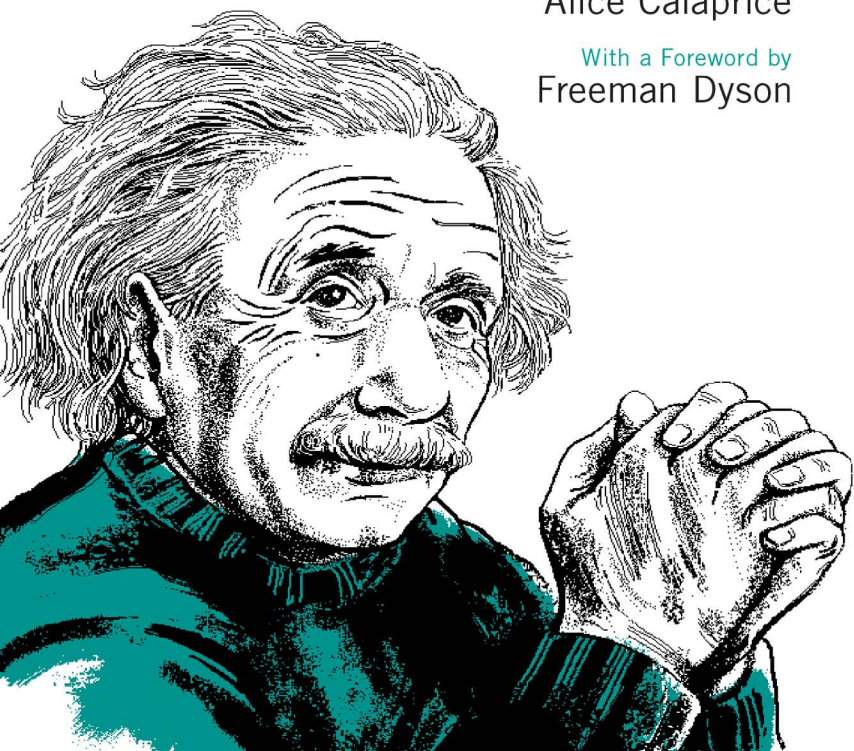


The Ultimate  
Quotable  
Einstein

Collected & Edited by  
Alice Calaprice

With a Foreword by  
Freeman Dyson



The Ultimate *Quotable*  
EINSTEIN



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WITH A FOREWORD BY  
Freeman Dyson

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS  
PRINCETON AND OXFORD

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*For my growing extended family—*

The Abeghians, Braunsfurths, Calaprices,  
Hazarabedians, Whittys, and Wongs,

*especially my sweet grandchildren,*

Emilia and Anya Calaprice, and  
Christopher and Ryan Whitty



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# *Contents*

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FOREWORD, BY FREEMAN DYSON	ix
A (LONG) NOTE ABOUT THIS FINAL EDITION	xvii
A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY	xxv

## THE QUOTATIONS

On Einstein Himself	1
On and to His Family	29
On Aging	53
On America and Americans	61
On and to Children	75
On Death	89
On Education, Students, and Academic Freedom	97
On and to Friends, Specific Scientists, and Others	111
On Germans and Germany	159
On Humankind	171
On Jews, Israel, Judaism, and Zionism	191
On Life	227
On Music	233
On Pacifism, Disarmament, and World Government	243
On Peace, War, the Bomb, and the Military	261
On Politics, Patriotism, and Government	287
On Race and Prejudice	309



On Religion, God, and Philosophy	319
On Science and Scientists, Mathematics, and Technology	347
On Miscellaneous Subjects	411
Abortion, Achievement, Ambition, Animals/Pets, Art and Science, Astrology, Birth Control, Birthdays, Books, Causality, China and the Chinese, Christmas, Clarity, Class, Clothes, Competition, Comprehensibility, Compromise, Conscience, Creativity, Crises, Curiosity, Death Penalty, Doctors, England, the English, and the English Language, Epistemology, Flying Saucers and Extraterrestrials, Force, Games, Good Acts, Graphology, Home, Homosexuality, Immigrants, Individuals/Individuality, Intelligence, Intuition, Invention, Italy and the Italians, Japan and the Japanese, Knowledge, Love, Marriage, Materialism, Miracles, Morality, Mysticism, Nature, Pipe Smoking, Posterity, The Press, Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, Public Speaking, Rickshaw Pullers, Sailing, Sculpture, Sex Education, Success, Thinking, Truth, Vegetarianism, Violence, Wealth, Wisdom, Women, Work, Youth	
Einstein's Verses: A Small Selection	461
Attributed to Einstein	471
Others on Einstein	487
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 547
INDEX OF KEY WORDS	557
SUBJECT INDEX	563

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## *Foreword*

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My excuse for writing this foreword is that I have been for thirty years a friend and adviser to Princeton University Press, helping to smooth the way for the huge and difficult project of publishing the Einstein Papers, a project in which Alice Calaprice has played a central role. After long delays and bitter controversies, the publication project is now going full steam ahead, producing a steady stream of volumes packed with scientific and historical treasures.

I knew Einstein only at second hand through his secretary and keeper of the archives, Helen Dukas. Helen was a warm and generous friend to grown-ups and children alike. She was for many years our children's favorite babysitter. She loved to tell stories about Einstein, always emphasizing his sense of humor and his serene detachment from the passions that agitate lesser mortals. Our children remember her as a gentle and good-humored old lady with a German accent. But she was also tough. She fought like a tiger to keep out people who tried to intrude upon Einstein's privacy while he was alive, and she fought like a tiger to preserve the privacy of his more intimate papers after he died. She and Otto Nathan were the executors of Einstein's will, and they stood ready with lawsuits to punish anyone who tried to publish Einstein documents without

their approval. Underneath Helen's serene surface we could occasionally sense the hidden tensions. She would sometimes mutter darkly about unnamed people who were making her life miserable.

Einstein's will directed that the archives containing his papers should remain under the administration of Otto Nathan and Helen until they determined it was time to make a transfer, and should thereafter belong permanently to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. For twenty-six years after Einstein's death in 1955, the archive was housed in a long row of filing cabinets at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. Helen worked every day at the archive, carrying on an enormous correspondence and discovering thousands of new documents to add to the collection.

