

SCIENCE, REASON AND CONSCIENCE: A PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNEY FROM THE CHAIR TO THE CREATOR - 6

Three people with different beliefs (a believer in a creator, an agnostic, and an atheist) gather in a room and witness the formation of a chair. The atheist argues that the chair came into being spontaneously, defending this with -in his own way- scientific explanations, while the believer states that this perfect order can only be possible by a creator. The agnostic remains neutral, stating that more evidence is needed.

The believer emphasizes the importance of explaining complex concepts with simple and understandable examples, while the atheist claims that these examples are not enough to explain the delicate order in the universe and that natural events cannot be explained by simple man-made events. The believer, on the other hand, explains **with scientific data** that explaining with simplified examples is a scientific method and that this method makes abstract concepts more easily understood by concretizing them.

While both sides defend their arguments, the agnostic joins the discussion, stating that both sides leave some questions unanswered. The agnostic talks about the difficulty of reaching definite information and emphasizes the need for more research.

SIXTH CHAPTER:

The agnostic's unexpected outburst had completely changed the atmosphere in the room. The believer and the atheist were listening carefully to the agnostic's words and reconsidering their own thoughts. The discussion about the existence of the chair was no longer just a matter of belief, but also included deeper philosophical questions such as the limits of knowledge, skepticism, and the source of order in the universe.

Believer: You and our friend who doesn't accept the existence of a creator are **actually meeting at the same point**. Neither of you believes in a creator, but your difference is that you are "for now" in a state of doubt. While our atheist friend completely rejects it, you say "**maybe it's possible, but let's wait**." You say "**let's wait**," hoping that science will find out how the doorknob goes down or how the pen draws on the notebook, even if it's random. So you're saying, "**in the end, either a creator will be reached, or how the doorknob goes down or how the pen draws on the notebook, even if randomly, will be explained in an objective, concrete way.**"

Look, my skeptical friend, **even though I know you will object**, I want to tell you a story that happened: "*Maybe it will be useful to others who are listening to us, or it will have an effect on you, and so that it won't be said why I didn't tell you.*" Then I will try to address your ideas one by one. Let me try to explain with simple examples:

One day, someone comes to Hazrat Ali (ra) and says:¹

- O Ali, you believe in the existence of the afterlife and live accordingly. But what if, O Ali, "there is no afterlife?"

Hazrat Ali's (ra) answer was:

- **BUT WHAT IF THERE IS...**

Hazrat Ali (ra) continues by saying:

- **If what you say is true, we will all be saved. But if what I say is true, then I will be saved, but you will perish, and perish eternally. Is this doubt worth such a possibility?**

Bediüzzaman Hazratleri has wonderful expressions on this subject:

- If there are nine possibilities of perishing and only one possibility of salvation on a path, it takes a madman who has given up on his life to walk that path.²
- It is known that: A harmless path is preferred to a harmful path - even if it is with one in ten possibilities.³
- Once upon a time - may Allah have mercy on him - an important person was afraid to get on a boat. We came to the Bridge from Istanbul with him one evening. We had to get on the boat. There was no carriage. We had to go to Sultan Eyup. I insisted.

He said: *I'm afraid; maybe we'll sink.*

I said to him: *How many boats do you estimate there are in this Golden Horn?*

He said: *Maybe there are a thousand.*

I said: *How many boats sink in a year?*

He said: *One or two. Some years none sink at all.*

I said: *How many days are there in a year?*

He said: *Three hundred and sixty days.*

I said: *The possibility of sinking that has caught your imagination and touched your fear is one in three hundred and sixty thousand possibilities. Someone who is afraid of such a possibility **cannot be a human, not even an animal.***

I also said to him: *How many years do you estimate you will live?*

He said: *I am old. Maybe there is a possibility that I will live another ten years.*

I said: *Since death is hidden, there is a possibility of dying every day. So, in three thousand six hundred days, your death is possible every day. Look, it's not a one in three hundred thousand possibility like the boat, but maybe your death is possible today with a one in three thousand possibility. Tremble and cry, make your will.*

He came to his senses, and I put him on the boat trembling.⁴

Look, my skeptical friend, there are some **important points** I want to convey. I want to emphasize **how crucial** it is to believe and live according to that belief. These assessments I've made about the risks of disbelief aim to build a bridge between faith and reason.

