The World As I See It Study Guide

The World As I See It by Albert Einstein

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Originally published in 1956 as *Mein Weltbild (My Worldview)*, this book is a compendium of letters, speeches, articles and essays by Albert Einstein on religion, politics, peace and faith. from the early 1920s to the late 1940s. It was published ostensibly to present to the world a coherent view of Einstein, the humanitarian. The first edition of the book contained essays by Einstein on relativity and scientific matters, but these were deleted from the republished edition of 1984. All of Einstein's writings were translated from German, his native language.

The bulk of these writings evidently cover the period before the outbreak of World War II, the detonation of the world's first atomic bomb and the formation of the state of Israel in the aftermath of that conflagration. Einstein's views on world Jewry, Zionism, Nazism and nationalism are appropriately poignant, given their historical locus. His views on science and faith, too, are unique and refreshing. The reader learns about Einstein's profound pacifism and his dislike for the military.

The editors state: "These fragments form a mosaic portrait of Einstein, the man. Each one is, in a sense, complete in itself; it presents his views on some aspect of progress, education, peace, war, liberty, or other problems of universal interest. Their combined effect is to demonstrate that the Einstein we can all understand is no less great than the Einstein we take on trust."

Fair enough. However the book suffers from a paucity of precise dates for its various components, as well as from a complete absence of any connective text that would elucidate the context for the disparate parts. The reader can't escape the suspicion that this book, published one year after the scientist's death, is merely the product of a box full of miscellaneous papers discovered among his effects and cobbled together—hastily and without any scholarly background that might have made his writings even more meaningful.

For example, when and under what circumstances did Einstein write his "Letter to the Schoolchildren of Japan?" Was it before or after the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? As for another letter to Signor Rocco, Minister of State, Rome, on "Fascism and Science," when and why did he write it? What, exactly, was the Gumbel case, to which Einstein refers multiple times? How is it relevant to his work and his life? The text is, disturbingly, without any references or footnotes to answer such puzzles.

There are gems of thought and reflection within the book, but they lie scattered about within the mass of seemingly disconnected and disjointed writings; so the readers are left alone to try and make or invent the connections. One wonders if Einstein was as great a humanist as a scientist,as claimed by the editors in their introduction, then why hasn't anyone taken the time to show how these aspects of his life are integrated into the "mosaic" they claim lies within its pages?

Thankfully, the editors do provide a brief biographical sketch. Einstein was born in 1879 in Ulm, Germany where his father owned an electrochemical plant. Two years later, the family moved to Munich and Einstein went to school. Here he encountered "a rigid, almost military type of discipline and also the isolation of a shy and contemplative Jewish child among Roman Catholics." Although his teachers considered him unsatisfactory, a Jewish medical student sparked his interest in mathematics. "At the age of 14, [he was] a better mathematician than his masters," according to the introduction.

Then the family moved to Milan, where Einstein enjoyed a sunny respite from harsh northern weather and a break from school for a few months. Enrolling in the Polytechnic Academy in Zurich, he studied mathematics, science and philosophy. After he graduated, a possible teaching position failed to materialize. Therefore, Einstein went to work in the patent office in Berne where, by 1905, his first monograph on the theory of relativity was published. Soon he was offered a position as lecturer at the university in Zurich, then a professorship. A subsequent assignment at the University of Prague preceded a position as professor at the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin.

But by the mid-1930s, Einstein announced that he could no longer work or live in any country that did not practice "political liberty, toleration and equality of all citizens before the law." Shortly thereafter, Einstein accepted a position at Princeton University as professor of mathematics and theoretical physics, where he remained until his death.

Chapter 1 "The World as I See It"

Chapter 1 "The World as I See It" Summary and Analysis

The 42-page first chapter of this book is broken down into 28 different subsections, each dealing with a different theme under the general heading of "The World As I See It." In one of these subsections, Einstein gives us the meaning of life in a single, short paragraph. He states what is obvious to him — that we exist for our fellow humans. This applies, not only those with whom we are connected by bonds of family and friendship, but to all those unknown to us with whom we share a common destiny by our common humanity.

Einstein reflects on the interconnectedness of daily life and on how impoverished humans would be without the ability to work for and with each other. He is mindful of the labors of others, past and present, upon which he relies on a daily basis. He says he tries to give in the same measure that he receives. Truth, beauty and goodness are the physicist's ideals that he says gave him courage to face life with a smile. Acknowledging the frailty of human existence and human will, Einstein says humor is essential to a balanced life.

External trappings of success, property and luxury meant nothing to him. However, focusing on the objective or unattainable perfection, sought in art and science, were strong motivations in his life. Despite his attachment to family and loved ones, Einstein confesses that he never lost the need for solitude — a need that seems to increase with the years. In part, he says, this is because he's come to the awareness of the limits of mutual understanding and sympathy with other humans.

The scientist says his political ideal is democracy, wherein each man is respected but no man held up as an idol. Einstein calls it a mere irony of fate that he was chosen for admiration and respect, because of one or two of his ideas that may be inaccessible or incomprehensible to most people. Einstein finds totalitarian systems, such as communism and fascism, abhorrent. He believes the United States of America has found the correct balance for an orderly society that allows the maximum personal freedom with respect for all citizens.

Calling the military an abominable product of the human herd instinct, Einstein says this "plague spot of civilization" ought to be immediately abolished, and that he would "rather be hacked in pieces than take part in such an abominable business." On the other hand, Einstein notes, humans are capable of wonder and amazement, a sense of mystery which is the genesis of religion, science and art. The sense of mystery is aroused by an awareness of something we cannot penetrate. It gives rise to deep wisdom and exquisite beauty — the truly religious attitude, according to Einstein. In this sense only, he says, is he a deeply religious man.

At the same time, Einstein confesses he cannot accept the notion of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or who manifests a will very similar to that of humans. Nor can he comprehend the notion of an individual who survives his physical death.

The Gumbel Case

In what appears to be a brief speech (without reference to time, place or circumstance), Einstein notes a change in the tenor of the times, from an earlier generation when university students "had faith in the amelioration of human society, respect for every honest opinion, the tolerance for which our classics had lived and fought." In those times, people fought for a larger political unity, called Germany. By contrast, Einstein says, contemporary students strive for a larger political unity, called Europe, and for greater tolerance and freedom.

The reason for the gathering to which Einstein speaks is the Gumbel case, in which a professor, Herr Gumbel, was punished and ostracized for speaking out and for publishing a book about political crimes. Einstein says men like Gumbel are needed in a society that encourages the free exchange of healthy thought and opinion.

Good and Evil

Einstein says he believes that the best service one can do his fellow man is to provide him with some elevating work to perform, thus indirectly elevating him. The physicist doubts whether political and religious leaders have done more good than harm in their efforts to improve humanity. Giving people elevating work applies especially to the artist and scientist engaged in intellectual, creative work. Einstein concludes that the true value of a human being is the extent to which he or she has achieved liberation from the self.

Society and Personality

Einstein reflects that a healthy society strikes a balance between the individual and the group. He acknowledges that most of what we refer to as human society is a collection of gifts from other individuals in other generations The gift of language, through which all other societal gifts are transmitted, is itself perhaps the greatest achievement and gift of humans. Einstein observes that the human child — isolated from his fellows — would develop nothing more than a primitive mentality, bereft of the shared gifts of human society.