In early December 1981, Otto Nathan and Helen were both in apparently good health. Then, one night, when most of the Institute members were on winter holiday, there was a sudden move. It was a dark and rainy night. A large truck stood in front of the Institute with a squad of well-armed security guards in place. I happened to be passing by and waited to see what would happen. I was the only visible spectator, but I have little doubt that Helen was also present, probably supervising the operation from her window on the top floor of the Institute. In quick succession, a number of big wooden crates were brought down in the elevator from the top floor, carried out of the building through the open front door, and loaded onto the truck. The guards jumped

on board and the truck drove away into the night. Before long, the archive was in its final resting place in Jerusalem. Helen continued to come to work at the Institute, taking care of her correspondence and tidying up the empty space where the archives had been. About two months later, suddenly and unexpectedly, she died. We never knew whether she had had a premonition of her death; in any case, she made sure that her beloved archive would be in safe hands before her departure.

After the Hebrew University took responsibility for the archive and after Otto Nathan's death in January 1987, the ghosts that had been haunting Helen quickly emerged into daylight. Robert Schulmann, a historian of science who had joined the Einstein Papers Project a few years earlier, received a tip from Switzerland that a secret cache of love letters, written around the turn of the century by Einstein and his first wife, Mileva Marić, might still exist. He began to suspect that the cache might be part of Mileva's literary estate, brought to California by her daughter-in-law Frieda, the first wife of Einstein's older son, Hans Albert, after Mileva's death in Switzerland in 1948. Though Schulmann had received repeated assurances that the only extant letters were those dating from after Mileva's separation from Einstein in 1914, he was not convinced. He met in 1986 with Einstein's granddaughter, Evelyn, in Berkeley. Together they discovered a critical clue. Tucked away in an unpublished manuscript that

Frieda had prepared about Mileva, but not part of the text, were notes referring with great immediacy to fifty-four love letters. The conclusion was obvious: these letters must be part of the group of more than four hundred in the hands of the Einstein Family Correspondence Trust, the legal entity representing Mileva's California heirs. Because Otto Nathan and Helen Dukas had earlier blocked publication of Frieda's biography, the Family Trust had denied them access to the correspondence and they had no direct knowledge of its contents. The discovery of Frieda's notes and the transfer of the literary estate to the Hebrew University afforded a new opportunity to pursue publication of the correspondence.

In spring 1986, John Stachel, at the time the editor responsible for the publication of the archive, and Reuven Yaron, of the Hebrew University, broke the logjam by negotiating a settlement with the Family Trust. Their aim was to have photocopies of the correspondence deposited with the publication project and with the Hebrew University. The crucial meeting took place in California, where Thomas Einstein, the physicist's oldest great-grandson and a trustee of the Family Trust, lives. The negotiators were disarmed when the young man arrived in tennis shorts, and a friendly settlement was quickly reached. As a result, the intimate letters became public. The letters to Mileva revealed Einstein as he really was, a man not immune from normal human passions and weaknesses. The letters are masterpieces of pungent

prose, telling the sad old story of a failed marriage, beginning with tender and playful love, ending with harsh and cold withdrawal.

During the years when Helen ruled over the archive, she kept by her side a wooden box which she called her “Zettelkästchen”—her little box of snip-pets. Whenever in her daily work she came across an Einstein quote that she found striking or charming, she typed her own copy of it and put it in the box. When I visited her in her office, she would always show me the latest additions to the box. The contents of the box became the core of the book *Albert Einstein, the Human Side*, an anthology of Einstein quotes which she co-edited with Banesh Hoffmann and published in 1979. *The Human Side* depicts the Einstein that Helen wanted the world to see, the Einstein of legend, the friend of schoolchildren and impoverished students, the gently ironic philosopher, the Einstein without violent feelings and tragic mistakes. It is interesting to contrast the Einstein portrayed by Helen in *The Human Side* with the Einstein portrayed by Alice Calaprice in this book. Alice has chosen her quotes impartially from the old and the new documents. She does not emphasize the darker side of Einstein’s personality, and she does not conceal it. In the brief section “On His Family,” for example, the darker side is clearly revealed.

In writing a foreword to this collection, I am forced to confront the question whether I am committing an act of betrayal. It is clear that Helen

would have vehemently opposed the publication of the intimate letters to Mileva and to Einstein's second wife, Elsa. She would probably have felt betrayed if she had seen my name attached to a book that contained many quotes from the letters that she abhorred. I was one of her close and trusted friends, and it is not easy for me to go against her express wishes. If I am betraying her, I do not do so lightly. In the end, I salve my conscience with the thought that, in spite of her many virtues, she was profoundly wrong in trying to hide the true Einstein from the world. While she was alive, I never pretended to agree with her on this point. I did not try to change her mind, because her conception of her duty to Einstein was unchangeable, but I made it clear to her that I disliked the use of lawsuits to stop publication of Einstein documents. I had enormous love and respect for Helen as a person, but I never promised that I would support her policy of censorship. I hope and almost believe that, if Helen were now alive and could see with her own eyes that the universal admiration and respect for Einstein have not been diminished by the publication of his intimate letters, she would forgive me.

It is clear to me now that the publication of the intimate letters, even if it is a betrayal of Helen Dukas, is not a betrayal of Einstein. Einstein emerges from this collection of quotes, drawn from many different sources, as a complete and fully rounded human being, a greater and more astonishing figure than

the tame philosopher portrayed in Helen's book. Knowledge of the darker side of Einstein's life makes his achievement in science and in public affairs even more miraculous. This book shows him as he was—not a superhuman genius but a human genius, and all the greater for being human.

A few years ago, I had the good luck to be lecturing in Tokyo at the same time as the cosmologist Stephen Hawking. Walking the streets of Tokyo with Hawking in his wheelchair was an amazing experience. I felt as if I were taking a walk through Galilee with Jesus Christ. Everywhere we went, crowds of Japanese silently streamed after us, stretching out their hands to touch Hawking's wheelchair. Hawking enjoyed the spectacle with detached good humor. I was thinking of an account that I had read of Einstein's visit to Japan in 1922. The crowds had streamed after Einstein then as they streamed after Hawking seventy years later. The Japanese people worshiped Einstein as they now worshiped Hawking. They showed exquisite taste in their choice of heroes. Across the barriers of culture and language, they sensed a godlike quality in these two visitors from afar. Somehow they understood that Einstein and Hawking were not just great scientists but great human beings. This book helps to explain why.

