David Topper

Einstein for Anyone: A Quick Read

A concise but up-to-date account of Albert Einstein's life, thought and major achievements

VERNON SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

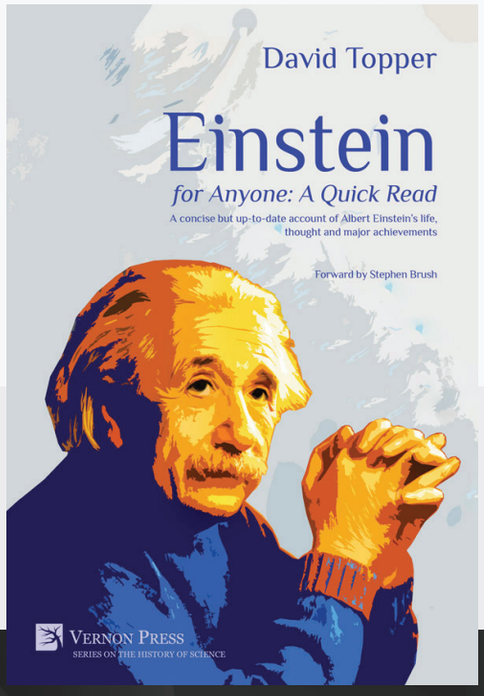
Summary

Here is the compact story of this famous man, from the smiling contrarian in his grade school picture to the nonconformist adult who refused to groom his hair. As such, it fills a gap: the need for a very short book on Einstein that gives a brief but up-to-date story of his life and thought, with a simple explanation of what he contributed to 20th century physics and beyond.

There is a chapter on his habitually thorny relationships with woman and close relatives. His first love, his first and second wives, his parents and his children – none of which was a painless union. The birth of an illegitimate daughter, the estrangement of his sons after divorcing his first wife, his incessant struggle with his controlling mother – all had a strong physiological effect on Einstein's personality.

Next is a chapter on the young Jew struggling with self-identify, who in adulthood was unwaveringly committed to social justice that he believed was rooted in Jewish ethical values. It began with his early flirtation with Orthodox Judaism, only to be vehemently rejected by the science-obsessed teenager. Then his exposure to overt anti-Semitism when he moved to Germany was followed by his subsequent espousal (with reservations) of the Zionist movement. Lastly he moved to the USA fleeing Nazi Germany, only to be confronted with endemic racism towards African-Americans, to which he boldly spoke-out supporting the burgeoning civil rights movement.

Finally, there is the scientist who expresses his ideals through his radical ideas about the physical world, as he reworked our conceptions of space, time, and motion. The result was a new cosmic model of the universe that is being developed further today. As well, his commitment to an ordered and predictable universe was ultimately expressed in his final (but still unfulfilled) quest for a theory unifying all forces of nature into one whole.



About the author

David R. Topper, Professor of History at the University of Winnipeg (retired, June 2012), from 1970 taught courses in the history of science and the history of art. He was the recipient of two teaching awards: the Robson Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Winnipeg (1981), and the National 3M Teaching Fellowship (1987). Since 1982 he has been an international co-editor and, from 2005, honorary editor of the journal Leonardo. He has published three books: Quirky Sides of Scientists: True Tales of Ingenuity and Error from Physics and Astronomy (Springer, 2007), How Einstein Created Relativity from Physics and Astronomy (Springer, 2013), and Idolatry and Infinity: Of Art, Math, and God (Brown Walker, 2014). For reviews see: www.davidrtopper.com

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