Thus the ultimate worth of any individual is within the context of community, and is largely determined by the extent to which an individual directs his or her life toward promoting the good of others. Such a person is called good or bad according to how that person stands in regard to the community, Einstein says. Yet that attitude is wrong because it does not fully account for the major contributions from what we call "human society" through the ages. The cultivation of edible plants, the use of fire and the steam engine, for example, were all the product of individuals within a society.

In fact, Einstein says all of western culture in the Greco-European-American tradition, since the Renaissance, has been based on the liberation and isolation of the individual. In modern times Europe is overpopulated, with three times as many people as a century earlier. However the number of great individuals — inventors, scientists and creative thinkers — has decreased disproportionately. Only a few individuals are known to the masses as personalities [perhaps Einstein refers to himself] through their creative achievements. Organization has displaced the individual, especially in the technical and scientific fields.

One result of this organizational rise over the individual has been a marked degeneration in the arts, according to Einstein. Political leaders have disappeared, while common people seem to be deficient in common sense and judgment necessary to a democracy. The democratic, parliamentarian approach to government has thus been shaken, giving rise to dictatorships around the world that are tolerated, according to Einstein. The mass media seem to wield inordinate power to motivate people to put on military uniforms and march off to kill each other. It's no wonder the world is filled with prophets who predict the collapse of western civilization, although Einstein denies he is one.

The industrial age has actually made the struggle for human existence more difficult, because the leisure time that it produces presents problems for mankind. One of these problems is that less work means that fewer workers , but people don't know how to structure this time or how to use it beneficially, according to Einstein. The result has been overindulgence in material goods and an accompanying devaluation of the individual self. The scientist hopes that people can use their free time to advance their own personal development, to the betterment of their communities.

Address at the grave of H.A. Lorentz

Once again, the reader is confronted with the circumstances of a specific individual, with no footnotes or references to help understand Einstein's writings. His graveside elegy praises Lorenz as a great genius in modern physics, a kind and gentle man who made his life an example for all to follow. Before the outbreak of World War I, Lorentz demonstrated his leadership abilities and his desire to serve his fellow man by conducting several conferences of physicists, Einstein notes. After the war, he devoted his efforts to reconciliation and to the reestablishment of productive relationships between scientists of various nations. Lorentz continued this work by serving on the League of Nations Commission for International Intellectual Cooperation. Einstein praises Lorentz' credo of service, and endorses it as the way forward for the human race.

In honor of Arnold Berliner's 70th birthday

As the editor of *Die Naturwissenschaften* [*Natural Sciences*], Arnold Berliner performed an extraordinary service to fellow scientists by creating a journal for scientists to keep pace with the work of other scientists. This is at a time when the expansion of knowledge is moving at terrific speed, Einstein says. The explosion of knowledge in the

sciences produced an inevitable specialization, with the result that the scientific community is not unlike the biblical Tower of Babel with so many different languages that no one could understand anyone else.

Einstein believes a textbook that Berliner wrote on modern physics has alsoproven valuable. He recalls a medical student who told him that, without Berliner's book, he could never have grasped so broad a range of physics in the time available to him. Einstein commends his friend, Berliner, for making the sciences come alive for other scientists in various fields.

Obituary of the surgeon, M. Katzenstein

Einstein expresses his gratitude for his 10-year friendship with Professor Katzenstein during his 18-year stay in Berlin. He recalls the many happy hours they spent together on his yacht, discussing their work and personal experiences. Although Einstein says he was a carefree bachelor, Dr. Katzenstein was forever concerned about his patients, and always called to check on those he'd operated on before leaving on the boat.. Dr. Katzenstein retained a vivid imagination and an irrepressible sense of humor — rare in a North German in those days, Einstein observes.

Katzenstein was concerned with two medical research problems. The first was a practical exigency to find ways to get healthy muscles to take the place of those lost through disease or injury, by transplantating tendons. Einstein recalls those occasions of joy for his friend, when he could coax a muscle to take over the work of one lost, or when he could avoid surgery in cases referred to him. The second category involved pure research into basic human tissues. Katzenstein's studies led him to conclude that osteomyelon and periosteum prevent each other's growth if they are not separated by bone. Einstein states this discovery led him to explain previously inexplicable cases of wounds failing to heal, and in bringing about a cure.

Katzenstein's work inspired his own son to join him in his research and to carry on his work after his death. Einstein says he's grateful to have had such an outstanding man as a friend.

Congratulations to Dr. Solf

Without any explanation of time, circumstance or location by the editors, Einstein's tribute to Dr. Solf, of Lessing College [Princeton University?], is somewhat baffling. In his eulogy, Einstein cites Dr. Solf's work in bridging the gap between the arts and sciences, to the benefit of the public's spiritual nourishment. Einstein says an over-emphasis on athletics, an intensified struggle for economic existence and a brutal political life have combined to mark "our age as barbarous, materialistic and superficial." Einstein says he is grateful for the energies that Dr. Solf has contributed to Lessing College and to nurture communication between academics and the general public.

Of wealth

Einstein believes that no amount of wealth can advance humanity. Rather, the development of fine character is the only thing that can produce great ideas and worth deeds. He asks whether anyone could imagine Moses, Jesus or Gandhi trying to effect miracles with bags of cash.

Education and educators

In a letter to an unidentified young woman who has sent him a manuscript, Einstein advises her to save the book for her future descendants, and not try to get it published. While somewhat clever, the problem with the manuscript is that it is "so typically feminine, by which I mean derivative and vitiated by personal rancour." Einstein admits that he was less than a perfect student, but says his academic career probably would not have been helped by writing and publishing a book about his school life.

To the schoolchildren of Japan

Einstein writes to Japanese schoolchildren, stating that he is familiar with their country, having visited it and been impressed with Japan and its people. He notes that the contemporary age is the first in which peoples of different nations and cultures have learned to accept each other, rather than fear and hate each other. He sends them a wish that their generation may put his to shame in the further development of peace and brotherhood.

Teachers and pupils

In this address to children, Einstein reminds the youngsters that the culture and knowledge passed on to them is a form of immortality achieved by humans collectively, and that their responsibility is to accept this gift with gratitude and to try to build upon it through their own diligence and hard work. If they do that, he says, they will find a rich meaning in life and acquire the right attitude towards other nations and ages.

Paradise lost

Einstein reflects upon an earlier time, when the artists and educated peoples of Europe were united in cooperation, assisted by the use of Latin as a common language. Einstein regrets the loss of this unity to the passions of nationalism. The Latin language is defunct; and men of learning have become the mouthpieces of nationalism, rather than members of an international community of intellectuals.

Religion and science

Since all human effort throughout history has been concerned with the satisfaction of needs and reduction of pain, Einstein believes that religion serves the purpose of reducing the fear of such things as death, illness, starvation, wild animals. Religion, as an organizational structure, creates individual mortals as priests to mediate between mankind and the monsters it fears, thus producing a social and political order. Einstein believes social and familial feelings prompt humans to create gods with the traits of parents such as compassion, guidance, love and support.

The Jewish faith represents the evolution of religion from fear to morality, as well as with most of the world's major religions, Einstein says. Although no world religions have progressed to a purely moral basis, most are transitional and emphasize morality as a higher social good. In this stage, according to the scientist, religion is largely anthropomorphic. The third evolutionary stage of religion is a cosmic religious awareness, which admittedly is next to impossible to explain to someone who hasn't had the experience. But hints of this cosmic insight appear in the Psalms of David, in some of the prophets, and in Buddhism.

