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Imagining Einstein

By
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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
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To my loving parents for supporting me in every way possible through more than two decades of education. This thesis is as much a reflection of their hard work as it is of mine.

To my wife Betsy for believing in me, understanding me and loving me. These things mean more than words can say.

CONTENTS

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Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Michael A. Meyer for serving as my thesis advisor. He willingly accepted a student he knew nothing about with an unconventional topic. I thank him for taking the risk with me and with my idea. Because of him I asked myself after every completed sentence whether it was accurate, clear, intelligent, and above all, the best I could do. I trust I will continue to hear his voice whenever I put pen to paper. It was Albert Einstein who said "Academic chairs are many, but wise and noble teachers are few," Dr. Meyer is one of the few.

DIGEST

This is not a thesis about Albert Einstein, but rather about the cultural values expressed in myths and images of Einstein which Jews have created and perpetuated. Einstein is almost indisputably the most famous Jew of the twentieth century. Some of his popularity among Jews is certainly due to his own statements about Judaism and activities as a Jew. Although Einstein was not religiously observant he was an active Zionist, a great admirer of Spinoza, and a soldier of no small stature in the political battle against Nazism and antisemitism. Above all, he was a profoundly religious man in the sense that he was searching for a single, unifying principle to account for all of existence.

Although Einstein was in many ways a Jew, he represents more to Jews than his activities as a Jew seem to justify. Certainly there were greater Zionists, more charitable philanthropists and more eloquent spokesmen for Jewish causes. Indeed, Einstein himself would likely have admitted these claims. Nevertheless, Jews have lionized Einstein in their correspondence with him, their press, humor, advertising, art, music and institutions. Einstein has been proclaimed, not by ballot, but by popular and highbrow Jewish culture, as a Jewish hero.

By examining the myths and images of Einstein in these

various genres of Jewish culture I attempt to identify the components of these images and myths, as well as what their similarities, differences and frequency of appearance tell us about the values of those Jews who create and/or adopt them. I also examine the ideological purposes served by creating and perpetuating certain images and myths of Einstein.

The thesis begins with a general survey of the various approaches used to study and interpret images and myths related to culture heroes. From this survey I arrive at the methodology which is followed in subsequent chapters, namely, the study of Jewish Einstein mythology via such cultural vehicles as correspondence, the Jewish press, humor, advertising, art, music, and institutions which sought affiliation with the Einstein name. Before analyzing images and myths of Einstein I present a biography in order to establish which personality traits and events from the "real" Einstein's life influenced the shaping of the imagined Einstein.

Finally I conclude by defining four motifs which are dominant throughout the many representations of Einstein in Jewish popular and highbrow culture. These four motifs, Ilui, Or La-Goyim, Kol Bo and Navi each represent certain traits which Jewish culture has found in its most famous twentieth-century hero. Although assuredly related to the real Einstein, the Einstein imagined by Jews is mostly a

reflection of their own cultural ideals and ideology. Jewish culture's Einstein is an Ilui, an Or La-Goyim, a Kol Bo and a Navi because these are the images it admires, depends upon, and wishes to represent to the world. They provide an entree into the collective psyche of Jewish culture--a culture which has elaborated an image of its most famous hero as a man of brilliance, Jewish suffering and commitment, and penetrating universal vision.

Introduction

"Heroes Aren't Born, They're Made"

Benny's old grandfather, a grey-bearded patriarch from Poland, was very much puzzled by all the newspaper talk about Einstein and his theory of relativity.

'Tell me, Benny,' he finally asked with curiosity one day when his grandson returned home from college. 'Who is this Einstein and what is all this relativity business about?'

'Einstein is the greatest living scientist,' began Benny enthusiastically, a little uneasy about his own knowledge of the matter. 'Relativity is--well, it's hard to explain. Let's put it this way: if a man's sweetheart sits on his knee, an hour feels like a minute. On the other hand, if the same man sits on a hot stove, a minute feels like an hour. That's the theory of relativity!' concluded Benny triumphantly.

Grampa looked shocked. For a minute he kept stunned silence, an expression of incredulity in his eyes. Then he muttered into his beard 'American Goniff!'

'Tell me, Benny,' he finally asked, 'and from this your Einstein makes a living?'[1]

Much noise has indeed been made about Albert Einstein and his achievements. One cannot help, however, but share some of the grandfather's bewilderment in the above exchange regarding Einstein's fame. His amazement that a man engaged in something so seemingly impractical as the theory of relativity--no matter how naively explained by his grandson--could become so famous, points to something quite remarkable about the depth to which Einstein has permeated our culture. Einstein has become a folk hero on

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[1] Nathan Ausubel, A Treasury of Jewish Folklore (New York: Crown Publishers, 1948), pp. 357-358.

the largest scale. Just how large is exemplified by a recent People Magazine poll of March 19, 1986 in which the following question was posed: "If you could have someone else's brain for just twenty-four hours, whose brain would you choose?" A full fourth of the respondents chose Albert Einstein. At five percent, John F. Kennedy was the runner-up, followed closely by Ronald Reagan, Lee Iacocca, God and Thomas Edison.

Einstein defies most, if not all established characteristics of previous American culture heroes. Some Americans admired Woodrow Wilson and Adlai Stevenson (neither of whom has reached the level of Einstein's fame), yet for the most part our American heroes have been men quite different from either of them or Einstein. "The accent," explains Leo Gurko, "has been on muscle over mind, instinct instead of brain, impulsiveness at the expense of reflectiveness . . . The idealized American male has leaned strongly in the direction of brawn and egotism . . . As he appears in our folklore and our fiction, he has been more a creature of driving will power than of intelligence and imagination. He has tended to be cocky, boastful and aggressive, and has seldom been projected into situations requiring anything more from him than a physical response."[2]

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[2] Leo Gurko, Heroes, Highbrows and the Popular Mind (New York: The Bobbs-Merril Company Inc., 1953), p. 168.

The anti-intellectual tendencies in American hero worship are clear. Our heroes are folksy, relying on country wisdom rather than books, perspiration rather than inspiration; they are men of action who conquer land rather than fields of knowledge. Even in this technological age, when there is no land left to conquer and no Daniel Boones or Davy Crocketts to do the conquering, we still admire men of action: those who do rather than those who teach. "The average American," writes Dixon Wecter, "is prone to believe that nobody becomes a teacher who can succeed at any other trade."[3]

For a more specific example of American anti-intellectualism we can cite the case of Thomas Edison. Although he lived in the post-pioneer period of American history, he achieved the same mythic proportions for many of the same reasons as previous American folk heroes. As Wyn Wachhorst in his book Thomas Alva Edison: An American Myth explains: "He was a pioneer from a day when the technological frontier was as wide open as the land had been for Daniel Boone."[4] Edison stressed the American ideal that genius was " . . . one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration."[5] One of his favorite

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[3] Dixon Wecter, The Hero In America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 479.

[4] Wyn Wachhorst, Thomas Alva Edison: An American Myth (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 120.

[5] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

anti-intellectual anecdotes concerned a physicist whom he asked to measure the volume of a strangely shaped vessel. The physicist spent hour upon hour making numerous calculations and finally presented Edison with the solution. Edison verified the answer by simply filling the container with water and emptying it into a standard beaker. "No man of a mathematical habit of mind," said Edison, "ever invented anything that amounted to much. He hasn't the imagination to do it. He sticks too close to the rules."[6] Edison is even recorded as worrying that his mathematically trained son Theodore "may go flying off into the clouds with that fellow Einstein."[7] It seems fair to say that Edison represented to the American ideal of the industrial age what, according to John Ward, Andrew Jackson symbolized for the American of the early 1800s, namely, "a judgement unclouded by the visionary speculations of the academician."[8] Intellectuals, and more specifically scientists, have been largely looked down upon in America as "somewhat unfit for the rough and tumble realities of everyday life . . . naive and a bit soft headed."[9]

Yet, against this swift current of American anti-

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[6] Ibid., pp. 152-153.

[7] Ibid., p. 153.

[8] John Ward, Andrew Jackson: Symbol For An Age (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 49.

[9] Leo Gurko, Heroes, Highbrows and the Popular Mind, p. 60.

intellectual folk heroes, swims the solitary figure of Albert Einstein. If, as Wecter postulates, "the hero must do things better than the common folk, but his achievements must be open to every man's comprehension,"[10] how then do we account for the popularity of Einstein, about whom it was said that "only twelve men in the world understood him"?[11]

Einstein's profession as a theoretical physicist is not the only element in his character which is antithetical to traditional American notions of heroism. Einstein was a Jew. Just as the image of scientist does not coincide with typically American paradigms of the hero, how much more so the image of the Jew. True enough, there are Jewish scientists who have become well known in America. Sabin and Salk both achieved notoriety for their research which helped prevent horrible diseases. Neither Sabin nor Salk, however, reached anything even close to the level of Einstein's popularity and influence. Unlike Einstein, their names, faces and views on non-scientific issues are unknown to the general public.

"It is understandable," writes Daniel Boorstin, "that American folk heroes should be Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett and Mike Fink, men clever with their hands, able to hew a forest, strangle a mountain lion or master a river, while

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10 Dixon Wecter, The Hero In America, p. 485.

11 Ibid., p. 479.

Jewish folk heroes are Moses, Elijah . . . "[12] Boorstin sums up the difference between American and Jewish culture best when regarding America he asks, "What other nation could summarize its history by the movement of a line across a map? Nothing could be further from the character of Jewish history."[13] Jews, being denied for so many centuries a land to explore and master, have been forced to construct their communal identity on the foundation of ideas. Jews have lived by their wits. It is brain over brawn which has enabled them to survive and this non-naturalistic tendency has been cultivated by centuries of Jewish experience. In the early nineteenth century, Benjamin Rush urged that "Americans not be so foolish as to turn their backs upon a goldmine in order to go chasing butterflies."[14] Jews, on the other hand, having repeatedly seen territorial and political misfortune as a people, have internalized the lesson that ideas, Rush's "butterflies", are actually of a more permanent and substantial worth than "goldmines".

What better symbol of community through ideas and the intellectual search for ultimate meaning than Albert Einstein? Perhaps then, Einstein is more Jewish hero than

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[12] Daniel Boorstin, America and the Image Of Europe (Gloucester, Massachusetts: The World Publishing Company, 1976), p. 176.

[13] Ibid., p. 178.

[14] Ibid.

American hero. Although he is one of the twentieth century's most famous personalities, Einstein is almost indisputedly its most famous Jew. No other twentieth century Jew has "made it" to the degree that Einstein has, and as powerful as his image might be in American popular and highbrow culture, it is all the more so among Jews. Some of Einstein's popularity among Jews is certainly due to his own statements about Judaism and activities as a Jew. Einstein was not a religiously observant Jew, yet he was an active Zionist, a great admirer of Spinoza and a soldier of no small stature in the political battle against Hitler. Above all, Einstein was a profoundly religious man in the sense that he was searching for a single, unifying principle to account for all of existence.

Although Einstein was in many ways a Jew, he represents more to Jews than his activities as a Jew seem to justify. Certainly there were greater Zionists, more charitable philanthropists and more eloquent spokesmen for Jewish causes. Indeed, Einstein himself would likely have admitted to these claims. What John Ward said of Andrew Jackson in his book Andrew Jackson: Symbol For An Age is no less true of Einstein, namely, " . . . historical actuality imposed little restriction on the creation of the symbolic role people demanded [him] to play . . . many patent facts about his life fit poorly with the

stereotype."[15]

Elie Weisel has said that "Jews are for history, not myth."[16] Yet, in the case of Einstein nothing could be further from the truth. This is what makes the myth of Einstein so unique and worthy of study. Jews have lionized him in their institutions, their press, on canvas, in advertising, music, film and folklore. Einstein has been proclaimed, not by ballot, but by popular and highbrow Jewish culture, as a Jewish hero. Jewish adulation, more so than his own scientific achievements--which relatively few people understand--has been the power source of the Einstein myth. If Jewish culture is the primary means by which the Einstein myth has been shaped and perpetuated then it is likely to have influenced American myths of Einstein. Although Jewish and American myths of Einstein are different, there is undoubtedly some interplay between the two cultures' manipulation of his image. Perhaps Einstein's popularity in America is actually a result of the Judaizing of the traditional American folk hero. For, as we have already established, Einstein is both atypical as an American hero, and an unlikely candidate for the high esteem in which he is held as a Jew in the Jewish world. But this is true only of Einstein the man, not of Einstein

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15 John Ward, Andrew Jackson: Symbol For An Age, p. 208.

16 Alan M. Olson, Myth, Symbol and Reality (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), p. 30.

the myth.

Indeed, nothing less than an individual turned myth could bridge the gap between American and Jewish culture and bind the two together in such paradoxical fashion. Wachhorst has suggested that, "As a form of myth, the culture hero functions to resolve mechanically contradictory cultural values into a single paradoxical reality. . . . Neither a separation nor a synthesis of the two poles is necessary; rather, the paradox itself produces a schematic diagram of reality directly perceived only in symbol and myth."[17]

When we speak of Einstein, all except the few who either knew him personally or truly understand his theoretical physics, do so from the perspective of symbolism and myth. It is for this reason that I have titled my thesis "Imagining Einstein." For, although a vast corpus of material has been written about Einstein's life and work, relatively little consideration has been given to the images and myths of Einstein, and even less to the way in which Jews as a subculture have created and been affected by those images and myths. Have Jews played such a major role in the creation and perpetuation of Einstein mythology because they have sought to bathe in the glory of a Jew who reached the highest levels of non-Jewish society?

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17 Wyn Wachhorst, Thomas Alva Edison: An American Myth, pp. 3-4.

As Selig Brodetsky put it: "If I was proud of him as a Jew it was because through Einstein the Jews were contributing to the progress of humanity."[18]

Or perhaps after witnessing the grim and evil results of technology at Hiroshima and of the violent activist social philosophy of Adolf Hitler--both of which Einstein was believed to understand--Americans re-evaluated their own shoot-em-up, territory-conquering heroic ideal. Suddenly there was a great deal of attraction to ideals represented by the gentle Jew Einstein grappling with ideas and seeking a unifying principle to assure them that "there was meaning in the universe and that the meaning was good."[19] As Gurko suggests, "If the American hero in this later stage has been less of a giant and more of a human being, he is reflecting a change in the atmosphere of the country on its way to a less ingenuous and more sophisticated concept of the nature of experience, the meaning of the universe and the toughness of the future that looms ahead."[20]

Americans have certainly admired Einstein but it is Jews, as a subculture, who have tried most vigorously to shape and then co-opt the ideals of the imagined Einstein.

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[18] Selig Brodetsky, Memoirs: From Ghetto To Israel (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), pp. 124-125.

[19] John Ward, Andrew Jackson: Symbol For An Age, p. 202.

[20] Leo Gurko, Heroes, Highbrows and the Popular Mind, p. 198.

How and why Jews have tried to make Einstein in their own image can be discovered not in the reality of Einstein's life, but in the complicated fabric of images and myths which have come to represent him. For we are not so much interested in Einstein as we are in what our fascination with his image tells us about ourselves as Jews. "If it is true," writes Lou Benson in his book Images, Heroes and Self-Perceptions, "that the qualities that are attributed to the heroes of a culture are those qualities which are most highly regarded; and if an individual tends to aspire toward them, then an examination of the heroes of any given society will reveal what that society values most highly in its people."[21] Part of the reason we must study heroes via culture rather than in a biographical fashion is not only that culture is the means by which men and women are transformed into myths, but also, as Benson points out, " . . . from a psychological point of view, the popular versions of the hero and heroine can show the difference between what people profess to admire and what they do in fact admire. It will be these qualities with which they will identify rather than a commonly espoused list of virtues."[22]

It is my hope to reach a clearer definition of Jewish

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21 Lou Benson, Images, Heroes and Self-Perceptions (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 198.

22 Ibid., p. 7.

values in the twentieth century by tracing the evolution of Einstein mythology created by Jews. How and why have Jews created and been affected by images and myths of Einstein? What are the components of these images and myths? Which components are stressed or downplayed among various Jews during various periods and what do the similarities, differences and frequency of these components tell us about the values of those Jews who create and/or adopt them? What ideological purposes are served by various images and myths of Einstein, including those fashioned by antisemites?

In order to answer these questions I will rely upon a methodology constructed from the approaches of other studies which have also attempted to "chronicle the stages in the evolution of a culture hero."[23] The only other study of this nature dealing with a Jew--of which I am aware--is a brief, preliminary investigation of Sir Moses Montefiore by Moshe Davis called Sir Moses Montefiore: American Jewry's Ideal. However brief Davis' study might be, he does suggest three lodes of source material which will provide the answer as to how Montefiore's achievements were " . . . compounded into a rationale whereby he came to be the quintessential role model of a modern, emancipated

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[23] Wyn Wachhorst, Thomas Alva Edison: An American Myth, p. 3.

yet totally committed traditional Jew."[24] The three sources Davis uses are: institutions bearing Montefiore's name, primary historical documents, and Montefiore's correspondence. Of these three, the second seems rather obvious but the first and the third are both worthy of consideration.

An extensive study entitled A Preliminary Checklist Of American Institutions and Organizations Named In Honor Of Sir Moses Montefiore by Bertram W. Korn documents, according to Davis, "the power of the name and reputation of one man."[25] Although this thesis will not contain an exhaustive study of institutions and organizations which sought affiliation with the Einstein name, several will be examined. We know of elementary schools in Jewish suburbs, hospitals, Jewish community centers, B'nai Brith lodges and the like which have used Einstein's name as their own, or used his image as a focal point in their art and architecture. The services which these various institutions provide and the process by which they chose the Einstein name or image will help reveal for Einstein, as they did for Montefiore in Davis' study, "the multifaceted qualities which the American Jewish community

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[24] Moshe Davis, Sir Moses Montefiore: American Jewry's Ideal (Cincinnati, Ohio: American Jewish Archives, 1985), pp. 5-6.

[25] Ibid., p. 6.

saw in him."[26]

Davis' third suggestion is not as unique as his first in terms of analyzing a culture hero, yet written correspondence between a public figure and his public is certainly helpful in determining what they saw in him as praiseworthy and what issues they felt him capable of addressing. Fortunately, Einstein's correspondence has been collected and indexed by Princeton University. Again, given the nature of a rabbinic thesis, an exhaustive study of Einstein's letters will not be possible. Nevertheless, ample consideration will be given to his letters in order to discern patterns, general themes and types of individual Jews and Jewish organizations which wrote to Einstein and what they wanted from him.

Another useful technique in determining the importance of the major components in a culture hero's mythology is to actually quantify the recurrent themes, quotations and motifs which are stressed in the literature and folklore related to the particular hero. We know that Einstein was quoted and written about often by Jews in many different sources. We find his thoughts in Jewish newspapers, periodicals, worship services, anthologies, radio programs, etc. This information is significant because, as Wecter points out: "In this age, above all others, newspapers and newsreels and radio and the mechanisms of oration have such

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26 Ibid., p. 7.

power, in making or breaking the idol of the moment, that fresh irony has been given the old saying 'Heroes are not born but made.'"[27] By isolating the various themes of the Einstein myth and noting their frequency in the Jewish press and other mechanisms of Jewish culture, we can get a clearer picture of the transmutations by which Einstein became a Jewish culture hero. We can also discover which elements of the Einstein myth are most precious to Jews.

Folklore about Einstein also exists in many places. There are documented stories and anecdotes, fictitious renderings in both popular and highbrow Jewish literature and a surprisingly large number of Einstein jokes. This folklore, literature and humor must be examined not only to quantify its thematic content, but also to assess its overall character and purpose. "American humor," writes Boorstin, "has for the most part been forthright, the humor of exaggeration, understatement and rough-house of the Tall Tale, Mark Twain, Mr. Dooley, Mack Sennett and Will Rogers. But Jewish humor has been that of double-entendre, irony, paradox and satire; its proper response is not the belly-laugh, but the 'tsk, tsk' and the nod of the head."[28] Of which sort is the humor about Einstein? Moreover, what purpose is served by joking about Einstein at all; does it

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[27] Dixon Wecter, The Hero In America, p. 488.

[28] Daniel Boorstin, America and the Image of Europe, p. 180.

serve to enhance or debunk Einstein's image as a culture hero?

If Einstein is indeed a Jewish culture hero, then it is to popular and highbrow Jewish culture we must look in order to trace his evolution from man to myth. "All art is transforming," warns Alvin Rosenfeld in his recent book Imagining Hitler, "and thus inherently in conflict with the testimonial or documentary ideals of history writing."[29] "The ghost of Hitler," he continues, "has been set free from the strictures of historical consciousness and enjoys a second life through art."[30] While Rosenfeld charts the course of the Hitler myth through fiction, I intend to do so with Einstein's myth through many art forms. What do symbolizations of Einstein by Jewish writers, artists, sculptors, photographers, and musicians and tell us about what Jews have seen in Einstein as praiseworthy. These areas of Jewish culture are perhaps the most ignored of all by those who have studied Einstein in the past, and yet it is here more so than anywhere else that the Einstein myth has been crafted.

Finally, all of these various myth-making venues of Jewish culture, whether institutional, folkloristic, humorous, fictitious or one of several art media, must be

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[29] Alvin Rosenfeld, Imagining Hitler (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. xvii.

[30] Ibid.

squared with the real Einstein. As Rosenfeld notes, "A partial awareness . . . can be a stimulus to myth-making predilections of popular imagination."[31] Wachhorst further clarifies this point when discussing the myth of Edison: "The final picture, of course, is a product not just of collective psychology, but of its interaction with the personality traits of the real Edison and the particular events of his real life."[32] This is especially important in Einstein's case not only because of his revolutionary scientific genius and the turbulent times in which he lived, but also, because of his own acumen for manipulating the media and the active role he played in creating his own public image. As a fellow mathematician who knew Einstein well put it: "Einstein was his own best and most watchful publicity agent."[33] It is for these reasons that any serious study of Einstein mythology must begin with the necessary biographical information about the "real" Einstein.

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31 Ibid.

32 Wyn Wachhorst, Thomas Alva Edison: An American Myth, p. 15.

33 Solomon Bochner, Einstein Between the Centuries (Houston, Texas: Rice University Press, 1979), p. 38.

Chapter I

The "Real" Einstein

"I read in Einstein's unpublished correspondence," writes Fritz Stern, "with the historian's habitual hope that the archives would yield some nuggets to shock or prod the mind; the letters were marvelously human, but Einstein remained elusive and enigmatic. The search has been fascinating and disheartening--and has fully borne out what a friend said at the very beginning: 'Einstein is the hardest person to say anything about.'"[1]

However correct Stern's friend might be, there has nevertheless been a great deal said about "the hardest person to say anything about." One will find no fewer than thirty biographies of Albert Einstein listed in the card catalogue of any major library, not to mention the countless periodicals in which material on Einstein has been published. Perhaps not so surprisingly, given the nature of Einstein's character and the degree to which fiction has camouflaged the facts of his life, each biography is different in its approach, emphasis and conclusions. The most productive approach to understanding Einstein is therefore not to compare differences in order to uncover falsehood and hyperbole, but rather to concentrate on the important similarities between these various accounts in hopes of arriving, if not at the

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[1] Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," in Gerald Holton and Yehuda Elkana, eds., Albert Einstein: Historical and Cultural Perspectives, The Centennial Symposium in Jerusalem (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Universtiy Press, 1982), p. 321.

character of Einstein, then at least at the facts of his life.

