A Humanitarian Conscience: British Pacifists in Second World War China

Tobias Kelly
University of Edinburgh

What does it mean to talk about a humanitarian conscience? The paper focuses on a group of British pacifist who conscientiously objected to military service and ended up working in Second World War China for the Friends Ambulance Unit. These people would go onto have a significant role in the history of British humanitarianism. The paper treats conscience as a historically embedded cultural category rather than a transcendent principle or experience, and asks how forms of conviction, hesitation and self-sacrifice have shaped the direction of humanitarian action.

Tobias Kelly is a professor at the University of Edinburgh’s School of Social and Political Science. His research interests include human rights, war and peace, and political and legal anthropology.

Contact socsv@nus.edu.sg for further information.