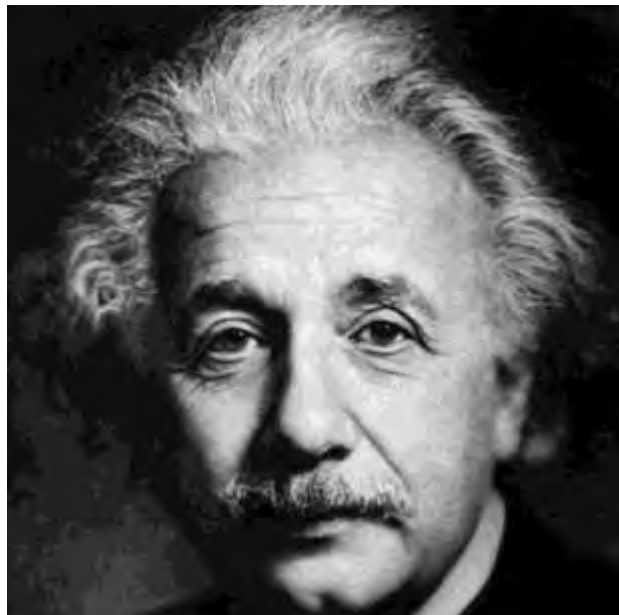


## Albert Einstein: A Scientist's Faith

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At the age of 26, Albert Einstein published four scientific papers: (1) special theory of relativity, (2) mass energy equivalence, (3) Brownian motion, and (4) photon theory, each of which could have made him famous. Though he is noted for these outstanding scientific breakthroughs, those who have looked more deeply into Einstein's character have found not only a scientific genius but a man within tense concern for the chains that bind men's minds and for the suffering that these chains have incurred in the world. Though his philosophy does not include the God of Judeo-Christianity. Einstein's faith in science gave him a spirit of sacrifice of personal desires for the greater cause of service to mankind.

Einstein was born in Ulm, Germany. His family was Jewish though not extremely religious, but as a youth he kept a profound conviction in his Jewish

faith. At the age of 12 he had to dismiss this conviction due to discrepancies between a literary interpretation of the Bible and the rational scientific thinking he was starting to develop. Einstein was fascinated by the ability of the mind to conceptualize and intuitively find solutions to the problems of geometry and mathematics. This phenomenon somehow showed a connection between the rational mind and the physical world that would never cease to amaze and please him.

Einstein did not like school; especially the earlier authoritative schools he attended. He did not have many friends and seemed to prefer to remain alone much of the time. Though later in life he welcomed close friends, he still retained this inherent desire for solitude. He was a man who preferred a quiet, simple life avoiding the public gaze, but he has become perhaps the best known and most respected scientist of the 20th century.

### Ideas of God

In an article entitled "Cosmic Religion," Einstein described the development of man's religious thought. According to him, men were motivated to either satisfy a need or to escape from pain. The feelings and longings of men come from a variety of emotions. Primitive men centered on fear. They devised a being that controlled the experiences that caused their fear so that by pleasing this being the experiences could be removed. Later from social feelings there developed a moral God or a God of Providence.

Einstein followed the progress from a religion of fear to the moral religion in the sacred writings of the Jewish people, and noticed that this was carried further in the New Testament. Therefore religions of today have a combination of fear and morality for their foundation and have an anthropomorphic God.

Man's God became a God who rewarded or punished man according to His will. Einstein was not satisfied with this God and stressed that men should rise above this conception though only a few gifted individuals have been able to do so. He emphasized that anyone who has a sense for causal law in the universe could not even think of such a God who rewards and punishes. Men are motivated according to certain necessities. From the viewpoint of a God who created all the laws and order of the universe including the necessities which govern man's motivation, these men could not be any more responsible for their actions than an object falling to the ground is responsible for its motion. In his book, *Out of My later Years*, he concluded:

"... if this being is omnipotent then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought, and every human feeling and aspiration is also His work; how is it possible to think of holding men responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such an almighty Being? In giving out punishment and rewards He would to a certain extent be passing judgment on Himself."

### Clear Light

Einstein claimed that this doctrine of a personal God of fear and hope that placed "vast power in the hands of priests" could only be maintained in darkness and in clear light He would have to be discarded.

Einstein's clear light is probably a clear understanding of reality all of which is contained in the whole of the universe. This understanding of the universe led to Spinoza's pantheistic God which Einstein agreed with. This God has no free will as ordinarily understood and no purposes but acts according to the necessity of His own nature, which according, to Spinoza and Einstein is to act freely.

Here, Einstein's childhood attraction to the beauty of the reasoning power of the rational mind and its connection to the physical universe is still a part of him: "That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God." The more Einstein unraveled the deep secrets of the universe, the more he realized its awesomeness, giving him a glimpse of the superiority of the reasoning behind it. This was Einstein's God.

In rising above the anthropomorphic idea of God, a few gifted men have been able to encounter Einstein's third level of religious Experience -- the cosmic religious sense. It is difficult to describe this level, because it is a deep experience that must be felt in order to understand it. The person who has reached that level "feels the vanity of human desires and aims, and the nobility and marvelous order which are revealed in nature and in the world of thought."

### **Finding a Higher Purpose**

Basically, it is breaking through the chains of selfishness and finding a higher purpose and meaning of existence. There is no doctrine or dogma to follow once the individual has discovered this spiritual level. In fact, dogma and the manlike God are too limiting for the freedom released in this new level. As mentioned, some men have reached it (Democritus, Francis of Assisi, and Spinoza are included by Einstein) but it is a sense that is difficult to teach to others who are not as gifted. Once a person has liberated himself from the limitations of selfish desires, the powerful meaningfulness that he finds in this "super-personal" awareness produces a very deep conviction independent of a divine Being according to Einstein. Einstein was a firm believer in individuality but he knew also that the individual must discover his purpose outside of himself living for others with concern for mankind as a whole and finally expanding his consciousness to find the unity in the totality of existence. A viewpoint that could be considered as Einstein's version of the "Golden Rule" for the religiously enlightened person is "... the free and responsible development of the individual so that he may place his powers freely and gladly in the service of all mankind."

