A Declaration of Interdependence: Peace, Social Justice, and the "Spirit Wrestlers"

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The struggle between the Doukhobors, a nonviolent society committed to communal values, and the Canadian Government epitomizes the tension between values of personal rights and independence on the one hand, and social obligation on the other. The immigration of the Doukhobors from Russia to the Canadian prairies in 1899 precipitated a century-long struggle that brings issues of social justice, moral obligation, political authority, and the rule of law into question. The fundamental core of Western democracies, founded on the sanctity of individual rights and equal opportunity, loses its potency in a community that holds to the primacy of interdependence and an ethic of caring. The transformation of individual identity from an isolated ego to a transpersonal state of interdependence presents profound implications for personal morality, social justice, and ecological awareness. The struggle of the Doukhobors invites us to imagine self-interest and community interest as no longer distinct and work toward a transformed vision of relational interdependence that embraces all of life.

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A nation that is capable of limitless sacrifice, is capable of rising to limitless heights.
—*Mohandas K. Gandhi*

What happens when a society of peaceful and non-competitive individuals chooses to resist government efforts to demand involvement and cooperation in war in favor of holding on to a core value of nonviolence? The conflict between the Doukhobors and the Canadian government is the clash between the values of freedom and independence on the one hand and social obligation on the other. It is the conflict of individual rights versus the authority of the state. The struggle of this little known group offers a relevant case study for a vision of social justice that recognizes transpersonal values and the emerging need for social structures grounded in interdependence and the ethics of caring. This essay describes the challenges imposed by the Doukhobors' struggle for independence in a climate of increasing interdependence.

Early History

The story of the Doukhobors begins in Russia in the 17th and 18th centuries when a number of Christian religious sects began to form. Their religious philosophy and social movement rejected the Russian secular government: the priests, icons, and ritual of the Russian Orthodox Church; the Bible as a source of revelation; and the divinity of Jesus. They were first labeled "Ikonabors" for their rejection of icons. The name "Doukhobor" was coined by an archbishop of the Church to refer to a specific group that evolved from this Christian movement. The name means "spirit wrestlers" and was originally intended to mock the members as wrestlers against the Holy Spirit. Later the group retained the name but reframed themselves as wrestling with and for the spirit of God. Ironically, they also wrestled against the established government and Church hierarchy, for they were persecuted in a variety of ways for their unorthodox beliefs. Indeed, they were in every way iconoclasts (Woodcock & Avakumovic, 1977).

The Doukhobor rejection of the highly structured Russian Orthodox Church was part of the larger movement of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, and, more specifically, with a Russian peasant movement known as Raskol, or, the Great Schism,

that protested ceremonial innovation (Tracie, 1996; Woodcock & Avakumovic, 1977). For more than a century, the Doukhobors were persecuted by government and church authorities for their beliefs and communal ways. They were forcibly relocated several times to keep them out of mainstream society. In 1894, Russian author Leo Tolstoy (1894/2003) who lived from 1828-1910, published the book *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, in which he calls for a return to the original message of peace that he felt to be at the core of Christianity. This work describes a doctrine of nonresistance to evil that provides a philosophical foundation for nonviolent protest and the creation of peaceful societies such as that of the Doukhobors.

Also in 1894, Tsar Nicholas II demanded an oath of allegiance from all of his subjects. The Doukhobors refused to comply. In July of 1895, 7,000 Doukhobor burned their rifles and swords in protest against mandatory military service in Russia. Retribution was swift, and many were exiled to other parts of Russia. This seminal event touched off a social movement to end all war and promote values of nonviolence, peace, and compassion. Following the lead of Leo Tolstoy (1894/2003), the Doukhobors abandoned notions of patriotism and the preference of one nation over another, viewing themselves as internationalists (Tarasoff, 2002). As ardent pacifists, they also refused military service, a stance that led to further relocation and the arrest of leaders of the movement.

The devastating plight of the Doukhobors attracted the attention of pacifists and utopians in England and America, who then raised money to finance the Doukhobors' immigration to Canada. In 1899, over 7,400 were transported from the Russian province of Georgia to the province of Saskatchewan in Canada. Canadian authorities were anxious to populate the open lands of Western Canada with immigrants from Eastern Europe. For centuries North America had been known as a haven for groups fleeing religious persecution. By granting asylum to the Doukhobors, the Canadian government took on their rejection of social authority in a stance that would have consequences later for both the Doukhobors and the Canadian government.

