

Einstein, Placenta, the Caves of Lascaux

By David Citino

The natural universe moves to precise rhythms:
Einstein died at 1:15am EST on April 18, 1955,
While speaking frantic German to a New Jersey nurse
Who, though she knew only English, still comprehended
Two hands seizing the sheets, the jaw stricken slack,
Eyes turning up zeros. Each percentage point rise
In the annual national unemployment rate produces
An additional 320 suicides. Nature works in five ways:
Gravity (through the agency of the as-yet-undiscovered,
The graviton), electromagnetism (which can be explained
Only by assuming that the energy of each photon
Equals the frequency of the light multiplied
By Planck's constant h), the strong force (gluons),
The weak force (the Z and W particles we've only just found),
And the human force (or belief), so powerful after all
That it can for example propel women and men
Through the exact replica of the caves of Lascaux
Of the Aurignacio-Perigordian period (c.14,000 - c.13,500 BC),
Located a stone's throw from the real Paleolithic thing,
Already damaged irreparably by the same forces.
All such movements of matter into energy, energy to matter
Are of course influenced by what we know of love and fear,
As when, for example, in my twelfth grade biology class
In Cleveland at St Ignatius' High School
When the Jesuit instructor tossed onto the lab table
The still warm placenta bloody as sunrise
In its clear plastic bag, eight youngsters, 1/3 of the class,
Left the lab and ran directly to the room marked 'Men'.