

THINKERS OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT
ALBERT EINSTEIN

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PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



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By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

Einstein is seventy four. Even in our present universal welter of confused thought; frustrated hopes and blurred values all will agree that he was the greatest figure of the last half-century. His works spelled a revolution in the realm of scientific thought and his influence on the changing outlook of the man was immense. In the words of a renowned contemporary scientist Dr. Leopold Infeld:

"Einstein influenced our contemporary world because of his doctrine, because of his thoughts and because of his written words. He was never born to be a man of action. Yet I wonder if there is in the history of science any other man who has appealed so much to the imagination of people all over the world as Einstein did."¹

Thousands of papers were written on his famous Theory of Relativity. The whole of scientific thought is being revised in the light of the researches of this great priest of relativity. Its influence on the contemporary philosophy is still greater. "Space and time are relative to the observer"—this has become the theme of the day. G. B. S. Haldane, following his philosophy wrote his "Reign of Relativity"; Edward Westermarck adapted it to the field of ethics in his "Ethical Relativity"; Bertrand Russell has also advanced it in the field of Ethics and Philosophy; Walter Lippman interpreted it for big business and added a drop of the milk of human kindness in his "Preface to Morals"; A. C. Mc-Gaffert introduced it to the field of religion in his "Rise of Modern Religious Ideas". Thus in every branch of knowledge its influence has become over increasing.²

The Theory of Relativity

Dr. Albert Einstein presented his first thesis in 1905 and his general theory of relativity appeared in 1915. In May 1919 its truth was empirically established—proved by the readings of an eclipse. The theory establishes that space and time are not absolute properties of nature. They are relative to the observer. Now, space is not measured in three dimensions: height, width and thickness time is another dimension. The relativists also add at will other dimensions from mechanical concepts,; and they thus obtain an altogether new framework, which gives the same results for any point of view of the observer. The principle has given a new conception to the law of gravitation and has changed it beyond any semblance of the past.³

Einstein was born in Germany in 1880 and graduated from Zurich Poly technical School in Switzerland in 1901. He worked as a clerk in the patent office in Berne (Switzerland) when he released his special theory of relativity. In 1915 he published his general Theory of Relativity and his fame ran in upward spiral ever since. In 1933 he left Germany and joined the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. A few years before his death he released his latest New Field theory and till his last breath devoted heart and soul to the exposition and development of this theory,, He breathed his last on 19th April, 1955 and left the world poorer.

¹ Albert Einstein— His work and its influence on the world. P. 117

² Here it is not possible to critically discuss how far can such an application be beneficial and how long can such " Union of thoughts" survive For to marry the spirit of any ago means to be a widow in the next. However, those who are interested in a critical valuation may consult : Philosophy of Reigion" by Fulton J. Sheen.

³ See "'New Philosophy of Science" by Prof. Bigk Elliot in "Universal History of the world" vol. III. "A History of Science" by Sir William Cecil Dampier. P. 399-411 and Dr. L. Infeld's "Albert Einstein."

Materialism is dead. Dr. Einstein was a master- genius. He was not only a scientist but also a great philosopher and a noble man. His views on the different problems of the world are no less edifying. He believed that pure materialism was a fraud wrapped in scientific terminology. He believed in God and declared his belief in religion.

J. W. N. Sullivan remarks that:

"In the new Universe, it appears, our religious insight is granted as great validity as our scientific insight. Indeed, in the opinion of the greatest creator of them all (Einstein) our religious insight is the source and guide of our scientific insight"⁴

He ridiculed those who stubbornly deny any purpose in the creation and think life as a meaningless venture. Einstein said:

"The man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unfortunate but almost disqualified for life."⁵

Western Civilization

Einstein very unequivocally declared that the modern civilization has feet of clay. In it, says he,

"Free exercise of the intellect exists no longer, the population is terrorized by gangsters who have seized power, and youth is poisoned by systematic lies. The pseudo—success of political adventurers has dazzled the rest of the world, it becomes apparent everywhere that this generation lacks the strength and force which enabled previous generations to win, in painful struggle and at great sacrifice, the political and individual freedom of man."

The scientist who had a human heart declared about the dazzling glamour of the west:

"Nothing of all that will remain but a few pitiful pages in the history books, briefly picturing to the youth of future generations the follies of its ancestors.

World Government

He held that nationalism was the fundamental ailment of our age and envisaged a state which would regard the whole human race as one brotherhood.

He "realizes that mankind can only be saved if a super- national system, based on law, would be created."

In a message to UNESCO he declared:

"The devastation wrought by the Wars of the last half century had brought home the fact to everybody that, with the present-day level of technical achievement, the

⁴ Quoted by C. E. M. Joad in "Guide to Modern Thought. "P. 117

⁵ "The World As I See It," By. A. Einstein P. 1

security of nations could be based only on supernational institutions and rules of conduct. In the long run, an all-devastating conflict can be avoided only by the setting up of a World Federation of Nations."

Dr. Einstein's portrait of the man of science—man who arrogated to himself the powers and authority he denied to God—is very realistic and illuminating. He wrote:

"The man of science, as we can observe with our own eyes suffers a truly tragic fate. Striving in great sincerity for clarity and inner independence, he himself, through his sheer Superhuman efforts, has fashioned the tools which are being used to make him a slave and to destroy him also from within. He cannot escape being muzzled by those who have political power in their hands. As a soldier he is forced to sacrifice his own life and to destroy the lives of others even when he is convinced of the absurdity of such sacrifices. He is fully aware of the fact that, universal destruction is unavoidable since historical development has led to the concentration of all economic, political and military power in the hands of national states. He also realizes that mankind can only be saved if a super-national system, based on law, would be created to eliminate for all time the methods of brute force. However, the man of Science has slipped so much that he accepts the slavery inflicted upon him by national states as his inevitable fate. He even degrades himself to such an extent that he helps obediently, in the perfection of the means for the General Destruction of mankind."

Looking Ahead

In these dark times when the air is filled with empty platitudes, silly arguments, tales of little men, it is refreshing to listen to the clear voice that speaks for reason. Einstein declared:

"Science has brought forth this danger, but the real problem is in the minds and hearts of men. We will not change the hearts of other men by mechanisms, but by changing our hearts and speaking bravely.

"We must be generous in giving to the world the knowledge we have of the forces of nature, after establishing safe-guards against abuse.

"We must be not merely willing but actively eager to submit ourselves to binding authority necessary for world security."

"We must realize we cannot simultaneously plan for war and peace.

"When we are clear of heart and mind—only then shall we find courage to surmount the fear which haunts the world."⁶

The fear still haunts us, but the sage who warned against its dangers is no more. And his absence is becoming more and more telling because dismal clouds are gathering on the horizon and none knows when the storm may break out.

⁶ Albert Einstein Quoted by Dr. Leopold, P. 124