Hazrat Ali's (ra) response regarding the existence of the afterlife encourages logical deduction based on possibilities. The question "**But what if there is?**" is truly thought-provoking.

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi also emphasizes the eternal happiness that the path of faith and living according to one's beliefs can bring.

Faith **reduces risks**. Both approaches state that it's wise to analyze possibilities and choose a path that carries fewer risks and potentially offers great gains. From this perspective, I can say that believing in a creator is a more logical and safe choice both in this world and the hereafter.

Believing provides a person with inner peace and a sense of security not only in the afterlife but also in this world. As Bediüzzaman Said Nursi points out, when calculating probabilities, the path of faith is much safer and more promising. Considering the great risks (eternal loss) and unhappiness that a non-believer may face, I can say that a life of faith is safer.

Believing in a creator allows a person to get rid of their spiritual burdens and live their life in a more meaningful and peaceful way. The examples of both Hazrat Ali (ra) and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi *clearly reveal the peace and security that faith brings while emphasizing the great risks that disbelief can lead to*. Thus, **a life of faith contributes to a person's purification from inner conflicts, finding peace, and leading a more meaningful life.**

A life of faith not only provides spiritual peace but also makes one's daily life more organized and disciplined. Faith provides a person with a program and order. This order helps the person use their time more efficiently, fulfill their responsibilities, and lead a more balanced life.

Believing in a creator and living a life of faith makes a person's life more organized and disciplined. I share scientific studies and academic publications on this subject in the footnote.⁵ This order contributes to a person finding peace and happiness both in this world and the hereafter. ***Against the risk of disbelief, the order, peace, and happiness that a life of faith brings increase a person's quality of life and save them from burdens, dilemmas, troubles, and unhappiness.***

The agnostic's mind was in turmoil. The believer's words had deeply affected him. However, he still had many questions and doubts. The peace and search for meaning that believing in a creator brings aside, **he wasn't sure** if there was enough evidence to support this belief. The arguments based on probability calculations and the disregard for other belief systems, in particular, had not satisfied the agnostic. The agnostic, grappling with these questions, finally decided to break his silence and express his thoughts...

Agnostic (Neither Believes Nor Disbelieves in a Creator): As I understand it, you are emphasizing the many benefits of the path of faith and worship. However, I disagree with you on a few points and have some questions.

First of all, while I respect the arguments of Hazrat Ali and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, I think these arguments are fundamentally based on a belief system, and when viewed from outside this belief system, they may not be convincing. The existence of the afterlife or belief in a creator are not scientifically proven things. In this case, it is not possible for me to accept these assumptions when making probability calculations.

"What if these assumptions are true?" This is where I adopt an agnostic approach. I accept the "unknowability." Therefore, **I do not find probability calculations based on a belief system**

built on assumptions to be valid. Also, saying that disbelief brings great risks and unhappiness is not true in my opinion. **People without faith can also live meaningful, peaceful, and happy lives.**

I agree that faith provides order and discipline, but I don't think religious beliefs are necessary to achieve this order and discipline. **People can find different ways to create order and discipline in their own lives.** For example, activities such as meditation, sports, and artistic pursuits can also provide similar benefits. **Leading an orderly life and staying away from bad habits is entirely a matter of personal choice and discipline.**

So, it is possible for a non-believer to have an orderly and peaceful life. **Being a believer or a non-believer does not prevent a person from leading their life in an orderly and peaceful way.** It is entirely a matter of personal preference. I respect the "unknowability" and think that both options can be evaluated personally. **Whether to be a believer or not is about how an individual defines their own inner peace and search for meaning.**

"What if there is (an afterlife) and the result is eternal loss?" I understand this argument, and I don't think I missed this point. It is indeed important to ponder the question **"WHAT IF THERE IS?"** but I want to approach this question from a few angles:

First of all, the **"what if there is"** argument is a philosophical argument known as *"Pascal's Wager"*.⁶ This argument states that not believing could result in an eternal loss, so it is more logical to be a believer. However, I think this argument has some weaknesses.

