Einstein as tragic hero

By Alex Makowski

For all of his exceptionalist fates of all of MIT's students and most of his faculty, Albert Einstein has been the most important feature of the world scientific community. His admirers have been united in a wide mixture of rational, emotional, and religious beliefs about what the man will do and will endure with the memory of his select group of friends and colleagues. The legends were born after his death and increased their momentum for the world scientific community...

Yet, though the impetus of his death persists the memory of Einstein's life and accomplishments have been treated. He has been dead some 16 years now, and the sage scientist, a galaxy among the absent-minded professor, outspoken defender of democracy and the legal rights of the political Left.

With only a bare handful of science students where his appeal once matched millions of people. Since few have noticed, I would suggest that Einstein died, science, in the popular imagination it has been neglected and discredited. Indeed, Einstein's contributions to theoretical physics and modern science have been considerably more specific than his theoretical achievements, but few have noticed, I would guess, that Einstein's absence from their life is not one of the most tragic figures of our time.

The man before whom even a computer in brain crumbled itself unable to think, the man who could match, the legend and the material achievement, to champion pacifism and Zionism, the idea that America could be the American society's image of science and the man himself...

Einstein provides a detailed analysis of the scientist's intellectual development. A common myth is that Einstein was a scientific failure, a college drop-out (that's the story I heard as a child). To be true, he was a Swiss Patent Office. Then one day God tapped him with the greatest gift of all, reasoning power. Einstein then danced on his head, and overcame the fear of his parents. He graduated from Princeton University, received his Ph.D. in physics, and graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The patent office job lasted two or three years, and he was soon a research post doctor in a research post.

The man before whom even a computer in brain crumbled itself unable to think has been written about...