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Universalism & Particularism in Quaker Philanthropy: 1770-1830

Introduction

This paper aims to examine the relationship of the Friends' Asylum to the greater project of Quaker philanthropy in Philadelphia during the early and mid-19th century. In this period, Quaker philanthropy in the Philadelphia area was born out a dense network of individuals. Even accounting for the population of Philadelphia—70,000 in 1830¹—the Quaker philanthropic network was quite small, composed of only about 100 individuals.² Quakers were a powerful group, yet the number of individuals who had both the combination of drive and resources to engage in philanthropic work was relatively small. Indeed, it was often the same individuals who engaged in the varied projects of education, health, abolitionism, and penal reform, the main pillars of Quaker philanthropic work. As Kashatus discusses,³ different philanthropic efforts were driven by various configuration of individuals along denominational (evangelicals, quietists, etc.) and class lines, yet members overlapped significantly and coordinated their efforts as parts of a larger philanthropic project.

The Friends' Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason (FA)⁴, opened in 1817, was one of the most ambitious and influential of the Quaker

¹ Campell Gibson, "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places In The United States: 1790 to 1990," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed July 24, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html>.

² William C. Kashatus III, "The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling" (Dissertation in Education, University of Pennsylvania, 1993).

³ Kashatus III.

⁴ The Friends Asylum is currently named the Friends Hospital, but as this is a historical work, I shall refer to all institutions and individuals with the marker that would have been used contemporaneously.

philanthropic efforts. Building upon the development of moral treatment at the Retreat at York by William Tuke,⁵ the FA was a groundbreaking institution that trailblazed alternative, and—what many claim as—more human treatment of those with mental afflictions. Many of those involved in the FA, either the Contributors involved in financial decisions or the Board of Managers that managed operations, held distinguished roles in the broader Philadelphia Quaker community, and often engaged in other philanthropic work. The FA was clearly seen as part of the larger philanthropic project, and was well-enmeshed in other groups, most prominently the Adelphi School. Roberts Vaux, in particular, was engaged in a vast number of philanthropic organizations and efforts in the early 19th century. However, as distinguished from other philanthropic efforts headed by the same individuals, the Friends’ Asylum was one of the only institutions not specifically aimed toward, or accepting of, non-Friends; until 1834 the FA only permitted those Friends and professors of the belief of the Society of Friends.⁶ For financial reasons, the FA began admitting people of other religious faiths, but those of other faiths remained a small minority of patients throughout the 19th century and did not have any impact on the primary functions, efforts, or goal of the institution until the 20th century. Neither was there a parallel Quaker institution geared towards non-Quakers.⁷

⁵ Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*, Cambridge History of Medicine. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Charles L. Cherry, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment, and Asylum Reform* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989).

⁶ The Contributors of the Friends Asylum, “Friends Hospital Annual Report 1834,” Third Month 1834, 7,

http://trptych.brynmawr.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/HC_DigReq/id/15230/rec/6.

⁷ I do not consider the Pennsylvania Hospital a comparable institution, despite the Quaker influence on its psychiatric care. Despite the congruity, the hospital was not governed by Quakers, intended for Quakers, nor was it born from the same dense network of Quaker philanthropists. This study is concerned with Quaker institutions that functioned as such, and their concerns with non-Quakers, not with all institutions within the Philadelphia area.

In contrast, during the same period, there were Quaker philanthropic educational efforts aimed toward both Quakers and non-Quakers. For example, the Friends Public School was open to non-Quakers as well as the Quakers whom it aimed to serve.⁸ The Adelphi School, founded by the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children in 1808 was intended specifically to provide education to the disadvantaged of Philadelphia, primarily those outside the Society of Friends. This institution shared a remarkable number of board members with the Friends' Asylum; eight of the nineteen founding members of the board of the FA, John Cook, Joseph M. Paul, Joseph Parrish, Roberts Vaux, Soloman Conrad, William Penrose, Joseph Scattergood, and John Paul, were also members of the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children.⁹ This paper attempts to understand the networks of individuals involved in Quaker philanthropy, how they overlapped and differed, but primarily the reasons for the differentiation in inclusivity of non-Quakers within specific institutions. The Friends' Asylum is the prominent institution that did not accept non-Quakers or have a parallel institution that did, despite the significant overlap of its managers with more inclusive organizations.

I hypothesize, and will aim to demonstrate through this paper, that variation in the level of universalism¹⁰ displayed in philanthropic efforts is tied to the perception of the needs for the

⁸ Kashatus III, "The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling," 257.