### **Science and Religion**

Einstein suggested that among those who have acquired his cosmic religious sense many of research are strongly represented. To pioneer a new understanding in the realm of science requires a deep conviction and sense of purpose that only a religious foundation can provide.

"I assert that the cosmic religious experience is the strongest and the noblest driving force behind scientific research. No one who does not appreciate the terrific exertions, and above all, the devotion without which pioneer creations in scientific thought cannot come into being, can judge the strength of the feeling out of which alone such work turned away as it is from immediate practical life, can grow. What a deep faith in the rationality of the structure of the world and what a longing to understand even a small glimpse of the reason revealed in the world must have been in Kepler and Newton to enable them to unravel the mechanism of the heavens, in long years of lonely work."

Einstein himself knew only too well that deep faith and intense longing of which he spoke. His pioneer creations in scientific thought were not only difficult to understand, but in many instances they seemed to defy common sense. His faith in the correspondence of a rational mind to a rational world had to be strong. He not only added new concepts to the scientific world but changed the whole system of thinking; he knocked away about every solid thing a scientist had to stand on. He understood from his heart what the faith of a scientist really means.

### **Reverence for Order**

In his striving to understand the universe, Einstein was humbled in his amazement at the reasoning he was able to find in the small part of reality that his mind could comprehend. Thus by cultivating a humble reverence for the rationality and order displayed in the universe, the field of science helped to free the individual from the barriers of personal hopes and desires. Therefore scientific knowledge was nourishment for the deepening of Einstein's cosmic religious sense.

Here Einstein had found a connection that put science and religion together in the same breath. This religion discarded a personal God and Einstein may have felt that this was necessary, allowing religion to dwell with humanity itself only before the unity of religion and science can be realized. Einstein remembered the problems he had had with his literal Bible when he began to ask scientific questions: "... a conflict arises when a religious community insists on the absolute truthfulness of all statements recorded in the Bible. This means an intervention on the part of religion into the sphere of science."

Therefore, when man reached that third level of religious experience discarding the God of punishment and reward, religion and science could begin to complement each other. How can this third level of spirituality be reached and communicated without a conception of God or theology? Einstein claimed that art and science could provide this sense to those who can perceive it.

### **Religion Gives Direction**

Later, Einstein modified his stand a little, giving a more defined purpose for religion. Science deals only with facts and relationships or answering the question: what is? Meanwhile religion asks: what should be? Science provides the means but religion is needed to make the fundamental ends clear. Therefore, religion defines the goal and gives a purpose and direction to the means provided by science.

He also admitted the value of religion in the pursuit of world peace and that religion implants the spirit necessary to give strength to the means to achieve the goal. Truth alone cannot justify itself; its value must come from a deeper conviction -- a religious spirit. So Einstein summed up his view of the interdependence of science and religion with a simple statement: "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."

Much of Albert Einstein's philosophy was perhaps influenced by different attitudes he developed during his youth. He always showed a strong stand for individual freedom and found authority very difficult to accept probably because his early experiences with authority limited his intellectual pursuits. He was a person of total conviction. This initially manifested in the Bible and his religion but his later scientific inclinations demolished his belief. Because he had had strong conviction in a literal biblical interpretation which had to be broken, he may have developed an inclination of distrust toward religious absoluteness. He may have set his determination to make sure to the fullest extent before putting his total faith into anything else. Therefore his approach to life became a quest for truth, always questioning, never accepting theories or ideas without contemplation.

### **A Reasonable God**

He developed a believable theory of man's creation of God, and man's God was unprovable to Einstein, making any faith in Him difficult. He thought people allowed too many questions about God's relationship to man and the universe to go unanswered. His search through universal causal laws made the literal God of the Bible impossible to him. Being inclined to study the physical laws, he probably had very limited studies in spiritual matters and laws. He emphasized the reasonableness of his God -- a God infinite in wisdom -- but he did not consider the internal side of God -- the God of heart which is also infinite. In a sense, he limited himself by pursuing only verifiable questions, but maybe that was necessary to allow him to open up a new physical world to mankind.

Nevertheless, he was able to develop a deep love for mankind and concern for freedom. This motivated him to sacrifice himself in the quest for truth that he might offer it up as a service to his fellow man. He lived by his convictions. He wanted others to discover this sense also, but possibly, couldn't understand selfish motives that bind men and how to overcome them.

He suggested that receptive men could discover the "religious sense" through science and art. However, not everyone is inclined scientifically or artistically. The spiritual path is difficult and many men do not have the inclination to tackle such a sacrificial endeavor. Einstein found his deep faith in science and through his sacrifice and service in this area he discovered this religious sense. Somehow a deep conviction or faith must be instilled in man to pursue something outside of his own personal desires.

### **Religion Aids Peace**

Later in life Einstein gave more credit to religion as an aid in developing world peace. Perhaps he noticed that when religions were removed from society, authority began taking different forms such as nationalism and this was detrimental to world peace. He saw that religion provided the fundamental goals to bring purpose to life.

Religion can be used to give direction to lead men to that third level of religious experience. However, in some cases, religion has been abused by dogma and over concern with theology rather than making the convictions a living experience, as Einstein noticed. Einstein's "Golden Rule" mentioned previously implies that service and self-sacrifice must be lived. This practice must be brought alive in religion if it is to provide direction toward world peace.