Einstein himself rejected the notion that his genius was inherited from either his father Hermann or his mother Pauline. "I have no particular talent," he said, "I am merely extremely inquisitive. . . . So I think we can dispense with this question of heritage."[2] This is not to say, however, that Hermann and Pauline's influence and the influence of Swabian-Jewish culture in general did not have a significant effect on young Albert.

Hermann Einstein married Pauline Koch in 1876; she was the daughter of an affluent Stuttgart grain merchant, and a lover of German music and literature. Hermann, the last in a line of moderately prosperous Einsteins, was born and lived in Buchau with his family until he moved to Ulm in 1886. Albert Einstein remembers his father as a man whose "mode of life and Weltanschauung differed in no respect from those of the average citizen in that locality. When his work was done, he liked to go on outings with his family into the beautiful country round Munich, to the romantic lakes and mountains, and he was fond of stopping at the pleasant, comfortable Bavarian taverns, with their good beer, radishes and sausages."[3]

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[2] Carl Seelig, Albert Einstein (London: Staples Press Limited, 1956), p. 11.

[3] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1971), p. 5.

Out of this marriage between the happy-go-lucky businessman and the cultured daughter of a successful grain merchant came the birth of a son, Albert, on March 14, 1879, and two years later, a daughter named Maja. In 1877 Hermann set up a small electrical and engineering shop in Ulm which, although financed by his in-laws, nevertheless failed within a year of Albert's birth. This was to be only one in a series of Hermann's business defaults which were to leave their mark on Albert for life. The collapse of Hermann's small workshop in 1880, due to "his own perpetual good nature and high hopes,"[4] convinced the Einsteins to move from rural Ulm to Munich, the cosmopolitan capital of Bavaria.

With the move to Munich the Einsteins left behind the calm of Ulm--a town in which they were capable of maintaining their Jewish identity while at the same time blending easily into the community at large--for the primarily Catholic, urban Munich with its 250,000 inhabitants. Although they were married in a religious ceremony, the Einstein's home was not particularly Jewish. They did not keep kosher, observe Shabbat, go to synagogue or observe other mitzvot which Hermann considered to be "ancient superstition." Perhaps the only Jewish vestige which remained in the Einstein household was the tradition of inviting a poor fellow Jew to share a Shabbat meal. Yet

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[4] Ibid., p. 6.

even this custom was modified by the Einsteins so that it took place on Thursday afternoons. It was usually the poor Jewish medical student from Russia, Max Talmey, with whom they shared their Thursday lunch. The Einsteins were progressive, assimilationist, ritual-scorning Jews; the notion that they were ashamed of their heritage is, however, mistaken. As evidence we know that Hermann Einstein " . . . appears among a handful of Ulmese Jews who paid to donate a statue of the prophet Jeremiah to the city of Ulm in celebration of its 500th anniversary."[5] We also know that the Einsteins employed Rabbi Felix Perles to tutor Albert in Bible while he was at the primarily Catholic gymnasium in Munich.

The Einstein's first home in Munich was a small rented house in the city. For the next five years Hermann and his brother Jakob worked together in their own shop which specialized in gas and water installations. They were successful enough to open the Elektro-Technische Fabrik J. Einstein and Company in May of 1885. The entire family then moved to the suburb of Sendling where they lived in a large home and tended to their growing electrical equipment factory. Jakob, the more mechanically minded of the two brothers, oversaw the technical aspects of the business while Hermann saw to financial matters. By 1892 the

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[5] Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity (Bristol, England: Adam Hiliger Limited, 1985), p. 67.

company landed two large contracts to construct power stations in Italy, but by 1893-1894 it encountered serious financial problems and was "driven out by branches of more efficient, out-of-town factories which sprouted in the Bavarian capital."[6] After the total default of the family business, the Einsteins decided to leave Albert, then fifteen years old, behind to finish the Luitpold Gymnasium in Munich while they tried once again to establish a successful business--this time in Milan, Italy. This final attempt also met with failure a mere two years later.

The family's business mishaps had a profound effect on young Albert and were, quite likely, part of the reason he chose never to pursue a business career. "Even when I was a fairly precocious young man," wrote Einstein in 1949, "the nothingness of the hopes and strivings which chases most men restlessly through life came to my consciousness with considerable vitality. Moreover, I soon discovered the cruelty of that chase."[7] Just how cruel he considered the business world to be is exemplified by the letter Einstein wrote to his sister Maja in Italy while he was finishing his studies in Munich: "If it had gone according to me, Papa would have already sought a (that is, another) position two years ago, and so he and we would have been

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[6] Ibid., p. 49.

[7] Paul Arthur Schilpp, Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist (London: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p. 3.

spared vexation. . . . Most of all I have been struck by the misfortune of my poor parents who for so many years have not had a happy minute."[8]

Einstein's unhappy associations with the business world were not the only factors which propelled him toward academe and theoretical physics. Throughout the various biographies of Einstein's early childhood in Munich a few important facts seem to be certain. Albert was not a typical child. This is not to say, however, that he showed any particular signs of genius. Almost every biography mentions that he did not learn to speak until the age of three and that even by the age of nine he had not yet achieved fluency in any language. "He was a dreamy child," writes Jeremy Bernstein, "who disliked sports and games."[9] The Russian medical student Max Talmey who saw the young Einstein regularly from the age of ten to fifteen recalls that "in all those years I never saw him in the company of other boys his age."[10] According to his sister, Albert loved "solitary games of patient persistence, such as jigsaw puzzles, complicated block buildings and card houses

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[8] Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 51.

[9] Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p. 14.

[10] Erik H. Erikson, "Psychoanalytic Reflections," in Holton and Elkana, Albert Einstein, p. 154.

of unbelievable height."[11] Pauline's music seems to have shaped the young Einstein as much as his love for games requiring concentration and the interplay between shapes. She taught her son how to think musically at the piano, and throughout his life it was his music and his violin to which he would retreat most often when in need of emotional peace.

Besides his solitary playfulness and his early love for music there are two factors not directly related to Einstein's formal schooling which sowed the seeds of his later scientific genius and fame. Virtually every Einstein biography from children's books to scientific journals mentions the time Hermann showed his son a simple pocket compass. Einstein himself tells the story best:

> . . . how should it happen that sometimes we 'wonder' quite spontaneously about some experience? A wonder of such nature I experienced as a child of four or five years, when my father showed me a compass. That this needle behaved in such a determined way did not at all fit into the nature of events, which could find a place in the unconscious world of concepts (effect connected with direct 'touch'). I can still remember--or at least believe I can remember--that this experience made a deep and lasting impression upon me. Something deeply hidden had to be behind these things.[12]

Einstein's uncle Jakob influenced him even more than his own father. Jakob was a talented engineer in his own

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Paul Arthur Schilpp, Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist, p. 9.

right, taking out no less than six patents on his inventions between 1886 and 1893. He took it upon himself to teach Albert Euclidian geometry long before he encountered it in school. Einstein's secretary, Helen Dukas, reported that his library included three books bearing Jakob's signature; books he most probably gave to Albert when he was a young boy. They were "a logarithmic and trigonometric handbook, a textbook on analysis and an introduction to infinitesimal calculus."[13] Although it is by no means certain, all of this leads Lewis Pyenson to conclude that Jakob was responsible for the "second wonder" (the pocket compass being the first) that Albert experienced as a child:

> At the age of twelve, recalls Einstein, I experienced a second wonder of a totally different nature in a little book dealing with Euclidian plane geometry, which came into my hands. . . . Here were assertions, as for example the intersection of the three altitudes of a triangle in one point, which--though by no means evident--could nevertheless be proved with such certainty that any doubt appeared to be out of the question. This lucidity and certainty made an indescribable impression upon me.[14]

A childhood fascination with the mysterious force behind the compass needle and a love for the simple, beautiful truths of geometric theorems point to an important character trait in Einstein, namely, a powerful

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[13] Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 5.

[14] Paul Arthur Schilpp, Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist, pp. 9-11.

and playful imagination. It seems clear from the reports of those who knew and worked with Einstein that his childhood fascination with the deeper meaning of things influenced him throughout his career. As Pyenson explains: "Only a shallow historian would attempt to sketch Einstein's single 'method'. Yet a case can nevertheless be made for the continuing presence in Einstein's work, of a special vision . . . Einstein always sought to penetrate beneath external forms, to apprehend a deeper structure."[15] Gerald Holton recalls a conversation with Einstein in which Einstein said "he was brought to the formulation of the relativity theory in good part because he kept asking himself questions concerning space and time that only children wonder about."[16] Einstein also mentioned that " . . . play seems to be the essential feature in productive thought."[17]

Einstein paid an increasingly heavy price in order to preserve his childhood curiosity and approach to problems. The childlike was often seen by others as childish, the simple as naive. Einstein was "convinced that beauty was a guiding principle in the search for important results in

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15 Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 73.

16 Gerald Holton, Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Keeler to Einstein (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 356.

17 Albert Einstein, Ideas and Opinions (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1954), pp. 25-26.

theoretical physics."[18] He often "spoke quite openly of this aesthetic appeal, of beauty and harmony. . . . It was this feeling . . . that guided him in his scientific thinking."[19] Yet, what seemed like beauty and artistic license to Einstein seemed more "like alchemy"[20] to his fellow physicists. "From their thematic perspective," explains Holton, "Einstein's was an anathema. Declaring by simple postulation rather than by proof, Galilean relativity to be extended . . . [to] all other branches of physics; dismissing the ether, the playground of most nineteenth century physicists, in a preemptory one-half sentence; depriving time intervals of inherent meaning; and other such outrages all delivered in a casual, confident way in the first short paper on relativity--those were violent, 'illegitimate' distortions of science to almost every physicist."[21] What Erik Erikson said of Einstein, in one of the few attempts at a psychoanalytic examination of his achievements, seems to be accurate: "Einstein succeeded in saving the child in himself even when, increasingly, he had to accept, with a kind of nonviolent

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[18] G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), p. 82.

[19] Ibid., p. 53.

[20] Gerald Holton, "Einstein and the Shaping of Our Imagination," Holton and Elkana, Albert Einstein, p. xxi.

[21] Ibid.

resistance, isolation and even punishment rather than submit to standardized formulations."[22] Indeed, Einstein's stubborn independence and faith in his own methodology were all that sustained him on his lifelong journey to "understand the world in a wildly speculative way."[23]

Einstein's playful, creative fascination with reality would have amounted to little were it not for his great strength of character and militant independence which manifest themselves during his early school days. Young Albert's experiences as a student were unique from the start. His was a free-thinking Jewish family which separated itself from Munich's Jewish community both socially and economically. According to Pyenson " . . . it is reasonable to assume that in the early 1880s the Einstein brothers constituted at the very least ten percent of all Jews engaged in mechanical or electrical engineering. They belonged to a select fraternity."[24] From age five to ten Albert was in the unique, but apparently not uncomfortable, position of being the only Jew in an otherwise Catholic elementary school. All elementary education in Bavaria at the time was

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[22] Erik Erikson, "Psychoanalytic Reflections," p. 155.

[23] G.J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 27.

[24] Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 69.

denominational. The closest Jewish elementary school was some distance and quite expensive for the Einsteins. To them, "the dangers of Catholic orientation were outweighed by the sound general instruction the school gave."[25]

Some sources mention that Einstein first encountered antisemitism at this point in his life. It is true that a teacher in the elementary school used the phrase "The nails with which Christ was nailed to the cross looked like this," in order to make a point. But, Philipp Frank--to whom Einstein told the story some sixty years later--notes that the teacher "did not add as sometimes happens, that the Crucifixion was the work of the Jews."[26] Most probably, Einstein and his classmates took little notice of his Jewishness.

The Luitpold Gymnasium in Munich, attended by Einstein from age ten to fifteen, was perhaps the major factor which nurtured his scientific and social independence. In retrospect, Einstein hated his five and one-half years at the school. "The teachers in the elementary school appeared to me like sergeants," he said, "and the gymnasium teachers like lieutenants."[27] Certainly, this was a recollection colored by the harsh anger Einstein later felt

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[25] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 10.

[26] Ibid., p. 11.

[27] Philipp Frank, Einstein: His Life and Times (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 11.

toward Hitler's Germany. In actuality, the Luitpold Gymnasium was more progressive than most schools of its type. Physics was taught there as a separate science from mathematics, the textbooks were the most up-to-date, the faculty somewhat liberal and the facility quite good. Despite anecdotes about Einstein being a poor student, the Luitpold Gymnasium was, according to Pyenson, " . . . a good school of its type, and Einstein could have received a good education there. His grades across the board were, in fact, excellent, in mathematics and German as well as Latin and Greek."[28]

Although Einstein's disdain for the Luitpold Gymnasium was retrojected upon what was probably at the time a rather good environment in which he did quite well, there was undoubtedly some early hostility toward authority which surfaced there. As Ronald Clark puts it, "Not giving a damn about accepted beliefs was an attitude which certainly developed at the Gymnasium. The teaching may or may not have justified the principle, but the outcome was singularly fortunate. . . . If Einstein had not been pushed by the Luitpold Gymnasium into the stance of opposition he was to retain all his life, then he might not have questioned so quickly so many assumptions that most men took for granted, nor have arrived at such an early age at

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28 Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, pp. 5-6.

the Special Theory of Relativity."[29] Even more to the point is Einstein's own assessment of his attitude and its outcome. He often mused about "how fate, to punish me for my contempt of authority, . . . made me an authority myself."[30]

It is important to recognize even in this early phase of Einstein's life, certain tendencies which would eventually become Einstein trademarks, giving rise to all sorts of folklore. His antipathy for the conventional, or for any authority, extended itself beyond his school days and into his scientific, political and social life. His generally sloppy appearance, the countless stories (many of which were true) about him not wearing socks or wearing different colored shoes, his often unpopular political stands, all seem to stem from his early aversion to majority conventions. Stern makes this same point: "In the simplicity and goodness that were his, I detect . . . a distant echo of his encounters with German life. Could one imagine a greater contrast between his German surroundings and himself, between people so formal in their bearing, so attentive to appearance, so solicitous of titles, honors, externals, and himself? Did the insolence of office, the arrogance of the uniform push him into ever greater

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[29] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, pp. 13-14.

[30] Erik Erikson, "Psychoanalytic Reflections," p. 156.

idiosyncratic informality? Was not his appearance a democratic rebuke to authority?"[31]

Einstein's independence, first stimulated by the Gymnasium, motivated him to become an autodidact in a number of disciplines. For a time he was tutored in Old Testament literature and adopted, from age ten to twelve, a rather fundamentalist approach to the Bible. He even insisted on observing kashrut. This new-found religiosity seems to have been itself a form of rebellion. Just how freethinking Einstein's parents really were is demonstrated by the mere fact that they, being irreligious Jews, supported their son in his dietary observance. But, at the age of twelve, soon after the "holy geometry book" fell into his hands, Einstein rejected religious truths because they conflicted with what he felt to be the higher truths of science. As he himself explained, "Through the reading of popular scientific books I soon reached the conviction that much of the stories in the Bible could not be true."[32]

Max Talmey was an important factor in Einstein's intellectual development during this period of independence and self-teaching. Talmey, in a book about Einstein, gives us one of the very few firsthand accounts of what Einstein

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[31] Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 333.

[32] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 17.

was like in his early and mid-teens:

> He showed a particular inclination toward physics and took pleasure in conversing on physical phenomena. I gave him therefore as reading matter . . . two works that were then quite popular in Germany. The boy was profoundly impressed by them. . . . After a short time, a few months, he had worked through the whole book of Spieker. He thereupon devoted himself to higher mathematics, studying all by himself Lubsen's excellent works on the subject. Soon the flight of his mathematical genius was so high that I could no longer follow. Thereafter philosophy was often a subject of our conversations. I recommended to him the reading of Kant. At that time he was still a child, only thirteen years old, yet Kant's works, incomprehensible to ordinary mortals, seemed to be clear to him. Kant became Albert's favorite philosopher after he had read through his Critique of Pure Reason and the works of other philosophers.[33]

By fifteen Einstein managed to teach himself more than the average university graduate and wanted desperately to leave the Gymnasium. The details surrounding his departure are a bit hazy. The most popular version of the story is that Einstein hated the school so much that he convinced a sympathetic physician to give him a certificate stating that he was suffering from a nervous breakdown and needed to join his family in Italy. At the same time, he procured a letter from his mathematics master attesting to his proficiency in the subject. Einstein hoped the letter would help him gain entrance to a university without the diploma he would have received from the Gymnasium. Most sources seem to agree that Einstein was actually expelled

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[33] Ibid., pp. 15-16.

from the Gymnasium before he was able to obtain the doctor's excuse. "Your presence in the class destroys the respect of the other students (for their teacher),"[34] he was apparently told. In Clark's opinion, the expulsion was not at all surprising: "For the kindly, gentle Einstein . . . is largely a figure of his later years; it is a figure very different from the precocious, half cock-sure, almost insolent Swabian of youth . . . Einstein was the boy who knew not merely which monkey wrench to throw in the works, but also how best to throw it."[35]

A factor in Einstein's decision to leave Munich ignored by most biographers is that he missed his family in Italy immensely. Picture the fifteen and one-half year old boy left behind to finish his degree and boarding in a rather dim apartment with an elderly woman. This, coupled with the following insights of Stern, seem to be the untold story behind Einstein's first flight from Germany:

> It is often said that Einstein left school because he objected to its militarism. I find this unpersuasive: Bavarian militarism? I would suppose that there might have been stifling Catholicism, insolent, thoughtless authoritarianism, a repulsive tone--all of which would have sufficed to discourage a youth like Einstein. I suspect Einstein left so precipitously in order to escape serving in the German army; by obtaining Swiss citizenship in time, he could do so without incurring the charge

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[34] Philipp Frank, Einstein: His Life and Times, p. 17.

[35] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 20.

> of desertion. His first adult decision, then, was to escape the clutches of compulsion--and the image of Einstein as a recruit in a field-grey uniform does boggle the mind. He left Germany without regrets. His first encounters with that country had not been happy.[36]

In 1895 Einstein joined his family in Pavia, where they had moved from Milan in search of a better business environment. Although the family enterprise continued to flounder, Einstein enjoyed a relatively carefree period in Italy. He had commitments neither to school nor work. After six months, the Einsteins convinced their son to pursue a stable career in electrical engineering. Without a diploma, Einstein knew that he could never enter a German university or technological institute. It is also unlikely that he would have willingly returned to Germany even if he could have been accepted to a university. So deep was his hatred for his birthplace that he renounced his German citizenship within less than one year of his departure. On January 26, 1896, Hermann, on Albert's behalf, petitioned the state of Wuerttemberg to discontinue his citizenship. Einstein was now totally exempt from German military duty.

The best option available for Einstein to continue his education in German-speaking Europe was at the renowned Federal Institute of Technology, or Polytechnic in Zurich. If he could pass the entrance exam, he would be accepted at the Polytechnic without a diploma. Although he was two

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[36] Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 325.

years younger than the required minimum, Einstein--perhaps due to some string-pulling by his mother--was allowed to take the entrance exam in engineering. He did quite well in mathematics and physics but failed modern languages, zoology and botany. Nevertheless, Einstein's essay in physics impressed the rector of the Polytechnic, Albin Herzog. Herzog advised Einstein to spend one year at the cantonal school in Aarau--enough time to graduate--and, by means of that diploma, to meet the Polytechnic entrance requirements without another examination.

Einstein encountered a school and an environment much to his liking in Aarau. He later reflected in 1952 that the school remained "the most satisfying image of this kind of cultural institution."[37] What Einstein loved most about the school was its academic freedom and lack of militarism. While at the cantonal school Einstein was fortunate enough to board with professor of history Jost Winteler and his family. The easy-going, nature-loving Winteler and Einstein soon became friends. It was from Winteler that Einstein developed such positive notions about the life of an academician. He loved the freedom, the democracy and the educational environment in which teacher and student shared in "responsible and happy work such as can not be

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[37] G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 18.

achieved by regimentation, however subtle."[38]

This new atmosphere did much to coax Einstein into the world of academe. It was some time during this year at Aarau that he decided not to become an electrical engineer in favor of the more fascinating world of theoretical physics and teaching. Yet, despite his newfound warmth for formal education, the wisecracking, independent, "impudent Swabian"[39] lurked just beneath the surface. It is an oft-told anecdote that when asked by a professor during a fieldtrip: "Now Einstein, how do the strata run here? From below upwards or vice versa?" Einstein's reply was "It is pretty much the same to me whichever way they run Professor."[40]

Einstein received his diploma from the cantonal school in Aarau in the summer of 1896. He then visited his parents in Italy and in October returned to Zurich to begin a four year program at the Polytechnic. If successful, Einstein would finish with qualifications to teach physics "on the lowest rung of the professional teacher's ladder."[41] While at the Polytechnic Einstein developed a deep mistrust of pure mathematics, believing it to be

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[38] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 25.

[39] Ibid., p.26.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., p. 29.

"incapable in itself of providing a formulation for nature's laws."[42] He found the famous Minkowski's lectures poorly delivered and the lectures of his physics professor Heinrich Weber equally disappointing. The record shows that Einstein did not regularly attend classes, choosing instead to spend his time studying on his own. His friend Marcel Grossman, on the other hand, attended lectures, took copious notes and passed them on to Einstein just prior to examinations. As Einstein himself explains his intellectual development during this phase:

> . . . I could have acquired a sound mathematical education. However, I worked most of the time in the physical laboratory, fascinated by the direct contact resulting from experiment. The remaining part of my time I used mainly in studying at home the works of Kirchhoff, Helmholtz, Hertz, etc. The reason why, to a certain extent, I neglected mathematics was not only because my interest in natural science was stronger than in mathematics but . . . my intuition in the mathematical field was not strong enough to be able to distinguish with basic conviction the fundamentally important from the rest . . . Naturally physics, too, were split into special fields each of which could engulf a short life's work without ever satisfying the hunger for deeper knowledge. . . . however I soon learned to sense those in particular that could lead to fundamentals and to overlook a host of others that filled the mind and distracted from the essential.[43]

By cramming for exams with Grossman's notes, Einstein received a final score of 4.9 out of a possible 6.0 and his

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[42] Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 27.

[43] Carl Seelig, Albert Einstein, pp. 23-26.

diploma. His average was good but not excellent and did not "augur a brilliant career."[44] Einstein's best hope for advanced training was for him to remain--as was the accepted practice--at the Polytechnic as a teaching assistant under one of his former professors. He was explicitly denied a place on the faculty. As an undergraduate Einstein was, in the opinion of his professors, "one of the awkward scholars who might or might not graduate but who in either case was a great deal of trouble."[45] The staunch independence which would serve Einstein so well during his adult life had once again cost him dearly in his youth.

The blow to Einstein's pride was severe. Years later he wrote to Grossman's widow saying " . . . I was suddenly abandoned by everyone, standing at a loss on the threshold of life."[46] The situation worsened when Einstein's aunt in Genoa withdrew the 100 francs a month she was sending him to pay for his schooling. Einstein was setting aside twenty of those francs per month in order to pay for the Swiss citizenship he so badly wanted.

The first job Einstein found was a temporary teaching position for a few months at a technical school in

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[44] Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 22.

[45] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 39.