Beliefs of the Doukhobors

The religious beliefs of the Doukhobors share common features with those of the Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, and other groups in North America committed to communal living and peaceful values.

They had early on rejected as idolatry the use of icons and other symbols in religious worship. "Priests or other intermediaries were unnecessary since each person was the bearer of the 'spark of God' and could have direct contact with God individually" (Tracie, 1996, p.2). They believed in spiritual individualism, meaning that each person is individually responsible only to God. In a spirit mirroring that of early Christian communities, they found communalism to be the appropriate expression of brotherly love. For the Doukhobors, private ownership of land was an unfamiliar arrangement. "They held all persons to be equal and rejected earthly authority where it opposed or contradicted their interpretation of the laws of God. Ironically, their own leaders were elevated to near-divine status and were obeyed unquestioningly by the faithful" (Tracie, 1996, p. 2). Their attitude and philosophy is summed up in two simple Doukhobor slogans: "toil and peaceful life" and "the welfare of the world is not worth the life of a single child." Adherence to these beliefs and values created conflict with the Canadian government, just as it had in Russia. For rejecting both spiritual authority and secular authority, they were persecuted by both (Tracie, 1996). The history of the Doukhobors highlights the manner in which a peaceful society deals with conflict.

The Doukhobors in Canada

The first few years of life in Canada were very difficult, requiring long days of back-breaking toil, but the community soon prospered. The Doukhobors were not interested in owning their own individual plots of land. Instead, the community chose to own the land collectively in a pattern of communal living that had served them well for centuries. Unfortunately for the Doukhobors, the Canadian Government introduced changes to the homesteading regulations, requiring individuals to claim title and to pledge an oath of allegiance to the Crown. Such oaths were contrary to the strict beliefs of the Doukhobors, since the group did not recognize secular authority in this way. This crisis precipitated a split within the Doukhobor community. Some chose to stay in the province of Saskatchewan by crossing out the oath of allegiance clause on their land titles and continuing to acquire homesteads. The other group, led by the charismatic leader Peter Verigin, moved to Brilliant in British Columbia, where they became known as the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood. This group has earned much notoriety for the extreme behaviors that are frequently

associated with the Doukhobors, such as public nudity, and violent conflicts with the government. However, it was the original group that settled in Saskatchewan that remained true to the original principles of peace and nonviolence and that eventually adapted to Canadian society.

The Peaceful Society

The competitive spirit is idolized in modern Western culture and felt by many to be an essential ingredient for survival. However, many social scientists do not share this view. Bonta (1997) reports on a study of 25 peaceful societies, that is, ones that constitute a harmonious society on both intragroup and intergroup levels and are completely without violence and external conflict. An important feature of peaceful societies is the absence of competition and a de-emphasis on achievement.

> Social interactions in the United States also involve elements of cooperation and competition operating, in many cases, almost simultaneously. This familiar mixture of cooperation and competition differs from most of the peaceful societies, which are highly cooperative in nature and carefully eliminate any manifestations of competition. (Bonta, 1997, p. 301)

Indeed, one of the major issues for the Doukhobors is raising their children to thrive in cooperative and non-competitive environments. Bonta (1997) reports that one of the common techniques for instilling the virtue of cooperation is the sudden removal of status from children, at a certain age. Newborns and infants are cherished and fondled by parents, siblings, and the entire community, and all of their needs are satisfied immediately. However, at around the age of three, "the status of the child abruptly and dramatically plunges. From being the center of everyone's attention, the child suddenly gets little notice at all and is made to feel like a very insignificant member of the community" (Bonta, 1997, p. 301). Repeated temper tantrums by the child are ignored until the rebellion disappears. "The infant learns quickly the importance of love, closeness, and dependence on others; the 3-year-old learns that the individual cannot dominate others" (Bonta, 1997, p. 302).

