



Einstein: The Passions of a Scientist

Barry Parker

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Einstein continues to captivate, not only for his revolutionary scientific insights but also for his complex personality and personal pursuits. In this unique contribution to the Einstein literature, physicist and acclaimed science writer Barry Parker draws on the great scientist's letters and personal papers to explore the intellectual and emotional passions that motivated both his work and his life.

Parker focuses on five aspects of Einstein's emotional nature that had a profound influence on his life and career. First and foremost was his lifelong passion for learning, not only in the fields of physics but also in mathematics and philosophy. This was manifested early on when he excelled at algebra, and later when he became absorbed with philosophy. Of course in his thinking about time and the nature of light, it was this passion to understand that led to his monumental papers on relativity.

Einstein's "second great love" was classical music, especially the music of Mozart. Parker shows that listening to and playing music (he was an accomplished violinist) were not only recreations for Einstein but also provided stimulation for his scientific creativity.

His relationships with women also greatly influenced him. Parker examines his two marriages, his liaisons with other women, and his distant relationship with his two sons from his first marriage.

Another lifelong passion was his strong antiwar feelings and advocacy for peace. Einstein considered world government the only means to achieve worldwide peace. A chapter is devoted to his efforts to promote the idea of world government.

Finally, Parker considers Einstein's obsession with finding a unified theory of physics to explain all the forces of the universe, and his reluctance to accept the indeterminacy of quantum theory. In the opinion of some colleagues, this was a tragedy, for Einstein isolated himself from the rest of the scientific community during the latter part of his life to pursue a lone quest that remained unfulfilled at his death.

This is an original, insightful look at one of the greatest geniuses of all time who did so much to shape our vision of the world.

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