[46] Ibid., p. 40.

Winterthur, near Zurich. Next he answered an advertisement to tutor two young students at a boarding school in Schaffhausen. This also lasted only a few months since "Einstein managed to convince his charges that the Gymnasium education they were receiving was stifling, and when he requested that he be given full responsibility for their education he was fired."[47] Bad luck aside, two positive things did happen to Einstein during this period. The first was that he completed a thesis on the kinetic theory of gasses and submitted it to the University of Zurich for his Ph.D. Although it was rejected as too brief a treatment, he did manage finally to receive his Ph.D. from the University based on the submission of a subsequent paper. The second was that on February 21, 1901, Einstein became a Swiss citizen. He was happy about his new status because in Switzerland "men are left to themselves and privacy is respected."[48] Although he presented himself to the military authorities to do his mandatory three months of duty, he was rejected for service because of varicose veins and flat feet.

Despite the good news of his citizenship, losing the tutoring job meant that Einstein was back in Zurich and unemployed for the third time in one year. On the advice

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[47] Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 79.

[48] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 41.

of his friend Marcel Grossman, Einstein applied to the Swiss Patent Office for the position of Technical Expert Second Class. Grossman's father was a personal friend of the Patent Office's original director and, after a bit of backslapping, Einstein was offered a job as Technical Expert Third Class. He accepted the position on June 16, 1901. As Clark points out, "Two legends have grown up about the appointment. One is that Einstein was employed because a knowledge of Maxwell's equations was essential and he was the only applicant who had it. The second is that the authorities in Zurich had already marked Einstein as a genius and passed on the good news. . ."[49] The simple truth is that Einstein was offered the position at the district office in Berne as "a good turn, for an old friend."[50]

Einstein did remarkably well at the Patent Office. More so than his academic training, it was his childhood love for tinkering, no doubt modeled after his electrical engineering father and uncle, and his extraordinary power of concentration which served him so well in his new career. Also, of no small importance, was his need to hold down a steady job in order to support his new wife and expected first child. In 1903 Einstein married his girlfriend from the Polytechnic, Mileva Maritsch. She was

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[49] Ibid., p. 46.

[50] Ibid., p. 47.

of Serbian and Greek Orthodox background and gave Albert two sons: Hans in 1904 and Edward in 1910. Pyenson accurately summarizes Einstein's years at the Patent Office when he says: "So it was that Einstein, whom the public views as an absentminded and impractical seer, in his youth succeeded at an exacting, governmental post that demanded a sense for the practical. . . . Einstein continued to put in eight hours of what he called 'fatiguing work' every day at the Patent Office. His labor was meticulous and disciplined. It required attention to detail and to precedent."[51]

Einstein's success as a patent examiner, however commendable, was dwarfed by the extraordinary scientific discoveries he made during his years in Berne. The most important thing the Patent Office job gave Einstein was "the time to think about physics."[52] Indeed, in 1905 alone, Einstein published four papers which were largely responsible for giving him claim to the title of the world's greatest scientist. Most outstanding is that his discoveries were made "under conditions which a contemporary scientist would find all but impossible. He had contact neither with professional physicists nor with the books and journals he needed for his work, since these

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[51] Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 52.

[52] Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 51.

were unavailable in the Patent Office and at the library at the University of Berne. He had no guidance from senior colleagues and no encouragement either. In physics he had to be self-reliant. There was no one else to rely on."[53]

Any one of Einstein's 1905 papers would have easily guarantied him "a place in the textbooks."[54] "Two of the papers, those on the special theory of relativity, form a unit in terms of style and subject matter; one had to do with the Brownian motion . . . and the last was the foundation of quantum physics."[55] All of the papers were published in the journal Annalen der Physik; three of them in volume seventeen, which is now "regarded as one of the most remarkable volumes of scientific literature ever published"[56]and brings a collector's price in the thousands of dollars. It is true enough that Einstein became a world figure by virtue of his 1916 paper on the general theory of relativity and its experimental confirmation in 1919, yet it is agreed that "his professional standing among physicists can be traced back to the great papers of 1905."[57]

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53 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 80.

54 Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 60.

55 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 165.

56 G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 9.

57 Ibid., pp. 16-17.

What most impressed his contemporaries was that Einstein seemed to arrive at the special theory of relativity entirely on his own. He cited no references in his 1905 paper on the subject except his friend at the Patent Office Michelangelo Besso with whom he talked at length about his theories. Although his work resembled previous studies by Poincare and Lorentz, Einstein relied little, if at all, upon them. The most striking difference between his work and that of mainstream physicists was its stark simplicity. Einstein's results were "produced by simple, general arguments, as opposed to long calculations of the type that [his] contemporaries were accustomed to."[58]

Along with the success of his 1905 papers came passage to the inner-most circle of European physicists and enticing offers to teach. According to Frank, "the researches whose results Einstein published at Berne in 1905 were so unusual that to the physicists of the Swiss universities they seemed incompatible with the assigned work of a minor official of the Patent Office; attempts were soon made to bring Einstein to teach at the University of Zurich."[59] In order to be appointed as a professor at the University of Zurich, Einstein first had to serve as a

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58 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 92.

59 Philipp Frank, Einstein: His Life and Times, p. 74.

Privatdozent at the University of Berne. Then, in 1909, at the urging of Professor Alfred Kleiner, Zurich's leading physicist, Einstein was brought to the University of Zurich to fill a vacant teaching position at the rank of "extraordinary" (associate) professor. The job was mundane with a salary equal to that which Einstein was making at the Patent Office. Nevertheless, he was in a city he enjoyed, finally able to concentrate solely on the work he loved.

In 1910 Einstein left Zurich for a promotion to the chair of theoretical physics at the German University in Prague. His wife did not want to leave Zurich but eventually acquiesced since "for the first time in his life he was to have a full professorship with adequate salary."[60] Perhaps the most important outcome of Einstein's year in Prague was not professional but social. The Jewish community in Prague awoke, however gently, Jewish religious and cultural sensitivities not felt by Einstein since childhood. According to the decree of Emperor Franz Josef, a man had to belong to a recognized church in order to teach in a state university. Einstein, who cut all ties with formal religion upon leaving the Gymnasium, now officially proclaimed himself a member of the "Mosaic" faith. Einstein also had contact with the Jewish literary and intellectual circles in Prague. We

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60 Ibid., p. 79.

know that he regularly spent time with Franz Kafka, Hugo Bergman and Max Brod. The last wrote a novel four years afterwards entitled The Redemption of Tycho Brahe in which the character Johann Kepler, Tycho's assistant and antithesis, is "so vividly portrayed that readers of the book who knew Einstein well recognized him as Kepler."[61] For the first of many times to come, Einstein's personality influenced the work of a Jewish artist and/or intellectual outside the realm of theoretical physics.

Einstein received mixed reviews as a lecturer while at the university in Prague. He was certainly dedicated and accessible to his students, but regular lectures were difficult for him to prepare in light of the constant new discoveries he was making and the time required to assimilate them. On occasion he was poetic, even brilliant as a lecturer, yet often he was rambling and unfocused. While in Prague Einstein did author one important paper, "On the Influence of Gravitation on the Propagation of Light," published in 1911. This paper was "a mid-station between the 1905 paper on the special theory and his final formulation of the general theory of relativity: his masterpiece of 1916."[62]

In an ironic turn of events, Einstein received an offer to become a professor of theoretical physics from his

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61 Ibid., p. 85.

62 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 116.

alma mater, the Polytechnic in Zurich. The Polytechnic was a larger, more prestigious institution than the University of Zurich which Einstein left to go to Prague. At his wife's request, Einstein informed the university in Prague that he would be leaving. Mileva had never adjusted to Prague and missed Zurich intensely. It was the last time that Einstein would appease her.

When Einstein assumed his teaching responsibilities at the Polytechnic in the fall of 1912, he was already becoming something of a legend. As early as 1910 Max Planck, perhaps the leading German physicist, said, "If Einstein's theory should prove to be correct, as I expect it will, he will be considered the Copernicus of the twentieth century."[63] Planck was only the first of many who would soon be comparing Einstein to Copernicus and Newton. Einstein had finally overcome a series of failures to acquire a professorship at an institution whose entrance exam he failed and at which, upon graduation, he was denied even a paltry assistantship.

Einstein dearly loved Switzerland and the Swiss; they gave him his first taste of democracy. According to Professor Andre Mercier, "The years Einstein spent in Berne, where he wrote his first revolutionary scientific papers and where he was virtually unknown except to a

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[63] Philipp Frank, Einstein: His Life and Times, p. 101.

handful of dear friends, were probably the happiest of his life."[64] Nevertheless, once Einstein began to achieve fame, pressure was brought to bear on him by the two leading German physicists Max Planck and Walter Nernst. They wanted Einstein to leave Switzerland for what was then the center of theoretical physics in Europe, Berlin. Einstein was uneasy about returning to the country he left angrily seventeen years earlier. Planck and Nernst, therefore, made him an offer too good to refuse. Einstein was to become the director of a physics institute, then in the planning stages, a member of the Royal Prussian Academy of Science endowed with a large grant, and also a professor at the University of Berlin without teaching or administrative responsibilities--all at a handsome salary. Despite the discomfort he felt in German society--his new position required repatriation--Einstein opted for the professional advantages Berlin offered and moved there in the fall of 1913.

Moving to Berlin marked the separation between Einstein and his wife and children. The marriage had been difficult for him to sustain. Whereas he hoped that matrimony would free him from the menial tasks of everyday life, precisely the opposite occurred. Einstein found himself lugging coal, chopping wood, feeding babies and

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64 G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 18.

trying to carry on research at the same time. In an enlightening interview, his son Hans recalled that Einstein:

> . . . had the impression that the family was taking a bit too much of his time, and that he had the duty to concentrate completely on his work . . .
>
> Q: And how did your mother take the separation?'
>
> A: Very hard.
>
> Q: What about your birthdays, did he remember that?
>
> A: No, he never did.
>
> Q: Did you go on vacations together?
>
> A: We often took small trips together and sometimes longer ones. In those days we were a happy family and there was nothing to indicate the separation to come.[65]

"There were two kinds of physicists in Berlin," according to Professor Ladenburg who worked closely with Einstein when he first arrived there, "on the one hand was Einstein, and on the other all the rest."[66] It was not so much that Einstein was intentionally aloof or snobbish, but rather that he was once again part of a society in which he felt like an outsider. Although he remained accessible to his students, Einstein "had no interest in the social events which were meant to be an essential part of the life of a great German Geheimrat, and, in every way . . . he

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[65] Ibid., p. 21.

[66] Philipp Frank, Einstein: His Life and Times, p. 110.

resembled no one so much as one of those Bohemian violinists who frequented the cafes and coffee houses where both he and Professor Frank spent a good deal of their spare time."[67] The only place in Berlin where Einstein could be heard lecturing on a regular basis was the weekly Wednesday afternoon colloquium at the Berlin Institute of Physics. He spent most of his time helping his students in their research, working on his soon-to-be-published general theory of relativity and playing his violin.

Part of the reason Einstein remained an outsider in German academic society was that he was an extremely frank man when it came to evaluating his own work and that of his peers. A fine example of Einstein's straightforward style is the letter he sent in 1908 to J. J. Laub: "This quantum question is so incredibly important and difficult that everyone should busy himself on it. I have already succeeded in working out something which may be related to it but I have serious reasons for still thinking that it is rubbish."[68] "The use of frank language," Pyenson asserts, "the view that politeness in speech is tantamount to lying, was one hall mark of emancipated German Jews. This preference is overwhelmingly present in Einstein's writings; where it has usually been misidentified as

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67 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 73.

68 Ibid., pp. 204-205.

fetching simplicity."[69] His propensity toward honesty gained Einstein the nickname Biedermeier (the German equivalent to the American "Honest Abe") as a schoolboy and influenced his scientific and political methodology as an adult. He never felt comfortable with a theory unless he could talk it out and express it in common language. "I can't put my theory into words." he once told a friend, "I can only formulate it mathematically, and that's suspicious."[70] Einstein was a man who "never hesitated to change his opinion when he found that he had made a mistake and to say so."[71] He had "an unqualified devotion to truth . . . as ready to discard his own views as those of another if they failed to measure up to the demands of reason or experience."[72]

Einstein was aware of how painful his honesty could be and therefore consciously tried to lessen its sting with his extraordinary sense of humor. Frank's discussion on this matter is most apt:

> Einstein's conversation was often a combination of inoffensive jokes and penetrating ridicule, so that some people could not decide whether to laugh or to feel hurt. Often the joke was that he presented complicated relationships

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69 Lewis Pyenson, The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 73.

70 Ibid., p. 28.

71 G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 31.

72 Ibid., p. 61.

> as they might appear to an intelligent child. Such an attitude often appeared to be an incisive criticism and sometimes even created an impression of cynicism. Thus the impression Einstein made on his environment vacillated between the two poles of childish cheerfulness and cynicism. Between these two poles lay the impression of a very entertaining and vital person whose company left one feeling richer for the experience.[73]
>
> To those about him his laughter was a source of joy and added to their vitality. Yet sometimes one felt that it contained an element of criticism, which was unpleasant for some. Persons who occupied an important social position frequently had no desire to belong to a world whose ridiculousness in comparison to the greater problems of nature was reflected in this laughter. But people of a lesser nature were always pleased by Einstein's personality.[74]

Perhaps the only place in Berlin where Einstein felt "at home" was in his uncle Rudolph's house. He was particulary fond of dining there with his uncle and cousin Elsa, with whom he had been playmates as a child in Munich. Elsa was now widowed with two daughters and enjoyed taking care of her cousin Albert. Even during the first World War she managed to provide him with healthy, satisfying meals and, more importantly, a sense of family warmth. Einstein, having found a woman whose company he enjoyed and who took well-enough care of him so as to leave plenty of time for work, decided in 1919 to legally divorce his first wife and marry Elsa. In contrast to the difficult middle class

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73 Philipp Frank, Einstein: His Life and Times, p. 77.

74 Ibid.

existence and childrearing he endured with his first wife, Einstein was now living the life of a well-to-do Berliner. Yet, even within his own spacious, well-furnished apartment, with a loving wife to care for him, Einstein remained something of a stranger. His years in Berlin were not happy ones.

Less than one year after his arrival in Berlin, the first World War began. The war that politicized so many Germans by whipping them into a frenzy of nationalism, also politicized Einstein. Although he much preferred the safety and quiet of his study, Einstein's inner voice, the voice that had so many times before told him he was right when all the others were wrong, compelled him to act. "Einstein was alone and disbelieving," writes Stern "Before 1911 he had never concerned himself with politics . . . now for the first time he ventured forth . . . convinced of the insanity of the war, shocked by the ease with which people had broken ties of international friendship and mutual respect."[75]

Einstein flatly refused to sign the Manifesto of the Ninety Two German Intellectuals, which asserted that "German culture and German militarism are identical."[76] He was one of a precious few who resisted the pressure of

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[75] Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," pp. 327-328.

[76] Philipp Frank, Einstein: His Life and Times, p. 120.

"what was expected at that time of every German artist and scientist."[77] Instead he signed a counter-manifesto which called for an end to the war and a just peace without annexations. Einstein was persuaded to sign the appeal, the first of his life, by a fellow pacifist. Since only three other prominent scientists in all of Germany agreed to sign, the document was never published. Einstein's opposition to the war was unique indeed. "No other German," wrote the pacifist Romaine Rolland, "acts and speaks with a similar degree of freedom."[78] Perhaps the only thing standing between Einstein and accusations of treason was his Swiss citizenship. In the last analysis Einstein's position was justified, and by the war's end "many felt as he had at the beginning."[79]

Despite his vehement anti-war activities, Einstein managed to accomplish his most famous scientific work during the war years. Between 1915 and 1918 he published over thirty papers, the most important of which concerned his general theory of relativity, authored in 1916. In his 1916 paper Einstein predicted that "in the presence of gravitation the geometry of space-time is altered . . . space-time becomes 'warped' or 'curved' . . . for a light ray moving near the sun . . . the space is sufficiently

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77 Ibid.

78 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 140.

79 Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 329.

'curved' by the gravitation of the sun that the light geodesic is different from the Newtonian prediction."[80] To the layman this means little, but beneath it all was the idea that light and time behaved differently relative to variations in gravity and that the differences could be accurately predicted. "It is not the discovery of an outlying island," explained one scientist, "but a whole continent of new scientific ideas."[81] Einstein's predictions were so shocking because they seem to have emerged as an organic whole, as "total knowledge discovered at once by a single act of divine intuition."[82]

True to form, Einstein published without empirical proof. It wasn't until 1919 during a solar eclipse that Sir Arthur Eddington and a team of British scientists were able to confirm "the prediction of general relativity that the light from a remote star passing close to the sun before reaching the earth is deflected by a definite amount."[83] Einstein's reaction to the proof was a simple "But I knew the theory is correct," and a telegram to his mother which mostly discussed family matters but also

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80 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, pp. 136-137.

81 John Heywood, The True Book About Albert Einstein (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1962), p. 79.

82 Yaron Ezrahi, "The Light of Reason," in Holton and Elkana, Albert Einstein , p. 263.

83 G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 43.

included the following two sentences: "Joyful news today. H. A. Lorentz has telegraphed me that the English expedition has really proved the deflection of light by the sun."[84] It was apparently just one more in a series of instances wherein Einstein was "ahead of the experimental confirmations that eventually established his predictions."[85]

Einstein's calm acceptance of the 1919 expedition's findings was lost in the blizzard of publicity he received in the Western press. From the moment the news was announced at a meeting of the Royal Society and the Royal Astronomical Society on November 6, 1919, Einstein became a public figure and a hero--the most famous scientist of the twentieth century. The London Times of November 7, 1919 reports the President of the Royal Society calling the announcement "one of the most momentous pronouncements of human thought."[86] " 'Space Caught Bending' became the most prominent headline in a leading newspaper."[87] The idea of all prior notions about time and space being proved false captured the public's imagination to an unprecedented degree. As Professor Herbert Dingle put it, "I doubt if

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[84] Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, pp. 144-145.

[85] Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 6.

[86] G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 43.

[87] Ibid., p. 44.

any scientific advance, not excluding the space explorations of more recent times, has ever aroused the public to such a pitch of enthusiasm as that which was experienced."[88]

It is difficult to understand why the confirmation of Einstein's theory of general relativity made such a public figure out of him. His talent was indeed extraordinary, yet his fame seems nevertheless disproportionate to any conceivable accomplishment in theoretical physics, no matter how great. The answer has as much to do with when the theory was confirmed as it does with its contents. During and immediately after the first World War there was a breakdown of the international scientific community and of the European intellectual community in general. Due to his early opposition to it, Einstein came through the war with his integrity intact; this, coupled with his scientific genius, made him the right man in the right place at the right time. As Stern notes:

> Somehow it seemed as if Einstein's achievement would revive the old international community of science. The world listened. Almost overnight Einstein became a celebrated hero. . . . The new hero appeared, as if by divine design, at the very moment when the old heroes had been buried in the rubble of the war. Soldiers, monarchs, statesmen, priests, captains of industry--all had failed . . . 'Before 1914,' Noel Arman has asserted, 'intellectuals counted for little;' after the war, and in a sense in the wake of Einstein, they counted for more. Einstein became a force, or at least a celebrity,

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88 Ibid.

in the world.[89]

The post World War One years were personally very hard on Einstein. He was often ill and the German inflation, combined with the amount of money he sent to his former wife and two sons for child support, made his financial position a precarious one. He was essentially a lonely and in some ways tragic figure. The greater his fame and the demands for public appearances, the more he withdrew into his research. "Einstein never fully belonged to any institution, country or person," writes Bernstein, "even members of his family."[90] Despite that "successive nationalities were bestowed upon him almost like honorary degrees,"[91] Einstein remained unattached to the people and society around him.

Although he avoided a public life as much as possible, Einstein's fame spawned thousands of articles, photographs, poems, limericks and jokes about relativity and about himself. More important, however, is that Einstein was asked for his opinion about topics totally unrelated to physics. People wanted to know his views on education, art, music, politics, life and death, etc. In Stern's opinion:

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89 Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 330.

90 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 7.

91 G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 17.

> What gave his views exceptional resonance was the magic of his person and his incomparable achievement. He was taken by many as a sage and a saint . . . Indeed, it was his simplicity, his otherworldliness, that impressed people. His clothes were simple, his tastes were simple, his appearance was meticulously simple. His modesty was celebrated and genuine, as was his unselfishness. . . . In some ways, I believe, he came to invest in his own fame, perhaps unconsciously to groom himself for his new role.[92]

If, in his new role as hero, Einstein was unwilling to identify himself with any particular nation or nationality, there were those who were willing to do it for him. As a citizen of the world Einstein became easy prey for anyone who wanted to claim or disclaim him as their own. The first serious outbreaks of antisemitism in twentieth-century Germany coincided with the 1919 expedition and the fame it brought Einstein. To the Germans, the popular Einstein was a despised Jew. It is important to remember "Einstein's success, the enormous acclaim, especially abroad at a time when most German scientists were still banished from international meetings--caused much ill will at home. . . . One fellow Laureate attacked it as 'Jewish fraud.'"[93] Einstein himself recognized the irony of being singled out as a target for German antisemitism: "When I came to Germany fifteen years ago I discovered for the first time that I was a Jew. I owe this discovery more to

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[92] Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 332.

[93] Ibid., p. 336.

gentiles than Jews."[94] Fame, international status and his religion rapidly created a certain plasticity to his public image. Einstein was aware of this, as evidenced by his postscript to a November 28, 1919 article in the Times of London about the general theory of relativity:

> Some of the statements in your paper concerning my life and person owe their origin to the lively imagination of the writer. Here is yet another application of the principle of relativity for the delectation of the reader. -- Today I am described in Germany as a 'German Savant,' and in England as a 'Swiss Jew.' Should it ever be my fate to be represented as a Bete noir, I should, on the contrary become a 'Swiss Jew' for the Germans and a 'German Savant' for the English.[95]

A few months later Einstein was less glib about the antisemitism directed against him in Germany. In 1920 an anti-Einstein movement began in Berlin under the name of the "Study Group of German Natural Philosophers". The group, led by Paul Weyland and lent credibility by the participation of Nobel Prize winner Philip Lenard, offered large sums of money to scientists who wrote or spoke against Einstein and his theories. In August the Study Group organized twenty symposia in Germany's major cities. The kickoff symposium was on August 27, 1920 in the Berlin Philharmonic Hall. Einstein attended the meeting himself. He saw swastikas and antisemitic pamphlets for sale, and heard his theories attacked by second-rate scientists. A

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94 Ibid., p. 284.

95 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 146.

few days later, Einstein answered his critics in a letter which he published in the Berliner Tageblatt. From 1920 onward, each time Einstein returned to Berlin from a speaking tour abroad he encountered ever worsening antisemitism directed against him and his fellow Jews.

Antisemitism finally caused Einstein to change his political philosophy from internationalism to Zionism. As early as November, 1919 the Times of London called Einstein an ardent Zionist . . . [He is] keenly interested in the projected Hebrew University at Jerusalem and has offered to collaborate."[96] Einstein's empathy for the "discrimination that talented Jews from eastern Europe and from Germany suffered at German universities"[97] motivated him to support the idea of a Hebrew University. He was also particularly concerned about what antisemitism had done to the Jew's self-image in Germany. Einstein felt ". . . with the emergence of Zionism, oppression and antagonism could be transformed; Jewish existence would be reawakened and flourish."[98] Like Ahad Ha-am, Einstein believed:

> It is not enough for us to play a part as individuals in the cultural development of the human race. We must also attempt tasks which only nations as a whole can perform. Only so can the Jews regain social health. Palestine is not

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96 Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 334.