⁹ Kashatus III, "The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling."

¹⁰ Through the paper, I will refer to the degree of universalism or particularism in various aspects of Quaker life. By universalism, I refer to the tendency within the Quaker community to function well with non-Quakers, concern themselves with non-Quakers, intermingle with non-Quakers, etc. In contrast, particularism is the tendency of the group to minimize contact with others, concentrate effort on its members, and to avoid non-Quakers. Both tendencies are always present, but the dominant tendency will vary depending on the situation in questions. Variation in the balance of universalism and particularism of Quaker philanthropic efforts should be understood as the dependent variable in this work.

stable reproduction of the Quaker community and family structure. Quakers, rightfully so, experienced anxiety regarding their religious survival in the face of persecution. Not only were the Quakers persecuted in England for their heterodox beliefs, but also in the United States. Due to their pacifism, Quakers refused to fight in the American Revolution for either side and were distrusted and suspected of being British loyalists throughout the post-revolutionary era.¹¹ They saw the nexus of their survival in the family and its capacity to instill Quaker morals and beliefs in the next generation and in perpetuity. When Quakers felt that their religious survival was attacked, or when anxiety occurred regarding the capacity of Quakers to ensure their survival, they tended to relinquish their universalism and emphasize their particularism. I argue that the issue of mental illness provoked this anxiety, and thus the Friends' Asylum tended towards particularistic activity that mimicked the process by which Quakers attempted to ensure their own religious survival. That is, philanthropic efforts were particularized in situations where the issue at hand was symbolically linked to the fears and concerns of the Quaker community. Projects were seen to increase in intra-communal value when the philanthropic effort pertained to the cultural understanding of Quaker religious transmission. The next section of this paper will be devoted to articulating the Quaker concern with religious survival, and the nexus of that concern in the familial structure. The anxiety and the particularistic response to it are rooted in the family structure. Following this discussion, I will aim to demonstrate why that concern would affect the manifestation of philanthropy in the FA, and in doing so, contrast the concerns pertaining to an asylum to those of the other philanthropic efforts.

¹¹ Robert C. Doyle, "Habeas Corpus: War against Loyalists and Quakers," in *The Enemy in Our Hands* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 43–44.

Religious Survival and Family Structure

As Kashatus argues,¹² familial reproduction was seen as vital to the Quaker community; as a minority religious group that had historically been ridiculed and attacked by the broader community, both in the United Kingdom and the United States, the survival and continuation of their unique religious identity and practice was of the utmost importance. Even with the relative security Quakers enjoyed in Philadelphia, their persecution was in recent memory, and they valued security. The importance of the family to the perpetuity and continuation faith is deeply rooted in Quaker religious ideology. Quakers, like many protestant groups saw their community as a church of ‘saints’ who believe in the proper faith, practice it correctly, and act morally in light of God’s will.¹³ Likewise, although Quakers do not accept a notion of original sin, they held analogous beliefs: children were not born with sin, but with a tendency towards it: “Infants (like idiots etc.) were under a physical disability of learning about or knowing the law. Until a person could distinguish right from wrong, his acts were not classified as sin.”¹⁴ The child would be born into the community, as the member of a meeting, but the default status of her membership would be withdrawn at the time when it was determined she could distinguish right from wrong. Thus, when a child reaches a certain age—variously defined between the ages of five and twelve¹⁵—the child would be culpable for her actions, and although she might be a member of a Meeting, her religious status would be stripped away were she to forsake the Inner Light¹⁶ and

¹² Kashatus III, “The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling.”

¹³ Jerry W. Frost, “As the Twig Is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood,” *Quaker History* 60, no. 2 (1971): 71.

¹⁴ Frost, 69.

¹⁵ Frost, 71.

¹⁶ The Inner Light is the presence of God in every person that Quakers believe can guide them. The relationship of the Inner Light to traditional protestant theology and doctrine varies between groups.

Quaker doctrine and practice. With the combination of these elements, it becomes clear that within the bounds of Quaker theology, familial socialization of the children is of the utmost importance. It is not nature which guarantees the child's salvation and proper religious life, but the way that the child decides to act. Only proper education can teach the child proper conduct and ensure salvation.

