … a real concern about what we do about refugees - another person has an issue about food banks - another person has an issue with social care system - now together unified they might have a concern about deprivation - so the concern at corporate level might be deprivation and all of those individual contributing factors … it's why I say I don't call it a judgment - I call it an augmenting process because like it comes back to - to something we were actually talking about earlier - is that I carry a little bit of that puzzle - … when I find enough other people - who have other little bits of the same puzzle - because a concern is *so* huge - I can't address that on my own - so they have-

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[696] *QF&P,* ¶19.47

they bring other pieces but the point where it becomes a concern for me is when enough of us have enough pieces - that go 'hello' like this is a real issue- but we can address this in multiple ways - that comes back to the 'overwhelming' which is why I don't see it as a judgement sorry (laughing) but someone else will be like 'no-no-no - that's *your* thing' and that's cool

I think for me it's that a certain method has been achieved to - to achieve this concern and keep it going which is the Quaker method of reflection and meeting for worship and everything like that - so it's a certain egalitarian way of approaching a subject and it's gone through that sort-of reflective [ambiance?]

well at least the ones that I was involved with, were pre-existing within the community before I joined - but I think the-the [*peace*] one was something I was quite passionate about anyway - so it was very much joined to that [*participant mentions a second concern*]- I think I was drawn in through friendships and other people and experiences and that moved into that one …. as I became deeper involved in the community then I became involved in that one

well I would attend as a Quaker on a Sunday at local meeting and I never even heard of the word concern - so I was an Attender for years, and then it's only in the last year that I went on the course called XXXXX And…most people on that course - had been involved in Quaker - 'centralised' - what I'd call centralised Quaker things…or had grown up as Quakers and they all had this language and they were talking about concerns - they were talking about …this whole language [bag?] of Quaker sort-of jargon which I'd never heard of before - so I only found out about concern in the last year.

I was trying to explain it when you tested me before (laughing) we started - my understanding of it at the moment is that it's something that somebody

cares about as an issue that then as a community people [have] taken on board and seen as like a collective responsibility.

it can't contradict those baseline testimonies because those baseline testimonies are part of the assumed background to the language use - like you know we're speaking English so and that gives you a cer - so you can't go 'I've got a concern to go and stab people' because you're speaking outside - you're running outside the bounds of the language - you - and so there's a set of formal limits and then there's a set of limits on like what the community does and how the community habitually uses the word.

[*Respondent 1 is here addressing two separate points. One addressing the relation of 'concern' to 'testimony' the second introducing the role of God's grace (as understood in the Christian theological tradition) in enabling an individual to hold and keep a concern going over a sustained period. - The recording was re-started and respondent 1 turned to the analogy of the Porphyrian tree to offer a clarification that had occurred to them*]

Respondent 1: - oh God how do I say the thing? …Porphyrian tree - religion - testimonies - concerns - branching outward to incredibly specific concerns – [I] shouldn't have put religion at the bottom - religion is the equivalent of 'Being' in the Porphyrian tree - it exists at each stage - each stage has it …[interviewer: it's not just a root -] it's not on it [respondent 2: Mm] - yeah it saturates the whole thing or like it is all the things are it …

Respondent 2: We also need to make sure I think that - what you consider concern is actually also not already covered in the standing testimonies**…** Maybe you just re-discovered a concern…*is* it a concern or just can we uphold it within the concerns that we hold?

How individuals experience and carry forward their concerns - the relation to the Quaker community

but in Quaker contexts I will sometimes be … for example in a meeting for worship I might stop and be - okay - well I feel in any other space I would try

and bring this into the space but in Quaker contexts I'd be 'Oh maybe I shouldn't because maybe it isn't - maybe God isn't calling me to do that in this moment or, maybe I've got to discern whether I - even though I *know* … so there's this strange - I've had to wrestle with this strange life tension - and I think it's a *good* tension because I don't [think] Quaker space should be spaces where everybody just brings all the time

You see I- I'm not sure what the word testing means. Even though I've read this. [*Extract from QFP on Testing of Concerns*] (pause) And we had at Business Meeting the other week [*reference was made at this point to a concern before the meeting for discernment*] people didn't know which way they were going and how to deal with it. It was led by [the Clerk] and it came out the way [they] wanted it to come out. And there again we were met with well we haven't got the capacity to be active on this campaign. Does it require us to be active? I don't know. I mean we could be actively supportive through, in the silence. So an elder could stand and say we hold as a Concern this issue and we have discerned that we can't take any active part in it but, please let us hold it in silence for five minutes.

I sometimes wonder if I should go to every meeting and just say '… we should be crossing the road, we should be stopping our middle class, bourgeois sort-of Quakerism and we should be going and living with the poorest and the most oppressed and we should be, …sacrificing our sacred cows and discovering new forms of Quakerism which meet them where they are and not where we are and not expecting them to come to us and I don't do that in Quaker spaces - or very rarely and I don't know *why* I don't - and I think it's good that I don't because - but I also I think it's maybe not good that I don't and I don't know why Quaker process stops me - because I *know* that that's what God's plot and [pathway?] is…and I don't go away and discern that 'Oh am I right about those things?' I *know* I'm right about those things, but I don't engage them in certain Quaker contexts in a strange way and I don't know why

Quakers, because on the whole they're very caring … sensitive people to the needs of others and everything that … we embrace a lot of concerns with a smaller 'c' all of the time and there are many many of them, I think in terms of what XXXXX meeting [*local meeting attended by respondent*] can do, and what a given meeting can do, that has to be very limited just because of the.. resources that we've got … I think we've kind of come to that position where if people have a - feel very strongly about something, whatever that is, they're free to pick it up as a concern *they've* got because they feel passionately about it and so on and if they can gather other people in the meeting, or outside the meeting who want to champion that concern and bring it…take it forward then that's [great]

(On corporate discernment) respondent 1: It's a good job we have it - it's definitely necessary … if you didn't have the - the ability to check the - it's Wittgenstein 'private language' thing … if you don't have the ability to check the way you're using a word against - the community's use of the word - you don't have a standard for - when you're just sliding off - when you're going wrong - and if there's no distinction between what appears to you to be a correct use of the word and what actually is a correct use of the word - then the word is meaningless

Concern with a capital 'C' […] is also very pragmatic in terms of what we can do effectively - and I think we need to remember that all the time - it's no good just being fluffy about something and saying 'yeah, I think we should do this and I think we should do that' and, everything else, *who's* going to do it? so that's how I would define the concern, that - the majority of people – [an issue] has become a real concern - these things come up, they bubble up and then they recede for a time, and they may bubble up again. - We had a lot of activity around [*another concern supported by the meeting*] we did

find it quite difficult, we had our fingers burnt to some extent, but no reason not to … we test these things - we try to think them through as best we can and - sometimes they work and sometimes they don't

I feel that there's certain things in my life which have that certain resonance that I know this is what I'm supposed to be doing in the world - and whatever context I go into I will bring that message, and that to me would be what I consider a concern

there was a period of sort-of 'Should I carry on with this?' and I think in that unknowing I think it was helpful to know - okay - a community of people who've sat in - prayer or whatever and have discerned that-that this is an issue […] and I'll trust … this time I'll trust them - I'll allow that to be a confirmation