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Dr. Albert Einstein - a memorial tribute, 1955.

DR. ALBERT EINSTEIN

A Memorial Tribute

April 24, 1955

A great life, my dear friends, came to an end this week in the death of Albert Einstein. I say "came to an end" and I mean, of course, as far as his physical existence on earth is concerned. He real life will never end. What was significant about his life can never end, and a thousand years from today men will speak and write about Albert Einstein whenever and wherever men will recount the story of the progress of civilization and of man's heroic enterprise to unravel the mysteries of the universe and to harness its forces for the service of man.

We are a privileged generation that such a man lived in it; and we are a privileged people that such a man belonged to it. I venture to say that our generation will be remembered because of him, and our people will grow in pride and self-esteem whenever they recall him.

Human progress, my dear friends, comes about through revelation and through personality, that is, through knowledge which is sometimes independent of experience, but which is in time verified by experience, and through great human personalities and character, character which is strong and courageous enough to defend knowledge and truth and by so doing, carve new highways for the advancing spirit of man.

Albert Einstein possessed both. He was a channel of great, new revelations of knowledge and of scientific truth, and he possessed character which enabled him to stand by not only the new insights which he discovered, in the face of the most violent opposition, but to stand by also the basic moral truth and ethical principles of mankind generally, and the indispensable values of society which were so bitterly and ruthlessly attacked in his day, and most especially in his country.

And I believe that it is this rare combination of revelation and of personality

in one man which so captivated the imaginations of the masses of the world. In the face of this, which is, after all, a miracle and a mystery, men and women in all walks of life, all over the world, most of whom were unable to understand even the rudiments of the obtruse scientific theories of this theoretician in the field of mathematical physics whose abstract speculations defied common sense - I say in spite of this fact, that the masses really never understood the involved and profound scientific theories and doctrines of Albert Einstein, they nevertheless stood in reverence of him, and what is even more revealing and complimentary, in love and admiration of him. No man coming from the cloistered halls of science was ever the popular hero of so many adoring millions as was Albert Einstein. He was acclaimed not only by savants and scientists, by universities and by governments, honored were showered upon him from all over the world, the Nobel Prize - he was acclaimed not only by these but by the people on the street who welcomed him wherever he appeared as a conquering hero. This shy, modest, and retiring man, who shunned publicity, who blushed and was terribly embarrassed whenever men praised him, was the idol of the masses, who sensed something very heroic and spectacular in his personality, something monumental and prophetic. Because of him they somehow felt encouraged. They were proud of their shared humanity. They somehow felt more hopeful and more elevated because of him. This is the amazing legend which a tremendous personality creates even during its lifetime.

And their link with him was not only man's instinctive reverence for great intellectual power - men do have an instinctive reverence for inventors and discoverers, for the revealers and the great healers of mankind, for the pathfinders of the world. And the masses, all people, somehowwere aware, even in a very vague and indistinct way that Albert Einstein had opened new doors upon the universe, had revolutionized scientific thought, and had given mankind a new vision, a new conception, of the structure of the universe. They came to realize, even those who were

unscientifically trained, that by providing a new formula for the transformation of mass into energy, he had made possible the fruitful exploration of nuclear energy and so ushered in a new age for mankind, the atomic age. And they sensed that there was something colossal about his achievements, whose consequences for the progress of the human race would be immeasurable.

But I venture to say that their admiration for him was not due solely on this account. It was also due to something else - beyond the revelation there was the personality. Albert Einstein, in their eyes, stood for the conscience of mankind. He stood four-square for all that mankind held sacred, for freedom and tolerance, the inalienable human rights, and for compassion, and pity, and justice. And they knew that Albert Einstein had always believed in these sacred values of the human race - that he fought for them, and suffered for them and was denounced and proscribed and execrated for them, and was exiled because of them, but that he remained under all conditions of attack, pressure, steadfast to the greater glory of humanity and as a superb tribute to the inviolable spirit of man.