*Freeman Dyson*

Institute for Advanced Study

Princeton, New Jersey, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2010





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## *A (Long) Note about This Final Edition*

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More than fifteen years have passed since I deliberately began to gather information for the publication of the original edition of *The Quotable Einstein* of 1996. Before that, I had already done so informally after I began work with the Einstein papers in 1978 at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. These past years have greatly enriched my life as I came to know what it's like to be on the other side of the publishing world—that is, what it's like to be author rather than editor, to be signing books in bookstores and for friends, to be reviewed and interviewed. Especially exciting was the year 2005, the centennial year of Einstein's theory of special relativity and the fiftieth anniversary of his death, when so many Einstein colleagues and I participated in a number of international, national, community, and media events, including the dedication of a long-awaited statue of Einstein in Princeton.

But now it is time to hang up this particular hat and wrap things up. This project has been a work in progress since the beginning, a bit like my ever-changing but (I hope) improving garden. This fourth edition is the last one I will compile. I am grateful to have this last chance to make additions as well as a number of corrections and clarifications. Perhaps in a few years an enterprising new editor will have the

energy to continue the project, since there appears to be a bottomless pit of quotable gems to be mined from Einstein's enormous archives.

For this edition, I added three new sections but deleted most of the front- and backmatter found in the earlier editions in order to keep the book a compact size. Readers who are interested in the "extras" of the earlier editions should consult those volumes for the following: a longer chronology of Einstein's life, a family tree, answers to the most common questions about him, excerpts from the FBI's Einstein file, the famous letter to President Roosevelt warning him about the possibility that Germany is building an atom bomb, Johanna Fantova's journal of conversations with Einstein, Helen Dukas's account of Einstein's last days, and a letter to Sigmund Freud from *Why War?* as well as the old introductions, which give some background about my involvement with this project. I hope readers will now enjoy "On and to Children," including Einstein's own two sons; "On Race and Prejudice," which deserves its own section since the publication of Fred Jerome and Rodger Taylor's *Einstein on Race and Racism* has brought new material to light; and just a few verses, limericks, and poems from among the five hundred or so in the archive, all written originally in German. I was able to expand and reorganize the sections covering politics and Jewish themes considerably due to the publication of David Rowe and Robert Schulmann's invaluable and compre-

hensive book, *Einstein on Politics: His Private and Public Thoughts on Nationalism, Zionism, War, Peace, and the Bomb*, which documents Einstein's political, social, and humanitarian writings. Also of value have been Jürgen Neffe's biography, *Einstein*, meticulously translated into English by Shelley Frisch; Fred Jerome's *Einstein on Israel and Zionism*; and Walter Isaacson's *Einstein*. In addition, the publication of volumes 10 and 12 of the *Collected Papers* has provided yet more primary material. Therefore, I was able to add about four hundred more quotations, bringing the total to around sixteen hundred. The new quotations are prefaced with an asterisk.

While continuing to read about Einstein, I discovered that the versions of his translated writings are continuing to multiply. For example, the reprinted essays in *Ideas and Opinions* and in Nathan and Norden's *Einstein on Peace* are not always faithfully reproduced from the original publications such as *Forum and Century* and the *New York Times Magazine* but were retranslated for these books, for other compilations (such as *Cosmic Religion*, which seems to take snippets from a variety of sources and paraphrase them), and in many biographies thereafter. Because *Ideas and Opinions* is often used as a trusted source, it is not surprising that many of us have been confused about what Einstein *really* said. Perhaps Einstein himself asked that some of his earlier published statements be revised, no longer finding them palatable later in life. It is advisable that scholars, at

least, go to the original sources, in the original language, whenever possible, and mention the dates of publication and alternative sources or versions.

Joseph Routh, who became the president of Magdalen College at Oxford over two centuries ago, when asked what precept could serve as a rule of life to an aspiring young man, warned: “You will find it a very good practice always to verify your references, Sir!” In the early editions of this book, I admittedly didn’t always heed this sage advice, not being intimately familiar with the vast Einstein literature and believing the sources I had found were trustworthy enough for a general audience. At the same time, I had also warned readers that the original volume was not in fact a scholarly book in the strictest sense. Still, the gist of the quotations themselves has been accurate, with a few exceptions—not too bad when dealing with about sixteen hundred quotations. I’ve deleted some unverifiable, questionable ones or placed them in the “Attributed to Einstein” section. *This edition therefore supersedes the quotations and sources of the previous editions.*

Furthermore, readers should be aware that published interviews must be taken with a grain of salt since they are filtered by the interviewer and Einstein did not always have a chance to approve them before publication. The same holds true for recollections, conversations, and memoirs, and for anecdotal compilations such as Anita Ehlers’s light-hearted *Liebes Hertz!*. I slightly changed a few of the

translations that appeared in the earlier editions of this book if I felt the newly found ones were more accurate, and I also added more explanatory material in some notes.

If a quotation can be found in the published volumes of *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein* (still a work in progress), I included the volume and document number as a source. With this information readers can consult these volumes for further context. Other reliable sources are Rowe and Schulmann's reprinted documents in *Einstein on Politics* and those reprinted in Fred Jerome's books. For items yet unpublished, particularly correspondence, I included an archive number when it was available, as a help to scholars who are able to access the database of the Einstein Archives or the Einstein Papers Project.

Readers of the earlier editions may notice that many of the quotations that were in the original lists in the "Attributed to Einstein" section are no longer in that section and can be found, documented, in the body of the book. The sources of some other popular ones are still undiscovered, and I feel that a good number of them are paraphrases or generalizations of Einstein's thoughts. Many others, though, are completely bogus and continue to be used dishonestly by those who want to use Einstein's name to advance their particular causes.

A word about Einstein's sense of humor is also in order, since humor doesn't always translate well from one language to another. Some, but not all, of

his more biting remarks may have been said in jest, tongue-in-cheek, or with a twinkle in his eye. Like most of us, he may have also regretted some of his words later. Once you know Einstein better, you'll also better understand his humor. Furthermore, the reader will note that, through the years, Einstein changed his opinion on a number of topics, as many of us do as we age. So when you read a quotation, be aware that's how he felt at the time he said it, and not necessarily forever after. Such contradictions show that Einstein was not always rigid and narrow-minded but open to new ideas and thoughts as the times demanded, while still trying to remain true to his basic humanitarian values. He was more ironbound in his scientific ideas, though.

Einstein continues and no doubt will forever continue to fascinate both scientists and other admirers around the world. Through his avuncular, genial, and self-effacing image, he manages to exude a charisma that sociologist Max Weber described as "a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." In this book, however, readers will learn once again that Einstein was all too human and that, for the most part, he is still relevant today.