97 Ibid., p. 332.

98 Uriel Tal, "Jewish and Universal Social Ethics in the Life and Thought of Albert Einstein," in Holton and Elkana, Albert Einstein, p. 302.

> primarily a place of refuge for the Jews of eastern Europe, but the embodiment of the re-awakening of the corporate spirit of the entire Jewish nation.[99]

In an attempt to clarify his position for the internationalists who felt betrayed by his shift to Zionism he said:

> . . . my Zionism does not exclude cosmopolitan views. I am a national Jew in the sense that I demand the preservation of the Jewish nationality as of every other. I look upon Jewish nationality as a fact, and I think that every Jew ought to come to definite conclusions on Jewish questions on the basis of this fact. . . . That was the main motive of my joining the Zionist movement.[100]

Einstein's relationship to Zionism and its leaders was problematic from the start. His active support for Zionism began in 1921 when Chaim Weizmann convinced him to join a fundraising trip to the United States. Einstein agreed to participate on the condition that he only had to sit on the dais without giving a speech. Suddenly, Einstein found himself in front of 100,000 people who expected to hear him speak. "Weizmann is my leader. Follow him. I have spoken,"[101] he said in German and sat down. From this point in 1921 until his death he alternated between feeling used

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99 Isaiah Berlin, "Einstein and Israel," in Holton and Elkana, Albert Einstein, p. 285.

100 Uriel Tal, "Jewish and Universal Social Ethics in the Life and Thought of Albert Einstein," p. 306.

101 G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 86.

and needed by the Zionist movement. He visited Palestine in 1923 on an historic journey during which he delivered the inaugural address at the Hebrew University. At several points during the years that followed he was disappointed with the Hebrew University and its first president whom "he saw as a creature of the crass American-Jewish plutocrats."[102]

Besides his quarrels with the Hebrew University, Einstein was also unhappy with the way in which the Arabs were being excluded by Weizmann from Zionist politics. Einstein was in favor of a bi-national state. Thus, even within Zionism he adopted a minority view. Einstein was a minority within a minority. As he himself explained:

> We, that is to say, the Arabs and ourselves --have got to agree on the outlines of an advantageous partnership which shall satisfy the needs of both nations. A just solution of this problem . . . is an end no less important . . . than the promotion of the work of construction itself.[103]

The 1929 Hebron riots brought the Jewish-Arab problem between Einstein and Weizmann to a head. Immediately after the riots Einstein wrote to Weizmann: "Should we be unable to find a way to honest cooperation and honest pacts with the Arabs, then we have learned nothing during our 2,000

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102 Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 334.

103 Uriel Tal, "Jewish and Universal Social Ethics in the Life of Albert Einstein," p. 304.

years of suffering and deserve all that will come to us."[104] Weizmann responded in a letter to Einstein: " . . . we do not want to negotiate with the murders at the open grave of the Hebron and Safed victims."[105] A full year earlier, Weizmann already sensed that Einstein was going to withdraw his support from Hebrew University. He wrote a letter to Felix Warburg: "There is really no length to which I would not go to bring back to our work the wonderful and lovable personality--perhaps the greatest genius the Jews have produced in recent centuries and with so fine and noble a character."[106] Weizmann's wishes aside, in 1933 when the Jews needed a homeland most, Einstein formally severed his ties with the Hebrew University and Weizmann. Cited in the two men's correspondence were "all the intractable issues about Jewish-Arab relations; all the differences between the safe outsider and the practical statesman."[107] It was twelve years before Einstein would once again proclaim himself a Zionist.

Throughout the entire period between the two world wars Einstein encountered increasing pressures in Berlin. Perhaps the only positive development at home was the Nobel

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104 Ibid., p. 305.

105 Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 335.

106 Ibid., pp. 335-336.

107 Ibid., p. 336.

Prize he received in 1921. The money was sent to help support his former wife and two sons. Since there were many in Germany who were outraged that the Nobel Prize was given to a pacifist, left-wing Jew, the award actually made life more difficult for Einstein. His troubles in Germany continued. "It was quite impossible for Einstein then," said L. L. Whyte, "and I am speaking about 1928-1929--to fail to be conscious of the fact that he was already perhaps the dominant symbol for antisemitism in Germany, so that it was really very uncomfortable for him to remain there."[108] Einstein began to combat antisemitism as best he could. Zionism was one answer, raising money to help his fellow Jewish victims of antisemitism was another. As Bernstein explains: "The more Einstein became aware of German antisemitism the closer a bond he felt to his fellow Jews. There is no more moving photograph of Einstein anywhere than the one taken in a Berlin synagogue in 1930. There he sits--skeptic and freethinker that he was and remained until the end of his life--his unruly hair flowing from underneath the traditional black yarmulke, holding his violin prepared to play a concert for the purpose of raising money to help his fellow Jews."[109]

Einstein openly professed his love for the Jewish

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[108] G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 56.

[109] Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 213.

people primarily because of the heightened Jewish identity he felt when discriminated against. The Nazis made a Jew out of Einstein. This is not to say that Einstein was irreligious. Organized religion was, however, only the second level in his three-tier conception of religion. Although above the first stage of "Fear," wherein " . . . the human mind creates illusory beings . . . tries to secure the favor of these beings . . . to make them well disposed toward a mortal," "Moral" or formal religion was nevertheless below the greater "Cosmic Religion."[110] According to Einstein, the cosmic religious sense compels one to "experience the totality of existence as a unity of full significance: and recognize "neither dogma nor God made in man's image. Consequently there can not be a church whose chief doctrines are based on the cosmic religious experience."[111] Most assuredly referring to his own experience, Einstein continued by claiming " . . . the cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest driving force behind scientific research. . . . Those who have dedicated their lives to similar [scientific] ends can have a living conception of the inspiration which gave those men the power to remain loyal to their purpose in

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110 Albert Einstein, Cosmic Religion (New York: Covici Friede, 1931), p. 44.

111 Ibid., p. 49.

spite of countless failures."[112]

Einstein's oft-quoted statements about God only make complete sense within the conceptual framework of his Cosmic Religion. Erroneously tagged an unbeliever, Einstein did believe in a God, albeit an impersonal one. "I believe," he replied to a rabbi who wanted to know in fifty words or less via telegram whether or not he was an atheist, "in the God of Spinoza who is identical with the mathematical order of the universe. I do not believe in a God who cares for the well-being and the moral doings of human beings."[113] Einstein spent the last third of his life searching for a unifying principle to define all of existence. This search is why he and others considered him to be a religious man. He firmly believed such a principle could be found, and that is what he meant when he said "God does not play dice with the universe," and that "God is subtle, but He is not malicious."[114]

No matter what Einstein believed, said or did, he was hounded by the antisemites: "Neither fame nor achievement, neither the Nobel Prize nor baptism [would have] offered immunity."[115] In 1932 Einstein left Berlin with the

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112 Ibid., pp. 52-54.

113 G. J. Whitrow, Einstein: The Man and His Achievement, p. 50.

114 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 15 and p. 66.

115 Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 338.

intention of returning for one semester each year. He was at this time, as he had been throughout the 1920s, lecturing abroad and serving on various international committees for peace. While he was still away in 1933, Einstein's summer home outside Berlin was vandalized by the Gestapo and his property confiscated on the charge that he was using it to fund a "communist revolt." Not only were some of his writings publicly burned in front of the Berlin Opera House, but there were also rumors of an assassination plot. Einstein never returned to Germany. Pyenson puts it best: "In 1913 he [Einstein] came to the imperial German capital as a foreign sage, and he remained a foreigner there for the next twenty years. He fitted into Weimar society no better than he had fitted into its Wilhelmian predecessor."[116] He fitted into Hitler's Germany least of all.

Hitler and antisemitism changed more than just Einstein's views on internationalism. Suddenly, the gentle scientist who had devoted over a decade of work to pacifism, found himself encouraging armed resistance. Imagine a young Belgian pacifist's surprise at Einstein's answer regarding his decision to resist the Belgian draft in 1933: "Were I a Belgian, I should not, in the present circumstances, refuse military service; rather, I should

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116 Lewis Pyenson. The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity, p. 61.

enter such service cheerfully in the belief that I would thereby be helping to save European civilization."[117]

If Einstein was going to save European civilization he would have to do so from afar. His life was in danger if he returned to Germany. In 1933 Einstein left California where he was guest lecturing and went first to Belgium and then--since the Belgian police were unable to guarantee his safety--back to the United States. Einstein accepted a lifetime appointment offered to him by the newly formed Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University. Although his arrival in Princeton brought a hail of publicity, after a short while Einstein, Elsa, her two children and his secretary Helen Dukas were able to lead a relatively quiet life. Elsa died in December of 1936. Although saddened by her death, Einstein was in no way incapacitated by it. Instead, he settled in to accomplish some of his most challenging work. Four years later Einstein, Elsa's daughter Margot and Helen Dukas were sworn in as United States citizens. In Princeton there was, of course, the usual folklore circulated by his neighbors about his wild hair, forgetfulness and casual dress. He was the absentminded, lovable professor, especially kind to the children in the neighborhood.

But world events did not leave Einstein entirely

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117 Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden, Einstein On Peace (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 229.

alone. Throughout his years at Princeton he was asked to support, speak for, speak against, join and otherwise involve himself in dozens of causes. He met presidents, artists, movie stars, writers, musicians and, in short, associated with the most exclusive intellectual and social circles of American society. Einstein was a celebrity despite himself. The attention his every public move received created a difficult situation for him; one which he described to his longtime friend the Queen Mother of Belgium in a letter written in 1951: "Because of a peculiar popularity which I have acquired, anything I do is likely to develop into a ridiculous comedy. This means that I have to stay close to my home and rarely leave Princeton."[118]

Perhaps the most important issue with which Einstein busied himself in America was the atom bomb. Contrary to popular mythology, Einstein had nothing to do with the actual research and testing related to the first atomic weapons. What he did do was sign a letter to President Roosevelt urging him to speed up research on the bomb and to secure sources of uranium from the Belgian Congo. The letter was the end result of meetings between Einstein and two scientists, Eugene Wigner and Leo Szilard. Wigner and Szilard convinced Einstein that the fission of uranium was possible and that the Germans were as close to its

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[118] Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 229.

realization as the Americans. Einstein agreed to their plan, which was for him to send a letter to President Roosevelt via Alexander Sachs, a respected economist and friend of the President. Einstein edited and signed the text which was prepared by Szilard. He warned Roosevelt that "certain aspects of the situation seem to call for watchfulness and, if necessary, quick action on the part of the administration . . . This new phenomenon would . . . lead to the construction of bombs, and it is conceivable . . . that extremely powerful bombs of a new type may thus be constructed."[119] The letter reached Roosevelt on October 11, 1939 and set in motion a series of events resulting in the Manhattan Project, the Los Alamos Project and the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Although Einstein was convinced that a bomb in America's hands was better than one in Hitler's and therefore pushed for its development, he nevertheless came to regret its invention and his role in it. "He deeply resented," recalls Bernstein, "the idea that he was somehow the 'father' or the 'grandfather' of the atomic bomb and often said that if it had not been for the menace of Germany, which he had more reason than many men to understand, he would have done nothing to have hastened the

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119 Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 556

process leading to its creation."[120] Once again, events not of his own doing thrust Einstein to center stage. The world wanted to know what its most respected scientist had to say in the wake of science's most terrible triumph. Einstein's first public statement on the atomic bomb appeared in the November, 1945 issue of the Atlantic Monthly; the article was later widely published. His plan was a simple, but unlikely one: "The secret of the bomb should be committed to a world government."[121] In Einstein's estimation, the fear resulting from Hiroshima and Nagasaki would perhaps "intimidate the human race into bringing order to its international affairs."[122] The time was right for the three superpowers--America, Britain and the Soviet Union--to "establish peace through world government."[123]

It is easy to doubt the practicality of Einstein's plan to prevent nuclear catastrophe, but not its sincerity. This can, in fact, be said about any number of Einstein's political notions. Granted, he went from internationalist to Zionist, from pacifist to supporter of military action and back again, yet, if one looks beneath the surface one

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120 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 228.

121 Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden, Einstein On Peace, p. 347.

122 Ibid., p. 351.

123 Ibid., p. 349.

does find a certain consistency in Einstein's politics. Yehuda Elkana, in his essay, "The Myth of Simplicity," states this most clearly:

> . . . above all, he fought tirelessly on behalf of the underdog. . . . Einstein's views on all of these issues were so clear-cut, so seemingly simple-mindedly idealistic, so consistent in considering human frailties that many called him naive and dismissed his views with a condescending smile. To them, Einstein was a simplistic philosopher, a confused professor, naive in matters political and social, oblivious to the multiple forces aligned against him. I do not find this view acceptable. On the contrary, Einstein's various political and humanistic activities can be seen as wise and common-sensical, stemming from a world view that was fully in line with his scientific metaphysics and the images of knowledge that guided him in his physical researches. . . . It was the same clear thinking, reducing all phenomena to what he thought to be fundamental, that made him appear to others to be naive or ignorant of human nature. He believed he knew what was important and what was basic; accordingly, he chose consciously to disregard all contrary evidence, . . . This is not 'naivete' but exactly the source of his towering strength.[124]

There is, however, one important exception to Elkana's characterization of Einstein's world view; Einstein hated postwar Germany. He refused to sign a manifesto urging the Unites States not to starve Germany, and even swore that he would publicly denounce the document. "Even the righteous," he said, "could not redeem the country of mass murderers."[125] When invited by Arnold Sommerfeld to rejoin

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[124] Yehuda Elkana, "The Myth of Simplicity," in Holton and Elkana, Albert Einstein, p. 234.

[125] Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 341.

the Bavarian Academy in 1946, Einstein replied by telling him "The Germans slaughtered my Jewish brethren; I will have nothing further to do with them, not even with a relatively harmless academy."[126] Where is the compassionate Einstein? Where is the defender of the individual; the champion of underdogs? Elkana surmises

> . . . the violence of sentiment, the total absence of vulnerability to pity . . . shows how desperately deep and all-consuming had been his [Einstein's] antipathy to Germany. Even his postwar laments about America, his horror at McCarthyism, were shaped by his image of Germany. America, he believed, was somehow following the path of Germany. The world of politics he saw through German eyes--always.[127]

After Elsa's death in 1936, Einstein lived almost entirely for his work. He was cared for by Margot and Helen Dukas. He offered the occasional statement about world affairs when asked and did his share of fundraising for Jewish and other causes. Yet, as he told Max Born in a 1937 letter, "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 further by the death of my mate, who was more attached to human beings than I."[128] The casual way in which Einstein referred to his wife's

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126 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 210.

127 Fritz Stern, "Einstein's Germany," p. 341.

128 Ronald W. Clark, Einstein: The Life and Times, p. 532.

quite recent death points to his remoteness. As Born put it, "For all his kindness, sociability and love of humanity, he was nevertheless totally detached from his environment and the human beings included in it."[129]

Despite his hibernation, Einstein's world fame prompted the final great proffer of his long career. The morning after Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann, died, Ben Gurion asked his political secretary Yitzhak Navon a question: "There is only one man whom we should ask to become the President of the State of Israel. He is the greatest Jew on earth. Maybe the greatest human being on earth. Einstein. What do you think?"[130] A cable was dispatched to Washington on November 16, 1952 instructing the Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban to "Please enquire immediately of Einstein whether he is prepared to become President of Israel. . . ."[131] Eban had trouble contacting Einstein by phone and finally wired him requesting a meeting in person to discuss "a message of historic importance."[132] Einstein, already sensing what the message was, phoned Eban at home and told him that he was neither free to accept, nor qualified to fulfill the position of

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129 Ibid.

130 Yitzhak Navon, "On Einstein and the Presidency of Israel," in Holton and Elkana, Albert Einstein, p. 294.

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid.

President. Eban asked Einstein to give the matter more thought and to at least discuss it with him in person. Einstein agreed to meet Eban two days later in New York. In the mean time, Eban asked Einstein to keep the matter quiet, at which point Einstein laughed, telling him "newspaper men kept phoning all morning to ask for confirmation of the rumors from Israel that the Prime Minister had cabled him about accepting the Presidency."[133] A little known but important sidenote is that Ben Gurion was actually hoping Einstein would refuse his offer. "'Tell me what to do if he says yes!'" he said to Navon, "'I've had to offer the post to him because it's impossible not to. But if he accepts we are in for trouble.' Two days later the ambassador met Einstein at a reception to which he had come with black tie and without stockings . . ."[134]

Not unlike Ben Gurion, Einstein knew that he lacked the social skills required of a statesman. In his formal rejection of the presidency he wrote:

> I am deeply moved by the offer from our state of Israel, and at once saddened and ashamed that I can not accept it. 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 exercise official functions. For these reasons alone I should be unsuited to fulfill the duties of that high office, even if advancing age was not making

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133 Ibid., p. 295.

134 Ibid.

increasing inroads on my strength.

> I am the more distressed over these circumstances because my relationship to the Jewish people has become my strongest human bond, ever since I became fully aware of our precarious situation among the nations of the world.[135]

The Albert Einstein who spent his last years in search of the elusive Unified Field theory was a far different man from the "impudent Swabian" of the late nineteenth century. It is rare that one man can both change our perception of and be himself changed by world events so profoundly as Einstein. He reshaped our most basic assumptions about time and space, lived through two World Wars, four changes in citizenship, two marriages, failure, fame and loneliness; and he did so with dignity. As John Kemny put it:

> I think everybody who knew Einstein well had his life changed by that. It set a standard that you wish you could live up to and you absolutely know you can't. Not just because your brains aren't as good as Einstein's, but to be that good and to be that humble and that kind a human being and that tolerant of human short-comings is a standard I know I couldn't live up to.[136]

It is undoubtedly his humility which prompted Einstein, before his death from an aneurism of the aorta on April 18, 1955, to request that he be cremated and his ashes scattered so as to prevent his grave from becoming a

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135 Jeremy Bernstein, Einstein, p. 214.

136 Jamie Sayen, Einstein In America (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1985), pp. 305-306.

shrine. He also left instructions that his house at 112 Mercer Street in Princeton never be made into a museum. It is a sad postscript that Einstein's brain was "commended to medical research after his death to become a singular curio."[137] Perhaps sadder still is the distance Einstein kept from almost everyone around him. Despite his many ventures into politics he remained an outsider. Most of his life was spent with a very few colleagues and students trying to solve the riddles of existence.

Here was a man wanting more often than not to be left alone, even by his family, yet able at times to give of himself to the entire world, a man mystified by his own fame and the degree to which myth displaced the truth about him.

Having examined the facts, we have sought to understand the "real" Einstein. Perhaps now the myths will reveal to us something of the "imaginary" Einstein and, more importantly, of ourselves.

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137 Yaron Ezrahi, "Einstein and the Light of Reason," p. 263.

Chapter II

Images of Einstein

As time passes, our memory of Einstein will be shaped more by posthumous myths and images than by the reality of his life. By examining how various images and myths of Einstein originated and were used by others to create even more myths and images, we can better understand the chief components of the myths, their importance and what these various motifs reveal about the people who create and/or perpetuate them.

Jews, of course, mythicized Einstein long before he died. An evolutionary study of Jewish Einstein mythology must, therefore, begin with those cultural media by which these myths were created while he was still alive. The most revealing of these is Einstein's own correspondence. What better way to discover that which his Jewish public saw in him of mythical proportion than by reading his fan mail? After his death, a number of myths were seized upon, regenerated and transmuted by various genres of Jewish culture. The first of these were the dozens of eulogies for him in the Jewish press. Although already existent during his lifetime, after his death Einstein myths appeared with greater frequency in Jewish humor, folklore, advertising, art, opera and institutions. These, no less than the events of his life, contribute to the extraordinary popularity Einstein enjoys as a Jewish folk hero. More importantly, these posthumous manipulations of Einstein by the machinery of Jewish culture reveal the deep

psychological and ideological needs of twentieth-century Jewry as reflected in the shaping of its most famous hero.

EINSTEIN'S CORRESPONDENCE

Einstein's personal letters reveal a fascinating picture of the man and his world. Some of his letters reflect a personality far different from that of the kind, old gentleman, absentminded and unaware of important details. Rather, we find a man who, once having lent his name to a particular organization, kept careful tabs on its activities and did not hesitate to withdraw his support when he felt they were less than exemplary. Einstein's letters reveal his willingness to help friends in trouble, but not at the risk of his own integrity. Most refreshing of all, we discover a man who responded to the queries of great world figures, admirers, critics and common folk with the same degree of respect and cordiality.

But none of this is really new. I discovered little about Einstein in his correspondence that has not already been noted by his better biographers. What has been as yet unexplored about Einstein's correspondence is not the picture it presents of Einstein through his own words but rather, of his public, and more specifically, his Jewish public, through their letters to him. Einstein's correspondence is perhaps the best means available to us for studying the dominant motifs of his image which circulated during his life time. What do letters to Einstein from Jews tell us about the people who wrote them

and their perceptions of Einstein?

The non-science related letters that Einstein received from Jews fall roughly into two categories. Firstly, there are letters from individuals writing to Einstein on their own behalf in order to praise, criticize or inform him regarding one or more aspects of his activities. What might today be called fan mail. Secondly, and more abundant, are letters from individuals representing Jewish organizations seeking support of some kind from Einstein. In examining both types of letters certain images of Einstein prevail. In the letters he received from his Jewish public we discover the complex, conflicting and at times superhuman roles the world Jewish community expected Einstein to fill.

A collective Einstein mythology can be constructed out of the various themes stressed in the Jewish public's correspondence with Einstein. The Einstein that emerges is overwhelmingly positive and multifaceted. To some he was a prophet or sage, seemingly in touch with forces and powers far beyond the reach of ordinary humans, to others a rebbe. There are those who praised him and found in his accomplishments a source of Jewish self-pride. He was a man with credibility, influence and universal appeal to all types of Jews. This credibility and far-reaching fame made him a sought after spokesman for Jewish organizations and the bearer of unwanted responsibility.

In much of the fan mail Einstein received from Jews, they ask questions of him or relate to him like a prophet/sage or rebbe; a man connected to the cosmos in a way unlike any other. "Dear Monique," writes Einstein in response to a letter from a young girl named Monique Epstein, "There has been an earth since a little more than a billion years. As for the question of the end of it I advise: Wait and see!"[1] Rabbi Leo Baeck sent a seventieth birthday greeting to Einstein wherein he praises him for having "grasped the oneness of existence."[2] Nahum Goldmann cabled Einstein and told him he was " . . . the greatest Jewish mind of our generation and . . . certainly one of the great spiritual leaders of our time."[3] Chaim Weizmann also sent a telegram to Einstein on Einstein's seventieth birthday in which he called him " . . . the greatest Jew of our generation who has shed fresh lustre on the names of Israel and given a new interpretation to the ancient spiritual and moral ideas of our people."[4] Here Einstein is not only a rebbe lending new insights to old ideas but also, a source of pride to the Jewish people, lending new

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[1] The Albert Einstein Duplicate Archive, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey: Document #42647.

