

Introduction

The subject of today's public workshop is the relationship between pacifism and citizenship. The assumptions and prejudices that surround this topic remain deeply rooted. The world of unexamined opinion may be fairly—or, rather, *unfairly*—divided between those who believe that pacifism is not a political identity but rather a matter of personal morality and those who believe that pacifism is and always has been a matter of broad political and social responsibility. Of course, this division of opinion is likely to remain, but inasmuch as the United States Institute of Peace knows that there are those from a wide variety of provenances who would have it otherwise, we believe it is incumbent upon us to give them a public forum.

As an introduction to this discussion, I would like to cite a few excerpts from a paper written by one of our discussants today, George Weigel,¹ who describes why he agreed to write a paper on pacifism although he is not a pacifist. I was struck in reading this paper by how well his reasoning resonates with the reasoning of the Institute in staging this workshop.

That is, of course, not to say that the Institute is not pacifist or that it must argue its way into discussions of pacifism. I quote the following as an eloquent statement on the importance of the discussion of pacifism to all those who are interested in the subject of morality in foreign policy. George states a general argument, then delineates four specific reasons for wanting to

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get in on the discussion of the current state of pacifist thought. He says,

As a general intellectual proposition, I believe it to be the case that any tradition of moral reflection, no matter how secure in its own self-understanding it may be, benefits from the friendly critique of other traditions. All things being equal, then, moral traditions which are experiencing a ferment in their self-understanding should be even more open to widening the circle of critical conversation about their future. . . . [As] American pacifism is in a period of perhaps unprecedented ferment, it seems to me that the time is precisely right for a candid exchange between pacifists and nonpacifists on the future of the pacifist conscience and pacifist politics.²

He continues by describing the reasons to join in a discussion of pacifism:

First, there is the empirical fact that the pacifist conscience . . . animates a significant and increasing number of American Christians [and, I might add, others] today, and those pacifist convictions can be expected to have a discernible impact on the future of our public life. Thus, anyone interested in the intellectual and moral health of the debate at the intersection of ethics in U.S foreign policy must be interested in and, it is hoped, a part of the debate over the pacifist future.

Second, there is the demonstrable historical impact of the pacifist conscience on the conduct of America's business in the world in the past as well as the present. This impact is persistently (and wrongheadedly) minimized by pacifists and foreign policy realists alike. But I take it to be an unassailable matter of historical record that one cannot begin to understand the terms of, or the passions engaged in, the debates over isolation and intervention in the 1930s, over nuclear testing and related issues in the 1950s, over America's role in the second Indo-China war in the 1960s and 1970s, and over U.S. policy in Central America today without taking serious account of the role pacifist individuals and agencies have played in shaping the contours and themes of the public discourse on these issues. Pacifists have

been, and remain, a small demographic minority in the United States. But they have had, and continue to have, an influence in our public discourse that is far greater than their numbers might suggest.

The third factor . . . is the contemporary recognition by both mainline/oldline Protestantism and Roman Catholicism of the legitimacy of the pacifist conscience within those religious traditions. Those who think that American pacifism is still largely confined to the historic peace churches can simply be said not to have been paying very much attention to the American religious scene for the past generation.³

George goes on to note that this pacifist renaissance in the mainline churches has been "a source of light as well as heat," which I believe is true. Fourth, and most important, George says, "I know and admire pacifists of deep moral conviction and impressive political sophistication. Having learned much from them, I hope to make some small recompense in what follows."⁴

Like George Weigel, the United States Institute of Peace and the public at large would do well to come to know and admire pacifists and nonpacifists of deep moral conviction and impressive political sophistication, and to begin to learn from both. We might look at this discussion as a three-cornered conversation between pacifists and nonpacifists, with the Institute standing in for the American public. We will hear first from Dr. Elise Boulding, then from Dr. Guenter Lewy. Both speakers have been asked to speak on the following question: In your estimation, what was, is, and should be the relationship between pacifism, in a strict and broad sense, and citizenship, in terms of social and political responsibility, in the United States? After the speakers have addressed the question, we will open the discussion to all the participants.

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Notes

1. George Weigel, "Christian Pacifism and World Politics: The Path to Distress, and Five Theses for a New Reformation," delivered at the Conference on the Future of Pacifism sponsored by the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C., September 15-16, 1988. Subsequently published in Michael Cromartie, ed., *Peace Betrayed? Essays on Pacifism and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1990).
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 4.