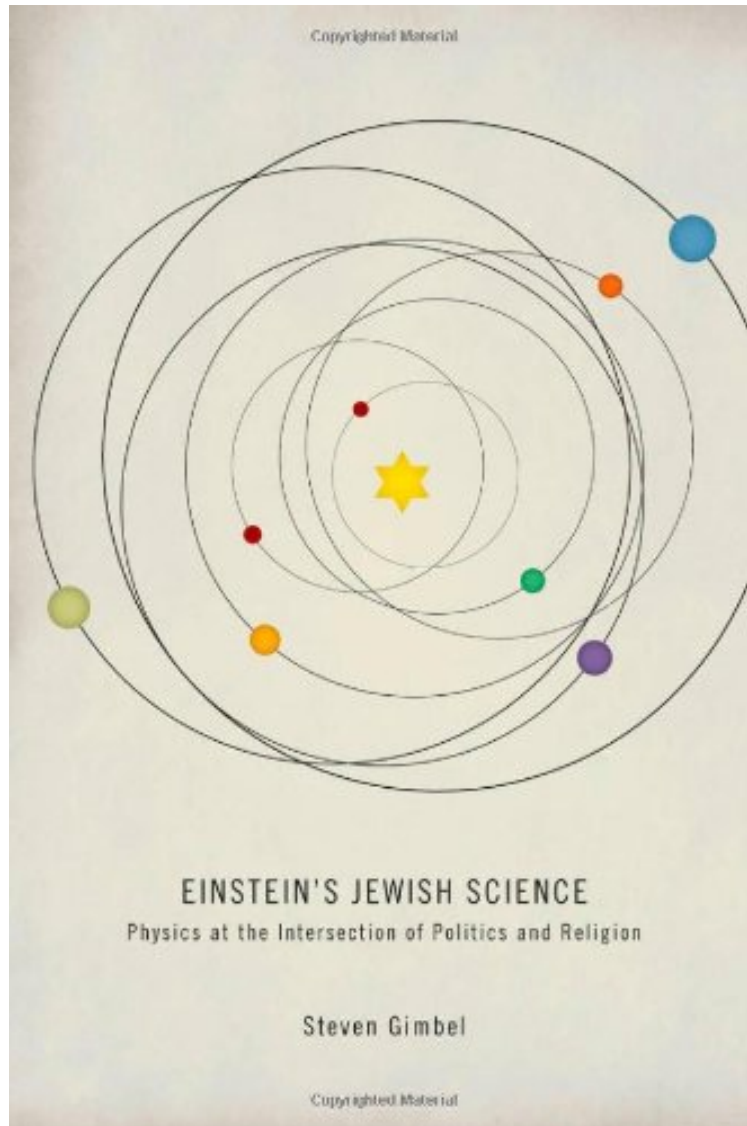


[FREE] Einstein's Jewish Science: Physics at the Intersection of Politics and Religion

# Einstein's Jewish Science: Physics at the Intersection of Politics and Religion

*Steven Gimbel*

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**Steven Gimbel : Einstein's Jewish Science: Physics at the Intersection of Politics and Religion** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Einstein's Jewish Science: Physics at the Intersection of Politics and Religion:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ... is only about the way Nazis labeled things they disliked. In factBy dsmThe title misleads one to think it is only about the way Nazis labeled things they disliked. In fact, there is a

complete discussion of what constituted Aryan science, why it was so identified, and why it therefore missed so many new revelations. The writing about how culture and religion affect personal outlooks is excellent, as is the discussion of the "breaking up" of thought into different religions. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