This childrearing strategy may seem unloving, or even violent, to modern sensibilities that value independence, initiative, and achievement. How can a peaceful temperament come from this apparent disregard for children? The Doukhobors would probably view modern childrearing as fostering self-centered, arrogant individuals. Their strategy forms the foundation of a particular orientation toward the self and the community. The message is very clear—your individuality is not important. The community values of peace and cooperation are supreme. Bonta (1997) shares the report that, in a neighboring Hutterite community in Canada, if one child is singled out for praise from a teacher, the entire class will react with embarrassment. Paradoxically, the Doukhobors elevate the status of the individual in his or her personal relationship with God with a fervor surpassing mainstream Protestantism's emphasis of the same. The values of community versus individuality are mirror images, reflecting different orientations and worldviews. What legal precedents or other standards can be applied to resolve these fundamental subgroup differences within the larger society?

Familiar notions of dependence and independence are built on the relationship between distinct, individual identities. The traditional understanding of dependence implies an operational attachment among separate entities. With the embracing of operational interdependence, however, the clear boundaries between subject and object begin to blur. Distinctions between "you and me" and "us and them" dissolve, as distinctions between identities disappear. The major transformative shift that occurs in interdependence is the embodied realization that I cannot do anything to you that does not reverberate back upon myself. Subject and object, I and "other," are not separate. Interdependence transforms the reference of the pronoun "we" from that of a collection of individuals to that of an organic whole. The strong communal values of the Doukhobors are grounded in a set of interdependent relationships. Their child-rearing patterns foster ego development that emphasizes communal affiliation. Yet members of this community-minded group are not lacking in autonomy and independent determination. The courage demanded of persons taking a peaceful, nonviolent stance reflects anything but a passive nature. Clearly, interdependence cannot be defined as the abandonment of independence. The search for understanding must probe more deeply into the nature of interdependence to resolve that paradox.

Conflict

The conflict between the peaceful Doukhobor and the Canadian government brings issues of justice, and particularly social justice, to center stage. What is

the obligation of the Doukhobors to the nation that adopted them when they were so mercilessly persecuted by the Russian monarchy? Must they sacrifice their most cherished values? The heightened emphasis on community by the Doukhobors necessarily clashes with the sensibilities of the larger social community that emphasizes the values of individuality and competition.

From his works during his lifetime of 384-322 BC, we find that Aristotle (trans. 2004) believed that moral virtue was not an inborn feature of human nature but a quality and skill that is learned through repetition. For Aristotle (trans. 2004), virtue is the foundation of exemplary human character and is based on moderation: "Moral virtue is moderation or observance of the mean . . . (1) . . . holding a middle position between two vices, one on the side of excess, and the other on the side of deficiency, and (2) . . . aiming at the mean or moderate amount of both in feeling and in action" (Aristotle, trans. 2004, p. 37). Courage, temperance, truthfulness, and gentleness are some of the virtues that Aristotle (trans. 2004) held in esteem. While these conceptualizations of virtues can be applied to the Doukhobors' patterns of behavior within their subgroup, the tenacity they demonstrate in regard to certain of their cherished beliefs may not earn them the designation of *moderate* that Aristotle (trans. 2004) considered to be an esteemed virtuous quality of human behavior.

For a report to the Canadian government on the Doukhobors, psychiatrist Alfred Shulman (1955) studied a group of male Doukhobors whose behavior was representative of the more extreme zealots of the community. In fact, many of his study participants were in prison. Shulman (1955) describes the personality of Doukhobor men as lacking in assertive, masculine characteristics. "The quiet and passive Doukhobors are pleasant, agreeable people, easy to talk to and easy to work with. . . . Nevertheless, the most passive Doukhobors are severely disabled in their capacity to handle many of the problems of living" (Shulman, 1955, p. 129). Shulman (1955) claims that this passivity interferes with a Doukhobor's ability for self-governance: "He cannot tell others what to do; he cannot oppose the wishes of the aggressive minority nor resist their direction" (p. 130). In characterizing the positive characteristics of the Doukhobor community, however, Shulman (1955) concludes that "[t]he zest and enthusiasm of many women; the assiduous care given to the children; the consideration that is paid to ethical goals—all of these represent stable, enduring facets of Doukhobor personality that are psychologically sound" (p. 123).