I thank my editor at Princeton University Press, Ingrid Gnerlich; my production editor, Sara Lerner,

for efficiently guiding the manuscript through production; and my eagle-eyed copyeditor, Karen Verde, for their interest and care in helping to prepare this volume for publication. Thanks also go to my former colleagues at Princeton University Press who produced this book and to the many people who, along with their friendly and gracious letters, sent me new quotations and copies of Einstein correspondence I had not seen before. Barbara Wolff of the Einstein Archives in Jerusalem made an exceptional contribution by providing corrections, further sources, and new details that were not familiar to me; she has helped to make this a better book and I'm extremely grateful to her. Osik Moses, an editor at the Einstein Papers Project at Caltech, has been most helpful and was always efficient and quick with her responses, and Diana Buchwald was gracious in giving me access to the archive. As usual, Robert Schulmann provided answers to important questions. Many friends, especially Patrick Lewin, provided encouragement and keen interest in this project. And I again thank Freeman Dyson for his wonderful foreword, which he allowed us to minimally revise in a couple of places. I hope this final edition will serve all readers well.

Claremont, California, January 2010





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## *A Brief Chronology*

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- 1879    March 14, Albert Einstein is born in Ulm, Germany.
- 1880    Family moves to Munich.
- 1881    November 18, sister Maja is born.
- 1885    In the fall, enters school and begins violin lessons.
- 1894    Family moves to Italy, but Albert stays in Munich to finish school. He quits school at the end of the year and joins his family in Italy.
- 1895    Enters the Aargau Cantonal School in Aarau, Switzerland.
- 1896    Relinquishes his German citizenship, is graduated from school, and moves to Zurich at the end of October to attend the Swiss Federal Polytechnical Institute (the "Poly"; later the "ETH").
- 1900    Is graduated from the Polytechnical Institute. Announces he plans to marry fellow student Mileva Marić.
- 1901    Becomes a Swiss citizen. Seeks employment while tutoring. Begins work on a doctoral dissertation for the University of Zurich.
- 1902    Probably in January, daughter Lieserl is born out of wedlock to Mileva. June, begins an appointment as Technical Expert at the Patent Office in Bern.
- 1903    January 6, marries Mileva in Bern, where they take up residence. Lieserl may have been given up for adoption or died, for no mention is made of her after September of this year.
- 1904    May 14, son Hans Albert is born in Bern.

- 1905 Einstein's "year of miracles" with respect to his scientific publications.
- 1906 January 15, receives doctorate from the University of Zurich.
- 1908 February, becomes a lecturer at the University of Bern.
- 1909 Is appointed Extraordinary Professor of Physics at the University of Zurich.
- 1910 July 28, second son, Eduard, is born.
- 1911 Goes to Prague to teach for a year.
- 1912 Becomes reacquainted with his divorced cousin Elsa Löwenthal and begins a romantic correspondence with her as his own marriage disintegrates. Accepts appointment as Professor of Theoretical Physics at the Polytechnical Institute (now the ETH) in Zurich.
- 1913 September, sons Hans Albert and Eduard are baptized as Orthodox Christians near Novi Sad, Hungary (later Yugoslavia, now Serbia), their mother's hometown. Accepts a professorship in Berlin, home of cousin Elsa.
- 1914 April, arrives in Berlin to assume his new position. Mileva and the children join him but return to Zurich in July because of Einstein's desire to end the marriage.
- 1916 Publishes "The Origins of the General Theory of Relativity" in *Annalen der Physik*.
- 1917 October 1, begins directorship of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Physics in Berlin.
- 1919 February 14, is finally divorced from Mileva. May 29, during a solar eclipse, Sir Arthur Eddington experimentally measures the bending of light and confirms Einstein's predictions; Einstein's fame as a public figure begins. June 2,

- marries Elsa, who has two daughters at home, Ilse (age 22) and Margot (age 20).
- 1920 Expressions of anti-Semitism and anti-relativity theory become noticeable among Germans, yet Einstein remains loyal to Germany. Becomes increasingly involved in nonscientific interests, including pacifism and his brand of Zionism.
- 1921 April and May, makes first trip to the United States. Accompanies Chaim Weizmann on U.S. fund-raising tour on behalf of Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Delivers four lectures on relativity theory at Princeton University.
- 1922 October through December, takes trip to the Far East. November, while in Shanghai, learns that he has won the 1921 Nobel Prize in physics.
- 1923 Visits Palestine and Spain.
- 1925 Travels to South America. In solidarity with Gandhi, signs a manifesto against compulsory military service. Becomes an ardent pacifist.
- 1928 April, Helen Dukas is hired as his secretary and remains with him as secretary and housekeeper for the rest of his life.
- 1930 December, visits New York and Cuba, then stays (until March 1931) at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), in Pasadena.
- 1931 Visits Oxford in May to deliver the Rhodes Lectures. December, en route to Pasadena again.
- 1932 January–March, at Caltech. Returns to Berlin. December, takes another trip to the United States.
- 1933 January, Nazis come to power in Germany. Gives up German citizenship (remains a Swiss citizen) and does not return to Germany. Instead, from the United States, goes to Belgium with Elsa and sets up temporary residence at Coq sur Mer.

- Takes trips to Oxford, where he delivers the Herbert Spencer Lecture in June, and Switzerland, where he makes his final visit to son Eduard in a psychiatric hospital. Early October, leaves Europe for Princeton, New Jersey, to begin professorship at the Institute for Advanced Study.
- 1936 December 20, Elsa dies after a long battle with heart and kidney disease.
- 1939 August 2, signs famous letter to President Roosevelt on the military implications of atomic energy, which leads to the Manhattan Project.
- 1940 Becomes U.S. citizen.
- 1945 Retires officially from the faculty of the Institute for Advanced Study.
- 1948 August 4, Mileva dies in Zurich.
- 1950 March 18, signs his last will. His literary estate (the archive) is to be transferred to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem at a time determined by his trustees.
- 1952 Is offered the presidency of Israel, which he declines.
- 1955 April 11, writes last signed letter, to Bertrand Russell, agreeing to sign a joint manifesto urging all nations to renounce nuclear weapons. April 13, aneurysm ruptures. April 15, enters Princeton Hospital. April 18, Albert Einstein dies at 1:15 A.M. of a ruptured arteriosclerotic aneurysm of the abdominal aorta.

The Ultimate *Quotable*  
EINSTEIN



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## *On Einstein Himself*

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A happy man is too satisfied with the present to think too much about the future.