The function of art and science is to communicate the cosmic religious feeling, which Einstein sees as the most powerful incentive to scientific research. In an otherwise completely materialistic world, Einstein muses that scientists and artists may be the only truly religious people.

The religiousness of science

It is practically universal among scientists to have a particular kind of religious feeling, different than that of the average person because it is based on an awareness of universal causation and recognition of natural laws that reflect an intelligence vastly superior to that of humans. With the average person, Einstein says, the conception of God is a father-like figure who needs to be pleased to avoid punishment. To the scientist, morality is a purely human matter; but scientific inquiry is a religious (i.e., unselfish) pursuit.

The plight of science

Einstein sounds the alarm that scientists and institutions, whose existence depends upon the state, are menaced by a danger in Germany and Austria. This danger arises from political developments. Without making a direct reference to Nazism, and since the editors did not provide a date or context for this entry, the reader is obliged once again to assume such a reference. Einstein stresses the importance of providing economic support to scientific research for its own sake, without regard to immediate practical applications. But because of the weakening of the state, he calls upon the wealthier members of society to fill the gap. He encourages support for organizations established to continue the necessary work of scientists and to encourage youth to pursue scientific careers.

Fascism and science

In a letter to Signor Rocco, Italian minister of state, Einstein implores him to ask Mussolini not to demand that scientists in Italy sign an oath of loyalty to the fascist state. The physicist tells Rocco that although their political views may differ, they can probably agree that the foundations of western civilization were laid in the societies of Greece and Italy during the Renaissance. He says the work of scientists ought to be treated with the utmost respect, and that in doing so the Italian fascist state would bring credit to itself in the eyes of the world.

Interviewers

In a letter, evidently written to a friend who also has had experience with reporters, Einstein asks his correspondent for advice in this area. He presents a hypothetical scenario wherein a reporter calls and asks one's opinion about a colleague. If the interviewee refuses to discuss the matter, then the reporter will write that he avoided the question for reasons the reader can surmise for himself. Conversely, if the subject does answer the question, Einstein says the reporter could twist his response out of proportion. He asks his friend for advice on this dilemma.

Thanks to America

In what appears to be a brief speech to the mayor and other officials of an [unnamed] American city, Einstein expresses his gratitude for a two-month visit in which he learned of the strong American patronage of the sciences, and of the strong American respect for scientists and intellectual pursuits. These signs of a global view of the world, larger than nationalism, are refreshing and indicate a potential to build a better world, according to the scientist. Einstein also thanks the United States for its role in regulating international relations in an orderly manner.

The university course at Davos

Einstein congratulates a fledgling university in Switzerland, that offers courses for healing of mind and body, for having achieved a good balance in its curriculum. Acknowledging that communities tend to assume less responsibility for their actions than individuals, Einstein remarks that this fact is a source of great suffering and oppression. Many young men come to Davos to heal their bodies, inspired by the sunny mountains and healthy living. But this healing, Einstein says, is usually of a limited type and produces bodies not strong enough to cope in the real world. However, the introduction of university courses helps advance the mind as well as the body, so that overall progress toward building a sturdy mature person is the result, according to the physicist.

Congratulations to a critic

In a few sentences, Einstein congratulates an [unnamed] critic for his ability to feel and judge free of the fashions of the day, and to express those observations in felicitous language.

Greeting to G. Bernard Shaw

Einstein salutes George Bernard Shaw, playwright, essayist and novelist, as an artist. He saw Shaw as someone who could see clearly the foibles and weaknesses of his contemporaries, portray them in witty and amusing satire, and still remain untouched by them. Only a tiny fraction of people, or artists, are given this rare ability, and Einstein pays tribute to Shaw as a master, who has amused and enlightened everyone.

Some notes on my American impressions

Although he decries the cult of personality, Einstein says he's impressed that Americans place a higher value on knowledge and justice than on wealth and power. Einstein marvels at the well-made everyday object of America—houses, machinery, and durable goods—that are clearly superior to those of Europe. Einstein sees America at the top in terms of technical and organizational expertise, Europe in the middle and China and India at the bottom.

Einstein finds Americans to be genuinely optimistic, usually wearing a smile, which makes relations with Americans pleasant and uncomplicated. He finds Europeans, in contrast with Americans, more critical and self-conscious, less good-natured and helpful, more isolated and generally pessimistic. Life for Americans is a process of becoming, never being, and is more oriented toward the future and ambition, he says. Because of a greater emphasis on the group than the individual, Americans manifest less individuality in their outlook and morals.

In contrast, Americans allow their public institutions such as schools and railroads to be owned and operated by private individuals more than is the case in Europe, which leads to a much greater disparity of wealth. But Einstein believes that wealthy individuals in America are more public-spirited and generous than the elite of Europe.

The prohibition laws have lowered public esteem for government in the United States, largely because they can't be enforced and have caused a flowering of organized crime. Another aspect of prohibition that Einstein sees as negative is the abolition of public gathering places where people can discuss ideas and events. This function has been taken over by the press, Einstein says, controlled by special moneyed interests.

American achievements in scientific research are not only results of wealth, but also of hard work, commitment and cooperation, according to the scientist from Germany. America's vast wealth and technical superiority exert a shaping influence on international relations where the most pressing need is for disarmament, Einstein says. Americans, he hopes, realize their power and influence around the world and are ready to use it to maintain peace and order.

Reply to the women of America

The American Women's League lodged a protest against Einstein's visit to their country.He responded with a letter noting that never had he felt such flat rejection by so many women all at once. But, in a humorously sarcastic tone, Einstein agrees that the women are right to want to exclude such an opponent of capitalism and war. He recalls tongue-in-cheek that the cackling of its patriotic geese once saved ancient Rome from a surprise invasion.

In the first chapter, the reader gets a sense of the multi-faceted dimensions of Einstein's character and personality — a personality, like most, with its share of contradictions. Einstein strongly supports democracy, the rule of law and peace, and yet believes an orderly society must have a single person as its primary decision-maker. He views science as his own religion, and organized religion as oppressive to the human spirit,

even though it contains some ancient and valid truths. The physicist cares little for wealth or the outward trappings of material success. He endorses the simple life as the healthiest, most productive one.

Our destiny and purpose in life is to be found in our common humanity, although the rights of the individual must be balanced against the interests of society for either to be healthy, according to Einstein. Morality, he asserts, is a practical matter and not a religious one. Through numerous letters, elegies and speeches, Einstein expresses his admiration for those who nurture and follow their sense of mystery about life and the universe — as in the case of scientists and artists. Einstein finds Americans much less materialistic and friendlier than he'd expected, although perhaps unaware of their important role in world affairs.

Einstein expresses in several instances his strong opposition to Fascism and Nazism, but also reveals a rather condescending attitude toward women. In a letter to a college student who has sent him the manuscript of a novel about her student struggles, Einstein advises her to put it away and only show it to her future children. He also chides her for her "typically feminine" failure of personal rancor. In another instance, Einstein responds to a woman's group that opposes his visit to the United States by saying he is against to all forms of violence and warfare, except the inevitable war with one's own wife. He also compares the woman's group to the cackling geese that saved Rome from invaders.