This assessment of Doukhobor personality arose, however, from a modern psychological perspective based on social values of independence, achievement, and competition. Much of Shulman's (1955) analysis focuses on members of the zealot sect, whereas the Doukhobors who remained true to the original spirit of the peaceful society refused to follow the charismatic leader Peter Verigin and demonstrated patterns of communal adaptation that led to a fuller integration into Canadian society. Passive resistance does not emerge from passivity but from strength. The courage it takes to maintain a nonviolent stance may not appear to be as glamorous as the courage required for competition, but it can be seen as nonetheless virtuous. Holding to their spiritual values and core beliefs in the face of opposition demanded of the group's members an exemplary character. It is at least clear that many of the virtues espoused by Aristotle (trans. 2004) have been embodied in the character of Doukhobor society.

Justice

Aristotle (trans. 2004) devoted much emphasis to justice in his treatise on *Nicomachean Ethics*. As with his conception of virtue, he believed that justice is acquired through learning: "Justice does not make just people; just people make justice" (2004, p.66). Aristotle (trans. 2004) defines justice in terms of both legality in the polis and equality among individuals: "A just thing then will be (1) that which is in accordance with the law, (2) that which is fair; and the unjust thing will be (1) that which is contrary to law, (2) that which is unfair" (p. 90). Comte-Sponville (1996) points out that the two facets of Aristotle's (trans. 2004) definition are related yet separate. "These two meanings, though interconnected (justice requires that individuals be equal before the law), are nonetheless distinct" (p. 63).

Tracie (1996) describes how, when the Doukhobors arrived in Canada, there were misunderstandings on both sides. Canadian authorities did not anticipate the tenacity with which the Doukhobors would reject secular authority and hold to communitarian values. "Conflicts between the Doukhobors and the government on such routine regulations as registering births and deaths, collecting census information, and registering for the homestead lands made both sides wonder what they had gotten themselves into" (Tracie, 1996, p. ix). Issues of both legality and fairness come into

play in the conflict between the Doukhobors and their Canadian government. How should the government view the refusal by the Doukhobors to comply with important obligations to educate their children and support the defense of the country through military service? Tracie (1996) responds that "the government may have unwisely assumed that the Doukhobors understood more about the requirements of acquiring the land than they actually did" (p. 5).

The conflict between the Doukhobors and the Canadian government highlights the essence of Aristotle's (trans. 2004) definition of justice. Legally, the Doukhobors were bound to conform to the rules of the land. The Canadians had taken them in and given them land when they were being severely persecuted in Russia. The people of Canada had a legal and moral right to expect these new citizens to register their births and participate in the census. The Doukhobors, however, assiduously held to a philosophy of nonkilling and were fearful of any type of conscription or military service. Compulsory education law became another touchstone for conflict. Education was viewed in Canadian society as promoting personal advancement and achievement; values actively shunned by Doukhobors. They avoided "self-enhancement through education, development of the arts, acquisition of individual forms of self-expression. These appear to Doukhobors as leading to competitiveness and self-assertiveness, in contrast to which self-denial is sought" (Hawthorn, 1955, pp. 27-28). Central to modern democracies is an emphasis on education, which is understood to be fundamental to the workings of a democracy. In order for its citizens to participate in the governance of the country, its economic system, and its industrial base, education is considered to be socially essential.

While Canada had the legal right to demand compliance with the laws of the land from the Doukhobors, the question remains, Would it be fair to do so? The second half of Aristotle's (trans. 2004) definition of justice requires the determination of whether a particular situation or condition is promoting fair treatment. Given the small numbers of the Doukhobors relative to the overall population and the earnestness with which they held to their beliefs, would it not be prudent to make an exception for them from the requirement for equal treatment? One could argue that an exception for some creates an injustice for the rest of the population who do have to conform. Ultimately, the government

did make an effort to make concessions in these matters. However, the negotiations were difficult due to this clash of differing worldviews.

