



The Seville Statement on Violence, an Inspirational Scientific Step towards Peace

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After the 65th anniversary of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, origin of the Pugwash Movement, and the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the World Academy of Art and Science, *Cadmus* is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a special issue with Seed Ideas on inspirational topics related to the commitment of WAAS to the application of Knowledge to address humanity's pressing global challenges.

“It is possible for us to end war and the suffering it causes. We cannot do it by working alone, but only by working together.”

I would like to recall now the relevant message of the Seville Statement on Violence, presented 35 years ago by selected scientists of quite different disciplines—such as anthropologists, biologists, physiologists, political scientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and sociologists—and from the four corners of the world, on the occasion of the VII CICA Conference held in Seville. The UNESCO Paris General Conference adopted it as part of its effort to counter ideas which have been used to justify war and violence, and decided its dissemination, translating it into all its official languages (Paris, 16 November 1989). In the words of the Dalai Lama (1998), *perhaps the most comprehensive statement on the latest research was summarized in the 1986 Seville Statement on Violence.*

Our main purpose was to state that it was not scientifically true that violence and war cannot be ended, as some people say, because they are part of our natural biology. And we did it through the following five propositions:

1. It is scientifically incorrect when people say that war cannot be ended because animals make war and because we are like animals: neither do animals make war, nor are we like animals. Unlike animals, we possess culture that we can change.
2. It is scientifically incorrect when people say that war cannot be ended because it is part of human nature, because our human culture gives us the ability to shape and change our nature from one generation to another.
3. It is scientifically incorrect when people say that violence cannot be ended because people and animals who are violent are able to live better and have more children than

others. Actually, evidence shows that people and animals do best when they learn how to work well with each other.

4. It is scientifically incorrect when people say that we are violent because of our brain. The brain can be used for cooperation just as well as for violence. It depends on how we are brought up and how we choose to live our lives.
5. It is scientifically incorrect when people say that war is caused by “instinct.” None of our behavior is so determined by biology that it cannot be changed by learning. Of course, we do have emotions and motivation like fear, anger, sex, and hunger, but we still decide how to express them. In modern war, the decisions are not usually emotional; instead, they are made in the way soldiers have been trained. The most important question is why they are trained and prepared that way in the first place by political leaders and the mass media.

Conclusion: We are not condemned to war and violence because of our biology. Instead, it is possible for us to end war and the suffering it causes. We cannot do it by working alone, but only by working together. However, it makes a big difference whether or not each one of us believes that we can do it. **In the same way, war was invented in ancient times, and we can invent peace in our time.** It is up to each of us to do our part.

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