Firstly, *"Pascal's Wager"* targets only a specific belief such as Christianity or Islam. But there are many religions and belief systems in the world. Each has its own beliefs and forms of worship. If one is right and the others are wrong, then those who believe in other belief systems also face the same risk. **In this case, choosing the right belief turns into a kind of gamble.**

Secondly, **faith should be sincere.** Believing solely based on probability calculations may contradict the nature of true faith. If a person **worships only considering the probabilities without truly embracing the belief, this may not be a sincere belief,** and perhaps such a belief may not be accepted by the Creator or the universal power.

The agnostic's words had caused a look of disappointment and **sadness** on the believer's face. After remaining silent for a while, he took a deep breath and slowly began to speak:

Believer: I understand, I understand your doubts. But what if you're wrong? What if there really is a creator and we're ignoring him? **Can you take that risk?**

The believer's question caused a profound silence in the room. The agnostic avoided answering, looking away. The atheist shook his head with a mocking smile.

As the tension in the room grew, the same question echoed in everyone's mind:

"WHAT IF THERE REALLY IS A CREATOR?"

At the same time, everyone was eagerly waiting to hear how the believer would respond to the agnostic's words. Just then, the believer took a deep breath and...

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I HAVE PARTICULARLY PREFERRED TO USE ENGLISH AND WESTERN AUTHORS' WORKS AS SOURCES BELOW.

The reason for this preference is the unfortunately biased attachment of many people to **WESTERN AND ENGLISH SOURCES**. However, in Eastern sources and especially in our own works, there are works admired by Western sources. The works of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur Collection, Imam Ghazali, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina, Ibn Khaldun, and many other valuable names prove this.

¹ This event is attributed to Hazrat Ali (ra). You can learn the truth from the following website:

Sorularla İslamiyet. (2024). Hz. Ali, to someone who does not believe in the afterlife: "If there is none, I have nothing to lose, but if there is, what will you do?". <https://sorularlailamiyet.com/hz-ali-ahrete-inanmayan-birine-eger-yoksa-benim-kaybedecek-bir-seyim-olmaz-ya-varsa-sen-ne>

² From the Risale-i Nur Collection by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi The Mesnevi-i Nuriye

³ From the Risale-i Nur Collection by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi The Word 19: Third Word

⁴ From the Risale-i Nur Collection by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi The Letters 415: Twenty-Ninth Letter / The Sixth Section

⁵ The scientific studies and academic publications that examine the benefits of faith cover a wide range.

Research on the different aspects and effects of faith reveals its potential benefits on psychological, social, and even physical health. Here are some important studies and publications on this topic:

Psychological Well-being:

- **Meaning and Purpose:** Faith can provide individuals with meaning and purpose in their lives. This has been associated with higher life satisfaction, less depression, and anxiety.
 - Park, C. L. (2010). Making sense of the meaning literature: An integrative review of meaning-making and its effects on adjustment to stressful life events. *Psychological Bulletin*.
 - Krause, N. (2003). Meaning in life and mortality. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*.
- **Hope and Optimism:** Faith can increase individuals' feelings of hope and optimism about the future. This can improve their stress-coping skills and increase psychological resilience.
 - Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry*
- **Social Support:** Religious communities can provide social support to individuals and strengthen their sense of belonging. This can have positive effects on psychological well-being.
 - Lim, C., & Putnam, R. D. (2010). Religion, social networks, and life satisfaction. *American Sociological Review*

Physical Health:

- **Immune System:** Some studies suggest that religious beliefs and practices may have positive effects on the immune system.
 - Koenig, H. G., King, D. E., & Carson, V. B. (2012). *Handbook of religion and health* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- **Life Expectancy:** Some research has observed that individuals with religious beliefs tend to live longer than those without.
 - McCullough, M. E., Hoyt, W. T., Larson, D. B., Koenig, H. G., & Thoresen, C. (2000). Religious involvement and mortality: A meta-analytic review. *Health Psychology*

Social Benefits:

- **Moral Behaviors:** Religious beliefs can encourage individuals to engage in moral behaviors and reduce crime rates.
 - Johnson, B. R., Larson, D. B., & Pitts, M. (2000). Religious programs, institutional networks, and social capital for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. *Justice Quarterly*
- **Charity:** Individuals with religious beliefs have been found to be more inclined to engage in charitable giving and volunteer activities.
 - Bekkers, R., & Wiepking, P. (2011). Who gives? A literature review of predictors of charitable giving. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*

