

Einstein: The legend of the idiot that became a genius?

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It is supposed to be an inspirational story that Einstein overcame handicaps in his early life and became recognised as a genius. This article looks at the possibility that Einstein started as an idiot and remained an idiot and never really became a genius, instead he managed to turn his large number of fans/followers into idiots by having them believe Einstein's publicity campaign.

1. Introduction

There is an interesting article in the Einstein Archives of the Hebrew University of Israel [1] dealing with Einstein's disabilities in his early life. [2] Since the article wants to be sceptical whenever possible as to Einstein's disabilities, its only fair to take a sceptical stance as to whether Einstein really was a genius.

The idea of attacking Einstein is to represent him differently than the way the mainstream represents him. There has been a vast propaganda campaign to promote Einstein as a genius, as response to that many people are inspired to do things in Einstein's way, i.e. to try to emulate him. With so much belief in such a personality; to take a critical response to such a hero's physics, the critics can only then respond by attacking that hero worship, and to show that such a hero has feet of clay. So that those aping Einstein thinking that they are acting like geniuses by doing so are hit by the criticism – Einstein was no genius, he was an idiot, so those aping Einstein are similarly acting like idiots.

The legend is that Einstein with his mental difficulties turned out to be a genius. That is the way the news media likes to portray him. The grim reality is – he was an idiot and stayed an idiot and the news media falsely represented him. It is common practice for what is called the gutter press to get the news wrong. In the case of Einstein they carried on their tradition, and as consequence it has misinformed people in the physics community to act like idiots.

First I will criticise an article praising Einstein:

2. Criticism of Everyone Loves Einstein

Jacob Foster who describes himself as a DPhil student in Mathematical Physics at Balliol College, has written an interesting article called “Everyone Loves Einstein.” [3] . He is referring to the centenary of the publication of Einstein's famous papers of 1905 and asks the question: “So as the

centenary of his miraculous year comes to a close, I wonder—why does everybody love Einstein?”

Well, he has got that wrong for a start – not everyone loves Einstein!

One instantly wonders why he could have got something like that so completely wrong. There is a big movement of “Einstein is wrong”. Obviously, he does not belong to that camp and in his article proclaims his love of Einstein. He is of course in the Einstein fan club, and when we look at the record of that club we find that they ignore evidence they don't want to believe. So clearly he does not want to believe there is anyone who does not love Einstein and so ignores the evidence.

Knowing his *modus operandi*, it then becomes interesting to see what he chooses to believe:

Foster: “The rough contours of the story are, by now, a commonplace. In 1905, everything changed. The journal *Annalen der Physik* published five papers by an academically unaffiliated patent clerk named Albert Einstein—papers that argued persuasively for the existence of atoms, overturned common-sense Newtonian notions of time and simultaneity, and suggested that light was actually composed of the tiny units or quanta we now call photons.”

Yes, the story is fairly well known because there are so many Einstein fans that they keep telling us this sort of story. Just because they keep telling us this does not make it true, its just something they want to believe about their hero overturning Newtonian physics. As dealt with in my papers – Newtonian physics has not been overturned.

Foster continues: “Jump forward one hundred years, and that patent clerk (or rather the amusing old man he was to become) is one of the most recognizable icons of our time, his unruly mop of white hair an essential badge of genius. Students—not just the terminally unhip physicists who emulate him in their lack of socks and disordered dress—decorate countless dorm rooms with his impish face. Time magazine even went so far as to proclaim him Person of the 20th Century. In the traditional hagiography, the young Einstein is the ultimate underdog, coming from nowhere to storm the gates of orthodoxy and re-imagine the physical universe; the old Einstein is more sage than scientist, left behind by his own revolution and wandering the streets of Princeton like Walter Matthau in *I.Q.*—charming, to be sure, but mostly harmless.”

This sort of hero worshipping is sickening; most heroes turn out to have clay feet when looked at in more than a superficial way. But it highlights the sort of thing that the Einstein fans want to believe that “Einstein is the ultimate underdog” who made it big, and they want to emulate (that is “ape” in other words) Einstein's behaviour.

As Richard Moody points out [4]: “curious feature of the now famous paper, Einstein, 1905, is the absence of any reference to Poincare or anyone else: As Max Born says, It gives you the impression of quite a new venture. But that is, of course, as I have tried to explain, not true (Born, 1956).”

Einstein's work is the cobbled together pieces of unreferenced works of others.

And in doing that made numerous mistakes. But rather than acknowledge those mistakes, the Einstein fans want to continue to ape their hero with his false image of not working from others.