Social Justice

The relationship between the Canadian government and the Doukhobors centers on issues of social justice. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the influential Enlightenment philosopher, introduced two key concepts that help to define the critical relationship between society and the individual: the *general will*, and the *social contract* (Gourevitch, 1997). The general will of a society can be thought of as that of a body with members being parts of the body that carry out critical functions. Just as the physical human body has a general will that looks after its own wellbeing, so the state has a general will that looks after itself. The social contract describes a broad class of theories that involve implied agreements by which people form nations and maintain a social order. A social contract implies that the people voluntarily give up a degree of freedom inherent in their natural rights to a government or other authority, in order to jointly preserve social order and carry out social goals. The mutuality of a social contract allows both parties to benefit and thrive. Rousseau's social contract theory helped form the theoretical foundation of modern democracies.

With the Doukhobors, there are two social contracts: (a) the contract by members of the Doukhobors to form their own community and social order and (b) the contract defined by their relationship with the Canadian nation. Hawthorn (1955) says that the core beliefs of the Doukhobors centered on the issue of authority. The Doukhobors ultimately rejected all spiritual and secular authority, holding on to "the belief in individual guidance by divine revelation, and the belief that external authority lacks the necessary religious sanction or wisdom to direct anyone's life" (Hawthorn, 1955, p. 27). The Doukhobors place the site of authority in the conscience of the individual. It can be postulated that this concern would be legitimately addressed if the Doukhobor group lived in isolation and had no need to interact with others. However, despite the group's necessarily interdependent relationship with its adopted Canadian society, the situating of authority in the individual conscience was the belief that was held most firmly by the Doukhobors and regarding which they were the least open to compromise with their adopted nation.

Peace, Social Justice, and the "Spirit Wrestlers"

As Tracie (1996) suggests, the Doukhobors gravitated toward a model that reflects the communalism of the early centuries of Christianity, with an emphasis on brotherly love and the sharing of resources and labor. However, reliance on a transcendent spiritual authority contains inherent challenges. How do eternal spiritual principles translate into the day-to-day demands of living in a temporal setting? While the decision to adhere to the dictates of an ultimate religious authority—the "spirit within"—and to reject representatives of secular authority can be postulated to be admirable as an ideal and to demonstrate deep faith, in the modern world, individuals and groups must come to some agreements about social order and the protection of that order. In the absence of such an agreement, the notion of a social contract as defined by Rousseau becomes impossible to implement.

English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1859/1999) published in 1859 a radical work called *On Liberty* that strongly advocated for the moral and economic independence of the individual from the state. Yet, even with his emphasis on the independence of the individual, Mill felt that "every one who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit, and the fact of living in society renders it indispensable that each should be bound to observe a certain line of conduct towards the rest" (p. 2). Mill's sentiments were considered radical in Victorian England. The goal of Mill's formulations was, of course, to create a climate for the widest possible level of individual freedom that would still allow the state to preserve peace, safety, and the social order. Mill did also himself fear what he referred to as the "tyranny of the majority," a situation in which society as a whole can influence an individual's personal morals and etiquette to that person's possible detriment. This led him to articulate his famous "harm principle," which grants to people the freedom to do as they will provided it does not harm others. Therein lies another facet to the conflict between the Doukhobors and the Canadian government: the Doukhobors uphold the standard of the harm principle through their peaceful attitudes and practices while the Canadian government stands behind the obligations demanded by their social contract with the Doukhobors.

Civil Disobedience

The Canadian experience with the Doukhobors raises the issue of the citizen's right to resist a law that is felt to be unjust or immoral, or that violates one's religious convictions. Comte-Sponville (1996) asserts that, "when the law is unjust, it is just to fight it— indeed sometimes it may be just to violate it . . . Socrates, unjustly condemned, refused to save himself and turned down offers to help him escape" (p. 65). There is no guarantee that the general will proposed by Rousseau as exercised by a society upon its members is always just. Clearly there is a long history of struggle with this issue of social justice, and, according to Comte-Sponville (1996), disobedience to an unjust law is not only a right but a requirement.

Perhaps no conviction was more cherished by the Doukhobors than their belief in the need to refuse to participate in military service. As a group, they had held strictly to their belief in nonviolence and nonaggression when they were residents of Russia—to the point that it had caused them great disruption and demanded tremendous sacrifice. They preferred to sacrifice their land and suffer persecution rather than abandon this fundamental principle. Pacifism became a central point of social conflict in North America during World War I and World War II, when it was considered unpatriotic to retain a pacifist position. Canadian authorities worked with the Doukhobors to establish alternatives to military service during those international conflicts, but, as with other issues for this group, the arrangements were not smoothly achieved.