To ensure the child's survival, as well as religious survival as a whole, Quakers necessarily place importance on the way that the child will learn to make decisions, her religious knowledge, and the extent and manner in which she heeds the Inner Light. The Quaker universalism, that in each individual there is the Inner Light, does not necessitate that each individual will listen to it. Every individual has the capacity for revelation and for properly following the will of God, but that is not guarantee that they will actually do so. The child must learn to listen to the Light, and must be compelled to understand the importance of doing so. The child, quite sensibly, is thought to learn through the teaching of her parents, and the education that she receives.¹⁷ This is quite simple to place within the real historical experience of the Quaker community and the structure of the families as constituted within meetings.¹⁸ The family was seen to function, and does indeed function, as the primary locus for the continuation of religious and cultural identity that would facilitate the successful transmission of religious, values, habits, and identity from generation to generation. The moral character of the Quaker community was seen to reside in the isolation it could provide itself from the other religious groups within the family and the strength of educating children primarily within the familial unit, and more broadly within the religious community.

¹⁷ Frost, "As the Twig Is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood," 78–81.

¹⁸ This explication of the Quaker cultural understanding of the family is not necessary limited to Quakers and most likely is quite similar to other Protestant groups.

From an early age Quaker children were immersed in Quakerism. Parents were expected to raise their children in a sheltered manner best suited to keeping them within the Society. In 1799, Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting reminded parents of their solemn responsibility,

Mothers being earnestly recommended to Educate their children as becomes our religious professions, endeavoring early to instill into their minds the principles we hold, and carefully avoid adorning their young charges in a manner inconsistent therewith.¹⁹

First and foremost, all Quaker children join the community of a meeting, and are trained within it. Since the beginning of Quaker life in the Americas, Friends have established schools for the moral and secular education of the young within the community, to ensure that they will learn the distinctly Quaker religious path and moral training and be free from the influence of non-Quaker education.²⁰ Furthermore, these schools, even those that eventually provided educational access to those of other faiths—or indeed were charitable ventures primarily of those of other faiths—placed great emphasis on the effect of the child’s home environment on her academic success. The Adelphi School, designed as a charitable school for impoverished Quakers and non-Quakers, released a pamphlet in 1810 for the parents of its children in which it adamantly proclaims the necessity of parental example;

More is in the power of parents and guardians, to help the master of a school in keeping good order among his scholars than is generally supposed. They may teach their children obedience at home, and then they will be likely to be obedient at school.

...
Children are much inclined to follow the example of their parents those who have the care of them [illegible word] set them good examples is of the first importance.... It [example] qualifies with proper authority to suppress the pernicious habits of swearing, lying, and other immoralities; and commands love and obedience.

¹⁹ Margaret Morris Haviland, “In the World, but Not of the World: The Humanitarian Activities of Philadelphia Quakers, 1790-1820” (Dissertation in History, University of Pennsylvania, 1992), 44–45; *Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Women’s Minutes, 1790-1820* (Philadelphia: Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, 1820).

²⁰ Richard R. Wood, “The Beginning of Friends Select School: From the Minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting,” in *A Friends Select School History*, ed. Carol H. Brown (Sharon Hill: Archway Press, 1989), 11.

...

Endeavor therefore, to keep them from associating with idle, noisy, or wicked companies in the street; from such they learn wickedness. The most likely way to perform this duty will be to make your own company, and the company of the family agreeable to them, by tender, affectionate, yet firm treatment; they will then love their homes, and will with more ease be kept within doors, improving themselves in spelling, reading the Bible, writing, or attending to your kind of advice...

...

We entreat you to endeavor to impress upon their minds a fear, and reverence of their *great* and *merciful* CREATOR, as a very tender, yet just father, who we are assured will punish the wicked, and reward the good.²¹

As much as the school could do, they make it quite clear that the educator's job will be only successful through the proper disposition of the child that they receive. The child must be obedient, but more so will only become a good student through moral example and an eye toward God. Disciplines is not sufficient, and the development of a capacity for proper decisions in light of the Inner Light requires training.

Furthermore, meetings function as an 'insurance policy' for children should anything occur to their family. The meeting would ensure that the child will always be placed with a moral, upstanding, Quaker family within the community, providing for the physical and economic needs of the child, as well as their continuation within the faith. The child's education would be ensured, and thus her salvation secured, even if the parents perished.