It is interesting that Foster looking at the book “Einstein's Miraculous Year: Five Papers That Changed the Face of Physics.” edited by John Stachel notes that there is a great deal of mythology surrounding Einstein:

“Stachel's achievement lies in disentangling young Einstein from the forest of mythology that has

sprouted up around him. The icon of old Einstein—what Stachel calls ‘Einstein as aged sage and saint of legend’—has so obscured Einstein the man that Stachel’s introductory essays will come as a bracing surprise even to those familiar with the Einstein story. The first introduction, written specially for the centenary edition, vigorously debunks the myth of Einstein as a counter-culture intellectual, chafing under the strict Teutonic academic establishment.”

So to a certain extent Foster realises that the “Einstein” as portrayed to the general public is a fiction. But knowing that he still wants to buy into believing most of the fiction.

Getting to the physics:

Foster: “Newton’s mechanics relied upon the notion of an absolute space (a sort of universal coordinate system) and an absolute time (one, single clock ticking off seconds at exactly the same rate everywhere in the cosmos).”

In other words setting clocks to all go at the same rate.

Foster: “If absolute space and time are abandoned in favour of another absolute—an absolute speed of light in all reference frames—then Maxwell-Lorentz theory could accommodate a relativity principle.”

The relevant words are “if” AND “a”.

He says: ““If absolute space and time are abandoned.....”

By doing this he means abandoning Newtonian physics. I have looked at these issues and there is no reason for doing so.

But of course IF abandon Newtonian physics then there are consequences; in this case “accommodate A relativity principle.”

He uses the word “a” there is more than one relativity principle.

So the consequences of abandoning Newtonian physics is abandoning the relativity principle consistent with Newtonian physics for another relativity principle.

I have looked at this issue of why abandon one relativity principle for another relativity principle.

And the Einstein fan-club gives no adequate reason for doing so, other than that make things up that just are not true.

So Foster was almost onto the facts of the case – why abandon one relativity principle for another, but rather than get onto that sort of issue he gets diverted into stating his love for Einstein.

Foster: “Einstein viewed this paper as a ‘theory of principle, rather than a constructive theory.’ What he meant is simply that, rather than trying to explain physical phenomena by building them up from a microscopic description, he is generalizing from experiment certain principles that lay down rules nature appears to obey. “

To a certain extent that is true, but the word “experiment” can mislead. Einstein was actually thinking from “thought experiment” not “physical experiment”. He was considering “thought experiments” like what would happen if he travelled at the speed of light – what would then be the

observations. He then gave his opinion on such “thought experiments” which seem contrary to the actual “physical experiments”. His thought experiments were not physically possible, it was not possible to travel at the speed of light and see if it conformed to what he believed would happen; experiments had to be limited to observations for a traveller below light-speed. So he was not building from what had been observed by actual “physical experiments.” With his acceptance by the Einstein fans it then meant that the actual “physical experiments” had to be reinterpreted by the way that Einstein wanted them to be interpreted so as to conform to his “thought experiments”. That then raise the issue of why do the reinterpretation – and the Einstein fans don't give any reason. They do make claims that are false however – they make claims for example that Michelson-Morley experiment shows that light-speed is constant; but on investigation it turns out that the existing Newtonian physics way still works. (see my paper explaining that the Michelson-Morley experiment can be interpreted from maths based on variable lightspeed.)

Foster: Einstein's most famous result—that mass m and energy E are equivalent, and that $E = mc^2$, where c is the speed of light—is derived as a consequence of the special theory in Einstein's fourth paper, ‘Does the Inertia of a Body Depend on Its Energy Content.’

No it isn't. Einstein derived $E=mc^2$ from Newtonian physics not from special relativity and then assumed if true in Newtonian physics then would be true in special relativity. (as dealt with in one of my papers)

As to the quantum issue, Foster says: “Although it was for his work on the photoelectric effect that Einstein won the Nobel Prize in 1921, the true revolution initiated by this work—quantum mechanics—never secured Einstein's approval. He remained forever sceptical of the fundamental status that quantum mechanics assigns to probability. Typically, Einstein expressed this belief as a principle, ‘God does not play dice.’ His friend Niels Bohr, one of the founders of quantum theory, also had a principle: ‘Einstein, stop telling God what to do.’ Although triumphalists of the mainstream tradition usually bemoan Einstein's ‘failure’ to accept quantum mechanics, there remain a small but significant number of (often eminent) quantum ‘sceptics’ who, with Einstein, believe that the foundations of quantum mechanics themselves require revision, and that God doesn't play dice after all.”

The issue there is that Einstein did not believe the philosophy upon which quantum mechanics was being built by Bohr+co. Generally the mainstream likes to ignore that their quantum physics is built from a deviant philosophical belief, and tries to ignore discussing that with its students. (Einstein wanted it built on a different philosophy.)