Written at age seventeen (September 18, 1896) for a school essay in French entitled "My Future Plans." *CPAE*, Vol. 1, Doc. 22

Strenuous intellectual work and the study of God's Nature are the angels that will lead me through all the troubles of this life with consolation, strength, and uncompromising rigor.

To Pauline Winteler, mother of Einstein's girlfriend Marie, May (?) 1897. *CPAE*, Vol. 1, Doc. 34

\*In many a lucid moment I appear to myself as an ostrich who buries his head in the desert sand so as not to perceive a danger. One creates a small world for oneself and . . . one feels miraculously great and important, just like a mole in its self-dug hole.

Ibid.

\*I know this sort of animal personally, from my own experience, as I am one of them myself. Not too much should be expected of them. . . . Today we are sullen, tomorrow high-spirited, after tomorrow cold, then again irritated and half-sick of life—not to mention unfaithfulness, ingratitude, and selfishness.

To friend Julia Niggli, ca. August 6, 1899, after she asked him his opinion about her relationship with an older man. *CPAE*, Vol. 1, Doc. 51

I decided the following about our future: I will look for a position immediately, no matter how modest it is. My scientific goals and my personal vanity will not prevent me from accepting even the most subordinate position.

To future wife Mileva Marić, ca. July 7, 1901, while having difficulty finding his first job. *CPAE*, Vol. 1, Doc. 114

In living through this “great epoch,” it is difficult to reconcile oneself to the fact that one belongs to that mad, degenerate species that boasts of its free will. How I wish that somewhere there existed an island for those who are wise and of good will! In such a place even I should be an ardent patriot!

To Paul Ehrenfest, early December 1914. *CPAE*, Vol. 8, Doc. 39

Do not feel sorry for me. Despite terrible appearances, my life goes on in full harmony; I am entirely devoted to reflection. I resemble a farsighted man who is charmed by the vast horizon and who is disturbed by the foreground only when an opaque object obstructs his view.

To Helene Savić, September 8, 1916, after separation from his family. In Popović, ed., *In Albert's Shadow*, 110. *CPAE*, Vol. 8, Doc. 258

I very rarely think in words at all. A thought comes, and I may try to express it in words afterwards.

From a conversation with psychologist Max Wertheimer in 1916. In Wertheimer, *Productive Thinking* (New York: Harper, 1945), footnote on p. 184

I have come to know the mutability of all human relationships and have learned to insulate myself against both heat and cold so that a temperature balance is fairly well assured.

To Heinrich Zangger, March 10, 1917. *CPAE*, Vol. 8, Doc. 309

I am by heritage a Jew, by citizenship a Swiss, and by disposition a human being, and *only* a human being, without any special attachment to any state or national entity whatsoever.

To Adolf Kneser, June 7, 1918. *CPAE*, Vol. 8, Doc. 560

I was originally supposed to become an engineer, but the thought of having to expend my creative energy on things that make practical everyday life even more refined, with a loathsome capital gain as the goal, was unbearable to me.

To Heinrich Zangger, ca. August 1918. *CPAE*, Vol. 8, Doc. 597

I lack any sentiment of the sort; all I have is a sense of duty toward all people and an attachment to those with whom I have become intimate.

To Heinrich Zangger, June 1, 1919, regarding his lack of attachment to any particular place, as, for example, physicist Max Planck had to Germany. *CPAE*, Vol. 9, Doc. 52

I also had little inclination for history [in school]. But I think it had more to do with the method of instruction than with the subject itself.

To sons Hans Albert and Eduard, June 13, 1919. *CPAE*, Vol. 9, Doc. 60

I have not yet eaten enough of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, though in my profession I am obliged to feed on it regularly.

To Max Born, November 9, 1919. In Born, *Born-Einstein Letters*, 16; *CPAE*, Vol. 9, Doc. 162

By an application of the theory of relativity to the taste of readers, to-day in Germany I am called a German man of science, and in England I am represented as a Swiss Jew. If I come to be represented as a *bête noire*, the descriptions will be reversed, and I shall become a Swiss Jew for the Germans and a German man of science for the English!

To *The Times* (London), November 28, 1919, 13–14, written at the request of the newspaper. Also referred to in a letter to Paul Ehrenfest, December 4, 1919. See also the quotation of April 6, 1922, below. *CPAE*, Vol. 7, Doc. 26

Another funny thing is that I myself count everywhere as a Bolshevik, God knows why; perhaps because I do not take all that slop in the *Berliner Tageblatt* as milk and honey.

To Heinrich Zangger, December 15 or 22, 1919. *CPAE*, Vol. 9, Doc. 217

With fame I become more and more stupid, which of course is a very common phenomenon.

To Heinrich Zangger, December 24, 1919. *CPAE*, Vol. 9, Doc. 233

Since the light deflection result became public, such a cult has been made out of me that I feel like a pagan idol. But this, too, God willing, will pass.

To Heinrich Zangger, January 3, 1920. *CPAE*, Vol. 9, Doc. 242. Einstein had even been asked to give a three-week "performance" at the London Palladium to explain relativity.

I do know that kind fate allowed me to find a couple of nice ideas after many years of feverish labor.

To Dutch physicist H. A. Lorentz, January 19, 1920. *CPAE*, Vol. 9, Doc. 265

An awareness of my limitations pervades me all the more keenly in recent times because my faculties have been quite overrated since a few consequences of general relativity theory have stood the test.

*Ibid.*

I am being so terribly deluged with inquiries, invitations, and requests that at night I dream I am burning in hell and the mailman is the devil and is continually yelling at me, hurling a fresh bundle of

letters at my head because I still haven't answered the old ones.

To Ludwig Hopf, February 2, 1920. CPAE, Vol. 9, Doc. 295

My father's ashes lie in Milan. I buried my mother here [Berlin] only a few days ago. I myself have journeyed to and fro continuously—a stranger everywhere. My children are in Switzerland. . . . A person like me has as his ideal to be at home anywhere with his near and dear ones.

To Max Born, March 3, 1920. In Born, *Born-Einstein Letters*, 25. CPAE, Vol. 9, Doc. 337

The teaching faculty in elementary school was liberal and did not make any denominational distinctions. Among the *Gymnasium* teachers there were a few anti-Semites. Among the children, anti-Semitism was alive especially in elementary school. It was based on conspicuous racial characteristics and on impressions left from the lessons on religion. Active attacks and verbal abuse on the way to and from school were frequent but usually not all that serious. They sufficed, however, to establish an acute feeling of alienation already in childhood.