In his early years the meeting would serve John chiefly as an insurance policy. If the immediate family became financially insolvent, the meeting might make loans, give money, seeds, tools, or perhaps a cow to the Woolman's so that the family might survive. If there were too many brothers and sisters for the parents to support, the meeting could take the responsibility of placing some of the children for rearing in good Quaker homes. If Friend Woolman died and John's mother wished to remarry, the meeting would demand that the boy's inheritance be reserved and that he be well taken care of. If both parents died, the meeting would serve as an emergency set of parents. John would be put out to Friends and later be apprenticed with his master guaranteeing, clothing, education

²¹ Adelphi School Managers, "The Managers of the Adelphi School to the Parents and Guardians of the Scholars," in *Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the Adelphi School in the Northern Liberties Established Under the Direction of the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children* (Philadelphia: Meyer and Jones, 1810), 16–17.

and training in a profession. The meeting would pay the apprenticeship fee if necessary and supervise the indenture so that no undue obligation was placed upon the orphan.²²

To be a proper example, parents needed to remain with the Society of Friends to preserve the religious lineage. This may seem obvious, but Friends took great precaution to ensure the family remained Quaker. Individuals who married outside the Society of Friends were often [read out of Meeting](#), struck from its records, and disowned by parents.²³ The network that facilitated the child's development from birth so she might follow the Light would be stripped away were she to commit an infraction. It was of the utmost importance that the individual not taint the Society, children, nor individual salvation.²⁴

Following Durkheim, punishments for violating communal standards functioned more to demarcate the community's identity rather than to retaliate.²⁵ Punishments enacted for violating norms do not merely provide incentives for individuals to conform, but also evoke a commitment among those who already conform. If the ability of an individual to listen to the Inner Light is of the utmost importance, and an individual given all the training, resources, moral lessons, and familial examples chooses to stray in any way, the deviant activity would most likely have been understood as an affront to the communal standards that are at the of the Quakers' concern for religious survival. Religious success and continuity were dependent not only upon actively securing theological boundaries but reinforcing the beliefs and identity of children within the community and maintaining a differentiation between Quakers and non-Quakers.

²² Frost, "As the Twig Is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood," 67–68.

²³ William C. Kashatus III, "The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling, 1790-1820," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 118, no. 1/2 (n.d.): 87–116.

²⁴ Frost, "As the Twig Is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood."

²⁵ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. W.D. Hall (1893; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1997).

Deviance²⁶ from Socialized Capacities

As demonstrated, Quakers place great emphasis on the ability of the individual to reason and to listen to the Inner Light. Thus, I argue that when deviance emerges within the standard path of socialization, the anxiety that Quakers already felt about the world came into full force, and their secondary universalism caused philanthropic projects relinquish their efforts outside the Society. That is, when an individual inexplicably is turned away from the Light and reason,²⁷ especially in cases like mental illness where the turning away seems inexplicable, then reestablishing a path of socialization becomes of the utmost concern. Quakers must work to replace reason with insanity, to re-socialize the individual. I argue that this is the case because more so than in other situations, the Quaker project at the Friends' Asylum mirrors that of a family and of the Quaker family structure that is at the core of Quaker socialization. Thus, as we see in the educational process, there is an emphasis on Quaker education that becomes apparent in times when there arises anxiety of religious continuity.

This anxiety regarding socialization and religious continuity is not directly observable. It is a causal explanation, a model which is not articulated in primary sources or as a self-understanding presented by those in the study. Rather, it is a plausible extrapolation that can provide a causal explanation for the phenomena under the observation, the disjunction between practices in parallel philanthropic efforts. It can explain this disjunction better than other understandings of Quaker ideology and philanthropy present in the literature, and appears to

²⁶ Throughout this paper, when I refer to 'deviance,' I am discussing violations of expectations within a community. Deviance is not understood as a universally normative statement regarding the deviant individual or her actions, but in regard to the values or norms in the community and time under discussion.

²⁷ The Inner Light is clearly connected with reason as one can only listen to it and act in accord with the light through deliberate choice. One must be trained to have the capacity to the listen to the Light within. (Frost, "As the Twig Is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood.")

conform with known data regarding Quaker cultural understandings of educations, socialization, and religious. Utilizing primary sources as a groundwork for my understanding, this model appears to be capable of explaining certain phenomena that have not been adequately conceptualized in the literature. As a causal hypothesis, it is an explanation for information already articulated either in secondary literature or by individuals in primary sources. It is liable to error and subject to falsification, and due to the imperfect transmission of historical data, this is perfectly possible. The connection of the anxiety with the family, and more so the connection between it and the mental illness is not something that can be pointed to, or would have been thought to articulate clearly by those under study. Nevertheless, my model appears to conform to primary source data, especially in regard to the form of treatment at the FA and the position of the family within the Quaker mode of religious survival. As a hypothesis with determinate results, I aim to demonstrate why this model can explain phenomena, namely the structure of care at the center and the particularism of the FA, better than other hypotheses. With this in mind, let us examine the other types of Quaker philanthropic projects to determine whether or not my hypothesis holds.

