Einstein, Albert Encyclopedia Article

Einstein, Albert

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Einstein, Albert

American Physicist and Mathematician 1879–1955

Although he attended school in both Germany and Switzerland, Albert Einstein was disinterested in the formalities of education, which led him to teach himself calculus, higher mathematics, and physics. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921.

Albert Einstein is perhaps the best-known scientist who ever lived. His contributions include the special and general theories of **relativity**, the assertion of the equivalence of mass and energy, and the **quantum** explanation of the behavior of electromagnetic radiation, including light. Einstein was born in Ulm, Germany, in 1879 and died in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1955.

Einstein showed little academic ability before entering the Federal Polytechnic Academy in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1896, where he studied both mathematics and physics. After graduating in 1900, he briefly taught school and then took a position in the patent office. During this time, he wrote articles on theoretical physics in his spare time.

Einstein's ability to apply advanced mathematics in the solution of complex physical problems led to the publication of a group of momentous papers in 1905. A doctorate from the University of Zurich and world fame soon followed.

The subjects of the 1905 publications included special relativity, the equivalence of matter and energy, and the quantum nature of radiation. These revolutionary publications, in combination with the general theory of relativity, which he published in 1915, and the development of quantum mechanics, to which he made significant contributions, transformed science and again demonstrated the indispensability of mathematics in the scientific endeavor.

The atomic age, the space age, and the electronic age owe much to Einstein's contributions to physics, changing human civilization more dramatically in the twentieth century than in previous centuries combined.

Bibliography

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