From a review of his philosophy, it would appear that Mill (1859/1999) would support the right of the Doukhobors to refuse military service. He believed that each individual held sovereignty over his or her mind and body. Insisting that someone participate in something so offensive was, from his point of view, a violation of individual rights. From the point of view of the state, the government is obligated to protect all of its citizens. Clearly, if the entire nation were comprised of pacifists, the Doukhobors could not continue to thrive. Someone must be ready to fight and protect liberty for the whole population. Is it fair to decline to fight, and to instead allow others to take up the sacrifice of putting life on the line in defense of the country against a real threat? All are beneficiaries in that defense scenario, but only some are offering their members to make the sacrifice.

In 1849, 10 years before John Stuart Mill published *On Liberty* (1859/1999), Henry David Thoreau (1849/2010) published his essay *Resistance to Civil Government,* later entitled *On Civil Disobedience.*

Motivated in part by his objection to slavery and to the Mexican American War, Thoreau asserted that it was the obligation of citizens to resist immorality and injustice by its government. He was a strong advocate of minimal government. In the early 20th century, Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) took up the cause of nonviolence as a leader of peaceful resistance in South Africa and India. His campaign for nonviolent resistance highlights the courage and moral tenacity involved in this challenging, but critical, position. It has been opined that

> nonviolence and cowardice go ill together. I can imagine a fully armed man to be at heart a coward. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice. But true nonviolence is an impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness. (Attenborough (2000), p. 34)

In his analysis of Gandhi's militant nonviolence, Erik Erikson (1969) characterizes the underlying test of truth for nonviolence as the refusal to do harm. This ethic is extended by Gandhi to include the determination not to violate another person's essence. These can be considered passive guidelines, since they are telling us what behaviors to avoid. Social movements require an active principle to guide any group behavior, a banner around which all people can rally and draw inspiration. The principle underlying a nonviolent stance toward others finds a natural home in an ethic grounded in a transpersonal worldview of interdependence, the only one in which the boundaries that separate individuals disappear. It must apparently require the group members to internalize the wisdom that one cannot harm another without harming oneself. As Erikson (1969) notes, "truth in Gandhi's sense points to the next step in man's realization of man as one all-human species, and thus to our only chance to transcend what we are" (p. 413).

Virtue, morality, and justice are not, it would seem, clearly defined dictates to be followed. Their relationship is a dynamic and organic one, requiring that both individuals and nations undertake critical self-examination regarding their exercise. Comte-Sponville (1996) asserts that, in the final analysis, "morality and justice come before legality" (p. 65), and that we have both the right and obligation to pursue those attributes over legal compliance in any conflict of values.

A Transcendent Social Vision

If the conflict between the Doukhobors and the Canadian government is framed as an issue of equality and individual rights, it will forever produce a stalemate. Ethical considerations of equality and social justice cannot be addressed as separate from the ultimate or final goal—the *telos*—of human development. Is equal treatment the pinnacle of social justice, or will that telos be found in an ethic that transcends individualism, that embodies transpersonal, communal values, and that becomes an ethic of caring and interdependence? If, as Aristotle (trans. 2004) claims, "just people make justice," is it possible that humankind, led by just people, could adopt Rousseau's notion of a general will to expand beyond individual rights and equality to embrace a vision of justice that encompasses an understanding and acceptance of human interdependence?

Baier (1996) reminds us that there is a dark, shadow, side to the standard of social justice that lurks behind the rule of law. Originally, the inalienable rights codified in law were for the privileged, only later expanding to include women, blacks, the poor, and the disabled, and perhaps allowing for their eventual morphing into an ethic of equal rights for all. Baier (1996) questions, however, whether an ethic of equal treatment can ever be synonymous with justice, if, in fact, equal treatment has so easily become injustice, historically. An ethic of equality that is paired with the valuing and fostering of self-reliance and individuality is blind to an essential ethic of caring. When ethics become abstracted from life situations of individuals, there necessarily arises "[t]he blind willingness to sacrifice people to truth" (Gilligan, 1993, p. 104).