To Paul Nathan, political editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, for an article on anti-Semitism, April 3, 1920. CPAE, Vol. 9, Doc. 366

I will always fondly recall the hours spent in your home, including the pearls of Persian wisdom with

which I became acquainted through your hospitality and your work. As an Oriental by blood, I feel they are especially meaningful to me.

To Friedrich Rosen, German envoy in The Hague, May 1920. Rosen had apparently been posted in Persia at one time and edited a collection of Persian stories. Einstein Archives 9-492

It also pleases me that it is still possible, even today, to be treated as an internationally minded person without being compartmentalized into one of the two big drawers.

To H. A. Lorentz, June 15, 1920. The “two big drawers” at the time were the pro-Central Powers and the pro-Allies. CPAE, Vol. 10, Doc. 56

\*Don’t be too hard on me. Everyone has to sacrifice at the altar of stupidity from time to time, to please the Deity and the human race. And this I have done thoroughly with my article.

To Max and Hedi Born, September 9, 1920, downplaying criticism for an article he wrote. In Born, *Born-Einstein Letters*, 34. CPAE, Vol. 7, Doc. 45

Like the man in the fairytale who turned everything he touched into gold, so with me everything is turned into newspaper clamor.

Ibid. To his friend Paul Ehrenfest he wrote ten years later, on March 21, 1930, “With me, every peep becomes a trumpet solo” (Einstein Archives 10-212).



Personally, I experience the greatest degree of pleasure in having contact with works of art. They furnish me with happy feelings of an intensity that I cannot derive from other sources.

1920. Quoted by Moszkowski, *Conversations with Einstein*, 184. Here, according to the context, Einstein refers only to literature.

\*I do not care to speak about my work. The sculptor, the artists, the musician, the scientist work because they love their work. Fame and honor are secondary. My work is my life, and when I find the truth I proclaim it. . . . Opposition does not affect my work.

Quoted in *New York Call*, May 31, 1921, 2. See also Illy, *Albert Meets America*, 312

To be called to account publicly for what others have said in your name, when you cannot defend yourself, is a sad situation indeed.

From "Einstein and the Interviewers," August 1921. Einstein Archives 21-047

If my theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare that I am a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say that I am a German and Germany will declare that I am a Jew.

From an address to the French Philosophical Society at the Sorbonne, April 6, 1922. See also French press clipping,

April 7, 1922, Einstein Archives 36-378; and *Berliner Tageblatt*, April 8, 1922. Einstein Archives 79-535

When a blind beetle crawls over the surface of a curved branch, it doesn't notice that the track it has covered is indeed curved. I was lucky enough to notice what the beetle didn't notice.

In answer to his son Eduard's question about why he is so famous, 1922. Quoted in Flückiger, *Albert Einstein in Bern*, and Grüning, *Ein Haus für Albert Einstein*, 498

Now I am sitting peacefully in Holland after being told that certain people in Germany have it in for me as a "Jewish saint." In Stuttgart there was even a poster in which I appeared in first place among the richest Jews.

To sons Hans Albert and Eduard, November 24, 1923. Einstein Archives 75-627

Of all the communities available to us, there is not one I would want to devote myself to except for the society of the true searchers, which has very few living members at any one time.

To Max and Hedwig Born, April 29, 1924. In Born, *Born-Einstein Letters*, 79. Einstein Archives 8-176

[I] must seek in the stars that which was denied [to me] on Earth.

To his secretary Betty Neumann, 1924, with whom he had fallen in love while married to Elsa, upon ending

his relationship with her. She was the niece of his friend Hans Muehsam. See Pais, *Subtle Is the Lord*, 320; and Fölsing, *Albert Einstein*, 548

Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.

In answer to the question, "Do you trust more to your imagination than to your knowledge?" From interview with G. S. Viereck, "What Life Means to Einstein," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 26, 1929; reprinted in Viereck, *Glimpses of the Great*, 447

My own career was undoubtedly determined not by my own will, but by various factors over which I have no control, primarily those mysterious glands in which nature prepares the very essence of life.

In a discussion on free will and determinism. Ibid. Reprinted in Viereck, *Glimpses of the Great*, 442

To punish me for my contempt of authority, Fate has made me an authority myself.

Aphorism for a friend, September 18, 1930. Quoted in Hoffmann, *Albert Einstein: Creator and Rebel*, 24. Einstein Archives 36-598

I am an artist's model.

As recalled and noted by Herbert Samuel, who asked him his occupation, reflecting Einstein's feeling that he was constantly posing for sculptures and paintings, October 31, 1930. Einstein Archives 21-006. The photographer Philippe

Halsmann's version is a bit different: An elderly woman on a bus told Einstein she must have seen his picture somewhere because he looked familiar, and Einstein responded, "I am a photographer's model." See Halsmann, letter to editors, *New York Review of Books*, May 26, 1966

I have never looked upon ease and happiness as ends in themselves—such an ethical basis I call the ideal of a pigsty. . . . The ideals which have always shone before me and filled me with the joy of living are goodness, beauty, and truth. To make a goal of comfort or happiness has never appealed to me.

From "What I Believe," *Forum and Century* 84 (1930), 193–194. See also Rowe and Schulmann, *Einstein on Politics*, 226, for background information and the whole essay. This and other passages from the essay have been variously translated elsewhere. For this edition of the book, I am consistently using the versions in *Forum and Century*.

\*Possessions, outward success, publicity, luxury—to me these have always been contemptible. I believe that a simple and unassuming life is best for . . . the body and mind.

Ibid.

\*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.

Ibid.

Many times a day I realize how much my outer and inner life is based upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how much I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received.

Ibid.

It is an irony of fate that I myself have been the recipient of excessive admiration and reverence from my fellow-beings, through no fault or merit of my own.

Ibid.

Professor Einstein begs you to treat your publications for the time being as if he were already dead.

Written on Einstein's behalf by his secretary, Helen Dukas, March 1931, after he was besieged by one too many manuscripts. Einstein Archives 46-487

It strikes me as unfair, and even in bad taste, to select a few individuals for boundless admiration, attributing superhuman powers of mind and character to them. This has been my fate, and the contrast

between the popular assessment of my powers and achievements and the reality is simply grotesque.

From "Impressions of the U.S.A.," ca. 1931, reprinted in Rowe and Schulmann, *Einstein on Politics*, 242–246. Einstein Archives 28-168

Although I try to be universal in thought, I am European by instinct and inclination.

