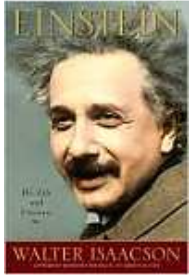


Einstein

Author: Walter Isaacson

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Pages: 675



Isaacson strikes the right balance in describing Einstein's personal and professional life. We learn about Einstein's complex relationships with his family members, but Isaacson does this tastefully and in a fact-based manner. Therefore, the book does not read like a tabloid publication as so many biographies do these days. Isaacson is

particularly adept at distilling complex theories in a manner that can be understood by someone with a high school physics education. An example would be how he describes quantum theory. There were some passages describing general relativity theory though in which I struggled to follow the examples and had to read them multiple times.

We learn a lot about the personality traits that made Einstein so productive in his early career, but less so later in life. As a young man, Einstein innovates by rejecting conventional wisdom and commonly accepted principles. In fact, his theory of relativity supposes that there is no absolute time. His contrarian beliefs are critical to his success early in his career and result in some of his finest work when he is only a junior scientist at the Swiss Patent Office.

Ironically, it is Einstein's refusal in the second half of his career to abandon his own principles that stymies his progress. He rejects quantum theory, which is increasingly embraced by younger scientists. Quantum theory suggests that it is impossible to determine both the precise position and momentum of an electron. Instead, scientists can only determine the probability that an electron is in a certain position at any given time. Despite overwhelming evidence supporting quantum theory, Einstein never reconciles its dismissal of certainty with his view that there is a reality that is concrete and determinable. As a result, Einstein spends his remaining years in a futile attempt to derive a unified field theory.

Einstein endures a great deal of tragedy in his life. His parents do not approve of his first wife because she is not physically attractive enough for their standards. He has a daughter, unaccounted for in history and his

own life, before his first marriage. Einstein's second son is committed to a mental institution for many years and never recovers from severe mental illness. In December 1932 Einstein leaves Germany only a month before Hitler gains power and never returns to his home country. The FBI accumulates a 1,427 page file on him because his pacifist and anti-war comments are misconstrued for sympathy toward communist causes even though Einstein is now a U.S. citizen. Einstein gets through these tough times with a sense of detachment, which Isaacson suggests might have been caused by autism.

Einstein is one of the best books I have read in a long time. The biographies I enjoy most are those in which you get a glimpse not only of the subjects, but also other famous people who interact with them. The characters in *Einstein* read from the Hall of Fame of legendary figures I learned about in high school. These characters include Max Planck, Franklin Roosevelt, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, Sigmund Freud, and Marie Curie to name just a few.

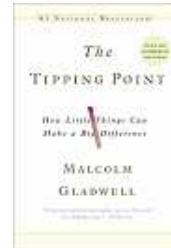
– Reviewed by Rishi Shrivastava

The Tipping Point

Author: Malcolm Gladwell

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company

Pages: 291 Paperback



The Tipping Point is very interesting and fun to read. Gladwell provides a well researched understanding of why certain social epidemics work the way they do. Gladwell very convincingly analyses Paul Revere's ride and the suppression of crime in New York City and equates the two to positive social epidemics.

Gladwell breaks down the reasons behind what he terms as social epidemics. He goes into details of elements like the law of the few, the stickiness factor, and the power of context. The chapters about Blue's Clues and Sesame Street are especially thought provoking. *The Tipping Point* is a 'must read' book for any independent thinker. Gladwell has presented the stories in a way that serve to punctuate his theories very well. While the devil may be in the details, I think it is the broad brush strokes that make this book important. Perhaps with a little knowledge of how tipping points work, one may be able to put a few to work in his or her own life or business.

– Reviewed by Musafir