As an example of the dissonance between equal treatment and justice, parents who firmly adhere to an ethic of equality—treating each of their children the same, parceling out nurturing and caring in equal measure, will find that ethic impossible to sustain when a disabled child arrives. The disabled child requires a style of care that goes beyond fairness and equality. In another example of this dilemma concerning equal treatment, Martin Luther King (Washington, 1986) reminds us that "[t]here is nothing wrong with a traffic law which says you have to stop for a red light. But when a fire is raging, the fire truck goes right through that red light, and normal traffic had better get out of its way" (p. 647).

Noddings (2003) describes an ethic of caring based on natural caring rather than on traditional moral principles: "We often justify our acts, especially those

that cause harm, by claiming adherence to a recognized moral principle. I have suggested that principles and rules are not as central to moral life as many traditional philosophers have supposed" (p. xiv). Noddings (2003) claims that the prevention of harm is founded less on moral principles and reasoning, which can lead us away from the longing for a good, than on direct caring. In this ethical framework she distinguishes between "caring for" and "caring about". Caring-for is a face-to-face attempt to respond to specific needs, whereas caring-about operates at a distance and takes us out of the realm of personal responsibility and the ability to make a direct impact. Caring-for is the motivational foundation of justice, Noddings (2003) claims, and she[<?] recommends the development of communities that support rather than destroy caring, that create a shift from moral principle to relationships that long for goodness.

Conflicts of social justice characteristically center on questions of authority, whether authority resides in a monarch, a priestly class, or an aristocracy, or as derived from the will of the people. Nonviolent social movements typically look beyond the Utilitarian notion of the greatest good for the greatest number, drawing their authority from a higher source (Blackburn, 2001). The Doukhobors assert the authority of the individual conscience in determining individual rights. However, there is a clear communal ethic of nonviolence beyond individual conscience that governs their stand on social issues. Such social movements are pointing to a transcendent authority, one that is not a god, a general will, or a codified set of laws.

What would be the impact of replacing the moral foundation of a social justice founded on the rule of law and adherence to abstract moral principles with an ethic of caring? Such a shift would likely represent a revolution within and among nations. Could we recognize the potential injustice of insisting that the Doukhobors conform to laws that have no relevance in their cosmology? Could the Doukhobors extend the communal ethic of interdependence to include Canadians of a different orientation? Both morality and legality would in those scenarios shift to a different type of relationship, a relationship in which care and concern would take precedence. "The resister must be consistently *willing to persuade* and to enlighten, even as he remains ready *to be persuaded* and enlightened" (Erikson, 1969, p. 416, emphasis in original). It is the moral and spiritual transformation of individuals that must ultimately lead to social transformation (Mamonova, 1999). The social vision implied by nonviolent and peace-oriented movements is founded on an ethic not of personal independence but of interdependence. Movements rooted in social justice principles are revisioning the assumptions of a social contract by which we exist in community and govern ourselves. Can those assumptions expand to embrace a vision of social justice that goes beyond the primacy of the individual to one that acknowledges the primacy of transcendent authority grounded in interrelationship? Can the Declaration of Independence be revisioned as a Declaration of Interdependence?

Since the first *Declaration of Interdependence* was introduced by Will Durant (Durant, David, & Richard, 1944), other declarations have followed. David Suzuki (1992) submitted a *Declaration of Interdependence* for the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in which he reminds us that we share a common history with all of life, as well as a common present and uncertain future. He suggests that we must evolve "from dominance to partnership; from fragmentation to connection; from insecurity to interdependence" (p.1). These declarations are further grounded in the recognition of the inseparable connection of the human community with nature.

Deep ecologist Arne Naess (1989) approaches interdependence as a psychological identification with all of life. Taking a developmental approach, Naess (1989) says that in the first years of life the ego manifests as a selfish center for the satisfaction of biological needs. Later, the process of socialization extends the self to family, friends, and community. Ultimately, the process of identification allows us to extend that to identify with all of life, a process that is attenuated by culture and economic conditions. However, this "ecosophical" outlook, as Naess (1989) terms it,

> is developed through an identification so deep that one's *own self* is no longer adequately delimited by the personal ego or the organism. One experiences oneself to be a genuine part of all life. Each living being is understood as a goal in itself, *in principle* on an equal footing with one's own ego. (p. 174, emphasis in original)

Naess (1989), therefore, avers that, rather than being a diminution of our sense of self, the identification of the ego with a larger nature allows us to share in its greatness and expand our potential to influence the

whole.