Clearly, Einstein retained aspects of the patriarchal Old Europe in which he was raised despite his forward-looking views on most other issues. Despite its offensiveness, this contrast gives the reader a sense of his humanity. Overall, the collection of writings in the first chapter reveals a warmth, humor and wisdom that provide a rounded view of Einstein, the physicist and human being

Chapter 2 "Politics and Pacifism"

Chapter 2 "Politics and Pacifism" Summary and Analysis

Under the heading "Politics and Pacifism," a number of diverse Einstein writings are assembled to elucidate the profound pacifism of the physicist, who has often been called the father of the atomic bomb. Once again, these passages would be immensely more meaningful to the reader with some identification as to date, locale and context. These would be especially useful for the reader to know whether certain writings were composed before, during or after the first use of nuclear weapons on this planet.

Peace

Mankind has a moral duty to engage in the process of making peace, according to Einstein, especially in an age when arms manufacturers exercise their economic and political clout to ensure that international disputes are not settled peacefully. The fate of individual nations depends on the involvement of individual citizens, he says.

The pacifist problem

Merely forming large organizations for peace will not be enough. Conscientious objection to warfare will be demanded to ensure peace. Conscientious objection is a struggle between the individual for his or her individual rights, and a government which demands that people commit criminal acts, Einstein says. People who would object to this position cannot be counted on in the hour of crisis, as proven by two world wars.

Address to the students' disarmament meeting

The machine age has produced leisure time, in addition to providing for the material needs of the western world, but is also has produced a new dilemma centered on equitable distribution of those resources. The potential freedom created by a reduction in the work required for survival is threatened by a concomitant capacity for increased production of armaments, according to Albert Einstein.

Einstein says that attempts to limit the production of arms and restrict the conduct of war are delusions, since those assumptions quickly evaporate in the heat of actual conflict. Even creation of a world court with the power to force nations to disarm at the same time, in the same proportions, isn't workable.. Thus, the only way to a just and happy society is through development of strong moral values that will impel nations and people to seek renunciation of war.

The strength for such morality must come from the younger generation who have had the opportunity to strengthen their minds and enlarge their perspective on life, the physicist says.

To Sigmund Freud

Einstein praises his contemporary and pathfinder in the field of mental health by citing how Freud demonstrated that the war-mongering destructive urge (*thanatos*) is balanced in the human psyche with the affective, life-giving urge (*eros*). In that regard, Einstein writes, it is clear from Freud's work that he, like others, yearns for an end to war in the same way that Jesus, Goethe and Kant desired. The physicist tells the physician he is convinced that a similar desire for peace animates all great men, even though the quality of political leaders in modern times is appalling.

Most political leaders and governments maintain their position and power through some combination of popular election and force. The intellectuals have almost no influence on the course of international relations, Einstein laments. So he proposes the creation of a free association of people whose lives and work indicate their ability and singularity of unselfish objectives. Einstein says this association could wield moral influence over nations who are always preparing for war.

Such an association might also try to enlist the support of religious organizations in its crusade for peace, and to give support to the League of Nations in carrying out its task to prevent future wars. There is no indication in the book of how, or whether, Freud responded to Einstein's letter.

Compulsory service

In a letter to an unidentified person, Einstein once again puts out a feeler for peace. He proposes that instead of permission being given to Germany to permit compulsory military service, it should be taken away from everybody so that only mercenary armies should be permitted, with their size and equipment to be discussed in Geneva, Switzerland. This arrangement, he says, would be better for France than allowing compulsory service in Germany. This would avoid the violation of individual rights under compulsory service.Further, it should be easier for two countries that had agreed to compulsory arbitration of disputes to combine their mercenary armies into a single organization, Einstein proposes.

This would give financial relief as well to both countries and help to establish an international police force that would gradually disappear as international security increased.

Germany and France

Returning to the same subject, Einstein says only if the French demand for security against military attack is satisfied can mutual trust and cooperation with Germany be expected. Germany ought to approach France and ask the League of Nations to bind all member nations to submit to every decision of the international court of arbitration, and to proceed militarily and economically against any member state that breaks the peace or resists an international decision promoting world peace.

Arbitration

Unconditional, systematic disarmament, in a short period of time, ought to be the goal, according to Einstein. There ought to be an obligation of all countries to not merely accept, but help to implement, decisions by the court of arbitration. Separate courts of arbitration should be established for Africa, America, and Asia, with a high appeals court for any dispute not resolved by one of those three.

The international of science

Although the international scientific community still remains in disarray since World War I, Einstein says individual scientists should stay in touch with each other until health can be restored in international societies by championing the cause of peace in their own communities. Einstein congratulates English scientists for their unity and cohesion in difficult times. He says he is optimistic about the reestablishment of an international organization of scientists because of economic pressures — if not as a result of their innate high-mindedness.

The Institute for Intellectual Cooperation

In its struggle to bring peace and political stability to Europe, the League of Nations created the Commission de Cooperation Intellectuelle (Commission on Intellectual Cooperation). Einstein heartily endorses its work as a way to bridge the differences between artists and thinkers, which are sometimes more pronounced than among practical men. The biggest drawback may be that the institute has been established in France, with French money, and directed by a Frenchman. But Einstein wishes it well and hopes that it will succeed in winning the confidence and recognition of intellectual workers everywhere.

A farewell

Evidently Einstein's high hopes for the work of the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation were shattered, as this letter of resignation makes clear. [There is no date on this letter to help the reader compare it with previous correspondence on this subject]. Einstein writes to Herr Dufour-Feronce, German secretary of the League of Nations, that it is apparent the commission is not serious about trying to improve international relations. The body has given its blessings to oppression of cultural minorities in all countries by allowing creation of national commissions to be established in each — the only link between the intellectuals of a given country and the commission. This amounts, Einstein says, to abandonment of national minorities in their struggle against cultural oppression.

In addition, the commission has been only lukewarm about changing militaristic trends in public education of the various countries, with the result that no serious efforts at reform are possible, according to Einstein. The commission has not made it a secret that it is willing to appoint members who stand in direct opposition to its stated goals, he says.

The question of disarmament

Disarmament cannot be achieved in a step-by-step process, according to Einstein, but must be accomplished totally and all at once. For as long as nations know there is a possibility of war, they will always on some level be preparing militarily, so that when war breaks out they can prevail. Unless nations are willing to place their fate in the hands of an international court of arbitration there is no hope for peace. Einstein says humanity stands at a crossroads: one direction promises freedom of the individual and security for society, the other slavery for the individual and the annihilation of civilization.

The disarmament conference of 1932

I

Despite the existence of the League of Nations and an international Court of Arbitration, there can be no real peace unless the world community agrees to put some enforcement teeth in the decisions of the court, Einstein argues. Military conscription requires a religion of nationalism, or patriotism, to support itself. Thus Einstein agrees with those who argue that spiritual disarmament must precede military disarmament. It therefore behooves those who oppose nationalism and militarism to oppose compulsory military service. Not only that, but there must be protection on an international basis for conscientious objectors who refuse to enter the military services.

II

Although many world leaders do wish for peace, Einstein says, the tradition of warfare is handed down from generation to generation through military training. Society values a misguided sense of patriotism. Thus the Disarmament Conference of 1932 is crucial in deciding the fate of several generations, according to the scientist. He expresses the hope that delegates to the conference will arrive with a solid support of their citizenry for peace, and without preconceived instructions or solutions that would hinder their flexibility in working with others honestly and openly for peace and disarmament.