[2] Ibid., Document #35012

[3] Ibid., Document #301387-2.

[4] Ibid., Document #33451.

luster to a collective self-image damaged by years of oppression, poverty and suffering.

The image of Einstein as a spiritual leader or rebbe is not at all uncommon in his correspondence. The following letter is typical:

> My Dear Professor Einstein:
>
> I am writing on behalf of my grandfather, Mr. Herman Gross, an aged Talmudic scholar and author, who is most anxious to meet you. My grandfather is particularly interested in discussing with you, the leading Jewish scientist of the century, and one who has gained an insight into the marvelous mechanics of Nature, the extent of your belief in God in particular, and religion in general.
>
> I know that he is willing to endure all the hardships of travelling in order to discuss this matter at any time that it may prove convenient to you. If it is impossible for you to arrange an appointment with him, would you please communicate your views on this subject to him?
>
> I know that you will give this letter your kindest consideration.[5]

There are many more letters like this. Indeed, Einstein received dozens, perhaps hundreds, of inquiries from rabbis and laymen alike asking about his views on religion. The she'elot were usually the same: "Do you believe in God?" or "What is the relationship between science and religion?" Einstein's t'shuvot--he often answered these letters--were usually something like the following response to Mr. Gross in the above letter:

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[5] Ibid., Document #33320.

Dear Sir:

I am so heavily burdened with work that it seems to me impossible to arrange the discussion with your grandfather you requested in your letter of April 16th. I shall, therefore, express in short my opinions about God and religion.

It seems to me that the idea of a personal God is an anthropomorphic concept which I cannot take seriously. I feel also not able to imagine some will or goal outside the human sphere. My views are near to those of Spinoza: admiration for the beauty of and belief in the logical simplicity of the order and harmony which we can grasp humbly and only imperfectly. I believe that we have to content ourselves with our imperfect knowledge and understanding and treat values and moral obligations as a purely human problem -- the most important of all human problems.[6]

Einstein's Jewish fan mail did not always take the form of letters. People often sent him newspaper clippings, sermons, essays and poems in which the image of Einstein as prophet/sage was predominant. Einstein received both published and unpublished poems about himself by his Jewish admirers. Whether they were published or not, Einstein saw fit to save them and make them part of his personal archive. In 1954 Saul Gottlieb published his Billet-Doux to Albert Einstein in The Quarterly Review:

I love you, great old man, and
I'd like to kiss that shining dome
of yours holding your scraggly head
between my hands and looking down
smiling into your eyes

I see among the stars

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[6] Ibid., Document #33321.

as they suddenly flood vastly in the dark
observing that unknown law you seek.

There, and in the sun with you
(and in your crystal eyes) are the eyes
of my children brimming with troubled innocence
like pure water, like rich air, like fire, earth

after all murder, after birth,
the plucked tiger-lily dying in a day,
immensity in an hour, all space in a crystal.

An old man with a child's eyes.
Head of windows to wonder.[7]

Gottlieb describes Einstein's eyes as crystal in which all space is contained. Einstein is the all-seeing, all-knowing man. With his "Head of windows to wonder," Einstein is privy to certain mysteries of creation and life that are unfathomable to ordinary humans. As powerful as Gottlieb's Einstein is, he stops short of relating Einstein to God. Not so in what is to my knowledge an unpublished poem composed and sent to Einstein by Amy Groesbeck:

<u>Albert Einstein</u>

"My religious feeling is a humble amazement at the order revealed in the small patch of reality to which our feeble intelligence is equal" (<u>Cosmic Religion</u> by Albert Einstein).

Mystic of Science, Architect of Space,
Who, Galileo-like, roams ceaselessly
Through interstellar worlds to find the key
Resolving man and nature's unity.
Earth-bound, we cannot read the signs you trace
As log book of your search; but the keen face,
White-haloed, merry-eyed, shows humor's grace
Tempering genius with humility.

For delving ever deeper in the raw

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7. Ibid., Document #31628.

And universal stuff of star or clod,
You catch, beyond the mind's divining rod,
The implication of one cosmic law
And state in simple terms your sense of awe:
Presaging that supreme equation--God.[8]

We, according to Groesbeck, are "earthbound," unable to "read the signs." Einstein's journey is beyond us, beyond any mortal mind. His vision is unique, an insight into the unifying principle of all existence; a glimpse of God.

Not everyone thought of Einstein as a prophet communing with the Almighty. Yet, even in letters from Jews who related to Einstein as something less than holy, we find notions of the extraordinary powers they attributed to him. To many Jews Einstein was a man with the ability to change the course of world events by uttering a few words, attending a meeting or agreeing to sit on a dais.

A number of Jews, both famous and unknown, tried to gain Einstein's support for a fellow Jew or Jewish cause. Seeking the assistance of a famous Jewish personality on behalf of a Jewish organization is by no means unusual. Jewish actors, musicians, writers and intellectuals are often asked to help their fellow Jews. What is so remarkable about those Jews who wrote to Einstein is the degree to which they believed he was able to sway public opinion in the world Jewish community. Vladimir Jabotinsky wrote to Einstein in 1933 asking for a statement defending

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[8] Ibid., Document #31699.

Abraham Stavski who was accused of the Arlosoroff murder. "A word of warning from you," pleaded Jabotinsky, " . . . would go a long way to dispel the unhealthy atmosphere of political vendetta which threatens to affect his fate even if he is innocent. . . . We have never met, Professor Einstein, but I know that honest men, even though politically opposed, sense each other's sincerity by a kind of 'wireless.'"[9] Although he was anything but politically naive, it is astonishing that Jabotinsky turned to Einstein for help with his Revisionist party's problems. Jabotinsky and Einstein differed on virtually every aspect of their Zionism, and yet Jabotinsky believed that Einstein was the person best suited to transcend political differences and come to the aid of a wrongly accused fellow Jew. Einstein was a man of integrity, trusted by Jews of every political persuasion. He had--at least in the public's imagination--no political axes to grind. He was an entirely good, fair and decent man.

Einstein received more letters from Stephen S. Wise than from any other Jewish leader. Although the cause or requested task often differed, Wise's message to Einstein was usually the same: his stamp of approval on a Jewish cause or organization was needed to inspire Jews and thereby guarantee its acceptance by the world Jewish community. When asking Einstein to issue a statement in

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[9] Ibid., Document #35091-2.

support of the High Commissioner, James G. McDonald, Wise wrote to Einstein: "Such a word from you would not only mean more to us than I can say . . . it will be a clarion call to American Jewry to courage and dignity."[10] Two years later, in 1936, Wise pleaded with Einstein to accept the Honorary Presidency of the World Jewish Congress: " . . . I do beg you to accept the Honorary Presidency . . . It would mean a great deal, not only to the Congress but to the Jews of the world who feel that you, the most eminent of living Jews, sympathize with the basic purpose of the Congress . . . Once again I earnestly submit to you that it would be a gesture that would hearten the unhappy Jewish world today if you were to lend your name to their cause."[11] In yet another letter to Einstein, Wise informs him that by issuing a statement refuting the anti-Zionist remarks of a Canadian Jew he "can neutralize the extremely bad impression made not only on Canadian Jews but on the entire Canadian people."[12] The letters cited above are typical of the more than 200 exchanged between Wise and Einstein. In almost every case Wise informs Einstein of an issue or organization about which he, with a brief statement or appearance, could influence the world Jewish

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10 Ibid., Document #35264-2.

11 Ibid., Document #35207-1, #35207-2.

12 Ibid., Document #35271

community. Like so many other Jewish leaders, Wise wanted the glory of Einstein's universal appeal and good name shed on his own pet projects.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem sought Einstein's blessing -- his active, moral and public support -- more often and more vigorously than any other Jewish institution. At its inception the Hebrew University was for many Jews perhaps the dominant symbol of everything cultural Zionism represented. By placing all that was good about secular culture within a Jewish context and vice versa, the University came to represent the ideals to which so many twentieth-century Jews aspired. Founding and sustaining the Hebrew University involved the combined efforts of this century's most important Jews. The vast majority of Einstein's correspondence related to Jewish organizations concerned itself with the Hebrew University and the influential people who defined, organized and directed it. Men like Chaim Weizmann, Judah Magnes, Felix Warburg, Julian Mack, Stephen S. Wise, Philip Hartog and Louis Brandeis all recognized the tremendous power of Einstein's image over all types of Jews. Einstein's universal appeal to Jews of every denomination and nationality was important for any Jewish organization which needed support from different--and often competing--factions of the world Jewish community. The University's leadership reasoned that if in the public's imagination

Einstein's image could be made synonymous with that of the University's, then the University would enjoy the support of world Jewry.

This strategy to co-opt Einstein's fame seems clear in the letters written to Einstein by the University's leadership during its first three decades. Just how valuable the University's leadership considered Einstein's support to be is best demonstrated in their letters to him regarding his resignation from the Board of Governors over his disagreements with Magnes about the running of the University. Magnes, realizing the importance of Einstein's affiliation with the University, wrote to Weizmann: "I think you will understand when I say that the Einstein matter will have to be cleared up definitely, as far as I am concerned. I shall be perfectly willing to withdraw from the University if Einstein will then come into it."[13] Weizmann, upon hearing of Einstein's resignation wrote to him: "You are the bearer of a great name, and so the injustice cuts the more deeply. . . . May I be permitted to add that, in such times as these, the Jewish people may make heavy demands on its great men? . . . Your own action has caused me personally so much pain and was so harmful to the University, that it would be a lack of frankness on my part to pass it over in silence, or with polite phrases which could give no real indication of my feelings in this

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13 Ibid., Document #33428.

hour of our people's tragedy."[14]

Once some of the reforms that Einstein suggested prior to and during his resignation were instituted, rumors circulated about him joining the University's faculty. "Nothing better could happen to our young university," cabled Morris Rothenberg, "than having the lustre of your name shed on it by your taking a chair on Mt. Scopus."[15] Nathan Ratnoff, when asked by Einstein to recommend improvements in the administration of the University, responded by writing: "The best thing that could be done for the University would be for you to accept the Professorship in Physics. The influence of your presence there would do more than anything else to correct the conditions that now exist . . . I feel I have the moral right to make a personal appeal to you to accept this position."[16] Both Weizmann and Rothenberg try to make Einstein aware of his personal responsibility to bear the burden of leading the Jewish people. Einstein, it seems, was not totally aware of just how important he was to the Jews.

There is an unmistakable note of desperation in the letters of those who wrote to Einstein regarding the Hebrew University. In its first decade the University was an

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[14] Ibid., Document #33425-2.

[15] Ibid., Document #37089-2.

[16] Ibid., Document #37100.

institution fraught with problems--financial, organizational, political, etc. Einstein's support was seen as somehow crucial, his presence the panacea for all that ailed the struggling university. The University's leadership hoped that Einstein's universal appeal--the Jews' belief that he would associate himself with nought but what was entirely good, honest and brilliant--would create the same image for the University. Einstein, on the other hand, must also have been aware of his enormous reputation. He too knew that his fame depended in part on his integrity. Einstein refused, no matter how urgent the need, to associate himself with an institution run by people he considered untrustworthy or incompetent. Nevertheless, Zionist leaders turned to him again and again, convinced that his mere presence and public support would solve their problems. Einstein knew better.

Eventually, Einstein rejoined the ranks of Hebrew University supporters. He was once again asked to take part in University affairs and even accepted the Honorary Presidency of the American Friends of the Hebrew University. During this later period Jewish organizations --chief among them the Hebrew University--turned to Einstein not so much for his spiritual guidance or practical advice, but as a device to raise funds. A testimonial from Einstein meant money in the bank for Jewish organizations. At Weizmann's suggestion, Einstein

was invited to speak at a fundraising dinner in London for the Hebrew University. "We feel sure," the dinner's sponsors wrote, "that your presence would add greatly to the dinner for its object . . . "[17] At yet another London fundraiser for the University Einstein was asked " . . . with all possible urgency to come to England and speak at the Dinner . . . your presence would ensure, as nothing else could, the success of the function . . . your participation matters most. It is certain that if you would come to England the Dinner would be a success; the Hebrew University would be given a new place in the eyes of the Anglo-Jewish community and we believe that the financial support required from this country would be forthcoming."[18]

In 1935 the American Friends of the Hebrew University sponsored dinners and a radio program in honor of the University's tenth anniversary. Speeches from the dinners in New York, London and Jerusalem were broadcast world-wide. Einstein was not an active supporter of the University at the time but he nevertheless received a letter from A.S.W. Rosenbach asking for his help:

> We should be greatly honored if you would be present with Mrs. Einstein, as our guests of honor and speak at the dinner. . . . A five

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[17] Ibid., Document #37054.

[18] Ibid., Document #37243-3

> minute speech . . . is all we ask, but it would mean so much in enlarging the support and appreciation of the Hebrew University. We know how much the University is indebted to you for its birth and growth; we know how much it owes to your inspiration and encouragement. It needs that inspiration and encouragement more than ever at this moment, when it is offering a haven for more of the professors exiled from Germany than any other institution in the world. . . . It is our hope that this number can be doubled, if sufficient funds are provided. America will supply these funds, if you add your voice to the others on this great occasion when so many millions will be listening in. . . . Please do not fail us in this hour of our critical need . . . we want the incalculable aid which your words will give in their effect upon millions of listeners on two continents. It would be nothing less than a tragedy, for us and for the University, to have this celebration . . . without your inspiring message which millions of our Jewish people will be expecting to hear from you . . . With kindest regards, and with the prayer that you will grant our request on behalf of this great cause--if only for the sake of the German exiled professors whom you will thus help to find a haven at the University.[19]

Rosenbach's letter points out to Einstein that the Hebrew University is saving the lives of German intellectuals and that Einstein has a moral obligation to assist. The appeal is, in a sense, more humanitarian than institutional. How could the thoroughly good and righteous defender of the oppressed refuse to rescue men like himself? In a different sense, however, Rosenbach's letter to Einstein is not at all a-typical. He received scores of such letters from representatives of the Hebrew University and many other Jewish organizations, each requesting the

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[19] Ibid., Document #32714-2, #32714-3.

use of his name or a personal appearance at a fundraising event. The images of Einstein contained in many of these letters are strikingly similar. Firstly, he is depicted as a citizen of the entire Jewish world. If a Jewish organization had a world-wide agenda and needed international Jewish support, there was no better vehicle for obtaining it than a statement from Einstein. He was perceived as belonging to no particular sect, party, country or institution. Einstein was a Jewish hero to whom every Jew could rightfully lay claim. This explains the invitations he received to speak on behalf of Jewish organizations in Europe, America, Canada, Mexico and Israel. His appeal transcended all boundaries: physical, political and denominational.

Secondly, mention is usually made of Einstein's integrity. Those who sought his sanction knew that, if successful, their organization's honesty, credibility and worth would not be questioned. This was especially true of Jewish academic institutions. Although evident in most of the letters Einstein received seeking his support for a particular Jewish cause, his image as a man of integrity is best exemplified by the Rosenbach letter. Perhaps as a byproduct of his integrity, Einstein was seen as a man who instilled confidence in Jews. This faith that Jews had in him is demonstrated in a letter he received from Israel Goldstein. Einstein originally supported the idea of a

Jewish-sponsored university in America without quotas. He therefore allowed the creation of The Albert Einstein Foundation for Higher Learning, Inc.--a fundraising organization whose goal was to finance just such a university. As worthy as its goal was, Einstein soon withdrew his support from the university project due to disagreements over fundraising tactics and what he perceived to be less-than-ethical behavior by some of the project's founders. Goldstein, upon hearing of Einstein's decision, sent him the following letter:

> . . . there is nothing I would hesitate to do, including the tendering of my resignation, in order to prevent this project from being injured, as indeed, it would be injured most seriously by your withdrawal of your name, sponsorship and active interest. First things come first. Your identification with this project is a primary requisite for its success . . . There is also involved, it seems to me, a responsibility toward those who have contributed funds and who have accepted positions of responsibility because your name was identified with the cause, as well as toward the larger Jewish community whose prestige, in a sense, becomes tied up with a Jewish-sponsored university under the aegis of your name. Your disassociation from it will, in my judgement, not only kill the project, but will probably make it impossible for a long time to come for any similar effort to be undertaken by another group.[20]

A third component of Einstein's image often contained in letters from Jews hoping to enlist his aid in fundraising for their organizations is his victimization by the Nazis. As one who experienced first-hand the evils of

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[20] Ibid., Document #40416.

antisemitism, Einstein was imagined to have a certain credibility and authority to speak for and to Jews. Jewish leaders and laymen alike had added respect for Einstein and expected added commitment from him because of his persecution by the Nazis.

All of these factors: his universal appeal, integrity and credibility as a Jew who paid dearly for his commitment to his people, combined to make Einstein the most compelling symbol with which any Jewish organization could hope to be associated. Einstein rejected the vast majority of speaking engagements, Honorary Chairmanships, Presidencies and requests for public support tendered him by Jewish organizations. The rarity of Einstein's public appearances on behalf of organizations only served to enhance his image as the most coveted spokesman for organized Judaism in the twentieth century. There persisted among Jewish organizational leaders and fundraisers of all sorts the notion that Einstein could sell any idea or cause.

EINSTEIN EULOGIES

It was Sholom Aleichem, among others, who recognized the irony of the phrase "Achare Mot-Kedoshim." Although taken literally the expression merely refers to the Torah reading from Leviticus 16:1-20:27. Sholom Aleichem's point was that individuals and culture in general have a tendency to make someone holier in death than they were in life. In the case of Einstein, Jews and Jewish culture stand justly accused. Indeed, in Jewish culture Einstein continues to be represented as an almost totally positive figure. This is not to say that Einstein's greatness was entirely posthumous. Certainly the events of his life had much to do with the way in which he has been remembered by Jews. In keeping with Sholom Aleichem's formulation, eulogies about Einstein in the Jewish press are a most illuminating source regarding aspects of Einstein's life which preceded so many of today's Jewish images and myths about him.

Einstein eulogies in Jewish papers from all over the world are strikingly similar in content. Virtually all of them touch upon the same few themes and events regarding Einstein's relationship to Jews and Judaism. An examination of these various eulogies provides a definite answer to the question posed in one of them as to whether Einstein " . . . will be remembered in the same breath with Moses [as has been boldly suggested by some], or will his

name be added to the list of condemned apikorsim of our generation?"[21]

The question of Einstein's prophet or sage-like image is beyond doubt given such quotes as the Prime Minister of Israel's after hearing of his death: "This mighty intellect, whose rays penetrated the dark unknown, has been suddenly extinguished."[22] The Jewish Advocate called Einstein a "Universe Builder,"[23] and David Coleman, President of the Los Angeles Jewish Community Council, said of Einstein at a community-wide commemoration in May of 1955: "If the prophets of the Bible cried out for social justice, he was their spiritual descendant."[24] "As the sages of Israel of old," Coleman continued, "dwelled upon the ideal of peace and yearned for the time when none there should be to make man afraid, so Dr. Einstein was a man of peace."[25]

It was more than the pursuit of peace and justice which shaped Einstein's image in the Jewish press as a prophet/sage. Einstein, according to his eulogizers, was a religious visionary because of his search for a unified

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21 Orthodox Jewish Life, May-June, 1955, p. 15.

22 The Jerusalem Post, April 19, 1955, p. 1.

23 The Jewish Advocate, April 21, 1955, p. 1.

24 David Coleman, "Albert Einstein: The Jew," in Maurice J. Karpf, ed., In Memoriam: Albert Einstein (Los Angeles, California: 1955), p. 34.

25 Ibid., p. 36.

theory to explain all of existence. Even the journal Orthodox Jewish Life, which criticized Einstein for his lack of understanding regarding mitzvot and his requested cremation, warned: "While we are thus tempted to condemn his concept of God, we might upon further reflection still find in his ideas some aspects of Yirat Ha-Shem. Is Einstein's belief in the possibility of complete unification a search for the One proclaimed by Judaism?"[26] The Zionist Record of South Africa quoted extensively from Einstein's Cosmic Religion and the Jerusalem Post claimed Einstein's "Jewish spirit was projected also through his scientific work. His constant endeavor lay in the direction of unity in a unified perception of the cosmos, both in spirit and matter . . . "[27]

Eulogies in the Jewish press also commented on more down-to-earth elements of Einstein's character. "To this preeminent genius," said Coleman, "as to lesser men before him, came the recurrent episode of uprooting and departure and resettlement. Out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, he came into a promised land, a land of freedom . . . "[28] Abba Eban noted that Einstein was

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[26] Orthodox Jewish Life, May-June 1955, p. 20.

[27] Jerusalem Post, April 19, 1955, p. 3.

[28] David Coleman, "Albert Einstein: The Jew," in Karpf, In Memoriam, p. 36.

"banished by the Nazi hangman;"[29] The Jewish Advocate also mentioned that Einstein "was forced to flee from persecution,"[30] and that " . . . while the world chose to forget that he was once a refugee he never permitted himself to forget it. He was deeply interested in the establishment and building of Israel and he was devoted to the welfare of distressed Jewry everywhere."[31] It seems that Einstein's victimization by the Nazis and his refugee status was an important part of his appeal among Jews. Jews were proud of the way in which Einstein's fame negated Hitler's claims against the Jews; they were proud of him for standing tall against Hitler. Coleman alludes to this by including in his eulogy a statement made by Einstein in 1932: "Those who rage today against the ideals of reason and of individual freedom--and seek to impose an insensate state of slavery by means of brute force--rightly see in us [the Jews] their irreconcilable opponents . . ."[32]

There are other, more obvious themes in Jewish Einstein eulogies than those of the prophet/sage and the triumphant victim of antisemitism. Practically every Jewish paper which eulogized Einstein mentioned his

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29 Jerusalem Post, April 19, 1955, p. 3.

30 The Jewish Advocate, April 21,1955,

31 Ibid.

32 David Coleman, "Albert Einstein: The Jew," in Karpf, In Memoriam, p. 37.

affiliation with Zionism and more specifically the Hebrew University. The Jewish Advocate's summary is typical:

> Albert Einstein was intensely interested in Jewish causes, in Zionism and in Israeli institutions. His first visit to the United States was in 1921 when he came with Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization on behalf of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. One of the buildings at this university, the Einstein Institute for Physics, is named after him and has possession of his manuscript on relativity.[33]

In the same article Dr. George S. Wise said: "Professor Einstein has been the leading force in shaping the academic and organizational structure of the University "[34] According to The Zionist Record, Einstein "referred to the Jewish State as 'our Israel'."[35] Einstein's image as a committed Zionist is reinforced in various eulogies by an account of his so called "Last Act". Just before his death Einstein worked on the text of a seven minute address he "intended giving over three major coast-to-coast networks on April 26."[36] The speech was to commemorate Yom Haatzmaut.

Einstein's affiliation with other Jewish organizations and institutions such as the United Jewish Appeal, Brandeis University and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of

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[33] The Jewish Advocate, April 21, 1955.

[34] Ibid.

[35] The Zionist Record, Johannesburg. April 22, 1955.

[36] Ibid.