Quoted in *Daily Express* (London), September 11, 1933. Also in Holton, *Advancement of Science*, 126

People flatter me as long as I'm of use to them. But when I try to serve goals with which they are in disagreement, they immediately turn to abuse and calumny in defense of their interests.

To an unidentified pacifist, 1932. Einstein Archives 28-191

I suffered at the hands of my teachers a similar treatment; they disliked me for my independence and passed me over when they wanted assistants. (I must admit, though, that I was somewhat less of a model student than you.)

To a young girl, Irene Freuder, November 20, 1932. Reprinted as "Education and Educators," in *Ideas and Opinions*, 56. Einstein Archives 28-221

My life is a simple thing that would interest no one. It is a known fact that I was born, and that is all that is necessary.

To Princeton High School reporter Henry Russo, quoted in *The Tower*, April 13, 1935

As a boy of twelve years making my acquaintance with elementary mathematics, I was thrilled in seeing that it was possible to find out truth by reasoning alone, without the help of any outside experience. . . . I became more and more convinced that even nature could be understood as a relatively simple mathematical structure.

Ibid.

Arrows of hate have been aimed at me too, but they have never hit me, because somehow they belonged to another world with which I have no connection whatsoever.

From a statement written for Georges Schreiber's *Portraits and Self-Portraits* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936). Reprinted in *Out of My Later Years*, 13. Einstein Archives 28-332

I have settled down splendidly here: I hibernate like a bear in its cave, and really feel more at home than ever before in all my varied existence. This bearishness has been accentuated still further because of the death of my mate, who was more attached to human beings than I.

To Max Born, early 1937, after the death of Einstein's wife, Elsa. In Born, *Born-Einstein Letters*, 125. Einstein Archives 8-199

I wouldn't want to live if I did not have my work. . . .  
In any case, it's good that I'm already old and personally don't have to count on a prolonged future.

To close friend Michele Besso, October 10, 1938, reflecting on Hitler's rise to power. Einstein Archives 7-376

I firmly believe that love [of a subject or hobby] is a better teacher than a sense of duty—at least for me.

In draft of a letter to Philipp Frank, 1940. Einstein Archives 71-191

\*I have never given my name for commercial use even in cases where no misleading of the public was involved as it would be in your case. I, therefore, forbid you to use my name in any way.

To Marvin Ruebush, who had asked Einstein for permission to use his name in promoting a cure for stomach aches, May 22, 1942. Einstein Archives 56-066

Why is it that nobody understands me, yet everybody likes me?

From an interview, *New York Times*, March 12, 1944

I do not like to state an opinion on a matter unless I know the precise facts.

From an interview with Richard J. Lewis, *New York Times*, August 12, 1945, 29:3, on declining to comment on Germany's progress on the atom bomb



I never think of the future. It comes soon enough.

Aphorism, 1945–46. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations (2d ed., 2001), this quotation came from an interview on the ship *Belgenland* in December 1930; perhaps it was recalled later and inserted into the archives under the later date. Einstein Archives 36-570

The development of this thought world (*Gedankenwelt*) is in a certain sense a continuous flight from “wonder.” A wonder of such nature I experienced as a child of four or five years, when my father showed me a compass.

Written in 1946 for “Autobiographical Notes,” 9

My intuition was not strong enough in the field of mathematics in order to differentiate clearly the fundamentally important . . . from the rest of the more or less dispensable erudition. Beyond this, however, my interest in the knowledge of nature was also unqualifiedly stronger. . . . In this field I soon learned to scent out that which was able to lead to fundamentals and to turn aside . . . from the multitude of things which clutter up the mind and divert it from the essential.

Ibid., 15–17

The essential in the being of a man of my type lies precisely in *what* he thinks and *how* he thinks, not in what he does or suffers.

Ibid., 33

There have already been published by the bucketsful such brazen lies and utter fictions about me that I would long since have gone to my grave if I had allowed myself to pay attention to them.

To the writer Max Brod, February 22, 1949. Einstein Archives 34-066.1

\*I lack influence [at the Institute for Advanced Study], as I am generally regarded as a sort of petrified object, rendered blind and deaf by the years. I find this role not too distasteful, as it corresponds fairly well with my temperament.

To Max and Hedi Born, April 12, 1949. In Born, *Born-Einstein Letters*, 178–179. (Similar to “My fame begins outside of Princeton. My word counts for little in Fine Hall,” as quoted by Infeld in *Quest*, 302.) Einstein Archives 8-223

\*I simply enjoy giving more than receiving in every respect, to not take myself nor the doings of the masses seriously, am not ashamed of my weaknesses and vices, and naturally take things as they come with equanimity and humor. Many people are like this, and I really cannot understand why I have been made into a kind of idol.

*Ibid.*, in reply to Max Born’s question on Einstein’s attitude toward a simple life

My scientific work is motivated by an irresistible longing to understand the secrets of nature and by no other feelings. My love for justice and the striving

to contribute toward the improvement of human conditions are quite independent from my scientific interests.

To F. Lentz, August 20, 1949, in answer to a letter asking Einstein about his scientific motivation. Einstein Archives 58-418

I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.

To Carl Seelig, March 11, 1952. Einstein Archives 39-013

I'm doing just fine, considering that I have triumphantly survived Nazism and two wives.

To Jakob Ehrat, May 12, 1952. Einstein Archives 59-554

It is a strange thing to be so widely known, and yet to be so lonely. But it is a fact that this kind of popularity . . . is forcing its victim into a defensive position which leads to isolation.

To E. Marangoni, October 1, 1952. Einstein Archives 60-406

All my life I have dealt with objective matters; hence I lack both the natural aptitude and the experience to deal properly with people and to carry out official functions.

Statement to Abba Eban, Israeli ambassador to the United States, November 18, 1952, in turning down the presidency of Israel after Chaim Weizmann's death. Einstein Archives 28-943

\*I myself have certainly found satisfaction in my efforts, but I would not consider it sensible to defend the results of my work as being my own "property," like some old miser might defend the few pennies he had laboriously scraped together.

To Max Born, October 12, 1953. In Born, *Einstein-Born Letters*, 195. Einstein Archives 8-231

I'm a magnet for all the crackpots in the world, but they are of interest to me, too. A favorite pastime of mine is to reconstruct their thinking processes. I feel genuinely sorry for them, that's why I try to help them.