America and the disarmament conference

Decrying the fact that Americans are so focused on solving their own economic woes, that they are even less involved in world affairs than usual, Einstein calls for government regulation and organization to effect an equitable distribution of goods and services in an economy where technology has left many unemployed. In a similar fashion, Einstein envisions a world where peace and order are achieved by each nation surrendering a portion of its sovereignty to international institutions with the power to enforce disarmament. He calls it a disgrace that leading developed nations of the world have failed in numerous disarmament conferences. Einstein takes America to task for its Europe-be-damned attitude and says the collapse of Europe will not stop short of American shores. The 1932 disarmament conference, therefore, is crucial to the stability of the entire world.

Active pacifism

Einstein considers himself fortunate to have witnessed a huge peace demonstration by the Flemish people. He reflects that any progress toward peace will involve a struggle with the entrenched political and military powers. The fact that world rulers are working for peace while, hostile forces prepare for war, is an indication of how difficult this struggle will be. People can only win the fight themselves, because even world leaders are not strong enough to bring about disarmament. The physicist expresses his hope that the conscience of the common man is awakened, so that future generations will look back on wars as a barbaric and incomprehensible relic of their forefathers.

Letter to a friend of peace

In his letter to an unidentified friend, Einstein commends him for his work in trying to halt humanity's rush to its own destruction. We cannot despair of mankind, Einstein says, since we are also humans among whom there are individuals such as his friend, who are living examples of unselfish service to others. Once again, he exclaims that nations must see the necessity of surrendering some self-determination to achieve peace.

Another ditto

Addressed only to "friend and spiritual brother," this letter restates Einstein's belief that military conscription is a form of slavery, and that France will pay for its militarism with two German military slaves for every one French military slave. Einstein says if 50,000 men refused at the same time on grounds of conscience to serve in the military, a blow against the status quo based on stupidity, fear and greed might be struck.

A third ditto

In yet another letter to an anonymous friend, Einstein agrees that the armaments industry is one of the most pernicious forces in the world. He calls it the evil power behind rampant nationalism. Nationalization of some industries might be one way to check the rise of the military-industrial complex, but the challenge is where to begin—aircraft, metals, chemicals? Einstein says that when he asked an American diplomat why Japan had not been forced to stop its arms buildup by a commercial boycott, he was told it would be impossible because American commercial interests are too strong in Japan. The physicist tells his correspondent that people sometimes think that an utterance from him on any subject will bring about change, when in fact he has almost no power to change anything.

Women and War

Perhaps revealing his innate sexism again, Einstein proposes that patriotic women should be sent to the front lines in the next war instead of men. That would be something new in the grim business of warfare. He adds women shouldn't be deprived of the opportunity to express their heroic feelings by making attacks on defenseless civilians. This is a very brief and rather troubling entry by Einstein and, devoid of context, seems to be merely a gratuitous slap against women.

Thoughts on the world economic crisis

The reader isn't given the courtesy of knowing which particular economic crisis Einstein has in mind, although one may safely assume it is the worldwide depression of the 1930s. Einstein says the economic crisis is a result of advances in efficiency of production, which has reduced the demand for labor. Unemployment results, causing business to falter. The unemployed can't participate in the fruits of better production. Dropping sales and profits cause businesses to fail; and pressure is put on banks through the withdrawal of deposits.

Over-production, which is often blamed for the crisis, can be either real or apparent, according to Einstein. Real over-production occurs when, for example, more cars are manufactured than justified by demand. Apparent over-production occurs when consumers can't afford the items that are produced. Obligations by debtor nations to repay reparations from World War I cause those countries to "dump" their products. This harms both them and their creditor nations. Einstein says this results in a shortage of gold in the debtor nations, which worsens matters.

Erection of new tariff walls, increase in the unproductive burden of armaments, and political insecurity increase difficulties in Europe; but they do not materially affect the United States, which means they can't be the cause of the crisis, according to Einstein. Dropping out of China and Russia causes a dent in world trade, but also is not the cause of the economic crisis. The economic rise of the lower classes since World War I could only produce a scarcity of goods — not an excess — Einstein says.

Einstein proposes that an economic floor in the form of a guaranteed minimum wage that helps workers keep pace with production be enacted, along with a limit on the number of working hours per week. He considers the potential benefits of a planned economy, such as the Soviet Union tried, but rejects it and says private enterprise should not be supplanted with publicly owned and operated businesses. However, he also advocates state control over monopolistic businesses to ensure that capital generation does not artificially strangle production and consumption.

Culture and prosperity

Einstein believes that culture is a delicate plant that depends upon a certain level of economic prosperity, as well as a tradition of respect for cultural achievements. For the last century, Germany enjoyed a sufficient — but modest — level of prosperity. This enabled those who had money and valued culture to afford to support the arts. But with the political meltdown in Germany [by which, the reader assumes, he means Nazism], Germany lost the level of prosperity to support culture. This is not only to Germany's detriment, but a loss to the entire world.

Production and purchasing power

The root of then-current economic difficulties in Germany is not so much an excess of production capacity, but rather a monetary system based on the gold standard, according to Einstein. A shortage of gold automatically leads to a tightening of credit and a reduction in the supply of money in circulation. The solution to this situation includes

statutory reduction in working hours to reduce unemployment in conjunction with a fixed minimum wage, government control of the amount of money in circulation and credit volume to help stabilize prices, as well as statutory limitation of prices for goods produced by monopolies.

Production and work

In a letter to a Herr Cederstrom, Einstein agrees that there is a surplus of labor in a society where production far exceeds the capacity of the common worker to purchase the goods and services available. Einstein does not agree with liberal economists who argue that efficiencies in labor are balanced by an increase in demand. He stresses the importance of making production jobs available to younger workers. The scientist says older workers should receive an income from the government and be prohibited from taking unskilled work.

Einstein favors a monetary system based on the value of certain selected classes of goods, instead of the gold standard — Keynesian economics. In such a system, a certain level of inflation would be acceptable as a common good. Bureaucracy stifles actual productive work, Einstein says, reflecting on his days as a clerk in the Patent Office in Switzerland. The best roles for the state are to act as a regulative force in the economy, to provide limits on healthy competition, to secure a good education for children, and to support a minimum wage high enough for workers to purchase the goods they manufacture.

Minorities

Einstein commends American blacks and calls for giving them assistance in their struggles for equality against racial prejudice. The real tragedy is that when minorities are stigmatized because of racial or other physical differences, they often project their low self-esteem on each other and consider their brothers as inferiors. Einstein says better integration of minorities into society, combined with better education, can promote their spiritual liberation.

Observations on the present situation in Europe

The European dilemma [once again, without a clear time reference], according to Einstein, is that political development toward a unified Europe has failed to keep pace with economic necessity. The future survival of Europe depends on the ability of each country to subordinate its national interests to the common welfare. This step, in turn, depends on a psychological shift in favor of cooperation and mutual trust.

The heirs of the ages

For those of previous times, overcoming one's own selfish egoism was sufficient for success in the world; but in modern times anyone who wants to be a valuable, contributing member of society must also overcome his or her national and class prejudices. The physicist believes that those in smaller states are better able to transcend nationalistic and narrow parochial interests and view themselves as world

citizens, rather than citizens of larger, more powerful countries. He hopes that the smaller nations will lead the world away from militarism and toward peace.