Albert Einstein lived through one of the most tempestuous, tragic, and revolutionary periods in European and world history. Through the major part of his life he was a world-renowned figure, and he was caught in all this web of world events and in the bitter social, economic, and political conflicts of the years, even though he himself tried to avoid becoming involved in them; he tried to steer clear of politics; he was never greatly interested in politics; he wanted to devote himself exclusively to his scientific research. But no one of the character of Albert Einstein could remain isolated in his scientific ivory tower when the whole structure of the world, during the period of the two world wars, was threatened with collapse.

Almost unawaredly he found himself time and again in the social arena doing battle for the endangered spirit of man, fighting against all forms of tyranny, against militarism, against chauvenism, against racialism, and against all the rebels

against light who were so numerous in the last two generations. He couldn't understand it himself, how he came to be involved. In a moment of introspection he analysed himself, and he said, "My passionate interest in social justice and social responsibility has always stood in curious contrast to a marked lack of desire for direct association with men and women. I am a horse for single harness, not cut out for tandem or team work. I have never belonged wholeheartedly to country or state, to my circle of friends, or even to my own family. These ties have always been accompanied by a vague aloofness, and the wish to withdraw into myself increases with the years." And yet this retiring man was in the forefront of the battles for human liberation in more than a generation.

Though born in Germany, where he received his early schooling, his family moved to Italy when Albert was 15 years old, and he was soon sent to Switzerland to continue his education. In the course of time he became a Swiss citizen, and it was in Switzerland that Albert Einstein first published his epoch-making scientific papers, and it was there in Zurich that he first occupied the post of Professor of Physics.

At the age of 34 - in 1913 - just before the First World War, Albert Einstein was invited to come to Germany to become the director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Physical Institute, and to be made a member, also, of the Royal Prussian Academy of Science. Andit was in Berlin that Albert Einstein remained, with occasional visits abroad, and periods of teaching in universities abroad like in Pasadena, California - it was in Berlin that he remained until Hitler's rise to power. Thus during the 20 most turbulent years in the history of Germany - the First World War, the defeat of the Germany armies, the collapse of the German Reich, the fall and abdication of the Kaiser, the establishment of the Weimer Republic, the rise of Nazism, the spread of anti-Semitic racialist propaganda, the assassination of Walter Rathenau, the Jewish minister of foreign affairs of Germany, and the persecution of the Jews.

Through these twenty turbulent years, Albert Einstein lived, worked in Berlin. And while honors were showered upon him during those years from all parts of the world, his life became increasingly embittered by what he saw all around him in Germany and by what he experienced as a free spirit and as a Jew, so that in 1932, with Hitler in power in Germany as Chancellor of the Reich, beginning to purge all Jews from public life and from all educational posts, Albert Einstein decided to become a permanent exile from Germany and to live abroad.

- Nazi propaganda from the very start singled out Albert Einstein for its special target of attack. In the first place, he was the supreme living repudiation of their basic thesis that only the Nordic race is capable of producing genius and that the Semitic race was mongrel, and decadent, and intellectually sterile. But here was Einstein, a Jew, whom the whole world acdaimed as the foremost living physicist and a genius of the first water, and the world even praised Germany for producing such a genius. That wouldn't do at all with the Nazis. Einstein had to be discredited. His theory of relativity had to be laughed out of court. He was a "frivolous inventor of fantastic hypotheses," they said. And they found a mouth-piece in the prominent pro-Nazi German scientist, Philipp Leonard, who spear-headed their campaign against. Albert Einstein. He told the world that Einstein represented the "Asiatic" spirit in science. He told the world that "it is unworthy of a German to be the intellectual follower of a Jew. Natural science, properly so called, is of completely Aryan origin, and Germans must today also find their own way out into the unknown. Heil Hitler:"

Now the militarists of Germany in the Junker class had been defeated in the First World War. They blamed their defeat on a stab at the back. It was the home front that had collapsed. Responsible for this collapse were the democrats and the pacifists and, of course, the Jews. And this was the text of all the post-war propaganda of the monarchists and the Rightists and the militarists and all the entire Republican forces of the Reich, all directed against the German Republic.

Albert Einstein was a democrat, a pacifist, and a Jew, and a stout defender of the German Republic. Hence the thunderbolts of Nazi hatred played around his head.