Quoted by Fantova, "Conversations with Einstein," October 15, 1953

In the past it never occurred to me that every casual remark of mine would be snatched up and recorded. Otherwise I would have crept further into my shell.

To Carl Seelig, October 25, 1953. Einstein Archives 39-053

During the First World War, when I was thirty-five years old and traveled from Germany to Switzerland, I was stopped at the border and asked for my name. I had to hesitate before I remembered it. I have always had a bad memory.

Quoted by Fantova, "Conversations with Einstein," November 7, 1953

I was supposed to be named Abraham after my grandfather. But that was too Jewish for my parents, so they made use of the “A” and named me Albert.

Ibid., December 5, 1953

All manner of fable is being attached to my personality, and there is no end to the number of ingeniously devised tales. All the more do I appreciate and respect what is truly sincere.

To Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, March 28, 1954. Einstein Archives 32-410

Today Mr. Berks has shown me the bust he made of me. I admire the bust highly as a portrait and not less as a work of art and as a characterization of mental personality.

From a signed statement written in English, April 15, 1954. Robert Berks is the sculptor who created the statue of Einstein in front of the National Academy of Science in Washington, D.C. The bust was used as a model for the statue. The bust itself, donated by the sculptor, was placed in front of Borough Hall, Princeton, New Jersey, in April 2005. (Statement, of which he gave me a copy, is in possession of Mr. Berks.)

It is true that my parents were worried because I began to speak fairly late, so that they even consulted a doctor. I can't say how old I was—but surely not less than three.

To Sybille Blinoff, May 21, 1954. Einstein Archives 59-261.  
In her biography of Einstein, Einstein's sister, Maja, put his age at two and a half; see *CPAE*, Vol. 1, lvii

I'm not the kind of snob or exhibitionist that you take me to be and furthermore have nothing of value to say of immediate concern, as you seem to assume.

In reply to a letter, May 27, 1954, asking Einstein to send a message to a new museum in Chile, to be put on display for others to admire. Einstein Archives 60-624

It is quite curious, even abnormal, that, with your superficial knowledge about the subject, you are so confident in your judgment. I regret that I cannot spare the time to occupy myself with dilettantes.

To dentist G. Lebau, who claimed he had a better theory of relativity, July 10, 1954. The dentist returned Einstein's letter with a note written at the bottom: "I am thirty years old; it takes time to learn humility." Einstein Archives 60-226

I never read what anyone writes about me—they are mostly lies from the newspapers that are always repeated. . . . The only exception has been the Swiss man, [Carl] Seelig; he is very nice and did a good job. I didn't read his book, either, but Dukas read some parts of it to me.

Quoted by Fantova, "Conversations with Einstein," September 13, 1954

If I would be a young man again and had to decide how to make my living, I would not try to become a scientist or scholar or teacher. I would rather choose to be a plumber or a peddler, in the hope of finding that modest degree of independence still available under present circumstances.

To the editor, *The Reporter* 11, no. 9 (November 18, 1954). See Rowe and Schulmann, *Einstein on Politics*, 485–486. Said in response to the McCarthy-era witch hunt of intellectuals. He felt that science at its best should be a hobby and that one should make a living at something else (see Straus, “Reminiscences,” in Holton and Elkana, *Albert Einstein: Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, 421). A plumber, Stanley Murray, replied to Einstein on November 11: “Since my ambition has always been to be a scholar and yours seems to be a plumber, I suggest that as a team we would be tremendously successful. We can then be possessed of both knowledge and independence” (Rosenkranz, *Einstein Scrapbook*, 82–83). At other times, Einstein allegedly also claimed that he would choose to be a musician, and suggested the job of lighthouse keeper to young scientists in a speech in the Royal Albert Hall in London in 1933 (Nathan and Norden, *Einstein on Peace*, 238).

\*In the present circumstances, the only profession I would choose would be one where earning a living had nothing to do with the search for knowledge.

To Max Born, January 17, 1955. See Born, *Born-Einstein Letters*, 227. Einstein Archives 8-246

Only in mathematics and physics was I, through self-study, far beyond the school curriculum, and

also with regard to philosophy as it was taught in the school curriculum.

To Henry Kollin, February 1955. Quoted in Hoffmann, *Albert Einstein: Creator and Rebel*, 20. Einstein Archives 60-046

The only way to escape the corruptible effect of praise is to go on working.

Quoted by Lincoln Barnett, "On His Centennial, the Spirit of Einstein Abides in Princeton," *Smithsonian*, February 1979, 74

God gave me the stubbornness of a mule and a fairly keen scent.

As recalled by Ernst Straus. Quoted in Seelig, *Helle Zeit, dunkle Zeit*, 72

The ordinary adult never gives a thought to space-time problems. . . . I, on the contrary, developed so slowly that I did not begin to wonder about space and time until I was an adult. I then delved more deeply into the problem than any other adult or child would have done.

As recalled by Nobel laureate James Franck, on Einstein's belief that it is usually children, not adults, who reflect on space-time problems. Quoted in Seelig, *Albert Einstein und die Schweiz*, 73

When I was young, all I wanted and expected from life was to sit quietly in some corner doing my work



without the public paying attention to me. And now see what has become of me.

Quoted in Hoffmann, *Albert Einstein: Creator and Rebel*, 4

When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come close to the conclusion that the gift of imagination has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing absolute knowledge.

Similar to "Imagination is more important than knowledge" (1929), quoted above. Recalled by a friend on the one hundredth anniversary of Einstein's birth, celebrated February 18, 1979. Quoted in Ryan, *Einstein and the Humanities*, 125

I have never obtained any ethical values from my scientific work.

As recalled by Manfred Clynes. Quoted in Michelmores, *Einstein: Profile of the Man*, 251

Many things which go under my name are badly translated from the German or are invented by other people.

To George Seldes, compiler of *The Great Quotations* (1960), cited in Kantha, *An Einstein Dictionary*, 175

I hate my pictures. Look at my face. If it weren't for this [his mustache], I'd look like a woman!

Said to photographer Alan Richards sometime during the last ten years of his life. Quoted by Richards, "Reminiscences," in *Einstein as I Knew Him* (unnumbered pages)

You're the first person in years who has told me what you really think of me.

To an eighteen-month-old baby boy who screamed upon being introduced to Einstein. Quoted in *ibid.*

I have finished my task here.

Said as he was dying. Einstein Archives 39-095. Taken from biographer Carl Seelig's account; he may have heard it from Einstein's secretary Helen Dukas or stepdaughter Margot Einstein.



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## *On and to His Family*

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