Chapter 3 "Germany"

Chapter 3 "Germany" Summary and Analysis

Germany 1933

Manifesto

Einstein says he can only live in a country where political freedom, equality of all citizens before the law and tolerance are the rule. Since those conditions do not exist [1933], the physicist says he can no longer live there. Those who have worked hard to promote international understanding and peace, including many great artists, are being persecuted. Just as individuals can become sick in times of difficulty, so can nations. Einstein hopes that Germany will soon recover and great men such as Goethe and Kant will not only be commemorated, but that that the culture and tradition of freedom of expression that made their work flower will soon be restored.

Correspondence with the Prussian Academy of Sciences

A declaration of April 1, 1933 by the Prussian Academy of Sciences, spurred by newspaper accounts that Einstein had declared Germany a state where he could no longer live, accuses the physicist of "atrocity mongering" and acting as an agitator in foreign countries. It notes that Einstein withdrew from the academy because he could no longer serve the Prussian state under its current [Nazi] government. The academy, in turn, announces in its declaration that it does not regret Einstein's withdrawal.

In a letter to the Prussian Academy of Sciences dates April 5, 1933, Einstein denies charges of atrocity mongering and says that has not been necessary because people can learn everything about the Third Reich from its official statements, ordering for the annihilation of the German Jews. Einstein reminds the academy that he allowed the International League for Combating Anti-Semitism to use his statement calling upon people of goodwill to do their best to check the spread of "this mass psychosis" in Germany. Einstein says he stands by every word he has published, and expects that the academy will communicate his words accurately and correct its slander against him.

The academy answers Einstein's letter with a reply dated April 11, 1933. It reaffirms its original charges of atrocity mongering and slander against Einstein, and says that he should have known that his words would be exploited and abused by enemies of Germany. Another letter from an official of the academy dated April 7, 1933 to Einstein expresses disappointment that someone of his stature, familiar with the German character and way of thinking would join a mud-slinging contest. The letter says a good word from Einstein on behalf of the German people would have helped the situation. It concludes by telling Einstein that, even if he hadn't resigned, there would have been a parting of the ways.

To the contrary, Einstein replies in an April 12, 1933 letter to the academy. Had he said a few good words on behalf of the German nation, it would have been a repudiation of the notions of truth and justice for which Einstein has stood all his life. The scientist says that if he had done that, it would only have assisted those who seek to destroy the high principles and ideas that have won a place of honor for Germany in the civilized nations of the world.

The Bavarian Academy of Sciences in an April 8, 1933 letter to Einstein, asks what his relationship will be with that organization, since it is closely allied with the Prussian and other German scientific academies. Einstein replies that he has no desire to be a German citizen or to remain in a position of quasi-dependence on the Prussian Ministry of Education. But those reasons shouldn't necessarily involve his separation from the Bavarian academy. He reiterates his disgust with official German policy that has made it impossible for many capable Jews of earning their living in Germany.

In another letter, in response to an invitation to associate himself with a French manifesto against anti-Semitism in Germany, Einstein says he can't participate because he is still a German citizen and a Jew. Although he agrees with the sentiment of the manifesto, Einstein says he can't get involved with a condemnation of the German nation coming from another country. A statement against injustice toward the Jews is better if it comes from someone who is himself not a potential victim.

Chapter 4 "The Jews"

Chapter 4 "The Jews" Summary and Analysis

Jewish ideals

The Jewish tradition entails a love of knowledge for its own sake, a desire for personal independence, and a passionate love of justice, according to Einstein. Because of this tradition, the Jews are seen as enemies of those who seek to establish a kind of state slavery by brute force. Although their historical role is a difficult one, Jews will survive, not only as the oldest of living peoples, but will continue to thrive and contribute to the ennoblement of the human race, Einstein says.

Is there a Jewish point of view?

Einstein says there is no such thing as a specifically Jewish outlook on life, save an affirmative attitude toward all life and a sense that the life of an individual has meaning by making the life of every living thing better and more beautiful. Judaism is not a creed, rather the negation of superstition and a misguided attempt to base the moral law on fear, he says. Nevertheless, Jews seem to have rid themselves of the fear and embraced a God who calls upon them to serve the living.

Judaism is not a transcendental religion, since it is primarily concerned with life as it is lived and embraces no faith other than the sanctity of life. But Einstein says, Judaism nurtures "a sort of intoxicated joy and amazement at the beauty and grandeur of this world," which is the same spirit from which scientific research arises and which inspires the songs of birds. In Judaism there is an express command that all living things should be in solidarity with each other; and so Jews, according to Einstein, first raised the demands of socialism.

Jewish youth

In answer to a questionnaire circulated by a Jewish youth, Einstein states that awareness by Jews of the necessity of sticking together is based on understanding that the individual survival depends on the group survival. The rise of nationalism everywhere threatens this tribal, communal sense of welfare, even though it is expressly defined in the writings of the early prophets.

Address on reconstruction in Palestine

An avowed Zionist, Einstein congratulates Jews for their efforts over a decade to reconstruct Palestine. He also says that the future relationship between Arabs and Jews will depend on what those groups, and not colonial powers such as England, do to achieve better relations. Einstein notes that the efforts of Jews to rebuild Palestine have promoted a strong degree of solidarity and optimism.

In recalling the history of the Zionist movement, Einstein reminds his audience that Herzl concluded Jews needed a spiritual center to preserve their sense of solidarity in difficult times. From that awareness arose the concept of Zionism and eventual settlement in Palestine to create, not so much a political society, as a cultural one. In seeking to live peacefully with their Arab brothers, Jews have the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned from thousands of years of martyrdom, Einstein says.

Two millennia of the Jewish diaspora are about to end with the rebuilding of Palestine and its eventual home for a new Jewish state where, according to Einstein, the national culture of Judaism will help to awaken a new economic and spiritual life in the Middle East. The new community must follow the social ideal laid down in the Bible, and become a spiritual and intellectual center for Jews of the whole world, Einstein says. A top priority is the establishment of a Jewish university; and Einstein says he's been successful in raising enough funds for the establishment of a medical school from Jewish doctors in America. He makes an appeal to the Jews in Germany to also contribute, despite current economic difficulties.

Palestine is "not a refuge for the Jews of Eastern Europe but the embodiment of the reawakened Jewish nation", according to Einstein. Jews in Germany over the last century were largely poor, politically disenfranchised, separated from Gentiles by legal, religious and cultural barriers, and intellectually limited to the study of their own literature. For these reasons, Jews did not experience the flowering of the Renaissance, although they did have the benefit of living in a community that afforded a high degree of personal comfort.

With the emancipation of European Jewry, many hungrily consumed the cultural and artistic achievements of the western world that had been forbidden them. Some quickly attained high positions in business and society. As they did so, Einstein says, they also let loose of their own traditions and adopted Gentile customs, traditions and attitudes to the point that Jewish nationality all but disappeared. Yet despite their efforts to assimilate, most Jews still felt estranged from the larger Gentile society, and anti-Semitism flared.

Einstein tells his [presumably Jewish] audience Jews must learn to treasure their own traditions and culture once again, and to think once again as a Jewish nation—the exact goal of Zionism.