From what Naess (1989) has explained of this shift, the transformation of the individual ego from its grounding in the values of individuality and isolation to the espousing of its transpersonal state of interdependence promises to be a dramatic shift with powerful implications for personal morality, social justice, and ecological awareness. When a person is living in a state of interdependence with a human community, self-interest becomes community-interest, with the recognition that to injure a member of my community is to injure myself and that to nurture my community is to nurture myself. An ethic of caring would replace the application of abstract legal and moral principles with the primacy of relationship. With the adoption of a standpoint recognizing interdependence, there cannot be an enemy, for no-thing and no-one is, outside of the whole of existence. The "enemy" is transformed from an external threat to an internal and personal struggle. When someone actively identifies with all of life, to contaminate the soil or destroy a species would be unthinkable suicide. This new ethic takes Mill's (1859/1999) harm principle to a level he could not predict, a level at which all harm is self-harm. "The greater our comprehension of our togetherness with other beings, the greater the identification, and the greater care we will take (Naess, 1989, p. 175)."

The Future Challenge

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, waves of immigrants left an increasingly crowded Europe and boarded ships for the New World in search of religious asylum. The seemingly vast territories of these continents allowed groups to form communities, relatively isolated from each other, where they could govern themselves according to the dictates of their religion. This relative freedom allowed a wide diversity of religious communities to flourish. By the end of the 20th century, population growth and increasing globalization eroded the ability of such groups to remain untouched by a more modern and technological culture. In that same time period, the Doukhobor experienced their solidarity as fracturing into several splinter groups and movements, in part because of external pressures to conform and internal differences of governance and doctrine (Woodcock & Avakumovic, 1977). Economic pressures have also made it difficult for Doukhobor communities to resist assimilation into mainstream culture and values.

Independence and isolation are no longer possible, and survival of the Doukhobor may just depend upon a culture-wide expansion of the adoption of the ethic of interdependence. The struggle in the Canadian Prairie between the Doukhobors and the Canadian Government, as well as all social movements grounded in nonviolence, are an opportunity to revision the social compact by which we are governed. The Doukhobor, a peaceful, nonviolent society, established on principles of communal interdependence and committed to the land in sustainable economies, exemplify in microcosm the values at the foundation of a transformed social ethic. The courage of such groups is beyond doubt. It is worth noting, however, that such an ethic would not foster the elimination or avoidance of conflict but rather would have the potential to transform conflict from a battle over equality and individual rights to an opportunity to foster the recognition of interdependence.

The ethics of caring and interdependence are not the sole purview of present-day social detractors and resisters, but, to transform unavoidable conflict for all, must become THE ethics of the 21st century. This emerging shift is presently being driven by the recognition of the ills of globalization and ecological devastation, as well as by shifts in the understanding and orientation of the individual to the whole. In this new century, isolation from others and devastation of the environment are no longer an option. While a vision of social ethics founded on caring and interdependence may seem like a utopian dream, the changing social, political, and ecological landscapes and the movement toward globalization are apparently inviting us to transform all dimensions of relationship in those same directions. The shift could not be accomplished by a mere abstract affirmation of the values of interdependence or a mere expression of caring-about social justice, nonviolence, and the plight of the environment. It would involve a deep transformation from our current preoccupation with social structures and with laws founded upon—and implemented in support of—independence. This transformation can occur only at the liminal interface between the personal and the transpersonal. It is less a fabricated view of the universe than a recognition of the interrelationships that currently exist and have always existed—a thoroughly embodied understanding of the way things truly are.

In reflecting on the future of whether his forefathers died in vain for the cause of peace and the end

of war, Peter Faminow (2002), himself a Doukhobor, says that his forefathers

> shall never be forgotten today and in the days to come. Yet surely the brotherhood of man must reign. The world must do to the atom bomb what Doukhobors did to the guns. Our forefathers have heroically earned their place in history and shall be remembered in perpetuity. As for me…I have never forgotten their peaceful crusade for the preservation of Mankind. (p. 22)

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