ComplicatedBy CustomerThis is perhaps a little more than I bargained for...Maybe I'll be smarter next year.Delivery and condition of product was excellent.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A New way of thinking about "Jewish" scienceBy C. M. StahlThe title is suggestive of the concept put forth by the Third Reichs notion of science. It was influenced by politics. But that simplistic concept based on racism and fanaticism is not really what Gimbel sets out to dispel. His book is deeper than that. He probes a question that he raises about the cultural and religious influences on scientific thinking. The idea of scientific impartiality as incorrect has been delved into much over the years. There is a lot to it as we see currently by the slews of journal retractions, firings and even arrests for scientific fraud. We knew of Hitlers Jewish science theories and Stalins devotion to his genetic quack Lysenko. Science for all of its moral purity and self-correction has a history replete with charlatans. Yet daily there are thousands of researchers toiling away with pure thoughts and a devotion to the scientific method. Men and women who know that their work may be proven for naught at some future date despite its promise today. Gimbel focuses on their efforts with a question about bias. He does not present an answer but merely poses questions. Do researchers inadvertently let a socio-cultural bias seep into their work? Is there a corruption of their science based on their beliefs? Without answering the questions he raises, Gimbel provides food for thought. This reader was unwilling to accept that the laws that have stood the test of time such as Newtons mechanics and optics, relativity, Boltzmanns statistical probabilities or Heisenbergs uncertainty could be tainted by their own bias because these ideas have been studied and evaluated for in some cases centuries. Even when they are discarded for the proof of new theories on the surface they appear as science in its pure form. Gimbel begs the reader to ponder some other ideas. He asks several questions about the Jewish influence on Einstein and his Relativity theory. Was Einstein a Jew? He suggests that he was not in the religious sense yet he was influenced by the cultural dicta of that heritage. The tradition of Judaism came with a sense of awe when encountering the world. Feynman wrote about this continually and he also was secular but Jewish. It is a passion if not a duty to be in a state of wonderment. Having answers is far less exhilarating than having questions. That certainly could be seen in the works of Einstein both of his theories and the thought problems he proposed throughout his life. In addition a traditional liberalism exists that allows one to question. Was Newtons a Protestant science? This reviewer would have scoffed at this notion prior to reading the book as he would have at the concept of Descartes being a Catholic scientist. Gimbel makes compelling points about both given the times in which they lived, the strictures of theological philosophy. Protestantism was borne in part out of the gainsay of papal authority. In Spinoza like fashion the Protestants were less likely back then to accept divine authority coming from a human. On the Catholic side they were only recently emerging from the inquisitions that forced early scientific philosophers from being anything less than cryptic in their writing. So possibly there is a sort of Protestant and Catholic science as there is a Jewish science. It is a new avenue of thinking when pondering the history and philosophy of science. As Gimbel points out Auguste Comte proposed that early science sort of unraveled in three stages. Initially it was religious with a design to prove the glory of Gods efforts. The metamorphosis of a butterfly was viewed as a specific design of a deity. The next stage was metaphysics and wonderment about our place in the world—a somewhat more secular supposition. Finally positivist or material and empirical way of viewing the world and nature. Those transitional stages do not come easily as Darwin found when unwrapping his Origins and Natural Selection treatises. It does not sit all that well in the current United States and its very large adherence to Genesis. Ultimately Einstein held pretty firm to notions like enlightenment, freedom and creativity. Like his secular predecessor Spinoza, these ideals were paramount to the betterment of society. Sans the ability to think freely we are subject to the rules of authority which have no philosophical control but certainly governmental control. The freedom to act ethically under the law of man offers the possibilities of new thinking and represses excesses. Creativity is necessary for the culture to expand and thrive. There is much more to say about the book but not in this venue. Read it yourself for more details. The takeaway is that Gimbel suggests to the slightly interested reader some food for thought. For the avid reader the same plus a plethora of ideas to explore. He does not proffer as many answers as he does questions.

Is relativity Jewish? The Nazis denigrated Albert Einsteins revolutionary theory by calling it "Jewish science," a charge typical of the ideological excesses of Hitler and his followers. Philosopher of science Steven Gimbel explores the many meanings of this provocative phrase and considers whether there is any sense in which Einsteins theory of relativity is Jewish. Arguing that we must take seriously the possibility that the Nazis were in some measure correct, Gimbel examines Einstein and his work to explore how beliefs, background, and environment may have influenced the work of the scientist. You cannot understand Einsteins science, Gimbel declares, without knowing the history, religion, and philosophy that influenced it. No one, especially Einstein himself, denies Einstein's Jewish heritage, but many are uncomfortable saying that he was being a Jew while he was at his desk working. To understand what "Jewish" means for Einsteins work, Gimbel first explores the many definitions of "Jewish" and asks whether there are elements of Talmudic thinking apparent in Einsteins theory of relativity. He applies this line of inquiry to

other scientists, including Isaac Newton, Ren Descartes, Sigmund Freud, and mile Durkheim, to consider whether their specific religious beliefs or backgrounds manifested in their scientific endeavors. Einstein's Jewish Science intertwines science, history, philosophy, theology, and politics in fresh and fascinating ways to solve the multifaceted riddle of what religion means and what it means to science. There are some senses, Gimbel claims, in which Jews can find a special connection to  $E = mc^2$ , and this claim leads to the engaging, spirited debate at the heart of this book.

