

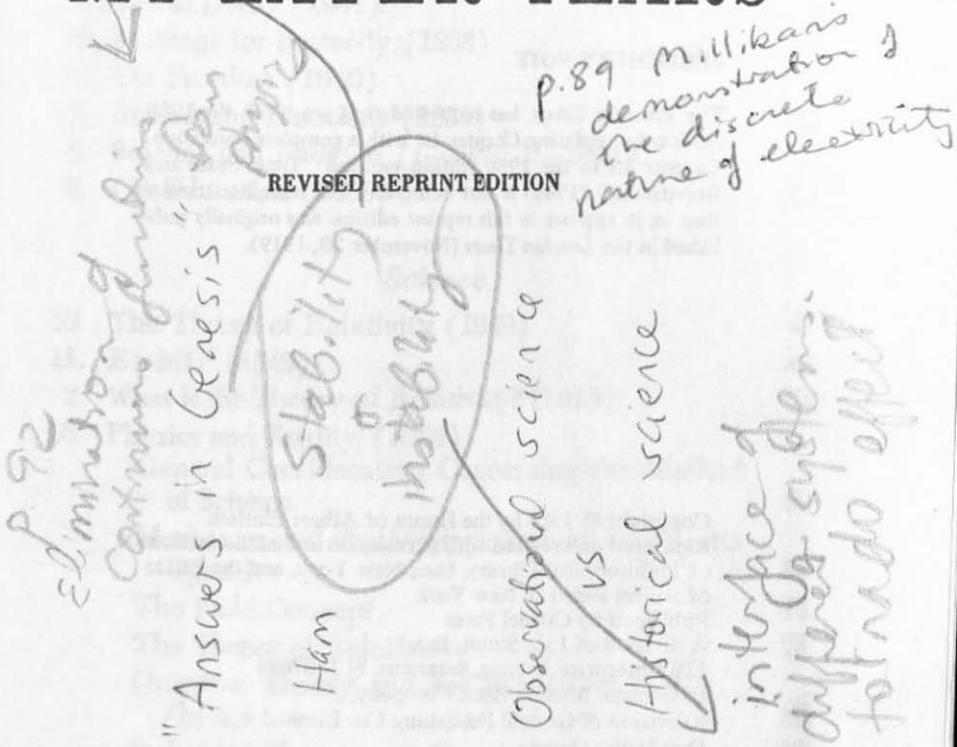
Doug  
Longman

"It's amazing how much  
you can't know if  
you are not interested  
in learning."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

# OUT OF MY LATER YEARS

REVISED REPRINT EDITION



THE CITADEL PRESS  
SECAUCUS, NEW JERSEY

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### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Einstein Estate has requested that we revise the 1950 edition by replacing Chapter 12 with a complete translation. Chapter 12 in the 1950 edition entitled "Time, Space and Gravitation" (1948) is not complete. The complete translation as it appears in this reprint edition was originally published in the *London Times* (November 28, 1919).

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 Published by Citadel Press  
 A division of Lyle Stuart, Inc.  
 120 Enterprise Avenue, Secaucus, N.J. 07094  
 In Canada: Musson Book Company,  
 a division of General Publishing Co. Limited  
 Don Mills, Ontario

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MORALS AND EMOTIONS

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WE ALL KNOW, from what we experience with and within ourselves, that our conscious acts spring from our desires and our fears. Intuition tells us that that is true also of our fellows and of the higher animals. We all try to escape pain and death, while we seek what is pleasant. We all are ruled in what we do by impulses; and these impulses are so organized that our actions in general serve for our self-preservation and that of the race. Hunger, love, pain, fear are some of those inner forces which rule the individual's instinct for self-preservation. At the same time, as social beings, we are moved in the relations with our fellow beings by such feelings as sympathy, pride, hate, need for power, pity, and so on. All these primary impulses, not easily described in words, are the springs of man's actions. All such action would cease if those powerful elemental forces were to cease stirring within us.

Though our conduct seems so very different from that of the higher animals, the primary instincts are much alike in them and in us. The most evident difference springs from the important part which is played in man by a relatively strong power of imagination and by the capacity to think, aided as it is by language and other symbolical devices. Thought is the organizing factor in man, intersected between the causal primary instincts and the resulting actions. In that way imagination and intelligence enter into our existence in the part of servants of the primary instincts. But their intervention makes our acts to serve ever less merely the immediate claims

of our instincts. Through them the primary instinct attaches itself to ends which become ever more distant. The instincts bring thought into action, and thought provokes intermediary actions inspired by emotions which are likewise related to the ultimate end. Through repeated performance, this process brings it about that ideas and beliefs acquire and retain a strong effective power even after the ends which gave them that power are long forgotten. In abnormal cases of such intensive borrowed emotions, which cling to objects emptied of their erstwhile effective meaning, we speak of fetishism.

Yet the process which I have indicated plays a very important part also in ordinary life. Indeed there is no doubt that to this process—which one may describe as a spiritualizing of the emotions and of thought—that to it man owes the most subtle and refined pleasures of which he is capable: the pleasure in the beauty of artistic creation and of logical trains of thought.