Yeshiva University are also oft-mentioned accomplishments in his eulogies written by and for Jews. As The Jewish Advocate correctly pointed out: " This great thinker was identified with the two first Jewish contributions to American higher education."[37] "The fruits of his dedication to Jewish causes," notes Orthodox Jewish Life, "live on in institutions of learning which he helped establish with vigor and devotion."[38]

Einstein the prophet/sage, the victim of Nazism, the Zionist and the supporter of Jewish institutions is the Einstein of the Jewish press at the time of his death. Although larger-than-life, Einstein's image among Jews in 1955 was not entirely out of proportion to his importance and influence. Over the course of time, however, much has been done by the workings of Jewish culture to transform Einstein from man to myth. During his lifetime and immediately after his death the components and ideological purposes behind Einstein's image among Jews were best revealed in his correspondence and eulogies. Later, other cultural vehicles carried these themes and brought about their transmutation.

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37 The Jewish Advocate, April 21, 1955.

38 Orthodox Jewish Life, May-June, 1955, p. 23.

EINSTEIN HUMOR

What purpose is served by joking about Einstein? The answer to this question becomes immeasurably more revealing of Jewish attitudes toward Einstein when we consider that it is primarily Jewish humor anthologies which contain, and Jews who tell, jokes about Einstein. It is no secret that Jewish culture embraces famous Jews as its own and that one important way of doing so is humor. "Jewish humor," write William Novak and Moshe Waldoks, "has in some ways come to replace the standard sacred texts as a touchstone for the entire Jewish community. Not all Jews can read and understand a page of Talmud, but even the most assimilated tend to have a special affection for Jewish jokes."[39] Furthermore, there is certainly much about Einstein that is laughable--his inappropriate dress, outrageous hair, contempt for authority, lack of social grace, forgetfulness, etc. It is surprising, however, that these are not the major components of Jewish humor about Einstein. Jewish Einstein jokes rely on less obvious vehicles to produce laughter and lead one to suspect in them a deeper purpose than mere entertainment.

Jewish jokes and humorous stories about Einstein do

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[39] William Novak and Moshe Waldoks, eds., The Big Book of Jewish Humor (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. xix.

not--for the most part--make fun of Einstein himself but of the phenomenon he became. Irony or the " 'tsk, tsk' and the nod of the head"[40] has always been the cornerstone of Jewish humor and there are few things more ironic than Einstein's fame. Indeed, Einstein's popularity seems downright absurd given that so few people understand his theories. This irony appears often in Einstein jokes and is produced by the two conflicting notions of his esoterica and his grass-roots popularity.

Some jokes refer to only one of these elements, others to both. The following joke, which contains a sad bit of truth in the sense that Einstein's first marriage failed in part because of his wife's inability to understand his unique discoveries, is typical of those which refer to the incomprehensibility of his scientific achievements:

> Albert Einstein had just finished a detailed lecture about his quantum theory and his various speculations concerning relativity. When he completed his talk he was observed to retire glumly to his study.
>
> 'That was a brilliant discourse,' commented another professor. 'What possible reason could you have for looking so downcast?'
>
> 'Reason enough,' replied Dr. Einstein. 'My wife doesn't understand me.' [41]

Another Einstein joke of the same type goes as

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[40] see chapter I, note 28.

[41] Henry D. Spalding, ed., Joys of Jewish Humor (Middle Village, New York: Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., 1985) p.315.

follows:

> Some years ago Professor Albert Einstein and Dr. Chaim Weizmann sailed together to America on a Zionist mission. When they arrived in New York City Dr. Weizmann was asked how he and the famous savant spent their time on the boat.
>
> 'Throughout the voyage,' Dr. Weizmann replied, 'the learned professor kept on talking to me about his theory of relativity.'
>
> 'And what is your opinion about it?'
>
> 'It seems to me,' concluded Dr. Weizmann, 'that Professor Einstein understands it very well.' [42]

Besides reinforcing Einstein's image as a Zionist and as a Jew who rubbed shoulders with the most important Jews of the century, this Einstein/Weizmann joke once again points to the notion that Einstein's ideas were beyond even the most intelligent of men. So too in the oft--told anecdote about the day Einstein spent with Freud. Freud is reported to have said at day's end that all went exceedingly well mainly because Einstein knew nothing about psychoanalysis and he knew nothing about relativity.

The other side of the esoterica versus mass appeal dichotomy in Einstein humor is exemplified in this story about a young school girl in Princeton:

> Professor Einstein was the head of the National Institute at Princeton University. Each day at noon he would walk to his apartment for lunch. At this hour school let out too. He loved children and one day he walked alongside a little girl of eleven whose name was Mary Wilson. He asked her how school was. She said everything would be all right if not for arithmetic.

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[42] Ibid., p. 317.

> 'May I know what problem you have to solve?' asked Professor Einstein. She told him and he solved it for her at once. She took a liking to him as he helped her with her arithmetic problems every day.
>
> 'Who are you?' asked Mary Wilson.
>
> 'I am Albert Einstein,' he said.
>
> Next day she told him that she asked a number of her girlfriends and nobody had heard the name Albert Einstein. 'I have an idea,' said Mary, 'you tell the people you are my friend and you will become popular.' [43]

Although it contains some factual notions of Einstein, namely that he was fond of the neighborhood children in Princeton and was known to solve the occasional homework problem for a few of them, what makes the above joke funny is the school girl's naivete. How could anyone not know of the famous Dr. Einstein? The joke's punch line depends on the listener already knowing just how popular Einstein really was during his years at Princeton.

The joke which relies most heavily on the incongruity between the esoteric and the popular Einstein for its effect is the one about Benny and his grandfather which begins the introductory chapter above. The joke in the introduction is taken from Nathan Ausubel's A Treasury of Jewish Folklore. Another version of the same story is found in Henry D. Spalding's Joys of Jewish Humor. The difference between the two is worth noting. In Spalding's

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[43] Rabbi H.R. Rabinowitz, Kosher Humor (Jerusalem: Alpha Press, Ltd., 1986), p. 153.

version the following is included: "Grandpa, who had known his share of con men and shnorrers in his time, looked shocked. After an interval of stunned silence, he gasped: 'And from this your Einstein makes a living?' "[44]

With the addition in Spalding's version the joke takes on an added sharpness that Ausubel's lacks. The old "grey-bearded patriarch from Poland" senses a con. Something is terribly out of whack in a society that glorifies achievements it does not understand. Given the particular Jewish tone of the joke, it seems that American Jews are, according to Benny's grandfather, especially guilty of being conned. Einstein is one of ours and we want so badly to bask in the glory of his image that our understanding becomes secondary and our behavior laughable.

Part of the way in which Jewish humor enhances Einstein's image is by portraying him as a prophet or sage. Although most jokes do not depend on the prophet/sage image of Einstein as the source of their humor--they depend rather on other factors such as the incongruity between Einstein's fame and his actual achievements--this prophet/sage motif in Jewish humor has helped shape Jewish perceptions of Einstein. He has in many ways become a sort of rebbe for secular and even some religious Jews of the twentieth century. In some sources Einstein is simply a man of great wisdom and insight, in others however, he is

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[44] Henry D. Spalding, Joys of Jewish Humor, p. 313.

a true prophet in touch with the innermost forces and secrets of the universe. Einstein's image in many of the "Prophet/Sage" jokes and stories emerges as an even more favorable one than that of the traditional rebbe. As Novak and Waldoks explain: " . . . unlike these rabbis, who were occasionally mocked or criticized in traditional Jewish jokes, Einstein--so far, at least--has remained a wholly positive figure."[45]

Take for example the following joke:

> A group of nuclear physicists gathered in the gambling town of Las Vegas for a symposium. During their free time they congregated in one of the casinos, and it soon became apparent that Dr. Einstein was spending all his time at the dice and roulette tables.
>
> 'Einstein is gambling as if there were no tomorrow,' remarked one of the scientists.
>
> 'What bothers me,' said another worriedly, 'is that he may know something.'[46]

This joke, which takes on added meaning if the listener is aware of Einstein's famous quote about God not playing dice with the universe, clearly supports the image of Einstein as prophet. Yet, one could argue that this and many if not all of the Einstein jokes analyzed thus far are not quintessentially Jewish. They are Jewish only by virtue of their being about Einstein who was a Jew and editors' decisions to include them in anthologies of Jewish humor.

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[45] Novak and Waldoks, p. 34.

[46] Spalding, p. 317.

It is important to remember however, that although these jokes might be as funny to non-Jews as they are to Jews, it is primarily Jews who read and tell them. This process in and of itself helps to perpetuate certain myths about Einstein more often among Jews than non-Jews.

Nevertheless, examples of Einstein humor that are purely Jewish in style and intent might reveal a uniquely Jewish purpose behind the choice of Einstein as culture hero. "A Jewish joke," according to one definition, "is one that no goy can understand and every Jew says he has already heard."[47] Are there such jokes about Einstein?

We find the "Einstein as Prophet/Sage" motif and other important cultural notions of Einstein developed in a thoroughly Jewish fashion in Philip Roth's short story On the Air. The story's main character is Milton Lippman, a second-rate talent agent representing third-rate talent. Lippman seizes upon the idea of creating a radio show with Einstein as its host. The format he has in mind would be similar to the already popular "The Answer Man" show. Lippman writes several letters to Einstein in order to fill him in on the plan. What makes these letters so funny and so Jewish is Lippman's incredible chutzpah coupled with his unabashed ethnocentrism and veneration for learning:

Dear Mr. Einstein:

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47 Novak and Waldoks, eds., p. xx.

> I am writing you with a wonderful suggestion that I know would bring about gigantic changes in the world and improve the lot of Jews everywhere. Mr. Einstein, I am a fellow Jew, and proud of it. Your name is sacred to me as to the people of our faith around the globe. That the Nazis chased you from Germany is our gain and their loss a million times over, if they even know what a loss is, and I only hope and pray that you are happy here in 'the land of the free.'
>
> Here is my suggestion. Why don't you go on the radio every week with your own show? If you would agree I would like to manage you, so that your famous mind would not have to be cluttered up with business and so on. I am ashamed to say this in the same breath with your name, but probably you are aware of "The Answer Man" program. . . . If you're not, just listen for a minute some night . . . .
>
> P.S. You will probably want to know what right I have even to suggest myself as a manager to the great Einstein . . . .The Great Albert Einstein. I feel it is even a sin to write out your whole name, that it is too holy for me to utter . . . [48]

In a subsequent letter to Einstein Lippman goes so far as to say the following:

> But what I am saying is that the sky is the limit once I get an okay from you. I am tempted to spell that with a capital letter. You. But in the middle of the sentence.
> Perhaps I should have told You . . . [49]

In yet another letter he reflects:

> Today we don't hear God as they did in the Bible -- and what is the result? It is impossible for some people to believe He is there. There. The same holds true with you, Doctor Einstein, I'm sorry to say. To the general public, who is Einstein? A name who

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[48] Philip Roth, On the Air, (New American Review, Volume 10, 1970) p. 9.

[49] Ibid., p. 11

> doesn't comb his hair (not that I have any objection) and is supposed to be the smartest person alive. A lot of good that does the Jews, if you understand what I'm saying.[50]

Lippman repeatedly refers to Einstein in these letters not only as a larger-than-life Jewish hero, but as a sort of Jewish deity. True enough, Lippman is trying to flatter Einstein in order to gain his approval. Nevertheless, Lippman's letters in Roth's story add fuel to the fire out of which Einstein's image among Jews has been forged.

To understand the purpose for which Lippman, and ultimately Roth, has deified Einstein we must first understand Lippman and the world he inhabits. Lippman is a Jew suffering from an inferiority complex. He mistrusts and feels persecuted by every non-Jew he comes in contact with and ridicules their culture at every opportunity. To Lippman, the culture heroes of non-Jews are pathetic imitations of the Jewish ideal:

> The Answer Man! Some schmuck from Fort Wayne, Indiana, with a deep voice who next year will be selling soap flakes on Helen Trent! This is somebody to look up to? I spit on him! Schmuck, with your answers, you don't begin to know the first thing about anything. You want the Answer Man? I'll give you the Answer Man, the kind of no-talent schmuckhead goy he is! . . . You are just another sure-of-himself goy, and the truth is that you are a fake, just like the rest of your religion! . . . The Answer Man! To a bunch of crap, that's what you got the answers to! A bunch of piddling goyische crap, that who

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50 Ibid., p. 13.

needs to know such nonsense in the first place![51]

Although Lippman's attack on the Answer Man is basically irrational, he does see through much of the hype and hypocrisy surrounding other more dangerous and influential non-Jewish cultural heroes of the day:

> Hitler, for instance--that little nut over in Germany thundering and howling at those millions of German people, and them saluting and cheering him back, goose-stepping for him all night long from one end of the country to the other, and all the time all this goose-stepping and sieg-heiling is going on, all the time the torches are burning and the millions are on their feet roaring, all the time in the middle of that face there is this little moustache! Hitler! What an idea! Or that Mussolini character--with a neck on him like Two-Ton Tony Galento, with a collar on him made of his own thick flesh, and he is in charge of all of Italy! . . . And how about that skinny Pope with the glasses: catch this--he raises that pale little hand of his and says some mumbo jumbo, and grown men, truck drivers, athletes, financial wizards, smack their foreheads down onto the pavement in awe. Imagine it--a man in a dress is in charge! . . . And telling them, 'Dominoes chess checkers bingo you're going to live forever Jesus Christ.' And they swallow it--whole![52]

It is not only the culture heroes of the non-Jews that Lippman despises, but their actual culture itself. Since Lippman receives no reply from Einstein he decides to take his wife and young son to Princeton in hopes of getting to see Einstein personally. The majority of the story describes the Lippmans' journey to Princeton and all that

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51 Ibid., pp. 7-9.

52 Ibid., pp. 17-18.

befalls them along the way. At one point they mistakenly wander into a tavern in search of ice cream for their little boy. The mistake provides Lippman with an idea for another radio show. A Jewish family on its way to meet Albert Einstein walks " . . . into a real dumb goy tavern instead."[53]

Although Lippman's comments about non-Jews are often the ravings of an uncontrollable bigot, his hatred of non-Jews is not entirely unprovoked. On the way to Princeton Lippman takes his family to a Howard Johnson's for ice cream. While in the ice cream parlor Lippman is subjected to a macabre series of antisemitic incidents at the hands of whiskey-drinking, gun-wielding thugs. They verbally abuse him, ridicule him about the size of his genitals and his circumcision, humiliate him physically in front of his wife and child and finally try to kill him. While these events were not the cause of Lippman's earlier bigoted outbursts they add credibility to his position regarding non-Jews and their culture.

Who stands tall as antithesis to everything Lippman detests about non-Jewish culture? Lippman's own culture hero "The Great Albert Einstein."

> "Children all over America," he writes Einstein, "think this fake [The Answer Man] is 'an Einstein' probably, when the real Einstein is something they would faint to hear in person. I would like them to know that THE GENIUS OF ALL

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53 Ibid., p.15.

> TIME IS A JEW! This is something the world must know, and soon."[54]

In his next letter to Einstein Lippman goes on to reveal a deeper purpose to his plan:

> Who better than you knows the persecution the Jews have taken around the globe? It will only stop when they look up to us and recognize that when it comes to smart, we are the tops. It will only stop when our own little Jewish boys and girls realize that there is an Einstein in the world who is a Jew just like them, and is a million times smarter than some goy radio announcer with a stuffy voice who they also give the answers to anyway.[55]

> "I have to assure you," Lippman continues in his last letter to Einstein, "the money is secondary. Uppermost is getting you on the radio and showing those goyim what smart really means. Why hide under a barrel something that could change the life of every Jew alive and their children to come?"[56]

Some of the praise Lippman heaps on Einstein in his letters is undoubtedly nothing more than flattery aimed at gaining Einstein's approval for the radio show. Nevertheless, this praise coupled with an important turn of phrase later in the story reveal a significant ideological purpose behind Lippman's--or perhaps even Roth's--choice of Einstein as hero. Upon entering the ice cream parlor on the way to Princeton Lippman remarks to the proprietor about the road sign outside which read "ICE CREAM EVERY FLAVOR

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54 Ibid., p. 9.

55 Ibid., p. 11.

56 Ibid., p. 12.

KNOWN TO MAN A REAL ICE CREAM ADVENTURE"[57]:

> 'We want ice cream. That's my little boy under there--who is shy and only five. We're here because we understand that you have every flavor known to man--that's quite and accomplishment.'
>
> The proprietor, drawing himself up to his full six and a half feet, said, 'Every flavor except matzohs, Moses.'
>
> Lippman, in a split-second shuffling through fifty retorts, came up with this one--because he who would soon be Einstein's agent would not be toppled again! 'Well, what else,' he asked graciously, 'might you have under m?' That's it, don't even hear the insult. Outsmart the goy bastard. Einstein him, but good![58]

Einstein has become a verb for Lippman. To "Einstein" someone is to outsmart, to rise above the ignorance of the antisemite without his ever being aware of it. Although still humorous, the story at this point takes on overtones which are dead serious. The image of Einstein in Lippman's eyes is one which serves to negate all that is evil in the culture of the antisemite. What gives the image such power is Lippman's assertion that Einstein, the most intelligent and decent man in the world is, in a sense, one of his own. Here is a Jew with the image of a brilliance so profound and a character so kind that it is capable of refuting the antisemites by raising Jewish self-esteem. All one has to do is believe in this image of Einstein and claim him as a fellow Jew loud enough for all the world to hear.

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[57] Ibid., p. 14.

[58] Ibid., p. 30.

It is important to recall that within Jewish humor itself we find the very notion of making Einstein larger-than-life or God-like is seen as laughable. Irony, like that which is represented by Einstein's fame--by the incongruity between Einstein the man and Einstein the prophet/sage--is a cornerstone of Jewish humor. Although Jewish humor recognizes this irony, it also perpetuates it in order to inflate Einstein's image beyond belief for the very serious purpose of refuting antisemites. The Einstein of Jewish humor is a figure so positive that his greatness is beyond question. By claiming Einstein as his or her own, every Jew thereby shares a portion of his undeniable greatness and can use it to disprove the assertions of antisemites. What we discover by examining Jewish humor about Einstein is a subculture quite aware that it is inflating the image of its culture hero, while at the same time it recognizes the necessity of that hyperbole for the sake of the myth's effectiveness in achieving its purpose, namely the engendering of self-esteem.

EINSTEIN ADVERTISEMENTS

While he was alive, Einstein could exercise some control over what was associated with his name. But those components of his image which made him such a desirable fundraiser in the Jewish world during his lifetime, have spawned a posthumous Einstein advertising phenomenon beyond his control and undoubtedly--were he still alive--much to his chagrin. Those trying to sell Jews on a particular cause, organization or product, no longer need permission to invoke the image of Einstein.

People of all sorts are profiting from Einstein's image. Sales from postcards, t-shirts, calendars, buttons, bumper stickers, portraits, posters, stamps, medallions and memorabilia undoubtedly total millions of dollars. The overwhelming majority of these products are of similar design: one or more photographs of Einstein sometimes underscored with an Einstein quote about God, knowledge or existence. Interestingly enough, most of these photographs and drawings of Einstein are from the neck up. It is, after all, his face, hair, eyes and brain that capture the imagination. The product, so to speak, is Einstein himself. People are purchasing an image of the real Einstein which either inspires or amuses them or both.

Although they undoubtedly help to create and perpetuate certain images of Einstein, Einstein products

to Jews. Specifically Jewish images of Einstein are best revealed by examining cases where his image is used to enhance that of an organization or product intentionally seeking Jewish patrons. Given the care he took to avoid commercialism, many of these present-day marketing strategies would have been impossible during Einstein's lifetime. Since his death, however, his image has become public property and Jewish organizations have often employed it to promote themselves.

In 1957 the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) ran full-page ads with Einstein's picture above the following quote from a letter he wrote to Bernard H. Sandler in 1939 on the need to help German Jewish refugees:

> The power of resistance which has enabled the Jewish people to survive for thousands of years has been based to a large extent on traditions of mutual helpfulness. In these years of affliction our readiness to help one another is being put to an especially severe test. May we stand this test as well as did our fathers before us.[59]

Underneath the quote is the reminder: "Albert Einstein served as Honorary National Co-Chairman, UJA, 1941-1946." The reminder is followed by the plea: "100,000 lives must be saved in 1957." This campaign achieves a number of objectives by combining Einstein's picture, the quote from his 1939 letter and the reminder that during his lifetime he supported the UJA. Chief among these objectives is to

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[59] Einstein Collection, Leo Baeck Institute Archives.

create a sense of urgency by associating the Jewish condition of 1957 with the Holocaust. While it cannot openly equate the two, by using Einstein's image as one who was himself persecuted by the Nazis along with a letter written by him about the need for funds to help German Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler, the UJA covertly links its needs in 1957 to the pressing needs of the late 1930s. The UJA also lends itself an air of authority by reminding people of Einstein's association with it during his lifetime. In addition to creating a sense of urgency and credibility for the UJA, Einstein's image is effective because of its universal appeal. By choosing Einstein as its posthumous spokesman the UJA runs no risk of alienating any particular faction of Jews.

The newly-formed Jewish Fund for Justice (JFJ) is raising funds by selling an Einstein poster. The poster, an original drawing of Einstein by artist Steve Mendelson, includes Einstein's creedo: "The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, an almost fanatical love of justice and the desire for personal independence--these are the features of the Jewish tradition that make me thank my stars I belong to it." Since the JFJ is a national grant-making institution which funds efforts to battle injustice and poverty in the United States, it is trying to raise money from Jews for a cause which is both ecumenical and liberal. No Jew better symbolizes universalism, justice for the

oppressed and liberalism than Einstein. Lastly, in much the same way as it served the UJA, Einstein's image prevents the JFJ--which is unaligned and seeking support from the entire American Jewish community--from offending any one movement by choosing a member of another movement as its figurehead.

Einstein's image persuades Jews to do more than support Jewish causes. Images of Einstein are often utilized to sell Jewish and secular products to Jews. Jewish periodicals from the 1950s to the present contain advertisements picturing Einstein. In some cases these advertisements from Jewish publications use Einstein to endorse something quite appropriate: the Encyclopaedia Judaica for example. In others, his picture is used to sell Jews everything from cigarettes[60] to microwaves.[61]

Without question, the most sophisticated and extensive advertising campaign of this type was developed in 1981 for Sanyo by the Arieli Agency in Israel. The campaign included posters, billboards, bus signs, magazine and newspaper ads depicting an Einstein-like character slanting his own eyes with his index fingers. The character appeared alongside the slogan: "Sanyo, the Einstein of

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60 American Judaism (Volume 10, Number 2, 1960), Back Cover.

61 Sanyo Advertising Campaing as explained by Chaim Shkedi during an interview in Tel Aviv in August, 1986.

Japan."[62]

The following interview with Chaim Shkedi, the project's artistic director, reveals the complex, subtle and multifaceted nature of Einstein's image among Israelis. He stresses several themes including Einstein's universal appeal to all types of Israelis, his German heritage, his Zionism, his perceived ability to foretell the future, his wisdom, holiness, integrity and genius. The Sanyo campaign was one of the most popular advertising campaigns in Israeli history; its success was entirely due to the image of Einstein.

