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Remembering our Humanity: the deep impact of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto

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“There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge, and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest.”¹ Days before his death, Albert Einstein joined Bertrand Russell and other notable scientists and philosophers in issuing a statement calling for the abolition of war and for governments to “find peaceful means for the settlement of all matters of dispute between them.” As a first step, they called for the renunciation of nuclear weapons. The initiative led to the establishment of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, which bring together influential scholars and public figures concerned with reducing the danger of armed conflict and seeking cooperative solutions for global problems. The Russell-Einstein Manifesto has had a major impact on the way in which people discuss the issues of peace and war. The paper traces the growing awareness of the meaning of war, ways in which violent conflict can be prevented, particularly in the nuclear age, and the humanitarian imperative for so doing.

¹From the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, London, 9 July 1955, signed also by Max Born, Percy W. Bridgman, Leopold Infeld, Frederic Joliot-Curie, Herman J. Muller, Linus Pauling, Cecil F. Powell, Joseph Rotblat and Hideki Yukawa