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Book review

EINSTEIN – PEACE NOW!
Visions and Ideas

Reiner Braun, David Krieger (Editors)
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2005 was declared by UNESCO a large group of scientific societies as *The International Einstein Year* to celebrate two events in connection with the great personality of Albert Einstein. The first one is the 100th anniversary of the publication of the relativity theory and of the quantum theory of life, and the second event is the 50th anniversary since Albert Einstein begun his long (or short – it’s relative!) journey to meet with the stars. To celebrate the personality Einstein and his efforts to make a better world Reiner Braun and David Krieger coordinated a group of scientists and public figures, amongst which there are some Noble prize winners, to write a book about the great the great humanity of Albert Einstein and also to make a statement on the world problems today.

The book represents a compendium of visions and ideas about the contemporary world that follow the ideas and values that Albert Einstein preserved and valued throughout his whole life: peace and morality. As the editors say, the book’s purpose is to “*make a contribution to the great dream of peace for humanity, in the tradition of Albert Einstein*” and in this respect the contributions of the authors pose visions for a better development globally, regionally, locally, for politics, for society and for the individual.

The book begins with an opening part in which Mikhail Gorbachev, Noble Peace Prize winner in 1990 and former General Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union presents the idea of the book and motivates its publishing by presenting three of the interconnected global challenges: security, poverty and the environmental challenge. A second chapter in the opening part of the book is written by Jurgen Renn, the director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. Here, the author presents the entrance of Albert Einstein into the public and politic life as a consequence of the necessity of scientists to assume social and political responsibility of their actions and discoveries.

The first part of the book – *Remembering Einstein* comprises of four chapters. The first one, *World Without War: A Tribute to Einstein’s Quest for World Peace* is written by Joseph Rotblat, also a Nobel Peace Prize winner and a physicist that worked on the Manhattan Project and is the sole living signatory of

the Russell-Einstein Manifesto¹. J. Rotblat analyses the world situation today in the view of Einstein ideas for peace and comes to the conclusion that a war-free world is both desirable and feasible.

The second chapter of this part in the book is an interview with Hans Bethe taken by Dieter Hoffman, in which the physicist describes Einstein the scientist and political person as he was perceived just after the second world war. In the end of the chapter, a statement of Hans Bethe on the 50th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing is presented.

The third chapter and the fourth chapters of the first part describe Einstein as a simple and modest man, but with an exceptional personality with a high morality and responsibility towards his actions.

The second part of the book, entitled "*Paths to Nuclear Weapon Free World*" comprises of four chapters that present today's possibility of a nuclear weapon free world in close connection with the ideas and visions of pacifism that Albert Einstein had half a century ago.

In the first chapter of the second part, entitled *Einstein-Man of Peace*, David Krieger reviews four of important ideas of Einstein's thinking on the world peace: militarism, pacifism, nuclear weapons and world government. In the second chapter of this part Jack Steinberger, also a Nobel Prize winner, presents the evolution of the nuclear arsenals in the world and the fact that the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty is not really in force and raises the idea that Europe, especially through NATO can contribute significantly to the reduction of existing nuclear arsenals. Chapter 3 of the second part presents the Latin-American history and current state of the nuclear arsenals. The last chapter of this part presents to the reader all the great physics discoveries of the 20th century, as well as the recent history of the cold war and of the nuclear race.

The third part of the book – *Striving for Peace* comprises of six articles in which the need for peace is reaffirmed. The first chapter is written by Oscar Arias Sanchez, former president of Costa Rica in which he declares the importance of world peace in fighting other stringent problems like the poverty and the social inequities.

The second chapter of this part is represented by the 5th *U Thant Distinguished Lecture*, given by Ahmed Zewail, chemist and physicist, at the United Nations University in April 2003. The lecture addresses the need for a rational world vision that takes into account development of the have-nots and the dialogue of cultures, and such a vision has to take into account the economic, political, religious and cultural dimensions of world affairs.

