

Einstein and twentieth-century politics: a salutary moral influence

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Abstrak

Einstein, the world-renowned scientist, was also publicly committed to radical political views. Despite the vast literature on Einstein, this book is the first comprehensive study of his politics, covering his opinions and campaigns on pacifism, Zionism, control of nuclear weapons, world government, and freedom over his whole career. Most studies look at Einstein in isolation, but here he is viewed alongside a liberal international of global intellectuals, including Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Bertrand Russell, H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Romain Rolland, Thomas Mann, and John Dewey. Frequently called upon to join campaigns on great issues of war, peace, and social values, they all knew or corresponded with Einstein. The book is concerned with how Einstein and comparable intellectuals sought to exert a salutary moral influence, as Einstein put it in a letter to Freud, which in practice amounted to a non-political form of politics. Close attention is given to the unique qualities Einstein brought to his interventions in political debate and in particular to the struggles he experienced in retaining control of his message. His influence derived in the first instance from his celebrity status as the scientist of genius. Einsteins complex and enigmatic personality, which combined intense devotion to privacy and a capacity to perform on the public stage, also contributed to the Einstein myth. Studying Einsteins politics takes us not only into the mind of Einstein but also to the heart of the great public issues of the twentieth century.