

PB on Albert Einstein

Source: THE DIGITAL NOTEBOOKS OF PAUL BRUNTON

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In this article we have compiled some of PB's notes where the great scientist Albert Einstein is mentioned, both in relation to the scope of his discoveries and the connection of these with Spiritual Truth. Paul Brunton's analysis of this is very illuminating.

Below is the selection of PB's notes arranged through our particular edition of subtitles:

Absolute is unattainable

Einstein has demonstrated once and for all how experimental science can only reach relative truth and how absoluteness is unapproachable. And even in mathematics, too, where we imagine that exactness replaces approximation we shall find that absolute quantities are unattainable. It is impossible to mark with precision the fraction of a fraction of a fraction of a second which actually elapses before or after any given time-dimension which is read off the dial of a watch and thus falsifies our reading. It is equally impossible to measure with rigid certitude any dimension on the scale which shall not be a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of an inch shorter or longer than our supposed measurement. Nor has any scientific experiment yet arrived at an absolute zero in actuality but has merely approximated it.

Einstein proved by purely scientific and mathematical methods the relativity of time and space, but the Jain masters of India knew it without such helps—and this teaching was imparted three thousand years ago.

Einstein has taken two fundamental human experiences—time and space—and proved them to be relative variables dependent on man himself, while he has dispossessed them of any other than a mathematical reality.

The mystery of the atom has resolved itself into the mystery of light, which is now the greatest mystery of physics. Einstein demonstrated the dependence of time upon the position and speed of motion of an observer. He showed, too, the amazing consequence of placing the latter in a stream of light wherein if he moved with the same velocity as light, the observer would then possess no sense of the passage of time. If this happened, what sort of a sense would he possess? Einstein could not tell us, but the mystic who has conquered mind can. He will possess the sense of eternity. He will live in the eternal, in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Einstein and mentalism

The philosophical meaning of Einstein's discoveries—that the nature of the world depends on the nature of its relation to the one who sees it, that we cannot truly speak about any object independently of the observer, and that time is the hallmark of this relativity—is in perfect accordance with our own doctrine. Whatever is seen, is seen by the mind. Apart from the mind we know nothing of its existence and apart from the mind the thought of time could not arise for us. In short, every existent object is wholly relative to the subject—Mind.

Many years ago Einstein was reported as criticizing Jeans and Eddington for their mentalistic views. He asked why anybody like the astronomer Jeans should trouble to look at the stars if he did not believe that they were really there. This is a tremendous misconception of the mentalist position.

It is strange how illuminated mystics have been unable to agree with each other on the question of mentalism and its truth. Among the moderns, Rudolf Steiner vehemently opposes it, whereas Ramana Maharshi strongly upholds it. Among the ancients, Patanjali deliberately attacked it, whereas Gaudapada specially advocated it. And if we leave the mystics for a moment and turn to the scientists, the same puzzling contradiction will be found: Thomas Henry Huxley and Sir Arthur Eddington bravely endorsed mentalism, whereas Einstein openly ridiculed it. How, when these great

minds cannot settle the problem of mentalism once and for all, can the lesser ones of the mass of humanity hope to solve it?

In reducing matter to a mere formula of mathematics, Einstein destroyed materialism through the appeal to intellect. Thus he really brought a spiritual message, even though it was couched in the modern idiom of his time—as another Jew, Jesus, brought a message that destroyed materialism through the appeal to faith nearly two thousand years ago.

The law of relativity and the knowledge of spiritual relativity

If a materialist would stop to think about this mystery of the ultimate observer and if his thinking faculties were sufficiently sharpened, purified, and made capable of dealing with such an abstract subject, he would lose his materialism and become a mentalist. Let him ask himself who it is that speaks when he speaks about himself, what is this "I," this thing that bears his name? Since that which speaks and that which is spoken of cannot be the same but must be separate, then he would have to admit a further "I" behind the one that speaks about himself. He could go on analysing backwards in a never-ending series in this way. Each time the "I" would seem to have some other "I" to which it was an object and to which it could refer as the subject. The existence of his ego would be established in relativity, for it would seem he could move infinitely and indefinitely through this mystery of what is meant by "I." This is because the instrument which he is using for such analysis is the logical intellect, which would thus reveal to him its strict limitations. >

>Observing these limitations he would then have to ask himself whether or not it were possible to use a subtler instrument, and then mystical metaphysics would tell him: Yes, such a subtler instrument is available—it is your intuition. Cultivate this rightly, shun its counterfeit, subject your feelings to the philosophic discipline, and then practise meditation. You will find that your intuition will lead you back and back to the one element which is the final "I" and which directs every operation of the subconscious functions of the body, and which gives your personality its consciousness of existence. This "I" is non-physical; it is the inmost part of your mind. Understand this and you will necessarily have to give up materialism. You will become a votary of mentalism. Even more, the realization of this truth in actual experience makes you aware that the universe is friendly to you because you are intimately related to it. Your own mind grows out of the World-Mind. It is this relation which enables your mental nature to think and to know, your emotional nature to feel, and your physical body to act. Without it you would be dead in the fullest sense of the term. Everything inside of you, like everything outside you, changes; but this real Self never changes for it dwells in the kingdom of the World-Mind, the kingdom of heaven which is an everlasting one. >

>It is a phenomenal feat to understand Einstein's law of relativity as it applies to the physical world; but, after all, this understanding does not bring peace of mind or strength of life. It is quite another thing to understand the law of relativity as it applies to the inner Self and such understanding does bring these things. Our knowledge of physical relativity has led us to control of the atom, whose reward seems to be the likelihood that we shall destroy ourselves, but our knowledge of spiritual relativity leads us to control of the mind, whose reward is to save ourselves.

Science: a different kind of revelation from God

There is a line of connection which can be traced from the appearance of gentle Jesus to the terrors of the Inquisition. There is another line which can be traced from the work of pioneer scientists like Galileo and Bacon to the work of atomic scientists like Einstein and Oppenheimer. If Jesus' gospel was a message from God, science was a different kind of revelation from God. Both Inquisitional tortures and Hiroshima's horrors are evidences of what men have done to the fine things entrusted to them. It is for the men themselves to undo their misdeeds and not wait for a Saviour to do it. The responsibility is theirs.