> This campaign, in my personal opinion, was the most successful campaign ever in Israel from a creative and a marketing perspective. Sanyo came to Israel a few years prior to their becoming our account. They came to us because they had the image among the Israeli public as being a cheap imitation of Sony electronic products. Sony was in Israel thirty-five years before Sanyo. According to what I know, Sanyo's products are every bit as good as Sony's and are the second most imported electronics in the United States.
>
> The first task we faced was to change the image of Sanyo as a company--to let the public know that this was a large and serious company, not a cheap imitation of Sony. There was also the perception among Israelis that all Japanese electronic companies were unproven newcomers, whereas the German electronic companies were thought of as the standard of the industry. We did a survey where we compared the public's perceptions of [unlabeled] Japanese products versus [unlabeled] German products. We discovered that the actual products being marketed by Sanyo were thought of as good products made of high quality materials.

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62 Ibid.

We had to take care of these various problems that Sanyo had. The first thing we had to do was change the brain character of the company--the way in which people viewed the company. We had to find a way for people to grasp the message that we wanted to get across for Sanyo. We considered several messages that we wanted to communicate. The first was that Sanyo represented the electronics of the future. We wanted to create the notion that the future was speaking in the present through Sanyo. At the same time we wanted to create a message that would be catchy and really grab people. Next we had to address the problem of the inferior status --in the minds of the Israelis--of Japanese products in comparison to German products.

We came up with a few slogans. For example: "Sanyo, the Yeki of Japan."[63] We wanted to combine the Yekiness and the quality of German electronics with the innovation and the futuristic orientation of Japanese products. When discussing this we decided that it wasn't enough just to speak about the precision of German electronics. We also had to emphasize the genius of Japanese products. So we arrived at the concept of combining genius and Yekiness. Then we came up with a brilliant idea! We asked ourselves what represented genius. When one thinks of genius one thinks of the[64] Einstein.

At this point we felt that we had arrived at the final solution, because for us Einstein represented the precision of the Austrian-German world and the innovation of the Japanese. The Einstein did a good job for us because it symbolized German Yekiness but it also spoke of the genius of the man himself. On the one hand it represents the genius of the man but at the same time it appeals to the Israeli sense of patriotism to the Jewish world and to their love of genius. The image of Einstein was no longer

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63 Yeki is a Hebrew term originally used to describe German immigrants in Israel. It connotes a person who is precise, conservative, straight-laced, thoroughly reliable and organized.

64 Throughout the interview Shkedi often attaches the definite article to Einstein's name. This seems to indicate that for him Einstein was not a person but a phenomenon.

only an Austrian or German one, it could also apply to others, Japan for instance. It had become a universal image. It came to my attention that one year after our ad campaign Sony began using Einstein to advertise their products in America. What this indicates is that even for non-Jews Einstein is the teacher, he is the one who can teach us about the innovations of the future. Einstein represents the stamp of approval on new and innovative products.

On one hand, we wanted the stamp of approval that Sanyo's products had a German quality to them. On the other hand, we wanted to emphasize our identification as Jews with the new Japanese products. By using the Einstein we were reshaping the brain character, the image, of Japanese products. So, as a result of all of the problems we discovered in Sanyo's image by means of our research we arrived at the solution of using the image of Einstein. We could have done what Sony did one year later--which was to show Einstein going around a showroom filled with products--but we didn't. We wanted to come up with something eye-catching. The eye-catcher we came up with was Einstein slanting his own eyes and the phrase: "Sanyo, the Einstein of Japan." This combination moved the entire project much further along. This picture created the visual connection between the two ideas we were trying to stress. The campaign was very catchy. We found that there was a group identification with Einstein as someone who was one of us, but also, one who represented the rest of the world.

Q: Once the campaign was finalized was it tested before bringing it out on a large scale?

A: First of all, in the Arieli company a great deal of research is done before any campaign is approved. The results of the research were very negative; the campaign was not likely to succeed. People thought that what we had done was to take Einstein, who was something holy, and suddenly turned him into something cheap. Cheap by virtue of the fact that we were going to use him in an advertising campaign. Our research was quite broad but it did not take into account the idea that people would actually fall in love with the idea. We didn't take into account that people really loved the image of Einstein and that ultimately, they would purchase

the products.

After the campaign began we discovered that instead of going into a store and asking for the Sanyo, people were asking for "the Einstein." We discovered that the image actually began to control the product. Later on, we took advantage of this by printing a poster which said "You have a telephone[65] from Einstein."

In the research the whole point, the effectiveness, of the ad campaign was missed because people we tested were at first shocked by the campaign. Suddenly, something that was of value, an image that was holy to them, something from above, was there in a magazine on their night-stand and in the morning it was something that would be thrown in the garbage. That's one point. A second point is that during the research we received a number of comments. In one instance we received a letter from a member of the Knesset: "How dare you make use of the image of the Holy of Holies?" What he meant was that we had somehow entered into and were toying with the psyche of the people and that this was a dangerous thing to do. Our response to him was that we did not view this as a moral issue. We were simply using the image of Einstein because it was part of our culture. We equate it with a case wherein one might put the Statue of Liberty on a bottle of American brandy.

In spite of the research which predicted that people would be upset by the campaign, once it began we did not receive a single negative comment. The expression "Sanyo, the Einstein of Japan" had a tremendous influence on their sales. I believe they are now the most famous electronics company in Israel. The ad campaign alone is not entirely responsible for this but, there is no doubt that it is primarily responsible.

Q: Based on this campaign is it possible to determine what is most important to Israelis about Einstein's image?

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[65] In Hebrew the expression "You have a telephone," can mean either "You have a telephone," or "You have a telephone call."

A: I think in the Israeli market it is the fact that he is our Jewish genius. He belongs to us.

The Sanyo advertising campaign weaves the crucial threads of Einstein's image among Israeli Jews into a tapestry of extraordinary strength and elasticity. Shkedi himself points to a number of the more obvious themes present in the Israelis' imagined Einstein. As a Zionist Einstein appeals to their Jewish sense of patriotism and as a world-famous intellectual he validates their desire to be accepted by the non-Jewish world. He represents genius, wisdom and innovation--all positive Jewish and Israeli values. Perhaps the negative reaction anticipated by the research prior to the campaing never materialized because Einstein's image among Jews in general and Israelis in particular is not entirely holy and untouchable. Indeed, Einstein was himself playful and has been the subject of more than a few jokes and humorous anecdotes.

One contributing factor to the campaign's success which Shkedi glosses over is Einstein's image as a German. True enough, he cites Einstein's <u>Yekiness</u> as part of the reason for choosing his image. Yet, it is hard to believe that Einstein is thought of by Israelis as a <u>Yeki</u>. There were few things he hated more than formality, rigidity and punctuality. It seems that there must be more than <u>Yekiness</u> to Einstein's appeal among Israelis as a German Jew. Although he was German, Einstein's image lacks the

understandably negative associations most Israelis have toward Germany and German citizens. He embodies all that was good about German culture--much of which is sorely missed by Israelis who were familiar with it--without conjuring up images of authoritarianism, concentration camps, horror and death. Einstein transcended the evils of Germany with his culture, his reputation and his sense of humor intact. He is one of the few Jews able to symbolize something positive about Germany, in this case German technology, without creating adverse reactions among Israeli Jews.

Although it's important to identify the various components of Einstein mythology contained in Israeli reactions to the Sanyo campaign, too much analysis is misleading. The campaign is a combination of inseparable images and motifs which create their own reality quite removed from the "real" Einstein. It is the incredible malleability of Einstein's image--the sense that he has become a sort of modeling clay sculpted lovingly and at will by the collective Jewish imagination--which makes him such an appealing figure for Jewish advertisers. Perhaps this is the true meaning behind Shkedi's remark: "He is our Jewish genius. He belongs to us."

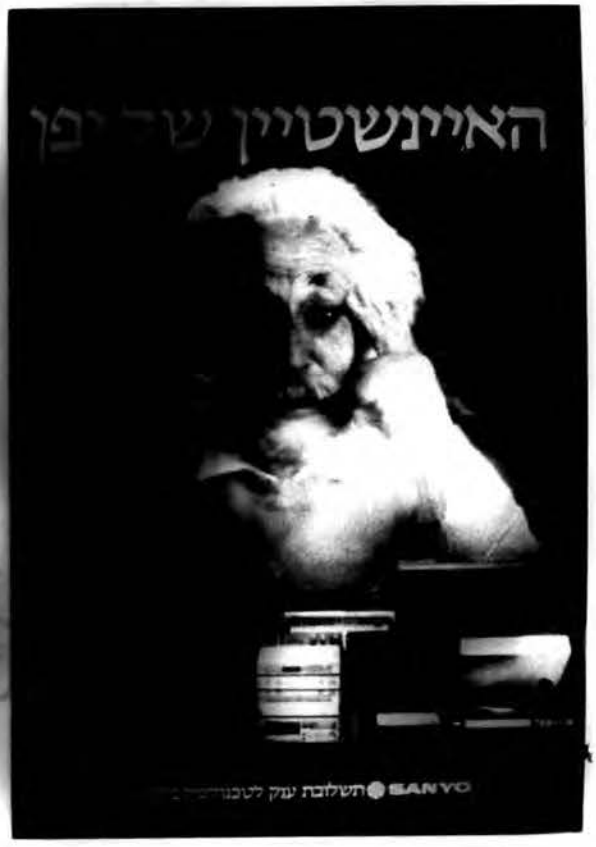
SANYO

SANYO

SANYO


המזגן המהפכני של סניו
גורם למתחרים להזיע.
SANYO


מהו שיא המהירות?


האיינשטיין של יפן
SANYO

EINSTEIN ART

According to legend an unrecognized Einstein was asked by a fellow passenger on a train in Europe what his profession was. "I am an artist's model"[66] he replied. Whether he actually said it or not, Einstein's alleged response contains more than a little truth. During his lifetime he was asked to sit for dozens, if not hundreds, of portraits by both painters and photographers. According to one source Einstein was only willing to pose for unknown artists.[67] He realized that a sitting with him meant instant success to an artist and he therefore granted this privilege only to those who needed it.

Both non-Jews and Jews painted sculpted or photographed Einstein during his life time. Most notable among the Jews were: Jacob Epstein, Lotte Jacobi, Max Liebermann and Leonid Pasternak (who also painted such Zionist figures as Bialik, Sokolow, Tchernichowsky and Weizmann). Although no comprehensive catalogue of Einstein art exists it is doubtful that it would reveal any substantial differences between works created by non-Jews versus those fashioned by Jews. Almost all of them picture Einstein from the waist up; his wild hair, frumpy clothing

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66 A.R. Michaelis, "Albert Einstein as Seen by Artists," Interdisciplinary Science Reviews, December, 1978, p. 263.

67 Ibid.

and sparkling eyes predominant. Art, it seems, is a genre in which Jewish and non-Jewish images of Einstein are quite similar. Furthermore, there are several cases wherein Jewish institutions use images of Einstein created by non-Jews and vice versa.

What is unique to Jews about Einstein art is not the art itself, but its popularity. Indeed, pictures of Einstein can be found in synagogues, Jewish community centers, universities, hospitals, B'nai B'rith lodges, on Jewish calendars, awards, etc. This is not to say that Einstein's image is absent from non-Jewish institutions. To be sure, many an Einstein portrait hangs in university physics departments or the offices and homes of non-Jewish humanitarians and Einstein fans world-wide. What is astonishing about Jews and Einstein's image is the tremendous popularity it enjoys among them in comparison to portraits of other so-called Jewish folk heroes and famous Jews of the twentieth century.

The overwhelming popularity of Einstein's image among Jews in comparison to other famous twentieth-century Jews is well illustrated by Andy Warhol's 1980 portfolio entitled <u>Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century</u>. Warhol is not a Jew but the conception, capital, promotion and sale of the 200 lithographs made from each of the ten portraits was the brainchild of a Jewish, New York City art

dealer named Ronald Feldman.[68] The ten original portraits by Andy Warhol were of the following twentieth-century Jews: Sarah Bernhardt, Louis Brandeis, Martin Buber, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, George Gershwin, Franz Kafka, The Marx Brothers, Golda Meir and Gertrude Stein. Feldman and Warhol chose these ten after surveying Jews from all walks of life regarding their "top ten" twentieth-century Jews.

A number of factors make the Warhol portfolio a barometer of Einstein's popularity among Jews. One is Feldman's affirmative response when asked whether or not the lithographs of the ten original portraits were purchased almost exclusively by Jews. Equally important is his observation that the portraits are purchased for emotional reasons. According to Feldman most people do not buy a particular lithograph because it appeals to them as art qua art. The decision to buy is based upon the subject, not the aesthetics of the painting.

Just what sort of Jews are buying the Warhol lithographs is difficult to say. Certainly many types of Jews from various professional, educational and Jewish backgrounds own one or more of the prints. Given the nature of Warhol's work and the portfolio's subject matter they are most probably modernistic (perhaps trendy,

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[68] Ronald Feldman Telephone Interview (New York: October, 1986).

pseudo-modernistic) in terms of their cultural pursuits and they would appear to identify positively in some way with Jews and or Jewish culture. Perhaps the only trait which can be ascribed with certainty to practically all of them is affluence. The least expensive of the lithographs sells for $2,000.

The monetary value of art is determined by a few key factors: the artist, the rarity of the piece, and its subject matter. Since each of the ten portraits was painted by Warhol and duplicated in exactly the same number the only variable among the lithographs of the ten portraits in the portfolio which can be used to determine each one's relative value is its content. This factor coupled with Feldman's assertion that Jews are the major purchasers of the prints means that the portfolio's price list serves as a popularity poll of sorts. The more popular the subject, the more expensive the painting. Prices for each of the prints in Warhol's <u>Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century</u> from least to most expensive are: Bernhardt, Brandeis, Buber, Freud, Meir and Stein $2,000, Kafka $2,500, Gershwin $3,000, The Marx Brothers $3,500, Einstein $4,000.

One can only guess as to why the Jews who own these prints value Groucho, Chico and Harpo more than Golda, Buber or Brandeis. It is sad but not surprising to Jewish professionals and active layleaders that Jews as an

affluent subculture are becoming ever more influenced by non-Jewish popular culture. These same professionals and layleaders however, would most likely not be disheartened by Einstein's number-one position on the price list. All of the other personalities on the list fall into one of three categories: intellectuals, political figures or pop culture celebrities. Least popular of these three are the highbrow intellectuals like Buber, Freud, Kafka and Stein. The political figures, Brandeis and Meir, are moderately sought after and the celebrities like Gershwin, the Marx Brothers and Bernhardt are the most desireable of all except for Einstein. By virtue of his status as an intellectual, Einstein should rightfully be at the bottom of the list. Therefore he must represent more to Jews than mere intellectualism. He was, of course, to some extent a political figure and later in life, a celebrity. Einstein manages to transcend each of these categories in the collective fancy of the Jews who purchase the lithographs. Einstein's position at the top of Warhol's list of ten famous twentieth-century Jews is yet another indication of the universality, transcendency and elasticity of his image among Jews.

EINSTEIN OPERA

Secular Jews are unquestionably a significant part of the power source generating images and myths of Einstein in popular and avant-garde Jewish culture. Perhaps the most innovative, creative and telling highbrow example of a secular Jew's contribution to the imagined Einstein is Philip Glass's opera Einstein on the Beach. The opera was a collaborative effort between Philip Glass, who wrote the lyrics and music, and Robert Wilson who designed and directed. First performed in Europe in the Summer and Fall of 1976 and at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City in November, 1976, Einstein on the Beach has been restaged several times, turned into a film, been the subject of a Public Broadcasting System documentary and helped to make Philip Glass perhaps the most popular serious composer of contemporary electronic concert music. A Glass/Wilson creation is difficult to describe to one who has never before experienced their work. High-tech and minimalist in design, Einstein on the Beach is described by one reviewer as: "precisely organized, tautly patterned, economical in its forces and austere in its decor."[69] Glass's music is an endless stream of rhythmic patterns seemingly repetitious yet constantly changing. "The

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69 Liner notes, Einstein on the Beach, (Brooklyn Heights, New York: The Tomato Music Company, 1979), p. 7.

organization, the patterning, the decor, along with the images themselves," writes Robert Palmer, "make up the content of Wilson's work, serving the functions that plot, characterization and narrative exposition serve in more conventional operas. This non-didactic approach means that Wilson's staging, direction and design and Glass's music can fuse into a single experience, an experience in which structure and substance are one and the same and the 'picture' is completed by the listener/viewer."[70]

The opera consists of three recurring motifs: a train, a trial and a spaceship, each intended to loosely represent something of the real Einstein. The train scenes serve as a reminder of the trains Einstein liked to play with as a child, the trains Einstein used to illustrate his theory of relativity and as a symbol of late nineteenth century technology. The trial scenes are meant to represent the moral and ethical testing which Einstein endured throughout his life regarding pacifism, nuclear weapons, and civil liberties. The opera's final motif is a spaceship scene representing the leap in technology which took place during Einstein's lifetime as a result of his theories. In addition to these three primary motifs, a fourth recurrent image appears in the opera, namely, Einstein himself. Seated half-way between the actors and the orchestra pit,

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70 Ibid.

Einstein appears throughout the opera playing his violin. Each of the three motifs is accompanied by its own music.

In the following interview with Philip Glass a number of important issues surface related to Einstein's image among secular Jews. Glass, himself a secular Jew, mentions several reasons why Einstein appealed to him as a person worthy of an opera. First and foremost, Glass was a fan of Einstein. He read about him as a young boy and encountered different aspects of Einstein throughout his life. Some of the chief components of Einstein's image, identified by Glass, which make him such good material for the theater include: Einstein's theory of relativity, his love of music, sailing, the cosmos and all things poetic.

> Q: Why did you choose to write an opera about Einstein?
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> A: Actually it was a joint decision. Bob Wilson suggested it. I didn't so much choose it, but I was extremely receptive to it. We were working on an opera and we were looking for a subject we were interested in. Einstein interested me for a number of reasons. As a boy growing up in Baltimore, I was born in 1937, in 1945-1946 I was old enough to be very aware of what was going on around me. Of course the biggest news of the day was atomic energy. After the Hiroshima and Nagasaki incidents, after the horror had dissipated to a point, people became very interested in nuclear energy, what it was and the man behind it.
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> Einstein all his life experienced waves of celebrity. It could have been about Israel, the unified field theory, it could have been about any number of things. At some point he became public property. I don't know exactly when it happened but, he became a very public person. It kept recurring so that every generation rediscovered Einstein and they found a slightly

different man interestingly enough. He looked a little different, he was aging and he was becoming the image of Einstein we know toward the end of his life. He was always an interesting man.

The incarnation of him that I knew was the guy who had trouble adding and subtracting but who invented the atomic bomb. That was the popular image of Einstein. He was the classic idiot-savant according to the public. Of course he really wasn't like that at all. But that's how he was portrayed and the press loved him. They couldn't get enough of him. So that is the Einstein I grew up with. I saw him in the papers and I read his books. He wrote some books about relativity for ordinary people. Besides that there were any number of other books and discussions about him.

Not long after that in 1952 I attended the University of Chicago. It happened to be where Enrico Fermi did his work on the splitting of the atom. So again I was confronted with the whole Einstein history and theories and so forth. I was at a school where quantum mechanics and relativity were discussed. The kind of education I got included contemporary science. It's almost like all through my life I kept running into Einstein. By the time at the age of thirty-eight Bob Wilson suggested we do an opera about Einstein, I was ready. I had been a fan for a long time. Also, it didn't hurt that he had been a musician.

Q: What values did you hope to create or perpetuate in Einstein on the Beach?

A: What was interesting to me about Einstein, and what we portrayed him as principally--and this is an unusual portrayal of Einstein that is not often done and I think one of the interesting things about what we did--is that we were interested in the poetic side of Einstein. The person who was moved by poetry, the man who loved to take his boat and sail on the lake, who liked to look at the stars and speculate about God and the cosmos.

The hard theory of Einstein was not good material for the theater. The nuts and bolts of scientific theory isn't theater stuff. What we

were interested in was the portrayal of a person, a portrait. It was the humanistic and poetic side of Einstein that interested us. For that reason he was always portrayed playing the violin in the opera. We wanted to emphasize his relationship as sensitive, as a man who responded to artistic values. Of course, as theater people you can see how that would fit in.

Q: Why, in the staging of the opera, was Einstein always removed from the actors?

A: That's an interpretation. Let me tell you how I looked at it. I looked at him as being half-way between the orchestra and the stage. Also, as an emissary as it were, between the audience and the stage. By putting him in that half-way position he was almost off the stage and into the pit; it brought him closer to the public. So, I didn't think of him being removed from the theater, but acting as a bridge.

Q: Did your Jewishness or Einstein's Jewishness have anything to do with your choice of Einstein as a subject or how you depicted him?

A: Little, except that growing up at the time that I did I was very aware of Einstein and of course, my parents were the first generation of Americans who were very supportive of Israel. In 1946 there wasn't a State, so that it was a very big emotional event in American Jewry when this happened and don't forget that Einstein was connected with this. That was something that we were all aware of. Now that's not a part of Bob's personal history. Bob is a white, Protestant male from Waco, Texas. He probably had little idea about any of this. I always did.

It doesn't enter the opera as such because as a joint work we stuck to images and sensibilities about Einstein that we shared, ones that were common. That was not a common one so it doesn't enter the opera. One could have done it, but then there are all kinds of curious issues that would have come up which the opera doesn't deal with at all, the work on the atomic bomb for example. In the end it really became a kind of poetic meditation on Einstein the man.

Q: Is it your understanding that Einstein

was behind the making of the atomic bomb?

A: Well, I think historically it seems to be true. The method to separate uranium, the screening process, was invented by Einstein. We know that. He tried not to think about it. It's one of the few places in Einstein's life where he shows a less than saint-like consistency. Yes the people from the navy came to consult, yes he was helping them solve problems but he says he didn't know what they were. Now how could that be? Surely he knew what it was for. He says he didn't think about it. Maybe he played a sort of trick on himself. Maybe he wouldn't let himself think about what it was for.

Then he signed the letter. Again, it was always presented as something he didn't really write--that he only approved it--but he did sign it. So, for even the great lovers of Einstein--and there is no one who admires Einstein more than me--it's a disturbing chapter of his life and you have to say finally, well, it's clay feet, what are you going to do?

Q: Do you feel that you were perpetuating old myths of Einstein or were you actually creating new myths?

A: Our myth is a new one. I think that we have extended it. We did something very interesting. I think we have added to the literary legacy of Einstein, the mathematic legacy, the photographs and commentaries, journals, memories and reminiscences, the memorabilia, the whole world of remembered Einstein. We added something new which is a poetic interpretation of Einstein that happened in the theater. I don't think anyone ever did that.

Q: Do you consider yourself to be a Jew in a religious, national or cultural sense?

A: Here's the thing about being a Jew. You don't have to think that you're a Jew because no one will let you forget it. No one will let you forget that you're Jewish. For me, growing up as I did, I'm forty-nine, when you say are you a Jew it's a laughable idea. How can you be anything else?

> Q: My question is about what sort of Jew you are.
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> A: If you are asking am I going to go to shul this Sunday[71] the answer is no. But then again, I have to say my father didn't either. So I'm that kind of a Jew. My father was not a Bar Mitzvah, oddly enough. In that generation that was very odd. My father was not a believer. My mother was but without the support of my father it had no real part of my family's life.
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> On the other hand they had a strong identification with Jewish culture. This was a strong and easy identification for my parents and one that they passed on to their children. Einstein was a similar sort of Jew and for those of us who have lived that way it's a completely comfortable way of being. The cultural identity is clear, the religious identity to people like myself doesn't seem to be an issue.