The familial socialization of the child is expected to bring her into the community of saints.²⁸ If the individual strays from the group, a response should be expected to reinforce the community's solidarity and strength.²⁹ Yet this deviance is not common across all cases; one must differentiate between the criminal and insane, because although both represent an affront to the proper socialization of the individual, they are seen differently, and are processed differently within both the Quaker community and the broader civil society. Criminal deviance is first and

²⁸ Frost, 71.

²⁹ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religion Life*, trans. Karen Fields (1912; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1995); Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*.

foremost concerned with moral conformity, but is perceived as intelligible and meaningful, whereas insanity is understood as concerned with pre-moral intelligibility and understanding.³⁰ Criminal deviance is met with sanctions that punish the criminal and ritually reinforce commitment to all in a shared moral understanding, whereas insanity requires an attempt to make the individual intelligible within the community, but does not merit sanctions. This distinction is important in that although both forms of deviance counter the standard process of Quaker religious socialization, they are responded to differently. As I will demonstrate, this differentiation allows one to understand why institutions promoting the welfare and betterment of prisoners, such as one finds in the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons (PSAMPP)—later, the Pennsylvania Prison Society and the subsequent creation of Eastern State Penitentiary in 1829—are universalistic, whereas mental health initiatives are particularistic.³¹

Penal Reform Institutions

Crime is processed differently than insanity, in that there is secular governmental apparatus that regulates and punishes moral deviance. Were a Quaker to steal or murder in the early 19th century, he would be brought to a secular court and punished according to secular law in a non-Quaker institution. He would be punished alongside those of other faiths and in a like-wise manner. Given the general congruence of American protestant morality, the sanctions on the individual by the secular institution would function in the Quaker community as both punishment to the individual and as the ritual reinforcement of moral commitment. The narrow

³⁰ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religion Life*, 16–17.

³¹ Paul Kahan, *Eastern State Penitentiary: A History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2008); Negley K. Teeters, *They Were in Prison: A History of the Pennsylvania Prison Society* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1937).

band of actions that are immoral by Quaker standards but that are not criminal, e.g. marrying outside the Society, can be easily punished by the community without relying on an external apparatus. Given both the common goals and institutional apparatus that bind Quaker criminals with others, it is of no surprise that the Quaker philanthropic institutions for the betterment of conditions and morals of prisoners were universalistic in their efforts.

The PSAMPP was certainly part of the network of Quaker philanthropy under discussion, including such members as Thomas Scattergood and Roberts Vaux. However, it was an effort across religious groups to use the prison system not simply as punishment, but to reform the prisoners' morals. The society's emphasis on the values of individual contemplation, as argued by many individuals, is certainly drawn from a Quaker understanding of listening to the Inner Light and cultivating an individual moral capacity, but the project was never articulated as a starkly Quaker project, but rather as a larger Christian project. Indeed, only about 40% of the members of PSAMPP 1787-1830 were Friends.³² More so than treatment of insanity, and even education, prison reform efforts in the Quaker community necessitated universalism naturally through the collective understanding of morals, and practically, through the secular nature of legal sanctions and penal institutions.

Educational Philanthropy

Quaker education efforts demonstrate the tension between universalistic and particularistic tendencies within a single range of institutions. Quakers in the Philadelphia community supported a wide range of educational institutions, and by examining them, and especially the Select Schools created by the Orthodox reaction to Orthodox-Hicksite schism, it is

³² Teeters, *They Were in Prison: A History of the Pennsylvania Prison Society*, 122.

possible to demonstrate the role of anxiety regarding familial continuity and religious survival. The Quaker educational efforts always held universalistic components. For example, the Friends Public School was open to Quaker and non-Quakers.³³ Moreover, the Adelphi School, founded by the Philadelphia Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children in 1808 was intended specifically to provide education to the disadvantaged of Philadelphia, primarily those outside the Society of Friends.³⁴ Quaker educational efforts, as demonstrated by Kashatus and Frost,³⁵ were primarily intended to ensure the proper moral and educational development of the child, but these goals were, for the most part, perfectly commensurable with universalistic charitable work aimed out towards those outside the Society of Friends.

