

Albert Einstein At Home

PRINCETON

1946-1950

Photographs by Herman Landshoff

Introduction by Harry Woolf

Director, The Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

Introduction Copyright 1980, by Harry Woolf.

Printed in the U.S.A.

He can revolve in orbits opposite
The orbit of the earth and so refuse
All planetary converse. And he wears
Clothes that distinguish him from what is not
His own circumference, as first a coat
Shaped to his back or modelled in reverse
Of the surrounding cosmos and below
Trousers preserving his detachment from
The revolutions of the stars.

His hands
And face go naked and alone converse
With what encloses him..."

So wrote Archibald MacLeish about Einstein in the poem that bears his name, reaching—with the condensing compactness, the power of poetry—to capture and to portray the magical melding of genius with humanity that was Albert Einstein. The thirteen pictures which follow are Herman Landshoff's contribution to the same process. Exploiting its universal language, he brings the art of photography to bear upon the human element in the life of science as it concentrates in one great man, inviting us to observe, with MacLeish again

*"When he a moment occupies
The hollow of himself and like an air
Pervades all others,"*

These deep, quiet pictures, set in the simple house (Plate 2) that was his American home are a song of their own, an obligato added to the great chorus of praise and proclamation that marked the centennial celebration of Einstein's birth in 1979. Statues and paintings, films and broadcasts, symposia and stamps (the United States chose Plate 4 of this set for its commemorative) and a spate of publications brought his presence once again to the world's attention, precipitating an inventory of intelligence and an assessment of achievement unparalleled in

the history of learning. But all this public clamor is best set in place, perhaps, by these photographs of a life "far from the madding crowd." At home and at work, they are reinforced by the words he wrote in March 1955, a month before his death, paraphrasing Lessing: "das Streben nach der Wahrheit sei köstlicher als deren gesicherter Besitz," (the aspiration to truth is more precious than its assured possession).

That the countries of the mind form a contiguous geography is an ancient truth. These beautiful pictures by Herman Landshoff do demonstrate, indeed, that art and science are neighboring states. An education at the Humanistische Gymnasium in Munich (where his father had become Director of the Munich Bach Society) followed by study in the Kunstgewerbeschule led to Landshoff's initial career as a caricaturist. But normal ambitions were to vanish under the rising tide of Nazism in the thirties and Herman Landshoff saw service in the French Foreign Legion in Africa before demobilization and migration to America, where his marriage took place and his career as a photographer developed.

It is not the first time that the poet has responded sensitively and profoundly to the primary displacement and the secondary enhancement of human values under the impact of conceptual revolutions in science. Donne in the *Anatomy of the World* was concerned with man in a post-Copernican universe, and Yeats in the *Second Coming* also anticipated the loss of absolute certainty emerging from the new science.

In the same vein, this brief introduction can be brought to a close by a juxtaposition of texts from poetry and science that Einstein himself might have enjoyed.

EINSTEIN* by Archibald MacLeish

Still he stands

*Watching the vortex widen and involve
In swirling dissolution the whole earth
And circle through the skies till swaying time
Collapses crumpling into dark the stars
And motion ceases and the sifting world
Opens beneath.
When he shall feel infuse
His flesh with the rent body of all else
And spin within his opening brain the motes
Of suns and worlds and spaces.*

THEORETICAL ADVANCES IN
GENERAL RELATIVITY** by Stephen Hawking

Condition 3 is the requirement of causality, i.e., that one should not be able to travel into one's own past. Thus general relativity predicts a beginning of time.

...[I]t was bad enough for time to have a beginning, but now it seemed that time would have an end as well, at least for an observer foolish or unfortunate enough to follow the collapse of a star....But we might be worried that new unpredictable information might enter the universe every time a star collapsed. Fortunately, it seems that this does not happen, at least at the classical level because it appears that the singularities formed by gravitational collapse always occur in regions of spacetime, called Black Holes, in which there is such a strong gravitational field that no light or information can escape to an external observer. This is called the "cosmic censorship hypothesis" and forms the basis for all theoretical work on Black Holes. It remains the major unproved conjecture in classical general relativity but it is supported by perturbation and computer calculations and by the failure of a number of attempts to establish inconsistencies among the results that can be derived from it.

*"Einstein" from NEW AND COLLECTED POEMS 1917-1976 by Archibald MacLeish. Copyright 1976 by Archibald MacLeish. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

**From S. Hawking, "Theoretical Advances in General Relativity," EINSTEIN CENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM, Harry Woolf (editor), Addison-Wesley, 1980. Reprinted by permission of Addison-Wesley.