Many of the themes so prevalent in other usages of Einstein's image in creations by and/or for Jews are curiously lacking in Einstein on the Beach. Neither in Glass's nor the opera's perceptions of Einstein do we find motifs such as the prophet/sage, the trustworthy fundraiser, the victim of--or weapon against--antisemitism, the international/interdenominational Jew. Zionism is the only Jewish aspect of Einstein's image identified by Glass and it is not present in the opera.

Einstein on the Beach is the work of a self-proclaimed secular Jew intended for a heterogeneous audience. The Einstein it creates is a very different one from most other Jewish cultural fabrications of Einstein. Although there

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71 This interview was conducted between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The coming Sunday was Kol Nidre.

are minor similarities--the spaceship scene does conjure images of Einstein as link to and communicator with the future--much of what Glass and Wilson emphasize in their artistic interpretation of Einstein has actually been deemphasized in more parochially Jewish fabrications of Einstein. Einstein's role in the development of the first atomic bomb plays a major role in Glass's fascination with him. Nuclear energy, the atomic bomb and Einstein's connection to them are absent in virtually every specifically Jewish application of Einstein. Jewish culture attempts to perpetuate Einstein's image as one who was entirely moral, wise and good. Given this desire to create such an angelic character it is not surprising that Einstein's connection to the atomic bomb is repressed by the myth-making machinery of Jewish culture.

Einstein on the Beach makes frequent use of Einstein on stage playing the violin whereas Einstein's violin is hardly mentioned in most uniquely Jewish adaptations of Einstein. According to Glass, the violin represented Einstein: "as sensitive, as a man who responded to artistic values." In fact, the opera's primary contribution to Einstein's image was, in Glass's opinion, a poetic and artistic one. Einstein is portrayed as "the person who was moved by poetry, the man who loved to take his boat and sail on the lake, who liked to look at the stars. . . . " Jewish culture, with the exception of

Jewish humor, takes Einstein very seriously. He is something set apart, carrying with him the burdens of persecution, responsibility, knowledge and power. Although Jewish culture is not opposed to poetry, music, sailing and stargazing per se, these activities seem inappropriate as primary images for its folk heroes. To the secular Jew, however, these images of Einstein can replace those more commonly stressed by mainstream Jewish culture. Certainly, to the artistic secular Jew, a poetry-loving, violin-playing, star-gazing Einstein is preferable to a prophet, victim of antisemitism or Spinoza-like believer in God.

This is not to say that Einstein on the Beach is any less of an artistic statement or powerful source contributing to images of Einstein than more intentionally Jewish Einstein creations. If anything, the fact that a secular Jew's Einstein intended for the non-Jewish public is quite different from other interpretations designed specifically for Jews attests to the imagined Einstein's tremendous flexibility and appeal. His image continues to satisfy a variety of needs within Jews of every sort.

EINSTEIN INSTITUTIONS

Einstein himself is an institution. The dozens of Jewish organizations named after him are one of the most effective vehicles by which Jewish culture perpetuates his role as folk hero. It is true that there are streets, schools and organizations named after Einstein which have nothing to do with Jews or Judaism. Nevertheless, the vast majority of institutions which have chosen Einstein as their namesake have done so for specifically Jewish reasons. By examining the services which these institutions provide and their reasons for identifying themselves with Einstein, we uncover a number of important themes in the Jewish Einstein mythology.

Perhaps the most famous of all Einstein institutions is the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University. When Einstein agreed to let Yeshiva University use his name for their new medical school, he broke with a lifelong policy of rejecting such offers. He tried unsuccessfully to convince the university to name the school after Maimonides or some other famous Jewish man of medicine. No one knows why Einstein acquiesced to Yeshiva University's request. We do know, however, why the University was so set upon Einstein as namesake for its new medical school. At the luncheon announcing plans for the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Dr. Samuel Belkin,

president of Yeshiva University, made the following statement:

> A cornerstone of our faith is the belief that the truest way to serve God is by serving man. We are assembled here to give this college a name that will embody these ideals and serve as an inspiration to those dedicating their lives to the pursuit of knowledge and the welfare of mankind. The name we have chosen is one that will be remembered for generations to come as a great scientist, a great scholar and a great humanitarian.[72]

Although the College of Medicine was to be "completely non-sectarian, selecting its faculty and students without regard to race or creed,"[73] it also claimed to be "the first medical college under Jewish auspices to be established in America, serving as a contribution by American Jewry to medical science and the national welfare."[74] Einstein's image bridged these two seemingly polar objectives while at the same time meeting several other important requirements. Not only was he a Jew, but he was also an American, a scientist, a humanitarian and an important enough figure so as to ensure that future generations would remember him and associate his image with that of the College. Other than being a Jew, it is this last factor which is the most essential in terms of Einstein's appeal as a namesake for Jewish institutions.

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72 The New York Times, March 15, 1953.

73 Brochure, Albert Einstein College of Medicine (New York: Leo Baeck Institute Archives).

74 Ibid.

Certainly there were scientific discoveries by Jews more directly relevant to medicine than either the Theory of Relativity or even the splitting of the atom. Nevertheless, there was no Jew alive whose name and image had a better chance of being remembered by future generations of Jews than Einstein. It was the tremendous staying-power of his image which made it such a compelling one for Jewish organizations to adopt.

Yeshiva University's rationale for taking Einstein's name as its own reveals the subtle interplay between the myth-making machinery of twentieth-century Jewish culture and the heroes it manufactures. Given that institutions exist in order to perpetuate themselves and their cause it would be foolish to choose as their namesake a relative unknown, destined to be forgotten in a generation or two. On the other hand, naming an institution after someone can in and of itself add to the reputation, fame, and ultimately the posthumous survival of the individual's image. Einstein was, of course, already famous when Yeshiva University named its medical school after him and he would certainly still be famous today if it had not done so. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that having the College of Medicine named after him has helped keep Einstein's image sharply focused in the minds of many Jews.

The important role Jewish organizations play in perpetuating Einstein mythology is demonstrated on the

broadest plane by the world-wide network of Albert Einstein B'nai B'rith Lodges. A total of eight lodges have been named after Einstein. The lodges are located in: Bern, Buenos Aires, Cleveland, Detroit, Jerusalem, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, Rio De Janeiro, and Sydney. Although most of the lodges were founded in the 1950s, the Bern Lodge was founded in 1962 and the Jerusalem Lodge in 1973. Since Einstein lived in Bern and a few minutes away from Lawrenceville in Princeton, it's not surprising that these cities have Lodges named after him. The other lodges, however, have far more complex and revealing reasons behind their decision to identify themselves with Albert Einstein.

The following interview with Dr. Wolf Mattsdorf, a founding member of both the Sydney and Jerusalem Lodges, pinpoints a number of important themes related to Einstein's image among Jews which help make him such a desireable namesake for their institutions. Chief among these themes is Einstein's universal Jewish appeal: the sense that he belonged to no one Jewish community and therefore he belonged to all. Other key components are his victimization at the hands of antisemites, his European culture and Zionism.

> Q: Why was Einstein chosen as the person to name your B'nai B'rith lodge after?
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> A: I belonged to the Albert Einstein Lodge in Sydney, Australia and when I moved here (Jerusalem) we established a lodge here as well. The one in Sydney was named after Einstein because the people who were at the inauguration

(the people who founded the lodge) were to a large extent from many different countries. Australia is as much a country of immigrants as Israel. Therefore, Albert Einstein is a sort of symbol. Every Jew has an identification with Einstein one way or another.

I, for example, don't know a thing about the relativity theory and yet, when I was growing up in Berlin there was this man who in summer and winter was going around with a violin case. My late father used to say 'that's a very, very famous man.' For me, Einstein is a symbol of the first victim of German antisemitism.

The Lodge in Sydney was founded after the Second World War in the fifties. Einstein represents the Jew in this century. He became the early victim of antisemitism. His theory was completely new and he was a Jew, so this became the rallying point to attack him. In a good sense he represents a symbiosis of German culture and Jewish values. Though he was not a religious Jew, he was a Jewish Jew. Then, of course, he was very cosmopolitan. Through his scientific view of the cosmos he had a wider view than the people who conceive of the world in terms of the Bible. He is a personality with so many aspects that people who are looking for a model will find in Einstein something they can use. He is a personality which combines a symbiosis of European culture, Jewish tradition, Jewish self-assertion--this is very important, he stood up--he was one of the early Zionists. These were important to the Jews in Sydney. The people of Sydney were of European origin.

When we started here in Jerusalem we had fourteen different nationalities: American, South African, Rhodesian, English, Australian, etc. We considered all sorts of names. We thought of Albert Einstein, who was known to everybody and wasn't confined to any particular nationality and his fate was identical to the fate of the Jews of this century, by and large. We finally accepted the name. There was some resistance to it because his Jewishness wasn't accepted by all the members. Because he was kind of a secular Jew whose religion was sort of a humanistic concept. The opposition came from people who were religious. Also, Einstein was for a bi-national state and perhaps there were some people against

this.

> We had an event for the thirtieth anniversary of Einstein's death. We had a speaker from the American Cultural Center here in Jerusalem. A relative of Einstein's who lives in Nahariyah came down and spoke about him. Of course, you can't imagine Einstein without the violin so we had some kids from the Rubin Academy playing the violin. We also had an actress from the Hebrew University's theater department read from his writings.
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> The B'nai B'rith Albert Einstein Lodge here just celebrated its thirteenth anniversary. We started just after the Yom Kippur War. We planted a grove of trees in the Judean Hills and we sent invitations to all of the other Albert Einstein Lodges in the world. It's sort of a gimmick to keep the Albert Einstein concept and B'nai B'rith Lodges together.

Besides identifying the elements of Einstein's image which make him such an effective tool for unifying the multinational membership of certain B'nai B'rith Lodges, Mattsdorf's comments also demonstrate the important role the Lodges--and every other Jewish institution named after Einstein--play in creating and promulgating images of Einstein. We find in many of these institutions a conscious effort to invoke and revive the image of Einstein at periodic public events. Furthermore, every meeting, letterhead, ceremony, advertisement or announcement in the papers helps Einstein's ghost walk among the living.

Einstein's name is not the only method used by Jewish institutions to self-identify with and sustain his image. We know of at least one synagogue which regularly celebrates Einstein's Birthday as a sort of Yom Tov and

whose bar/bat mitzvah students often choose Einstein as the hero about whom they write their bar/bat mitzvah address. The congregation is Humanistic and its rabbi is co-chairman of the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews. According to him, "there is no better symbol of Humanistic Judaism than Einstein."[75] Other Jewish institutions, such as the Hebrew University, the Leo Baeck Institute and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University organized elaborate Einstein Centennial Symposia. These symposia, in contrast to those organized by secular institutions, were dedicated as much to remembering Einstein the Jew as they were to examining the importance of his scientific accomplishments.

The Leo Baeck Institute organized a centennial exhibit of original Einstein materials and photographs which toured the country under the title Albert Einstein: Humanist and Jew. A lecture by Peter Gay entitled "Man of Peace in Time of War: The Einstein-Freud Correspondence," was also sponsored by the Leo Baeck Institute. The most elaborate and international Einstein symposium organized by Jewish institutions was the Jerusalem Einstein Centennial Symposium of March 14-23, 1979. The event was sponsored by: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Van Leer Jerusalem

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75 Rabbi Sherwin Wine, Telephone Interview (Birmingham, Michigan: The Birmingham Temple, December, 1986).

Foundation, The Jerusalem Foundation and the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. Although ample attention was given to Einstein's impact on scholarship and science, much of the symposium's purpose was to examine Einstein the man and the Jew. The symposium's participants were addressed by Jerusalem's Mayor, Israel's President and Prime Minister. As part of the centennial celebration a catalogue containing Einstein art, photographs, citations from the Israeli press, excerpts from his own diary during his 1923 visit to Palestine and memorabilia of all sorts was published by the Jewish National and University Library. The street in front of the Van Leer Institute was renamed "Einstein Square" by the Mayor of Jerusalem, a medallion was minted by the Israeli government in honor of the 100th anniversary of Einstein's birth and the Van Leer Institute established an annual Einstein Memorial Lecture and The Albert Einstein Fellowship Program. The various lectures delivered by the symposium's participants dealing with Einstein's personality and Jewishness were later published by Princeton University. The Jerusalem Einstein Centennial Symposium caused a tremendous resurgence of interest in Einstein among Jews both in and outside of Israel. The catalogue and collected essays from the event have become standard texts in the study of Einstein as a Jew. They have helped in large measure to revive and reshape Jewish perceptions of Einstein.

Einstein postage stamps and Einstein streets exist in other countries besides Israel and therefore cannot be considered uniquely Jewish cultural vehicles. Jews are the only ones, however, to immortalize Einstein via their coinage. In 1962 the Israeli government printed a five lira note with Einstein's picture on it. During the time it was in circulation it is not unreasonable to assume that the note did for Einstein's image what the American dollar bill has done for Washington or the penny for Lincoln. This is also true of the medallion minted in honor of Einstein's centennial. Of course, Einstein was famous prior to the minting of the bank note or medallion with his picture on it, nevertheless, they do help preserve and extend the life of his myth in much the same way as Jewish organizations using his name.

Einstein's appeal as namesake for Jewish institutions stems from a few chief elements of Jewish Einstein mythology. The Einstein imagined by Jewish culture is an international/interdenominational crystal ball in which Jewish institutions can see whatever they wish, and conjure whatever they need. Einstein can be labeled a triumphant victim of antisemitism, a cultured European, a Zionist, a humanist, a religious--albeit cosmic--Jew, a German, an American, an Israeli, a citizen of the world, and most important of all, a world famous personality whose image is sure to survive. Using Einstein as a figurehead ensured a

positive, unifying image for any Jewish institution which would not wane over the course of time.

Institutions named after Einstein will undoubtedly perpetuate his memory into the next century. This is also true of Einstein humor, folklore, advertisements, art and opera. A crucial dynamic has developed between Einstein's actual fame and the fame created by these various mechanisms of Jewish culture; between the "real" and the "imagined" Einstein. One, it seems, necessarily reinforces the other in a never-ending process by which Einstein's myth both generates and is generated by Jewish culture.

Time is the most important variable in this reciprocal transmutation process. As the years pass and the "real" Einstein fades from collective Jewish memory--when not a single Jew who knew Einstein is left alive--the mythological Einstein will predominate. Einstein's fame will eventually--if it does not already--rely more upon Jewish institutions and culture for its survival than upon history. Since Jews have and will continue to fashion Einstein according to their own needs the result is a reflection of the artisans' prejudices and ideology --not the subject's. What, we must now ask, do Jewish images and myths of Einstein tell us about ourselves and our culture?

Chapter III

In Our Own Image

Einstein had star quality. He was brilliant, witty, eccentric and controversial. He made for good copy and even better photos. One recalls here "the way in which this man learned to look into cameras as if he were meeting the eyes of the future beholders of his image."[1] The roots of Einstein mythology reach back into his extraordinary life. But the tree which continues to grow has been carefully tended, pruned and watered by those with a vested interest in its fruit. Although the Einstein mythology, created and sustained by the myth-making apparatus of Jewish culture, is not monolithic in content, certain motifs appear more often and with greater intensity. The fact that Jews have chosen to emphasize some aspects of the real and imagined Einstein while ignoring others implies that Jewish culture has certain yearnings or predilections related to its folk heroes. We emphasize certain traits in our heroes because we need them to possess those traits in order for them to perform their duty as heroes, namely, to represent to ourselves and to the outside world what it is we respect, admire and aspire to as a people. With this in mind, the following seem to be the major rubrics into which the Einstein mythology of Jewish culture can be divided.

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[1] Erik Erikson, "Psychoanalytic Reflections on Einstein's Centenary," in Gerald Holton and Yehuda Elkana, eds., Albert Einstein: Historical and Cultural Perspectives, The Centennial Symposium in Jerusalem (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 157.

Ilui

An Ilui is a genius, a prodigy. It is no secret that Jews admire intellect and value learning. The people of the book must have heroes of the book as well. Indeed, one is hard pressed to think of any Jewish culture hero--especially one on the scale of an Einstein--who is imagined to be of average intelligence. This quality of brilliance, of fame stemming primarily from academic achievement, is perhaps the single greatest difference between Jewish culture heroes and the heroes of American or Western culture at large.

One might argue that Jews venerate any kinsman who reaches the top of his field and thereby becomes world famous. Einstein's field was academe, but had he attained an equal degree of notoriety in some other area, would not Jews have rushed to glorify him in the same way as they did for his scientific achievements? Many Jews during this century--financiers, musicians, actors--have surpassed all others in their particular discipline and merited the title of "World's Greatest" or "Most Famous." Yet, none have achieved the power and popularity of Einstein's image. Part of the reason, I would argue, is that Einstein made it not with investment capital, not with a violin, not on the big screen, but with what matters most to Jews, his mind. "When one thinks of genius," said Chaim Shkedi, one thinks

of the Einstein. . . . he is our Jewish genius, he belongs to us." Jews love a Jewish genius, brains over brawn has been the cultural adaptation which has enabled them to survive. Admiration for the Ilui is deeply imbedded in the Jewish psyche.

Or La-Goyim

Einstein's fame among non-Jews (his role as A Light Unto the Nations) is an essential factor which contributes to his status as a Jewish folk hero. This phenomenon can best be described as reflected glory. Jews, because of the non-Jewish world's recognition of Einstein, felt themselves recognized. This, in turn led to Einstein's position of leadership in world Jewish affairs. This paradoxical phenomenon of attaining leadership in a minority group by virtue of success in the majority culture is termed "leadership from the periphery" by Kurt Lewin.[2]

But Einstein's relationship to the non-Jewish majority was not always a happy one. This, too, plays an important part in his status as a Jewish culture hero. Einstein was a victim of antisemitism whose growing fame shamed his foes. His Nobel Prize, his undisputed title as the world's

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[2] Kurt Lewin, "Self Hatred Among Jews" in Gertrude Weiss, ed. Resolving Social Conflict (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 196.

greatest genius, his identification with his own people as a Jew, all flew in the face of Hitler's racist ideology. It is fair to say that Einstein instilled pride in his fellow Jews by negating Hitler in the same way that Jessie Owens raised Blacks' self-esteem when he won four gold medals in the Berlin olympics. His victory on the track disproved everything Hitler said about Blacks in the same way that Einstein's scientific achievements refuted Hitler's antisemitism. In this sense Einstein became and continues to function as a symbolic weapon for Jewish culture to combat the claims of antisemites.

Einstein's victimization by antisemites also gave him credibility among other Jews. He suffered as they had suffered and therefore earned the right to represent them in battle. Although he would gladly have traded it for peace and solitude, Einstein's experience with antisemitism helped propel him into positions of leadership and symbolic importance in Jewish culture. Above all, Jews admired his resistance to persecution, acceptance in the non-Jewish world and refusal to disassociate himself from Jewish life despite his fame. Each is stressed often and intensely in Jewish Einstein mythology.

Einstein's fame outside the Jewish world gave him a special appeal within it. His universal acclaim made him an effective spokesman and culture hero for all Jews.

True, he remained on the Jewish periphery. Everything about him--his clothes, his hair, his work, his desire to be left alone-- contributed to his Jewish marginality. So did his purist idealism, his refusal to play politics, and his impersonal God. Yet, what may seem on the surface to be characteristics militating against his becoming a culture hero, played the opposite role. Jews as a subculture were themselves all too familiar with marginality, with being strangers in a strange land. Thus Einstein's image as immigrant, outsider and strange helped Jews identify all the more with him as a symbol of their own experience. The periphery was common ground.

Kol Bo

"Ha-foch ba, v'hapech ba, d'cho-la ba (turn it, turn it, for everything is in it),"[3] says the Mishna in reference to the Torah. It could also be easily said of Einstein. It would be hard to imagine a personality affiliated with any one Jewish organization or denomination reaching the level of fame and popularity that Einstein achieved among all sorts of Jews. The plasticity of his image, the way it lends itself to being shaped and reshaped by Jewish culture, is an essential ingredient in the

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[3] Avot, 5:22.

formula which creates folk heroes. By virtue of his non-alignment with any particular Jewish denomination and his universal citizenship, Einstein was and continues to be all things to all Jews.

Jews as a subculture are divided over several issues: religious, political, social, etc. Yet, at the same time, there is a clear tendency to identify with each other on an emotional level. There is more than a hint of truth to the old saying, "If a Jew in Miami sneezes, a Jew in Chicago gets a cold." The Talmud stated it more eloquently: "All Israelites are a surety one for the other."[4] Whichever version one prefers, there is an undeniable bonding among Jews which transcends most political and religious infighting. There must, of course, be something to rally around, some symbol equally accessible and meaningful to all Jews. Jewish culture heroes in general, and Einstein in particular, provide just such a symbol. Einstein's Zionism, another theme stressed heavily by Jewish culture's representations of him, only serves to intensify his function as Kol Bo. For if there is any one cause which ties most of world Jewry together it is Israel. By stressing his combination of non-alignment--without abandonment--and Zionism, Jewish culture has made Einstein a mirror in which every Jew can see his own reflection and the collective reflection of the entire Jewish people. His

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[4] Sh'vu-ot, 39a.

image binds Jews together and enables them to transcend political, religious and organizational differences.

Navi

Why is Einstein so often portrayed by Jewish culture as a prophet/sage? As far as anyone knows, he never claimed to commune with the Divine and yet he is depicted by Jews as an oracle. Most of Einstein's life was spent in search of the ultimate Truth. He believed unflinchingly that the cosmos operated according to a single unifying principle; that there was order, meaning and purpose to existence. Perhaps Jews made him into a prophet because they wanted to believe him. By clothing Einstein in prophet's garb, Jewish culture fabricated a myth it wanted to believe: that Einstein was right because a prophet couldn't be wrong. It is not far fetched to suppose that Jewish culture could easily have made nothing more than an absentminded, eccentric professor out of Einstein. Indeed, his personality and appearance would lead one to expect it. But Jews needed his image to be credible, omniscient and wholly positive to lend certainty to his message. When Einstein said that God was not malicious, that order not chaos, ultimate meaning not caprice, ruled the universe, who more than the Jews needed desperately to believe him?

One could argue that Einstein became a Jewish folk hero simply because he became world-famous, and Jews always embrace their famous sons and daughters. But how then do we account for Einstein's continued status as hero? The flesh and blood Einstein no longer supports his Jewish public image or his myth. It is Jewish culture, in all of its various media, which has cast and recast his image for the past three decades.

Although most assuredly related to the real Einstein, the Einstein imagined by Jews is mostly a reflection of their own cultural ideals and ideology. Jewish culture's Einstein is an Ilui, an Or La-Goyim, a Kol Bo and a Navi because these are the images it admires, depends upon and wishes to represent to the world. I suspect that these four images extend--at least in part--far beyond the scope of Einstein. They are unquestionably prevalent in Einstein's case, but they have also been essential in the mythology of previous Jewish heroes, and will likely play an important part in the mythology of Jewish culture heroes yet to be born. They provide an entree into the collective psyche of Jewish culture--a culture which has elaborated an image of its most famous modern hero as a man of brilliance, Jewish suffering and committment, and penetrating universal vision.

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