In the third chapter, Iva Isaksson, of the International Peace Bureau in Helsinki presents the continuous efforts that Albert Einstein made for a peaceful world: his position towards the atomic weapons and his public actions in relation to this subject.

In the next chapter, John Stachel makes an analysis of an article published by Einstein in 1947 in *The American Scholar*, entitled *The Military Mentality*

¹ The Russell-Einstein Manifesto was issued in London in 1955 and it represents an appeal to "the governments of the world" to acknowledge the danger of the nuclear weapons and to find peaceful means of resolving disputes.

and shows how pertinent and actual the ideas Einstein still are in today's world context.

Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1997 describes in the next chapter the role of the civil society in disarmament issues and presents some principles that international NGO's may follow to reach a better visibility and support when raising security problems.

In the last chapter of this part, Hartmut Grassl, former Director of the UN's World Climate Research Programme presents "*a self-made imminent threat for the entire mankind*" – the rapid climate global change, discusses some of the probable climate change scenarios that could take place and presents a brief but strong immediate strategy for sustainable energy systems.

The fourth part of the book is entitled *Finding Peace in the Middle East* and presents a neutral analysis of the actual situation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as well as the vision of Albert Einstein towards the newly formed state of Israel in 1947, in which he considered that "*the Jewish people who themselves suffered so severely from prejudice and oppression must have complete understanding for the necessity to grant the Arab minority in Israel freedom, democracy and full equality*".

Part 5 of the book is dedicated to the responsibility of scientists and to the ethics of science. The first chapter presents Einstein's most precious values: science, ethics and peace in context of today's world where scientists have to individually assume responsibility for their actions and discoveries "*because the development of military means of mass destruction is within their sphere of activity*".

The second chapter illustrates better this idea by presenting the story of Otto Hahn, the scientist that created the first uranium fission experiment and published his results in a time when his country was preparing for war.

The third chapter, *The role of science and technology in the quest for world peace*, presents the indisputable importance of the advances in science and technology to achieve a sustainable development status world-wide, in connection with the human – environment system.

The next chapter, written by Jean Maria Lehn, also a Noble Prize winner for chemistry, presents the ever increasing role of science in the contemporary informational society and the need for science to return into society, in other words to make science available for everybody, so as every individual become more responsible towards his own actions.

In the next chapter, Dudley Herschbach presents the activity of two persons that adopted Einstein as a model of morality and peace promoter: Leo Szilard and Andrei Sakharov. The first one has collaborated with his mentor on some inventions and studies, while the latter, also a physicist never knew the great person who Einstein was, but had the courage to criticize the Cold War, the nuclear race and the oppression from behind the Red Curtain.

In the next chapter, Jakob von Uexkull, former member of the European Parliament presents the idea of *World Future Council* consisting of respected individuals from allover the world to work and to find solutions to the main

problem that the contemporary world has: *the failure to respond to great challenges of our time, despite having the knowledge to do so.*”

The last chapter of the 5th part of the book is an interview with Abhay Ashtekar, one of the developers of “loop quantum gravitation theory”, in which he expresses the hope that in the year in which Einstein’s work is being celebrated; world politicians would understand and enforce Albert Einstein’s legacy: a constant fight for world peace and human wellbeing.

The last part of the book, *Appendix*, gathers some documents from different periods of that were issued by various groups of people, amongst which A. Einstein, as an attempt to convince world leaders to find peaceful means of settling political disputes. Some of these documents are: *The Appeal to the Europeans*, signed by Einstein in mid-October 1914, the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, the Pauling Appeal and many more.

Einstein –Peace Now! Visions and Ideas is a tribute to Albert Einstein’s constant and tireless efforts for world peace and social equity. It presents Albert Einstein as a peace advocate and less as a dedicated scientist. The book is also a good picture of the contemporary world problems: wars, environmental challenges and poverty and in the same time represents another appeal made by the authors for a better world.

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