However, the anxiety provoked when religious continuity is threatened evokes particularism in philanthropic efforts. When the Hicksites and Orthodox accused each other of falling outside the realm of acceptable Quaker doctrine³⁶, they each redefined what the “true path” was; this differentiation, for both parties, required anew the demarcation of their religious borders. The Orthodox Quakers needed to retain control over socialization, and thus withdrew their children from the general Friends schools and into ‘Select’ schools that would not accept non-Quakers, as many of the Friends schools did, or Hicksites.³⁷ These schools functioned to reinforce their borders, identity, and control over the socialism of the young. As the division

³³ Kashatus III, “The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling,” 257.

³⁴ Kashatus III, “The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling, 1790-1820,” 88.

³⁵ Kashatus III, “The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling, 1790-1820”; Kashatus III, “The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling”; Frost, “As the Twig Is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood.”

³⁶ This Hicksites and Orthodox split over disagreements over the use of scripture and mainline protestant theology. The details of this schism are not of concern in this work.

³⁷ Wood, “The Beginning of Friends Select School: From the Minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting,” 20.

between Hicksites and Orthodox cooled over the course of the mid-late 19th century, these select schools admitted Hicksites, and began allowing non-Quakers to enroll.³⁸

As a whole, Quaker philanthropic efforts in education reflect a balance between universalistic and particularistic tendencies. Yet, when religious continuity is threatened, particularism is reinforced. Whereas prison-reform institutions necessarily were universalistic due to practical purposes and the general protestant ideology of morals and punishment, educational institutions were more flexible. They lacked such a rigid institutional structure and beliefs that were shared with the broader society. Thus, anxiety in religious continuity could provoke particularism. I aim to demonstrate in the following section, an explanation capable of explaining the almost exclusive particularism present in the area of mental illness.

Insanity and the Friends' Asylum

Just as Quaker families displayed an stigma and harshness towards those that married outside the community, mental illness was perceived as a similarly deviant act in the 'normal' process of socialization and religious life within the Society. It placed the individual outside of the expected norms of action. However, as deviance concerned with the capacity for rational thought and intelligibly rather than a rejection of the Inner Light and morality, it was processed differently, and much more than crime, I argue, evoked anxiety about the tenability of Quaker religious survival. Whereas crime and moral deviance have certain ways of being dealt with, punishments to be meted out, and reform to be undertaken, mental illness strikes against the process of socialization, and by its very nature, was thought to be contrary to reason.³⁹

³⁸ Jno. W. Biddle, "Friends Select Schools," *The Friend*, September 5, 1885.

³⁹ The idea of mental illness as the absence of reason and rationality is well demonstrated (Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*; Cherry, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment*,

The understanding of the mental health in moral treatment at the Friends' Asylum arose out of the enlightenment scientific process. As a phenomenon with non-observable causes, mental illness was not tied to physical observables, and was thus often placed outside medicine and scientific research, as it generally was at the Friends' Asylum until 1850. Mental states—healthy and otherwise—were generally thought to be autonomous from physical health.⁴⁰ Thus medicine was thought to have little bearing on the treatment of mental afflictions, and its only role that of ensuring the comfort of the individual and performing palliative care such as prescription of sedatives or sleep-aids, pain-management, and healing autonomous physical issues that may cause discomfort to the individual and exacerbate the mental unease of the patient.⁴¹ Mental illness was thus disconnected from physical observables and predisposed to diagnoses entailing [social or other non-medical causes](#).⁴² This division of labor, so to speak, can be seen quite easily in the structure of the Friends' Asylum; the day-to-day care for the insanity was undertaken by the superintendent who was without medical training, but the physical needs of the patients, such as nourishment were under the supervision of a physician.⁴³ For example, in

and Asylum Reform.) and more simply in the mission statement of the FA: “To provide for the suitable accommodation of persons who are or may be deprived of the use of their reason, and the maintenance of an asylum for their reception, which is intended to furnish, besides requisite medical aid, such tender, sympathetic attention as may soothe their agitated minds, and under the Divine Blessing, facilitate their recovery.”(Contributors of the Friends Asylum, *Minutes of the Contributors*, 1812, 1812.)

⁴⁰ Cherry, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment, and Asylum Reform*, 17.

