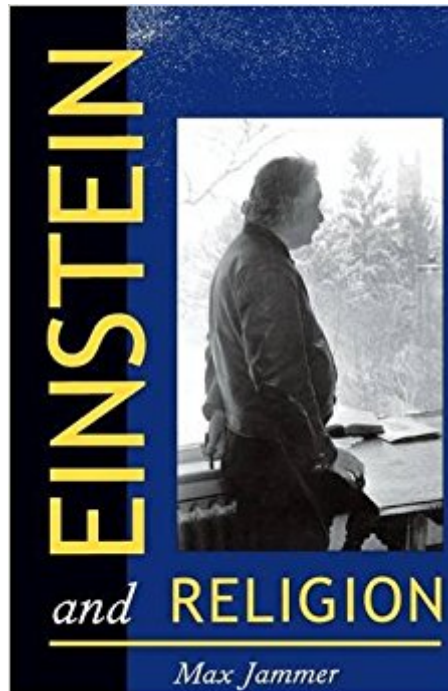




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Einstein And Religion: Physics And Theology



Synopsis

The philosophy of religion and the quest for spiritual truth preoccupied Albert Einstein--so much that it has been said "one might suspect he was a disguised theologian." Nevertheless, the literature on the life and work of Einstein, extensive as it is, does not provide an adequate account of his religious conception and sentiments. Only fragmentarily known, Einstein's ideas about religion have been often distorted both by atheists and by religious groups eager to claim him as one of their own. But what exactly was Einstein's religious credo? In this fascinating book, the distinguished physicist and philosopher Max Jammer offers an unbiased and well-documented answer to this question. The book begins with a discussion of Einstein's childhood religious education and the religious atmosphere--or its absence--among his family and friends. It then reconstructs, step by step, the intellectual development that led Einstein to the conceptions of a cosmic religion and an impersonal God, akin to "the God of Spinoza." Jammer explores Einstein's writings and lectures on religion and its role in society, and how far they have been accepted by the general public and by professional theologians like Paul Tillich or Frederick FerrÃ©. He also analyzes the precise meaning of Einstein's famous dictum "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind," and why this statement can serve as an epitome of Einstein's philosophy of religion. The last chapter deals with the controversial question of whether Einstein's scientific work, and in particular his theory of relativity, has theologically significant implications, a problem important for those who are interested in the relation between science and religion. Both thought-provoking and engaging, this book aims to introduce readers, without proselytizing, to Einstein's religion.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Given the voluminous literature on Albert Einstein (including more than a dozen biographies in the 1990s alone), it is surprising that so little scholarly attention has been paid to the scientist's religious views. Israeli physics professor Jammer, who knew Einstein personally, shows us an Einstein whose nominal childhood faith turned to atheism while preparing for a bar mitzvah that never took place. From then on, Einstein's religious views were a bundle of apparent contradictions: he corresponded with the world's great spiritual leaders yet disapproved of religious instruction for his sons, arguing that it was "contrary to all scientific thinking." He claimed that "science without religion is lame" but never set foot in a synagogue and requested not to be buried in the Jewish tradition. While eluding definitive conclusions about Einstein's deistic "cosmic religion," Jammer demonstrates that religion fascinated the man throughout his career, prompting him to publish articles in the New York Times and elsewhere. Chapters 1 and 2 profile Einstein's religious development and the controversial reception his ideas found with theologians, rabbis and Christian clergy. The more recondite chapter 3 explores the theological implications of Einstein's theories (Jammer does not exaggerate when he cautions the reader that this section "requires some familiarity with the foundations of modern physics"). Jammer's writing is not always as sophisticated as his ideas; he relies too heavily on long quotations from other sources and abstruse jargon. In all, though, this is a compelling, long overdue treatment of a neglected topic. (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Co-Winner of the 2000 Outstanding Book Prize, Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences "It is surprising that so little scholarly attention has been paid to [Einstein's] religious views. . . . This is a compelling, long overdue treatment of a neglected topic."--Publishers Weekly "A valuable resource."--George L. Murphy, American Scientist "Jammer's fascinating and scholarly account of Einstein's personal attitude toward religion explores the emergence of his 'cosmic religion'. . . ."--Choice "Jammer is an excellent guide to the religious impact of Einstein's life and thought."--Greg Peterson, Christian Century "A superb three-part survey that deals with the role of religion in Einstein's personal life; his philosophy of religion; and finally the effect of his physics on theology, the most brilliantly entertaining section of Jammer's book."--Meir Ronnen, The Jerusalem Post "Max Jammer illuminates Einstein's enigmatic relationship to religion with a clarity and detail that no previous study can equal. . . . Mr. Jammer's readable study should long remain an indispensable reference."--John F. Haught, The Washington Times "Jammer . . . shed[s] light on Einstein's often ambiguous views of religion, beginning with his early religious training and following his evolution to

the idea of an impersonal God. [He] takes pains to clarify widespread misinterpretations of Einstein's spiritual views."--Leigh Fenly, San Diego Union-Tribune"I can strongly recommend this beautifully written and accessible book."--Andrew Pinsent, Physics World"One emerges from this scholarly and readable book with a new appreciation of the uniqueness of Einstein's spirit."--Gerald Holton, Philosophy of Science"Max Jammer's is the first systematic historical account of Albert Einstein's religious views. . . . In the writing of this thoroughly researched and instructive book, Max Jammer has done the theological and scientific community a great service. Furthermore, he has made a significant contribution to the ongoing dialogue between science and religion."--Rufus Burrow, Jr., Encounter

Average Rating from me. This book is basically broken down into 3 parts. Part1 paints a picture of what Einstein's childhood upbringing was like and the "religious" factors (as well as schooling, towns lived in, etc.) that may have influenced his beliefs. I found it very interesting and would rate that part a 5 star. Part 2 is specifically about Einstein's very own thoughts on religion based on what little he wrote directly about the matter. I only gave this part 4 stars because the author took the liberty to expound upon what little was actually recorded and I think added a little too much of his own thoughts about what Einstein was meaning. Part 3 is actually described as for people who understand Physics (as in educated in it, of which I am not) and is very technical. I only gave this a 3 star because it really added no value to me. Thus we end with an average of 4 stars.

Not an easy read, but definitely doable for all audiences whom have received their secondary education if one tries hard enough. To myself, a physics major, it was definitely thought provoking and life altering. Grasping the physical concepts in terms of a philosophical viewpoint is definitely something that challenge the beliefs one holds true.

Good book

I thought it was a pretty good summary of Einstein's beliefs. Jammer focused on Einstein's views and did not intrude with his own. I thought it was quite informative and well balanced.

Everything OK. Prompt fulfillment. Book is in the new condition advertised.

The first two chapters are very informative. The third is virtually a throw-away

Superservice

Wonderful and scholarly book.

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