Hitler grouped all the democratic forces and elements in Germany into one category - Bolsheviks! He succeeded in undermining the Germany Republic by raising the cry of Communism! Just as some in our country are intent in undermining freedom of all kinds by raising the cry of communism.

Albert Einstein was never a communist. He, who refused to visit Russia, upon repeated invitations for fear that his visit there would be interpreted as a political endorsement of the Soviet regime which he decried of its suppression of human liberties. Unlike many British scientists and writers who flock to Russia, Albert Einstein consistently refused to visit the Soviet Union, even to attend scientific congresses there.

But the Nazis were nevertheless quick to brand him as Bolshvik, and his physics as "Bolshevik Physics," as "Jewish Physics," as "Talmudic Physics." When they came into power with Hitler they burned his books publicly on the square before the State Opera House in Berlin, and his home near Berlin was ransacked and sacked by the Bown Shirts on the allegation that Einstein, whom they denounced as a pacifist, had a huge store of arms hidden in his house. And he was expelled from the Royal Prussian Academy of Science because he dared to criticize the Nazi atrocities.

Albert Einstein was a lover of peace. He saw the futility of war. He hated the military caste. He was opposed to military conscription, and for a time he was an outright pacifist. But when he witnessed the rise of dictatorships in Europe and their threat not merely to governments and to the independence and sovereignty of nation, but to the very souls of people, the human rights - when he saw the purposes of these dictatorships to enshackle the human mind and to bring back the Dark Ages, he ceased to be a pacifist. He came to acknowledge that lovers of human freedom and dignity must be prepared to defend them, sometimes even at the cost of war. He was charged with inconsistency, but to be consistent to a principle and hold on to it to the

bitter end when its consequences become dangerous to the highest interests of civilization is to be a doctrinaire. Albert Einstein was a scientist, not a doctrinaire. He used principles as working hypotheses to the degree that they yielded socially desirable results. When conditions demanded it, he made intellectual readjustments. His supreme concern was always not the principle, but the welfare of the free man in the free society. Thus, when he saw the might of the Nazis increasing during the Second World War, it was Albert Einstein who wrote to President Roosevelt and drew his attention to the possibility of making the atomic bomb ahead of the Germans, who were experimenting in that field. It was the making of the atomic bomb which hastened the termination of the Second World War. When Einstein became aware of the dangerous implications of atomic warfare and the menace involved for the future of mankind, he was among the first to call for a control of this atomic bomb so that it would not destroy civilization. His experiences with Nazism, what he saw of the gradual whittling away of human liberties in Germany and how a democracy can be undermined made him terribly sensitive to any attack upon human freedom, and so after becoming a citizen of the United States and in recent years beheld forces quite analagous to the dark forces of Germany rising up in this country to undermine human freedom under one pretext or another, he warned the American people. Sometimes his warning was accompanied by admonitions and advice which was not entirely necessary on the American scene where the traditions of democracy were far longer established and entrenched than was the case in Germany. And when he saw the Congressional Investigation Commissions violating basic human rights in their quest for information, you may recall that he advised one who turned to him for counsel to refuse to testify, even if it meant imprisonment, for he feared that unless people rose up against this threat and resisted it in Ghandi fashion, as ix he said, ultimately the enshacklement of the American people

would take place, even as the enshacklement of the German people took place. Perhaps his advice was unwarranted; had he known America longer, he may have refrained from giving this particular type of advice, but it was certainly motivated by a profound love for America, for democracy, for the things for which America stands.