⁴¹ Cherry, 80–85, 99; Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*; Louis C. Charland, “Benevolent Theory: Moral Treatment at the York Retreat,” *History of Psychiatry* 18, no. 1 (2007): 61–81.

⁴² Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965); Cherry, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment, and Asylum Reform*, 7; “Causes of Mental Illness at Friends' Asylum,” accessed July 24, 2018, <http://qmh.haverford.edu/causes/>.

⁴³ This was true until 1850 when the first superintendent with a medical degree, Dr. Joshua H. Worthington, was instated and medical care was folded into the superintendent's responsibilities. (Henry M. Hurd et al., “Dr. Joshua Husband Worthington,” in *The Institutional Care of the Insane in the United States and Canada*, ed. Henry M. Hurd, M.D., LL.D., vol. 4 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1917), 540–41; Henry M. Hurd et al., *The Institutional Care of the*

1818 Isaac Bonsall, the first superintendent of the FA, writes that dissatisfaction regarding the food caused a patient to escape, but that the Medical Department would not increase the quantity of food, it not being medically necessary.⁴⁴ At the end of the day, the non-physical cause won out, and the medical control over physicality remained intact, completely separate from the care pertaining to mental illness.

The reason and morality at the heart of Quaker belief, the intangible ability of the individual to listen to and follow the Inner Light, can be seen as related to the non-physical explanation for mental illness. One could not be born a full Quaker as one could only achieve that through the use of reason and choice in listening to the Inner Light,⁴⁵ but only cultivated as such in the family. Yet, individuals who were properly raised in a family, educated, attended Meeting, and lived moral lives, sometimes appeared to become insane. As hard as Quakers worked to ensure the continuity of their religious faith and draw the border between themselves and those who did not follow the path, they could fail *despite acting in a seemingly perfect manner*. Patients of mental illness were not the disadvantaged or poor, the standard object of philanthropic work, such as the poor that the Adelphi School aimed to help, but those across all strata of social and religious prestige. The patients, must, in essence represent a failure to the community, and inability of their best tool for religious success and the continuity of their religious project to succeed, even when it should serve best. Just as it was inconceivable that a

Insane in the United States and Canada, ed. Henry M. Hurd, M.D., LL.D., vol. 3 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1916), 540.)

⁴⁴ Isaac Bonsall, *Superintendents Daybook*, vol. 2, 1824, 84–85,

http://tritych.brynmawr.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/HC_DigReq/id/14784/rec/20.

⁴⁵ Frost, “As the Twig Is Bent: Quaker Ideas of Childhood.”

properly-raised Quaker would marry outside the society,⁴⁶ I hypothesize insanity was processed as an affront to the Quaker's mode of survival, and a source of anxiety that touched the deepest concern about religious propagation.

Mental afflictions, in and of themselves, functioned as crises within the process of Quaker intergenerational efforts. Given the endemic nature of insanity which arises now and again in the natural pattern of life, Quakers were constantly reminded of their faulty process of socialization, and were anxious to reestablish primary control in the area of mental health and thus feel secure in the continuity of their religious identity. Universalist philanthropy was not articulated in mental health because Quakers had to secure their own borders. If Quakers were unable to ensure proper attention to the Inner Light within their own community, nor form an adequate response, then the well-being of the community had to be of primary importance.

The effects of this anxiety can be clearly seen within the Friends' Asylum. Not only was the FA particularistic, but functioned to reestablish the familial core at the heart of Quaker socialization processes. It mimicked the traditional Quaker familial structure and sought to duplicate the ideal form of the, moral, ethical, Quaker family in its care to reestablish responsiveness to the Inner Light. This mimesis begins in the structure of the asylum itself; the operations of the FA were headed by a superintendent and his wife—the matron—who embodied the traditional family structure. They lived in the center of the main asylum building, and their family spaces were those rooms in which patients, ate, socialized, and worked. The structure of the FA was seen as an expanded household as seen as such; throughout his notes, Bonsall, a

⁴⁶ Individuals who married outside the society, more often than not, were disowned and ejected from the Society. (Haviland 1992).

manager and the first superintendent of the FA refers to the groups of patients as “the family.”⁴⁷ He managed the asylum as a patriarch attempting to elicit rational responses, train the patients in proper conduct, and cultivate proper morality.