These studies and publications show that faith and religiosity can have positive effects on many areas of individuals' lives. Some scientific studies and academic publications on the positive effects of regular prayers like Namaz on physical and mental health are as follows:

- **Prayer and Stress**

- Koenig, H. G., McCullough, M. E., & Larson, D. B. (2001). Handbook of religion and health. Oxford University Press
- Seyyed Mohammad Javad Mortazavi, Seyyed Alireza Mortazavi, Zahra Simbar. (2016). The Effect of Prayer on Stress and Anxiety in Patients Admitted to the Coronary Care Unit: A Randomized Clinical Trial. Journal of Religion and Health
- Mehmet Akif Aydın, Mustafa Sait Özcan, Muhammet Zahit Kotan. (2018). The Effect of Prayer on Stress and Anxiety Levels. Journal of Religious Sciences Academic Research

- **Prayer and Depression**

- Pargament, K. I., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L. M. (2000). The many methods of religious coping: Development and initial validation of the RCOPE. Journal of Clinical Psychology
- Francis, L. J., Robbins, M., Kaldor, P., & Castle, D. (2004). Prayer and psychological health: A study among Anglican clergy. Mental Health, Religion & Culture
- Farkas, K. (2020). WYKORZYSTANIE DUCHOWOŚCI W DIAGNOZIE I INTERWENCJACH (THE USE OF SPIRITUALITY IN DIAGNOSIS AND INTERVENTIONS). Teologia i Moralność, 14(2(26)), 163–172. <https://doi.org/10.14746/TIM.2019.26.2.11>

- **Prayer and Physical Health**

- Aslan, H., & Keskin, H. (2011). The effect of regular praying on pulmonary functions. Journal of Physical Therapy Science
- Öztürk, M., & Şahin, F. (2014). The effects of prayer on blood pressure and heart rate in hypertensive patients. International Journal of Nursing Studies

These studies show that praying can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression levels, lower blood pressure and heart rate, improve respiratory functions, and positively affect physical and mental health in general.

⁶ Pascal's Wager (Pascal's Gamble) is an argument put forth by the 17th-century French philosopher, mathematician, and physicist Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). This argument contends that believing in the existence of a creator is a more rational choice compared to not believing.

The Core Logic of the Argument:

Pascal acknowledges that it's impossible to know for certain whether God exists or not. However, despite this uncertainty, he proposes that believing in God is a more logical choice because the potential gain of believing far outweighs the potential loss of not believing.

If we consider this argument as a gamble (wager):

- If God exists and you believe: You win an infinite reward (heaven).
- If God exists and you don't believe: You face an infinite punishment (hell).
- If God doesn't exist and you believe: You lose very little (you might miss out on some worldly pleasures).
- If God doesn't exist and you don't believe: You gain very little (you can enjoy some worldly pleasures).

According to Pascal, since the probability of winning an infinite reward is much greater than the probability of facing an infinite punishment, believing in a creator is a wiser choice.

Sources and Historical Context:

Pascal's Wager first appeared in his work titled "Pensées" (Thoughts), published in 1669 after his death. This work is a compilation of Pascal's thoughts on various subjects.

Since its publication, Pascal's Wager has been a widely debated argument, subject to various interpretations. Some find this argument persuasive for believing in a creator, while others argue that it is logically and theologically weak.

For Further Information on the Topic:

- Pascal's Wager - Wikipedia: https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pascal%27%C4%B1n_Kumar%C4%B1
- Pascal's Wager: A Pragmatic Argument for Belief in God - Liz Jackson: <https://onculanalitikfelsefe.com/pascalin-kumari-tanriya-inanc-icin-pragmatik-bir-arguman-liz-jackson/>
- Pascal's Wager on God - Paul Saka (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy): <https://onculanalitikfelsefe.com/pascalin-tanriya-dair-kumari-paul-saka-internet-encyclopedia-of-philosophy/>

These resources will be helpful for more in-depth information about Pascal's Wager.