

presenting science to the public in a favourable light.

O'Connor's book is undoubtedly a *tour-de-force* and an outstanding success; yet, I admit, I should have liked it all the more if it had been a shorter one.

DAVID OLDROYD

DAVID E. ROWE, ROBERT SCHULMANN (eds.), *Einstein on Politics. His Private Thoughts and Public Stands on Nationalism, Zionism, War, Peace, and the Bomb*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. xxix+523 pp., ISBN 13: 978-0-691-12094-2.

Some prefer to imagine Einstein as a reclusive scientist who shunned the world, others as a timeless sage uttering universal maxims for the sake of humanity. This book is one of several recent ones that help remember a more historically authentic, down-to-earth Einstein, immersed in specific political debates of his time. For Einstein, following and comprehending contemporary politics was a passion that ran a close second to physics and occupied enormous amounts of his time, writing, and intellectual efforts. The 1919 astronomical confirmation of the gravitational bending of light rays made Einstein a world celebrity for life. The media sensation had an often overlooked political aspect – the link between two scientists, British and German, who opposed the World War in their respective countries, also linked relativity theory to unpatriotic internationalism. The event fostered both the subsequent transformation of an esoteric scientific theory into a symbolic battleground for different political and ideological forces and Einstein's own transformation into a public intellectual, who lent his name to various activist groups, signed political appeals, spoke at rallies, and participated in polemics in print. He took the unavoidable media attention as an obligation and an opportunity to

make his political views heard, including those that were unpopular with audiences at the time and, in part, even today.

Einstein's political self-identifications, most significantly as a "European", a "Jew", and a "socialist" varied with issues discussed. His European identity developed as reaction against WWI. He denied the importance of whatever national citizenship he happened to hold, associating instead with a common European culture (limited to the Western half), whose global supremacy he took for granted even as he lamented its destruction by the war. The main culprit behind the European debacle, according to Einstein, can shortly be described as nation states – separate sovereign agencies that combine typical prejudices of one ethnic group with the tools of state power, indoctrination media, and military might. His attempts to invent a remedy evolved in the course of a thirty-year global genocide with intermission, otherwise known as the two world wars, the defining political reality of his entire adult life. He placed early hopes on international disarmament or on grassroots conscientious objection, but retracted from militant pacifism as impractical in the wake of the Nazi takeover in Germany. Einstein's final thoughts on the matter, made more urgent by the development of the atomic bomb, focused on the partly mislabeled "world government" proposal. Rather than creating one global superstate, the idea actually implied taking away from the existing states only their military arms and relegating the latter to an international agency. The UN, which left military power to the sovereignty of states, in his view, would fail in its mission to avert wars between them.

Einstein's Jewish identity was awakened in him also during WWI at the encounter with unfortunate refugees from Eastern Europe, poor, unassimilated, and treated with conceit in Germany even by their acculturated ethnic brethren. He proclaimed himself a Jew and looked for other ways to raise Jewish self-esteem in the midst of misery. Einstein downplayed race and reli-

gion, stressing instead as defining characteristics of Jewishness the cultural traditions valuing social justice and intellectual, even if impractical, pursuits. The rising tide of anti-Semitism made him believe that Jews would never see an end to their discrimination in Europe and throw his support behind the Zionist project of resettlement to Palestine. Even in the face of the Holocaust, however, Einstein continued to oppose the idea of a separate Jewish state, preferring instead a Palestinian “home” for Jews jointly with Arabs, possibly under international protection. A nation state with full its trappings, he predicted, would make the Jews, like the existing European nations, guilty of national hubris, mistreatment of others, and warfare. Einstein’s socialism primarily concerned economic issues. As a remedy to the great economic crisis of his time, he advocated such socialist measures as a limited working day and minimum wage, and he believed that introducing planned economies and government regulation would help repair the imbalances of “anarchic capitalism”. The urgency of this, however, paled to him in comparison with what he regarded as the most pressing need – to end the similar “anarchy” of nation states in international affairs.

Compared with earlier collections (such as *Einstein on Peace*, 1960), the reviewed volume is significantly broader in its thematic coverage and more meticulous in reproducing unabridged texts by Einstein. It does so partly at the expense of other sides in the dialogues, reduced to extremely informative and professional, but also very short introductions to the documents. The editor’s interpretations lean to the cautious side in comparison with Einstein’s own straightforwardness. The commentaries, for example, try to downplay Einstein’s socialism, despite his explicit self-identification. But overall, the volume offers a highly valuable edition and a very timely reminder of Einstein’s often misrepresented or ignored political efforts.

ALEXEI KOJEVNIKOV

ULF SCHMIDT, ANDREAS FREWER (eds.), *History and Theory of Human Experimentation. The Declaration of Helsinki and Modern Medical Ethics*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007. 370 pp., ISBN 978-3-515-08862-6.

The Helsinki Declaration is the most important and internationally known code of medical ethics, and since its promulgation, in 1964, has been and still is subject to continuous revisions, improvements and interpretations. It was adopted by the World Medical Association as a set of ethical principles that should guide physicians in conducting experimentations on human subjects. The original aims of the code were to attenuate the impact of the much more restrictive Nuremberg Code (1947) on the practice of human experimentation, without lessening ethical surveillance.

On the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Helsinki in 2004, the Hanover Medical School (Germany) and the School of History at the University of Kent (United Kingdom) undertook a wide-ranging study on the history of medical ethics, focusing on the ethics of human experimentations in the twentieth century, with special concerns for the antecedents, origins, contents and the modifications of the Helsinki Declaration, as well as for its legal, political and cultural impacts.

The chapters in the volume are grouped in three parts: history and theory of medical ethics, the Helsinki Declaration in an international context, and history and ethics of research in an international perspective. A fourth section of the volume provides some key documents, including the main versions of the Helsinki Declaration, issued in the past century and related to the history of research ethics.

The essays in Part I examine the historical facts and ideas that paved the way for the Helsinki Declaration. By rightly remembering that the Nuremberg Code, which preceded the Helsinki Declaration, spoke the language of human rights, Ulf Schmidt indirectly points out what had been missed in the 1964 WMA international code. How-