The Jewish community:

a speech in London

Einstein says the way in which other nations respond to the Zionist movement is an indication of their political and moral health. The fact that indicators show a rather malignant cluster of attitudes toward Jews and a Jewish state confirms the need for a nation to preserve and strengthen the Jewish community, according to Einstein. Since the Middle Ages, Jews have been excluded from recognized productive trades and

forced into the purely commercial ones; and the only way to help Jews in Eastern Europe is to allow them into all fields of endeavor.

Perhaps, not despite of, but because of the fact Jews have not been given a bed of roses by the Gentile world, they have grown stronger. Although the Gentile friends of Jews are few, there are those who have devoted their lives to justice and equality for the Jews, Einstein notes. Among those are playwright George Bernard Shaw and novelist H.G. Wells, to whom Einstein expresses gratitude.

Working Palestine

Einstein praises the organization, Working Palestine, as the one of most direct benefit to the people who are working to create a Jewish nation from Palestine. These are educated, intelligent, free men who work the land to make it productive for those who will come after them. Any contributions to this group for equipment and necessities are crucial to the building of Israel, Einstein says.

Jewish recovery

Einstein writes a newspaper plea to the Jews of Hungary for support of the Zionist movement, saying that the biggest obstacle to the creation of an authentic Jewish state is the middle class ease and laziness of Jews who have prospered in Eastern Europe. Jews can only flourish in a truly Jewish community, such as proponents hope to establish in Palestine, according to Einstein. The new state will be a center of culture for all Jews and a refuge for the oppressed, he writes.

Anti-Semitism and academic youth

Jews can only be truly liberated from their second-class status if they seek their own true identity and become aware of their actual place in Gentile society, Einstein says. Much like the all-important first step in curing a mental disorder that involves making the patient aware of his actual condition and its causes. The Jew must awaken to the fact there is no point in arguing the merits of intellect and spirituality to those who are prejudiced. Instead, they must take action to emancipate themselves and create a new society.

Letter to Professor Hellpach minister of state

The tragedy of the Jews is that they are an historical race dispersed throughout the world because of a lack of support for a community to keep them together, Einstein says in a letter. The result is the lack of a solid foundation for the individual, which can produce a kind of moral instability. Thus, the best thing for Jews is to come out from under their persecution from the Gentile societies in which they live (including Germany) and create their own nation. Until that happens, Einstein says, the Jews will never be safe anywhere, and will not have the right to call themselves a people.

Letter to an Arab

Einstein suggests formation of a privy council composed of four Jews and four Arabs, independent of political parties, which will meet weekly in pursuit of better relations. Each group of four people should be composed of a physician elected by the medical association, a lawyer elected by other lawyers, a working man's representative elected by the trade unions, and a clergyman elected by other clergymen. Even if the group has no definite powers, Einstein proposes, it would still be valuable as a means of improving communications.

Christianity and Judaism

Einstein says the basic teachings of Christ, without the church bureaucracy that developed after his death, as well as the beliefs and values of Judaism without the writings of the Prophets, are nearly perfect, and worthy of being striven for by everyone. The obligation to all people of goodwill is to try to make these basic teachings real and alive in the world.

Characters

Albert Einstein

Sigmund Freud

Professor Gumbel

H.A. Lorentz

Professor M. Katzenstein

Signor Rocco

George Bernard Shaw

Dr, Ernst Heymann

Arnold Berliner

Herr Dufour-Feronce

Professor Hellpach

Objects/Places

Germany

Einstein's birthplace and the birthplace of Nazism.

Switzerland

Einstein's adopted country after fleeing Germany.

United States

Einstein's home after leaving Europe; he taught at Princeton University.

Palestine

The country in the Middle East where the Zionist movement hoped to establish a Jewish state.

League of Nations

The organization for world peace established after World War I, which Einstein enthusiastically supported for a while.

Prussian Academy of Sciences

The professional organization of scientists from which Einstein resigned because of its support for German nationalism.

Rome

Capitol of the Italian fascist government, to which Einstein addresses a letter calling for freedom of scientific inquiry.

Japan

The country where Einstein writes to schoolchildren, telling them to work and study hard and be grateful for the knowledge handed down to them.

Old Testament

The portion of the Bible, along with Christ's teachings, that Einstein considers valuable to modern man.

Judaism

The faith, without the writings of the Prophets, that Einstein values highly.

Themes

Individual and society

In diverse writings, Albert Einstein articulates a view of the individual and his relationship to society that would probably be called holistic today. Einstein stands strongly in favor of individual freedom but tempers that view with the awareness that each of us is a member of a larger group that nurtures, educates and enriches us throughout life. Individual achievements in, say, science or the arts are made possible by the work of those of previous generations who have passed those accomplishments along as gifts that we know as culture.

In a letter to Japanese school children, for example, Einstein tries to impress upon the youngsters the debt owed to those who went before them — a debt that can only be repaid by hard work and new intellectual and spiritual growth. In this manner, Einstein says, human civilization moves forward. Einstein believes the state or government should serve citizens, instead of the other way around. Thus he is ardently opposed to fascism, communism and other "isms" that subjugate the individual to the extent that he or she becomes a slave of the state.

The worst expression of this mentality is found in the military establishment, in Einstein's view.He sees the military as just an instrument of armaments manufacturers and power-hungry politicians. (Einstein's pacifist views are treated more fully in the next section.) In several pieces of writing, Einstein praises the accomplishments of scientists and artists who stood on the shoulders of previous thinkers and explorers to expand mankind's horizon of knowledge.

The physicist describes himself as a "deeply religious man," but not in the usual sense. For Einstein, religion is an overwhelming sense of wonder at the miracles of the universe, akin to the feeling of awe expressed in the Old Testaments and in writings of the prophets. Too often, Einstein believes, the established, organized religions of the world simply create a bureaucracy called the priesthood to mediate between a higher being and a subordinate, fearful race of humans. Einstein believes the goodness, compassion and morality valued by religion come naturally from the human social compact and do not need to be enforced by fear.

Strangely enough, for a man of Einstein's lofty intelligence and somewhat idealistic view of the world, he is also a product of Old World Europe. This is evidenced by his attitudes toward women, which today would probably be labeled sexist. For example, in a letter to a young woman who has sent him the manuscript of a novel based on her frustrations as a university student, Einstein advises her to trash the book and, basically, be a good girl. In a letter to the American Women's League protesting his visit to the United States, he compares the members to a flock of cackling geese. In yet another instance, Einstein suggests that patriotic women should be sent to the front lines of the next war, instead of men.

Pacifism

Einstein's writings reveal the depth and passion of his pacifist views. From the post-World War I perspective, Einstein sees the best hope for lasting peace in the efforts of the League of Nations, which he hopes and believes can lead a worldwide disarmament movement. In any case, conscientious objection to military service is the strongest tool that people in democracies have for forcing the issue of disarmament. Partial disarmament will not work; only total disarmament can prevent war. But as the machinery of war becomes more threatening, Einstein says, mankind must develop the moral courage to take action in laying down arms.

Through an international organization such as the League of Nations, a mechanism for binding arbitration of disputes between countries needs to be established, with enforcement power of economic sanctions against nations that violate the ground rules for peace, according to the scientist. In addition to disarmament, there must be a restructuring of world economies to assure equitable distribution of goods and services and to avoid unemployment and fiscal inequalities that can destabilize governments and lead to war-like conditions.