Albert Einstein was a proud and loyal Jew. He had not been educated much in his childhood or early youth in the religious traditions of his people: He had some Jewish education in the Gymnasium where religious instruction was compulsory for all religious groups. There was little of the positive Jewish values in his home background. This was true of many young Jews at the turn of the century. Assimilationist tendencies were ripe among German Jews, but Albert Einstein, as he grew older, came to appreciate the spiritual and ethical values of Judaism and its high code of human conduct and brotherhood and of peace. He came to appreciate the plight of his fellow Jews in many parts of Europe, and subsequently he experienced the fierce anti-Semitism in his own country. And all these factors combined made him more aware of his Jewish responsibilities. Albert Linstein became an ardent Zionist, not out of any nationalistic fervor, but out of his great humanity and out of a great and mystic loyalty for his people, out of a desire to replenish their selfesteem and their dignity which were being so violently attacked, and out of a great compassion for the persecuted and the hounded among these people. It was these factors, along with his great admiration for Hebraic culture which he believed would receive a new birth in a Jewish homeland, that Albert Einstein became an ardent advocate of the Zionist cause. In fact, his visit to America in 1921 and to Cleveland was in connection with the Zionist movement. It was then that I had the first opportunity and the privilege of making the acquaintance of Professor Einstein, and I was privileged through the years to see a good deal of him, mainly in connection with the Zionist movement, and always found him to be reverent of Jewish values, deeply loyal and proud of his people and eager to help.

This week the State of Israel is celebrating its seventh anniversary. Albert Einstein had a hand in establishing the State of Israel. He had a hand in establishing the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He was greatly interested in its progress. He believed that a Hebrew University could become a bridge between the eastern and the western worlds. He was a loyal Jew, but he was a citizen of the world. He was not parochial in any of his loyalties. His outlook was universal.

I should like to say a word about Albert Einstein's religion. A great scientist is not necessarily a great authority on religion, and his opinions in the realms of faith are nomore authoritative than of any other intelligent student of the problem.

If religion is "doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God," Albert Einstein was a profoundly religious man, though he was not clear in his own mind what he meant and what other men meant when they spoke of God. He never really defined his conception of God, and if ever forced to a definition, Einstein would have probably denied a belief in a personal God; and yet he spoke often and wrote of his unshaken belief in the rationality of nature. He spoke of the "rational aspect of nature," and that the structure of the universe reveals wisdom and reason. He did not believe that nature was mindless. He was not a materialist. If Albert Einstein believed that there was reason in the universe, then there must be a reasoning mind in it, a universal mind, and if there is a universal mind, how far is his concept really different from the belief of the religious man that this universal mind laid down the laws not only of what we call physical nature, but of thenature of man as well, and of his ethical and spiritual aspirations.

On one occasion Professor Einstein wrote, "The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mystical. It is the soul of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties

can comprehend only in their most primitive forms, this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I belong to the ranks of devoutly religious men." On another occasion he wrote, "To that the sphere of religion belongs the faith of the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that it is comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image. Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind."

Professor Einstein knew the limitations about science. He knew that science can give us information about the correlation of facts and physical nature, to tell us nothing about aim and purpose and goal. In an address which he delivered before the Theological Seminary at Princeton, he wrote, "It is clear that no path leads from a knowledge of that which is to that which should be. No matter how clear and perfect our knowledge of present existence, no goal for our human aspirations can be inferred from it. No matter how splendid a knowledge of truth as such may be, able as a guide it is so impotent that it is not even to establish the justification and the value of this very striving for the knowledge of the truth. The setting up of the most fundamental goals and valuations and their establishment in the life of the individual seem to me to be the most important function of religion in the social life of man."

Albert Einstein believed in the value of religious organization, or churches, synagogues, temples as educational agencies to teach these aims and goals of the ethical and spiritual life of man. He even approved of rituals and ceremonies, not who as sacramental acts but as educative acts. I doubt then whether a man speaks and writes in this vain and who acts out the ethical ideals of religion can in any sense be called an un-religious man. Albert Einstein was not only a scientific leader of men, he was a spiritual leader of men. He led them in the ways of brotherhood and human freedom and social justice and peace. He hated all sham and all pomp and all privilege. He was a friend of man. He was the conscience of humanity in an age where

the consciences of most leaders of the world were somehow muted and silence. He was an individualist, a non-conformist, often a rebel, but always a lover of his fellow men. And so in the generations to come, mankind will treasure the memory of Albert Einstein not only because of his world-revolutionizing scientific theories - they will place him in the category of Copernicus and Newton and Faraday - the world will also remember him gratefully with a blessing in its heart as a great human being, a man who gives dignity to human life by the way he lives and the manner of his living in testing and searching times. The memory of the righteous is always blessed.



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