Foster: “So as the centenary of his miraculous year comes to a close, I wonder—why does everybody love Einstein? Part of it has less to do with who Einstein was than with what we made of him a patron-saint for science. When science can unmake the very stuff of the universe and threatens all life through nuclear holocaust, Einstein's strong principles, good humour, and benevolence make him a comforting presence in the technocratic priesthood. But I'd like to think that there is much to be learned from Einstein as he actually was. He balances independence with humanizing vulnerability—the ideal role model for those young people, of extraordinary temperament and vision but of ordinary human weakness, who are most likely to lead the revolutions of 21st century science and culture. He failed to balance his private and his professional lives—a cautionary tale for those at risk of sacrificing domestic happiness on the altar of their curiosity or ambition.”

Diverted to the publicity campaign to portray Einstein as hero in other words.

Foster: “And as anyone reading his beautiful papers can attest, he teaches us how to ask the deepest

questions of our world—and how to answer them.”

I disagree – Einstein's papers are a mess. Einstein keeps changing his mind and he does not give references as to what he is working from; that alone makes them a mess.

Foster: “Revolution must begin with the methodical, careful, and critical analysis of what has come before, for past errors usually point the way to future discovery.”

My critical analysis of Einstein and the foundation that Einstein has made for modern physics indicates it is all a mess and should be thrown away and started again.

Foster: “It must progress through years of false starts, blind alleys, and whimsical thought experiments.”

That is the path that Einstein's mess has set modern physics upon.

Foster: “Revolution is the ultimate victory of human ingenuity and intelligence over the mystery of the world—and it is Einstein’s lesson to us.”

Einstein's revolution to physics was to replace everything by his mess.

3. The dull-witted boy

Now dealing with information from Barbara Wolff & Hananya Goodman [2].

“Einstein himself told his biographer, Carl Seelig, that “my parents were worried because I started to talk comparatively late, and they consulted a doctor because of it.””

“As a matter of fact, the boy was, and remained, a reluctant talker for quite some years, and, until the age of about seven, used to repeat his sentences to himself softly, a habit which contributed to the impression he might be somewhat dull.”

So, first impressions of Einstein was that he was an idiot.

“After one year of home-schooling, Albert was sent to primary school, entering second grade already at age 6 ½. He may not easily have accommodated himself to the school’s expected mindless obedience and discipline aimed at instilling authoritarian civic virtues. Unable – or unwilling - to provide quick automatic responses, the boy was considered only moderately talented by his teachers.”

So, second impressions of Einstein were endorsing the first impressions.

However things do turn around:

“Yet at the end of his first school year his mother could proudly relate that Albert's report card was splendid and his second term marks again put him at the top of his class. If the stigma of the "bright under-achiever" - "The Einstein Factor" - had been justified at any time, now it was no more the case. The fact that, at the age of 9 ½, Albert was accepted to the competitive Luitpold-Gymnasium, disproves any observable learning disabilities. Had his grades in primary school not been above average, his entrance into the Gymnasium would not have been possible.”

He was making an improvement.

“While the social milieu of his Gymnasium class, as well as the subject matter, were significantly more sophisticated and challenging than at the primary school, the teaching style continued to resemble the style Albert had despised already during his first school years.”

Einstein not doing very well is in other words being blamed upon the teaching style.

“Learning facts and texts by rote was highly prized, while independent and creative thinking was perceived as undermining the teacher's respect.”

i.e. Einstein wanted to be creative thinker but the schooling was stifling that.

“As it is the case with most pupils, Albert did not take the same interest in all subjects, but did advance well in general; in particular he advanced in subjects he favoured even doing so far beyond his age.”

i.e. Einstein was poor in some subjects.

“In his later years, Einstein repeatedly pointed out that memorizing words, texts, and names caused him considerable difficulties.”

And that difficulty indicates a disability; not genius material in other words.

“Yet, if one regards the pupil's alleged “learning disability” in the context of his distaste for the teaching style which he experienced as military drill, and of his own mental preoccupations, then a psychological block seems a much more plausible explanation than medical “dyslexia”.”

Now blatantly pointing out its a “learning disability”, trying to excuse this from being a sign of dyslexia, and trying to blame the teaching methods. If Einstein were genuinely a genius he should have shone through even bad teaching methods, but he was having difficulties and excuses had to be invented to divert attention from the fact that Einstein was not genius material.

“But, yes, he flunked the entrance exam at the Zurich Polytechnic. Albert left his Munich Gymnasium in the middle of the seventh of nine obligatory high-school years, at the age of 15.”

Another sure sign he was not genius material.