"In this wide-ranging exploration, Gimbel... seeks to discover whether and to what extent Einsteins work could legitimately be called 'Jewish' and what difference it makes." (Publishers Weekly)"Gimbel spins out what could have been a mere provocation into a wide-ranging and entertaining collision of science, history, philosophy, and religion." (Zocalo Public Square)"Gimbel is an engaging writer... he takes readers on enlightening excursions through the nature of Judaism, Hegelian philosophy, wherever his curiosity leads." (George Johnson New York Times)"[A] lively, intentionally provocative and wholly compelling inquiry into the Jewishness of Einstein himself and the world-changing scientific revolution that he set in motion." (Jonathan Kirsch Jewish Journal)"Reaching back into the first half of the twentieth century, Gimbel returns with absorbing stories about Albert Einstein and his life as a politician, brilliant scientist, and Jew." (Fred Reiss San Diego Jewish World)"For anyone interested in the history and philosophy of science, this book is well worth reading to its delightful conclusion." (Rivqa Rafael Cosmos)"The author explores the question of whether a scientist's religious and cultural/ethnic heritage colors the way he/she does science." (Choice)"The author and his book do a wonderful job in framing the time, and the science, and the politics, and the religion." (Howard Blumenthal Digital Insider)"The ugly, public assault on Einstein in early 1920s Germany is the starting point... The attack on Einstein is thoroughly and clearly described and placed in its historical and political context. There is no better English-language source on the topic. But Gimbel quickly turns the whole question upside down, asking with more than a little, deliberate irony whether there might not, in fact, be some truth to the characterization of Einsteins physics as, in some sense, 'Jewish.' What follows is a fascinating and enlightening discussion of many aspects of the scientific, philosophical, religious, cultural, and political history of the 20th century that examines the many different ways in which one might understand the suggestion that Einsteins physics expresses or reflects something distinctively Jewish." (Don Howard Physics Today)"To understand Gimbel's argument about the Jewish quality of Einsteins approach and to perceive the boldness of Gimbel's decision to re-examine twentieth-century, anti-Semitic ideas about 'Jewish science' its necessary first to understand the historical moment out of which the theory of relativity emerged." (Donald Goldsmith Tikkun)"A fascinating engagement with the nature of Judaism and of science. By exploring and, in a sense, redeeming the Nazi accusation that Einstein's relativity theory is 'Jewish science,' Gimbel not only challenges the racist meanings of that charge but shows how scientific theories must in fact reflect the issues and concerns of the historical periods which give rise to them. This book is certain to generate much interest and will stimulate an important and understudied debate." (Rabbi Michael Lerner)"From its unnerving premise maybe the Nazis were right, and Einsteins physics is 'Jewish science' after all to its contrarian conclusions, Einsteins Jewish Science is a bruiser of a book. It asks questions and floats hypotheses that strain academic etiquette. With unflagging 'out-of-the-box-itude,' Gimbel reinterprets modern science and modern Judaism in a way that is sometimes exasperating, often challenging, frequently inspired and always riveting. You may not be persuaded, but after grappling with this book, you are sure to see in a new light both science and Jews of the twentieth century." (Noah Efron, Graduate Program in Science, Technology and Society, Bar Ilan University)From the Back CoverThe Nazis denigrated Albert Einsteins theory of relativity by calling it "Jewish science," a charge typical of the ideological excesses of Hitler and his followers. Philosopher of science Steven Gimbel explores the many meanings of this provocative phrase and considers whether there is any sense in which Einsteins revolutionary theory is Jewish. Arguing that we must take seriously the possibility that the Nazis were in some measure correct, Gimbel examines Einstein and his work to explore how beliefs, background, and environment may have influenced the work of the scientist. You cannot understand Einsteins science, Gimbel declares, without knowing the history, religion, and philosophy that influenced it. 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LernerAbout the AuthorSteven Gimbel is the Edwin T. and Cynthia Shearer Johnson Professor for Distinguished Teaching in the Humanities and chair of the Department of Philosophy at Gettysburg College, where he won the Luther and Bernice Johnson Award for Distinguished Teaching. He is author of *Exploring the Scientific Method: Cases and Questions*; *Ren Descartes: The Search for Certainty*; and *Defending Einstein: Hans Reichenbach's Writings on Space, Time, and Motion*.