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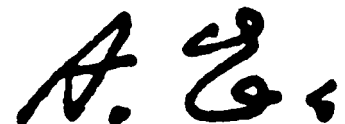
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On Reporters

(pp. 246–247 in translation volume)



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61. On Reporters

[1]

[10 August 1921]

Translation from Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions*, trans. Sonja Bargmann (New York: Crown, 1982).

[p. 1]

INTERVIEWERS

Mein Weltbild, *Amsterdam: Querido Verlag, 1934.*

- [2] To be called to account publicly for everything one has said, even in jest, in an excess of high spirits or in momentary anger, may possibly be awkward, yet up to a point it is reasonable and natural. But to be called to account publicly for what others have said in one's name, when one cannot defend oneself, is indeed a sad predicament. "But to whom does such a thing

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happen?" you will ask. Well, everyone who is of sufficient interest to the public to be pursued by interviewers. You smile incredulously, but I have had plenty of direct experience and will tell you about it. [3]

Imagine the following situation. One morning a reporter comes to you and asks you in a friendly way to tell him something about your friend N. At first you no doubt feel something approaching indignation at such a proposal. But you soon discover that there is no escape. If you refuse to say anything, the man writes: "I asked one of N's supposedly best friends about him. But he prudently avoided my questions. This in itself enables the reader to draw the inevitable conclusions." There is, therefore, no escape, and you give the following information: "Mr. N is a cheerful, straightforward man, much liked by all his friends. He can find a bright side to any situation. His enterprise and industry know no bounds; his job takes up his entire energies. He is devoted to his family and lays everything he possesses at his wife's feet. . . ." [p. 2]

Now for the reporter's version: "Mr. N takes nothing very seriously and has a gift for making himself liked, particularly as he carefully cultivates a hearty and ingratiating manner. He is so completely a slave to his job that he has no time for the considerations of any non-personal subject or for any extracurricular mental activity. He spoils his wife unbelievably and is utterly under her thumb. . . ." [4]

A real reporter would make it much more spicy, but I expect this will be enough for you and your friend N. He reads the above, and some more like it, in the paper next morning, and his rage against you knows no bounds, however cheerful and benevolent his natural disposition may be. The injury done to him gives you untold pain, especially as you are really fond of him.

What's your next step, my friend? If you know, tell me quickly so that I may adopt your method with all speed.