

# ALBERT EINSTEIN – A BRILLIANT THIEF

Gabriela M. ATANASIU, PhD.

Technical University "Gheorghe Asachi" of Iasi, Romania

Director of Research Center, MCSERM

In 1999, the scientific and historical analysis on the birth of the theory of relativity led to the clear conclusion that the true creator of the theory was Henry Poincaré and Einstein's work was a plagiarism. It is difficult to understand how Einstein elaborated a theory of this magnitude in just a few weeks as he hadn't previously published anything in this regard.

There were discovered two new significant elements in the last years:

a) absence of reviews on two major texts on Poincaré's theory in *Annals of German Physics*, despite German meticulousness, on three other texts about his studies in 1905, only various scientific texts less important being reviewed

b) apparently deliberate ignorance of three major studies on the relativity presented by the French physicist at the seminar "the theory of the electron", held in June / July 1905 at the University of Göttingen. The first text represents the famous relativist observation to the Academy of Paris about the dynamics of electrons, the second was the memorandum sent to Hendrik Lorentz in May 1904 and the third one described the principles of relativity sustained by Poincaré at the World Conference of Science in St. Louis, in September 1904. Moreover, in January 1905, the Göttingen Mathematical Society organized a seminar exactly on the theory of relativity set forth by Poincaré.

But the occurrence of this situation should be sought in the tensioned relations between France and Germany in the early twentieth century. David Hilbert, envious of Poincaré's discoveries decided to react by organizing a maneuver in order to give Germany the laurels of the French labor. And because risks proved to be huge, a person to assume all these was needed. That person was a petty officer in the Patent Office in Bern, Albert Einstein.

The University of Göttingen, where Gauss, Riemann and Lejeune-Dirichlet studied, was considered at that time the worldwide pole of mathematics and scientific researches. In 1905, the university was managed by David Hilbert, a leading mathematician. In that year,

Hilbert lost the Bolay Prize of Mathematics in favor of Henry Poincaré. This caused a huge frustration in the German academic society. Arnold Sommerfeld, Herglotz and Wiechert tried, during the autumn of 1904 and the next winter, to publish in the university's journal three works on superluminal electron, the electron that moves in vacuum at a higher speed than light. Sommerfeld, the physicist who improved the pattern of the atom discovered by Niels Bohr to be compatible with the relativity and the quantum mechanics, even published in a Dutch magazine a study which concluded that "Lorentz transformation", a revolutionary hypothesis of the famous Dutch physicist, cannot be used. Under these circumstances, in the middle of the preparations for the seminar, in the summer of 1905, Poincaré's observation appeared. He clearly and argumentatively postulated: no material body can exceed the speed of light in vacuum. Thus, David Hilbert was obliged to preserve the authority of the institution he was leading by taking three extremely important decisions:

- To systematically ignore Poincaré's studies and all adjacent studies.
- To request Max Planck's help, the manager of the Annals of Physics, a highly influential publication, to be sure that Poincaré's observations will not appear in its columns.
- To find a German to take the risks of a possible lawsuit by publishing Poincaré's results under his signature. His name was Albert Einstein and he was chosen apparently for the following reasons:

- To plagiarize involved automatically the exclusion from the scientific society and Einstein was a clerk without big ambitions;
- Hermann Mincovski, a Lithuanian Jew and head of the Mathematics Department of the University, knew Einstein, who was his student from 1896 to 1900;
- Max Planck and Einstein corresponded for a while on the quantum theory;
- Between 1902-1904, Einstein wrote various articles on thermodynamics and it seemed he had some knowledge in this area;
- His wife, Mileva Maric, was a respected physicist.

The manipulation worked and for Einstein it meant an incredible opportunity to promote his own ideas, known at Göttingen and Berlin as being plagiarized in their turn, ideas that had found no support until then. In the fall of 1905, immediately after the publication of the so-called Einstein's theories, Max Planck organized an international colloquium where he called him "the new Copernic".

## The real Einstein

Albert Einstein was far from being a genius. Considered mentally retarded because of his inability to speak until the age of 5, starting with the first school years he proved poor qualities. At the age of 15, he left school without any diploma. Einstein himself admitted in a school newspaper that he lacked imagination and practical skills. In 1895, he fails an entrance exam at the Polytechnic in Zürich, the only institution that did not require proof of high school graduation. The exam consisted of math problems that Einstein could not solve. He attended a modest economic school in Aarau, hoping to find an academic job after graduation. Unable to complete the courses of a school, as he wished to, and discouraged by the teachers' recommendations not to continue his studies, he takes a job, helped by his colleague and friend, Marcel Grossman, future co-author of his theories at the Patent Office in Bern. He was employed as a technical expert of third degree only in 1906, a year after elaborating his famous works, thus being promoted to the second degree. His activity at the Office was not, as one might think, based on quantum physics or theories in physics, but implied daily review of the technical documents for various patents. He worked in the Office until 1909, and during this period he unsuccessfully tried to get a position at a university. Surprisingly, despite having a tight schedule, with no access to anything associated to academic works, in his free time, Einstein elaborated four essays on quantum mechanics and published them in 1905. Failing to provide a justification for this situation, Einstein hinted that some of the ideas came during his sleep and the documents that led to the elaboration of his thesis were lost because of the war, although he spent that period in a neutral state, in Switzerland. Only in 1909, Einstein got an insignificant position at the university, associate professor of theoretical physics at the University of Zürich, his true career being that of journalist at a Jewish publication for another 10 years. His marriage with Milena Maric lasted until 1919, and their two sons were both diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia, an inherited condition. Besides Poincaré, Einstein took also "inspiration" from the studies of Hendrik Lorentz, Olinto di Pretto, who in 1903 published in the scientific magazine *Atte* the famous formula  $e=mc^2$ , Heinrich Hertz or the Scotsman James Maxwell. In 1953, Edmund Whittaker published a book, "Theory of Relativity by Lorentz and Poincaré", where he demonstrated with documents how the theory had been developed, its history and the primary sources plagiarized by Einstein in his works. He was still alive and his reaction to these accusations was the same as his real contribution in physics: zero.