He is excused for personal circumstances:

“When, with special permission, he presented himself for the entrance exam at the Zurich Polytechnic in the following autumn, he was still one and a half years short of the required age to enter that college. Also, as German and Swiss school curricula differ substantially, his knowledge, for instance, of French and of some general subjects definitely did not meet Swiss high-school diploma standards. So it was the circumstances that ‘handicapped’ Einstein, rather than his own personal inabilities.”

They note he was good at mathematics and physics because:

“More noteworthy than the fact that he failed the exam is that his knowledge in mathematics and physics impressed his examiner in such a way that he invited the boy to his college lectures even before Albert was accepted as a regular student.”

However as explained in a previous article is was a certain type of maths that Einstein was bad at.

Barbara Wolff & Hananya Goodman seek to defend Einstein from people who claim that Einstein had learning disabilities. (see references at the end for who they are), and they say:

“Who dares to determine ex post facto, whether Einstein's genius is a result of autistic traits or of schizophrenic features? As long as the experts base their judgements on outright erroneous assertions about his childhood deficiencies, on misunderstandings regarding his performance at school, or on trivia of the kind of "He let his hair grow long and did not comb it. He wore old clothes and did not care about style", those judgements can hardly pass for reliable scientific expertise. As long as the same symptom is cited as an evidence of schizoid traits by one and as proof of being an autism spectrum disorder by another expert, one ought rather trust a third expert who frankly admits that while a pre-mortem diagnosis of a disorder with no known biologic markers would seem difficult enough, definitive post-mortem diagnoses are clearly impossible.”

The fact is – it is not really possible to tell if Einstein was genius or idiot from looking at the evidence that is now left to us. So the Einstein fans capitalise on that and continue to proclaim the genius of Einstein. However, looking at the evidence – before his mega stardom as genius, the opinion was that he was an idiot. So it was a miraculous transformation from someone who appeared and idiot to becoming proclaimed a genius. So either he was a genius who was mistaken to be an idiot OR he was an idiot that was mistaken to being thought a genius.

I refer back to the claim that Einstein copied his work from others and did not say who were the sources of his work; this is very indicative that he was an idiot; not really being original. But then due to massive publicity campaign – large numbers of people were persuaded to be idiotic into believing him a genius.

The reasons for the publicity campaign are spelled out by the Jewish Chronicle [5] :

“Einstein's trip to America as part of a delegation led by Chaim Weizmann, the head of the Zionist Organisation. In 1919, the verification of the general theory of relativity had made Einstein a star. His reputation was cemented with the award of the Nobel Prize for physics in 1921. The Zionist movement was keen to exploit his fame for financial and political ends. As Einstein himself wrote, "I had to let myself be shown around like a prize-winning ox".”

It was all for political reasons that Einstein was portrayed as a genius and this has been allowed to corrupt physics by pulling people into believing that fiction. A massive diversion into hero worship of Einstein and his corrupted presentation of the works of others. We should be looking at physics without Einstein's influence; from the earlier sources before his mistakes were introduced to become the dogma of the Einstein fan-club

If we now draw a parallel with Einstein and the film “The Life of Brian.”. Brian was being followed by a mob of people who developed a religion that Brian was the messiah. Brian's mother pointed out to the mob- Brian was not the messiah but just a very naughty boy. Similarly it should be pointed out that Einstein was not a genius, just a very naughty boy. But the mob following Brian were too devoted to their religious belief that they ignored what Brian's mother said. Similarly the Einstein fan-club have formed their own type of religion in believing Einstein a genius and ignoring anything else.

References

[1] <http://www.albert-einstein.org/.index.html>

[2] The Legend of the Dull-Witted Child Who Grew Up to Be a Genius, Barbara Wolff & Hananya Goodman http://www.albert-einstein.org/article_handicap.html

Among those who discuss Einstein's deviant features from a scientific point of view are:

Simon Baron-Cohen, Professor of Developmental Psychopathology at the University of Cambridge, see for example: "Einstein and Newton showed signs of autism" New Scientist 30 April 2003

Anthony Storr, English psychologist known for his psychoanalytical portraits of historical figures, see for example: Dynamics of Creation (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993)

Temple Grandin, Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University and successful adult with high-functioning autism, see for example: ["An Inside View of Autism"](#)

[3] Everyone Loves Einstein, by Jacob Foster <http://www.oxonianreview.org/issues/5-1/5-1foster.html>

[4] Albert Einstein: Prophet or Plagiarist , Richard Moody
<http://einstein52.tripod.com/alberteinsteinprophetorplagiarist/id6.html>

[5] Review: Einstein before Israel, David Edmonds, August 10, 2011
<http://www.thejc.com/arts/books/52981/review-einstein-before-israel>

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