In a (undated) letter to Sigmund Freud, Einstein praises his work as truth seeking, of the same kind that a physicist would engage in. He observes that, even though such individuals are often great men, their work often has little impact upon society and politics. Einstein proposes to the father of psychoanalysis that a free association of intellectual leaders be formed to speak with a unified voice on matters of public concern in the press, as a way of influencing the course of events and preventing wars. Einstein further proposes an alliance between this band of intellectuals and religious leaders for pacifist purposes, as well as to lend support to the League of Nations. There is no indication of a reply to Einstein's letter.

Einstein reiterates his belief in the destructive connection between nationalism and compulsory military service: "A country which demands military service of its inhabitants is compelled to cultivate a nationalistic spirit in them, which provides the psychological foundation of military efficiency. The introduction of compulsory service is therefore, to my mind, the prime cause of the moral collapse of the white race, which seriously threatens not merely the survival of our civilization but our very existence."

Although national leaders sincerely wish to abolish war, Einstein says, they are held back by nationalistic traditions handed on "like a hereditary disease from generation to generation."

Zionism

Einstein reveals himself in these pages as an ardent Zionist, and one of the early advocates for a Jewish state in the Middle East. Although his writings on the subject are not dated, with the exception of one letter from 1930, the reader can safely assume the bulk of these writings date before 1948 and the establishment of Israel. In fact, most of

Einstein's correspondence and writings from this period assume the creation (or recreation) of a Jewish state in what is now known as Palestine.

This is how Einstein defines Jewish values: "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 which make me thank my stars that I belong to it." There are no uniquely specific beliefs that define Judaism, other than an affirmative moral outlook upon life, Einstein says. The essence of Judaism is a respect for the sanctity of life.

The kind of "intoxicated joy and amazement at the beauty and grandeur of this world" is expressed in the Psalms of the Old Testament; and this is precisely the attitude of scientists when they contemplate and analyze creation, according to the physicist. Somewhat idealistically, Einstein looks forward to an "advantageous partnership" with the Arab nations that will lead to creation of a Jewish state. He expects the Jews to live side by side with Arabs in an "open, generous and worthy manner" that results from the Jews' thousands of years of persecution. Einstein also notes with some satisfaction that the struggles of Jews everywhere for survival and for the creation of a nation have strengthened their bonds and purified their motives of retrograde nationalism.

The scientist says that if Judaism is considered without the Prophets, and Christianity - as Jesus taught it and not as the priests have made it - "one is left with a teaching which is capable of curing all the social ills of humanity." Einstein says it is the duty of everyone of goodwill to strive to make this teaching a living force in the world as, for example, by the establishment of a sanctuary nation for Judaism.

Style

Perspective

As a world-famous scientist, Einstein already had the attention of millions of people. Thus his style in most of these writings is direct, open and at times earnest. Einstein safely assumes that his opinions will be of interest to readers because of his reputation, so he is careful not to sound condescending. His perspective is entirely global, even cosmic, as he approaches contemporary issues. His writings reveal a refreshing, if somewhat napve, optimism and idealism that no doubt reflects his own spirituality, as well as the less complicated world in which he lived. His status as a brilliant physicist sometimes leads him to propose solutions for human dilemmas that are logical, commonsensical, and probably unworkable because of the vagaries of human nature. One example of this would be the privy council that he proposes to help improve relations between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. Composed of leaders from the various professions, this idealistic group would meet regularly and in secret to discuss obstacles to progress. Without a specific agenda or even any clearly-defined powers, Einstein expects this group of superior individuals to find answers to problems that are millenniums old. It seems like a nice idea, but one that has not yet proven effective. Throughout the book Einstein professes a love for, and connection with, the common man. Yet his perspective of many of the problems in his time is not worldly and unrealistic.

Tone

Throughout most of the book, which is really a compendium of scattered speeches, letters, elegies, and philosophical ruminations, there is a consistency of tone that is one of passionate but reasoned pleading. Einstein presents facts from his own experience and interprets them in light of his own personality and the time in which he lives. But he communicates with an eagerness and intensity that holds the reader's attention. In reply to a letter from a women's group in America that protested his visit, Einstein answers in a playful tone that some today might find offensive. In the letter, Einstein suggests colloquially that the political group is like the geese of ancient Rome that cackled to warn of an impending invasion. Behind the lightheartedness, however, the reader senses anger and no small amount of sexism. But that kind of sarcasm is rare. For the most part, his writings are very respectful and read like the imprecations of a wise uncle who has a truth he wants to share. Like a wise uncle, Einstein knows that some will want to learn and others will not. But his enthusiasm for ideas and causes is infectious because of the largely calm and reasoned tone of the book.

Structure

The book is divided chronologically into sections that deal with the meaning of life, religion, politics and pacifism, Germany 1933, and the Jews. Once the reader has completed the book, Einstein's *Weltbild*, or worldview, becomes apparent. He is a man of great intellectual curiosity, with a sense of wonder about nature and the universe, who sees in the starry-eyed awe of earliest religion something of the spiritual antecedent of the abiding curiosity of the scientist. He is also a man with great respect for life. He believes the true meaning of life is found in relationship to others, and that the social contract is sufficient to generate a sense of morality without the intervention of priests and organized religion. Stemming from his respect for life is Einstein's pacifism, and from his pacifism his work for disarmament. Although President Eisenhower is given credit for coining the term "military-industrial complex," Einstein seems to have gotten there first by writing forcefully about the militarism that flows naturally from nationalism and the armaments industry. The formation of a Jewish state seems to flow naturally from what the reader already has learned about Einstein's spiritual pacifist, and humanitarian views. Although the book suffers from a lack of clear dates, social and political context and even identification of people in certain instances, its structure is a logical progression drawn from a widely-scattered collection of writing to various readers and audiences over a wide time period.

Quotes

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Topics for Discussion

Given Albert Einstein's explicit pacifism, what do you think would have been his reaction after the atomic bombs, made possible with his theories, were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States at the end of World War II?

What do you suppose Albert Einstein would think of the situation today in the Middle East as a supporter of the creation of Israel and as an idealist who hoped for peaceful relations between Arabs and Jews?

In his letter to Sigmund Freud, Einstein asks the psychiatrist to support efforts for disarmament. Although there is no indication in Einstein's book of any response from the Viennese physician, what do you imagine would have been Freud's reply?

Einstein states his belief in a sort of Old Testament spirituality that captures the awe and sense of wonder that ancient peoples felt at the world and universe. He also states that he finds the basic teachings of Christ and tenets of Judaism nearly perfect. Where would he fit into today's controversy over evolution and "intelligent design?"

Do you think Einstein's views on conscientious objection to military service and disarmament would be considered unrealistic today?

Given his views on the destructive influence of nationalism, how do you think Einstein would view creation of the European Union?

How practical is Einstein's idea for a managed economy within the context of a free and democratic society?

Einstein's work for disarmament and peace, primarily through the League of Nationsthat was described in this book, took place well before the dropping of the first atomic bombs. Do you think he foresaw the implications of his theories for warfare and tried to stop their implementation?

Do Einstein's attitudes toward women, as revealed in several writings in this book, constitute sexism as we understand it today, or are they merely markers of the world he grew up in?

What do you consider Einstein's greatest contribution—his physics theories or his dedication to world peace? Why?