

Here, presented for the first time in English, is a firsthand account of Einstein's historic trip to Paris, after World War I. Not only is it of interest to the historian of science or researcher of international relations, but this snapshot from a turning point in time provides any thinker with an example of how a genuine idea can be presented and honestly discussed.

Being a social creature might not be exclusive to the human species, but coming to know personalities that are long dead, is definitely unique to us and is a very special tool in helping us live up to our uniqueness. Becoming friends with one of humanity's geniuses of the past provides a fun study in discovering an expression of the potential of mankind, and provides a clear example of what the nature of an individual man is, as opposed to a monkey.

I have specifically picked Einstein as my "buddy." As Einstein's future, we are able to reap the ideas and method that he sowed (if we bother to know him and our history), in order to provide a new platform of culture and ideas for our future. I hope that this peek into the past will help foster that for you.

In distilling the significance of the human individual's creative capability, you quickly realize the effect the interaction of the highest level of mind can have on the development of society at large; you see the grander impact a life can have on the world, rather than an existence of being consumed by the daily soap opera of personal situations that are inconsequential in the scheme of things (unless, of course, they help you develop your individual creativity to be an effective world citizen.)

Original sources are the only way to get a living sense of a debate. Not only the papers a person wrote, but his letters, lectures given by contemporaries on the topic, newspaper articles, and so on. These shadows of a process give you a chance to immerse yourself in an environment to appreciate and rediscover for yourself the cultural effect an idea has.

In search for such a context of Einstein's development of hypotheses, I reached a road-block in my research. The Princeton University Press had been putting out the collected works of Einstein, articles and letters, but at this point had only reached the year 1920-1921. Just when things start to get good! Einstein's theory of gravity had just been publicly validated and therefore popularized, he was plunging into General Relativity's implications on the shape of the universe and its interaction with other principles, such as electromagnetism.

In reading biographies of Einstein, the event they speak of as most important in these years—the early 1920s—is not some scientific paper being published, but Einstein's trip to Paris. One of the intended destructive effects of World War I was to cut off international intellectual relations. Einstein's trip would be the first step in mending French and German relations. This created quite a stir and many people were not happy on both sides.

With such an important instance in scientific and political history, I was surprised that I couldn't find Einstein's speeches from this conference, but only thirdhand short ref-

erences to what was talked about. In contacting the Einstein archives, I was told that Einstein spoke informally, so there were no written notes from him personally, but the archivist gave me a date and the title of a journal for which a Charles Nordmann was commissioned to report on the event. I tracked it down and assembled a team to translate it from the French.

For more on the context of the political environment, please see Michel Biezunski's article "Einstein's Reception in Paris in 1922" in the book *The Comparative Reception of Relativity*,* and an article by Nordmann in English on visiting battlefields with Einstein.** Both are priceless accounts that help you appreciate the actual struggle intellectuals went through to make humanity stronger through advancement in thought; and the fact that science cannot be separated from politics, and should take a leading role in culture.

Nordmann's article gives a good picture of the circle which existed, both as supporters and critics, around Einstein in the debate on The Relativity Theory. How refreshing it is to see how an idea can be honestly fought over, instead of simply deciding to agree to disagree, or deciding that anybody who dissents from the prevailing opinion is crazy. What's unusual in witnessing the back and forth, is that the opposition side is competent, for the most part, and is genuinely seeking the truth. This provides a foil to the lack of true scientific debate today in a Boomer era.

If you can become accustomed to the flowery descriptive nature of Nordmann's writing, you'll find this article useful, not only for the on-the-ground reporting in the middle of the development of Einstein's thoughts, but also because it provides a good overview of the fundamental principles on which Einstein's theory is based, and the many paradoxes that seem to come up according to common sense when faced with relativity. Also it presents a fair approximation for a layman of Einstein's basic method of approach.

For example, one thread that comes up repeatedly in the article is the subject of math. Nordmann, on behalf of Einstein, is sure to make the point that math is not useful in and of itself, and is out of reality, unless it is the servant of physics. Another continuous thread is the discussion of the meta-physical vs. positivism. It seems that Nordmann is sure to qualify both sides and imply that there's a balance needed; but from the work of Einstein and my coming to know his discovery process, it is clear that Einstein is simply above the mystic or the data collector, which comes up when Einstein discusses Ernst Mach.

As with all secondhand (or even firsthand) sources, the value comes from what you are able on your own to put together of the process of mind of the individual characters on stage, and what's pushing the overall drama as a whole, as opposed to having a perfect map of what was discussed when.

Therefore, I humbly submit to you this translation.

—Shawna Halevy

Footnotes

* Michel [Biezunski](#) on Einstein's reception in Paris, 1922.

** Charles [Nordmann](#) on visiting battlefields with Einstein.