This patriarchal training, as if the patient were a child, can be seen in a variety of instances, for instance in handling recalcitrant patients; “Hannah Lippincott will not go to the table to eat with the family but says she will eat if it is brought to her. We have a mind to try to try her by not indulging in hope she will conform to what we deem a salutary rule which is for all we deem proper to eat at the table with us. Subordination is a lesson she is unwilling to learn.”⁴⁸ However, upon “feeling the want of hunger”⁴⁹ she returned to eating at the table the next day and exhibited acceptable behavior. She was not penalized punitively once returning, but was merely sanctioned until she conformed to the expected activity. The language of the treatment is couched in terms of lessons that need to be taught by the father-figure, and in such a way that mimic the initial socialization that the Quakers utilize on children to begin with as a child. One can imagine the exact same lesson being given to a child, and throughout this episode there is no mention of medical diagnoses, psychological explanations, or anything other than the expectation of conformity. Although the complete non-medicalization is not universal, it appears to have been the dominant within the Friends’ Asylum during this period.

This practice is part and parcel of moral treatment which sought to elicit attention to the already-present, yet buried, source of the rational and moral. It educated and instituted the social

⁴⁷ Isaac Bonsall, *Superintendents Daybook*, vol. 1, 2 vols., 1820, http://triptych.brynmawr.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/HC_DigReq/id/15151/rec/1; Bonsall, *Superintendents Daybook*, 1824.

⁴⁸ Bonsall, *Superintendents Daybook*, 1820, 1:98–99.

⁴⁹ Bonsall, 1:99.

norms that were central to the standard socialization process, redoubling the boundary between rationality and that which makes one Quaker, and those who are not Quakers. Following Foucault,⁵⁰ we can see the social control of the asylum redoubling and reinforcing the social norms of the greater community. This familial project was done in relative isolation, in a Quaker institution, run by Quakers, and until 1834, with only Quaker patients. Even when non-Quakers were admitted to the FA beginning in 1834, it was a contingent practice done for purely financial reasons and non-Quakers were not the focus or emphasis of the FA throughout the 19th century.⁵¹

The form of care given at the Friends' Asylum can be seen to arise from the Quaker anxiety surrounding familial socialization in its mimesis of the standard socialization path. It was meant to function as a family, not as an institutional hospital, and the entire project of the moral treatment, beginning with the Tukes at the Retreat at York can be read as a Quaker project toward the mode of duplicating and redoubling the efforts of the Quaker community. The Quaker family and the mental institutions aimed to isolate the child/patient from the influences of non-Quakers to maintain a controlled environment for treatment, and to culture their capacities within an environment conducive to their moral and cognitive growth. Unlike education, which could occur in a relatively secular environment, and where the value of the training was equal across Quakers and non-Quakers, the orientation towards initial development must occur within a Quaker context.

⁵⁰ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*.

⁵¹ Contributors of the Friends Asylum, *Minutes of the Contributors*, 1834, Third Month 10th 1845.

Conclusion

Through the discussion in this paper, I have aimed to give a causal explanation of a seeming disjunction in Quaker philanthropy at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Whereas most Quaker philanthropic organizations were universalistic, or had equivalent universalistic organizations, the Friends' Asylum and Friends Select School only admitted, and later significantly prioritized, Quakers, rather than those of other faiths. I argue that this disjunction can only be explained through an understanding of the Quaker anxiety surrounding religious survival and continuity as embedded in the family structure and the socialization of children. Whereas Quaker philanthropic efforts generally display universalistic tendencies, particularism becomes dominant in situations where the power of Quakers to secure the continuation of their religion fails. Thus, the schism between the Orthodox and Hicksites resulted in schools which that did not accept non-Orthodox. However, that policy shifted when the rupture became less of a contentious issue in the mid-late 19th century.

The Friends' Asylum, however, displayed no such disjunction over time; even when it admitted non-Quakers, it was an instrumentally motivated financial decision: the institution retained its primary focus on Friends. This discontinuity between the practices of the Friends' Asylum and other institutions can be explained by articulating a potential model of the Quaker understanding of mental illness as a lack of reason and proper-socializations. Through this cultural understanding of mental illness and the Quaker concern for religious continuity, it is clear why the perception of insanity is always processed as a crisis. It represents the inability of the Quakers to secure their survival despite their best efforts and faith. Thus, unlike both penal reform and educational efforts, it always evokes the particularistic tendency within the Quaker community. By utilizing this causal explanation, it is possible to see the differentiation between

the policies of the Friends' Asylum and institution such as the Adelphi School not as disjunctive or contradictory, but as arising out of the same deeply rooted Quakers ideology.

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