As far as I can see, there is one consideration which stands at the threshold of all moral teaching. If men as individuals surrender to the call of their elementary instincts, avoiding pain and seeking satisfaction only for their own selves, the result for them all taken together must be a state of insecurity, of fear, and of promiscuous misery. If, besides that, they use their intelligence from an individualist, i.e., a selfish standpoint, building up their life on the illusion of a happy unattached existence, things will be hardly better. In comparison with the other elementary instincts and impulses, the emotions of love, of pity and of friendship are too weak and too cramped to lead to a tolerable state of human society.

The solution of this problem, when freely considered, is simple enough, and it seems also to echo from the teachings of the wise men of the past always in the same strain: All men should let their conduct be guided by the same principles; and those principles should be such, that by following them there should accrue to all as great a measure as pos-

sible of security and satisfaction, and as small a measure as possible of suffering.

Of course, this general requirement is much too vague that we should be able to draw from it with confidence specific rules to guide the individuals in their actions. And indeed, these specific rules will have to change in keeping with changing circumstances. If this were the main difficulty that stands in the way of that keen conception, the millenary fate of man would have been incomparably happier than it actually was, or still is. Man would not have killed man, tortured each other, exploited each other by force and by guile.

The real difficulty, the difficulty which has baffled the sages of all times, is rather this: how can we make our teaching so potent in the emotional life of man, that its influence should withstand the pressure of the elemental psychic forces in the individual? We do not know, of course, if the sages of the past have really asked themselves this question, consciously and in this form; but we do know how they have tried to solve the problem.

Long before men were ripe, namely, to be faced with such a universal moral attitude, fear of the dangers of life had led them to attribute to various imaginary personal beings, not physically tangible, power to release those natural forces which men feared or perhaps welcomed. And they believed that those beings, which everywhere dominated their imagination, were psychically made in their own image, but were endowed with superhuman powers. These were the primitive precursors of the idea of God. Sprung in the first place from the fears which filled man's daily life, the belief in the existence of such beings, and in their extraordinary powers, has had so strong an influence on men and their conduct, that it is difficult for us to imagine. Hence it is not surprising that those who set out to establish the moral idea, as embracing all men equally, did so by linking it closely with religion. And the fact that those moral claims were the same

for all men, may have had much to do with the development of mankind's religious culture from polytheism to monotheism.

The universal moral idea thus owed its original psychological potency to that link with religion. Yet in another sense that close association was fatal for the moral idea. Monotheistic religion acquired different forms with various peoples and groups. Although those differences were by no means fundamental, yet they soon were felt more strongly than the essentials that were common. And in that way religion often caused enmity and conflict, instead of binding mankind together with the universal moral idea.

Then came the growth of the natural sciences, with their great influence on thought and practical life, weakening still more in modern times the religious sentiment of the peoples. The causal and objective mode of thinking—though not necessarily in contradiction with the religious sphere—leaves in most people little room for a deepening religious sense. And because of the traditional close link between religion and morals, that has brought with it, in the last hundred years or so, a serious weakening of moral thought and sentiment. That, to my mind, is a main cause for the barbarization of political ways in our time. Taken together with the terrifying efficiency of the new technical means, the barbarization already forms a fearful threat for the civilized world.

Needless to say, one is glad that religion strives to work for the realization of the moral principle. Yet the moral imperative is not a matter for church and religion alone, but the most precious traditional possession of all mankind. Consider from this standpoint the position of the Press, or of the schools with their competitive method! Everything is dominated by the cult of efficiency and of success and not by the value of things and men in relation to the moral ends of human society. To that must be added the moral deterioration resulting from a ruthless economic struggle. The deliberate nurturing

one requirement above all!

of the moral sense also outside the religious sphere, however, should help also in this, to lead men to look upon social problems as so many opportunities for joyous service towards a better life. For looked at from a simple human point of view, moral conduct does not mean merely a stern demand to renounce some of the desired joys of life, but rather a sociable interest in a happier lot for all men.

This conception implies one requirement above all—that every individual should have the opportunity to develop the gifts which may be latent in him. Alone in that way can the individual obtain the satisfaction to which he is justly entitled; and alone in that way can the community achieve its richest flowering. For everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the individual who can labour in freedom. Restriction is justified only in so far as it may be needed for the security of existence.

There is one other thing which follows from that conception—that we must not only tolerate differences between individuals and between groups, but we should indeed welcome them and look upon them as an enriching of our existence. That is the essence of all true tolerance; without tolerance in this widest sense there can be no question of true morality.

Morality in the sense here briefly indicated is not a fixed and stark system. It is rather a standpoint from which all questions which arise in life could and should be judged. It is a task never finished, something always present to guide our judgment and to inspire our conduct. Can you imagine that any man truly filled with this ideal could be content:—

Were he to receive from his fellow men a much greater return in goods and services than most other men ever receive?

Were his country, because it feels itself for the time being militarily secure, to stand aloof from the aspiration to create a supra-national system of security and justice?

Could he look on passively, or perhaps even with indifference, when elsewhere in the world innocent people are being brutally persecuted, deprived of their rights or even massacred?

To ask these questions is to answer them!