

## SCIENCE, REASON AND CONSCIENCE: A PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNEY FROM THE CHAIR TO THE CREATOR - 15

The Deist's words had suddenly shifted the atmosphere in the room. As everyone tried to digest the thoughts brought by this new perspective, a deep silence prevailed. The Believer's gaze was locked onto the Deist, as if he wanted to delve deeper into this fresh outlook.

Just as the discussion had reached its peak with the Believer's striking question, the arrival of an unexpected guest added a new dimension. The Deist, confidently voicing his stance, acknowledged the existence of a Creator but questioned the role of religions.<sup>1</sup> This bold assertion served as an unexpected response to the Believer's inquiry.

The Deist's claim, "There is a Creator, but religions are man-made," took both the Atheist and Agnostic by surprise. The Believer, however, remained cautious in the face of this new idea. Where would Deism lead the discussion? How would this new perspective influence their thoughts on the existence of a Creator and the role of religion?

With the Deist's involvement, the debate had become even more complex and exhilarating. As different beliefs and doubts clashed, the search for "truth" deepened. All eyes were on the Deist. His ideas would shape the next stop in this philosophical journey.

Be prepared, because this intellectual adventure will soon reveal the "truth" in all its clarity...

**Deist:** You've reached the pivotal point in this discussion. Perhaps now is the time to offer you a new perspective.

**Believer:** (Turning to the Deist) Welcome. You say you have a different viewpoint to present. How will you approach this topic?

**Deist:** Yes, I do believe in a Creator. However, this Creator is one who created the universe and then withdrew. Natural processes govern the universe automatically. There is no constant intervention, as religions claim.<sup>2</sup>

**Believer:** That's an interesting approach. While you acknowledge the existence of a Creator, you seem to reject the necessity of religion. I'm curious to hear your explanation.

**Deist:** Of course. I also believe in the existence of a Creator. It seems illogical to me that this universe, this flawless order, came about by chance. But I don't think the Creator intervenes in the universe after its creation. The Creator established the laws and then withdrew, much like a watchmaker who builds a watch, winds it up, and then observes it running.<sup>3</sup>

**Believer:** So, you're saying the Creator has no relationship with us?

**Deist:** Yes, exactly. The Creator left the universe to function under its own laws after creating it. The Creator does not concern itself with our daily lives. I don't see the need for religion, because I believe that through reason and logic, humans can come to understand the existence of the Creator.<sup>4</sup>

**Believer:** What about the meaning of life? If the Creator has left us to our own devices, does that mean our existence has no purpose?

**Deist:** We create the meaning of our lives ourselves. Exploring the universe, gaining knowledge, helping others, engaging in art—these are things that can bring meaning to our lives. Instead of expecting the Creator to give us a purpose, we should define our own.<sup>5</sup>

I respect your faith, Believer. However, for me, reason and logic come before belief. While I acknowledge the existence of a Creator, I reject the necessity of religion. Everyone is free to choose their own beliefs, and I have made my choice.<sup>6</sup>

Reason and logic are the most valuable assets we have as humans. Through them, we can search for truth, make our own choices, and add meaning to our lives. Instead of waiting for the Creator to hand us everything, we should strive to realize our own potential.<sup>7</sup>

**Believer:** But doesn't this mean you are completely excluding the Creator from human life? Will belief in a Creator remain just a theory?

**Deist:** Believing in a Creator is important for understanding the origins of the universe. However, this belief doesn't need to dictate a lifestyle as religions and rituals impose. The Creator is merely the initiator of the universe, and the universe operates through the laws of nature.<sup>8</sup>

**Believer:** But if the Creator is only an initiator, where will we find guidance for humanity? How will we establish our moral values?

**Deist:** Moral values arise from human nature and the needs of society. Religions have systematized these values, but they are not commands from the Creator; they are the result of human experience.<sup>9</sup>

**Believer:** I see. However, accepting the Creator as merely active in the beginning leaves deep questions about His existence and wisdom unanswered. If there is a Creator, wouldn't the idea of a universe in constant relationship with Him be more coherent?

**Deist:** At this point, I think of the Creator more as a philosopher. He arranged the workings of the universe and then observed them. This doesn't lessen the respect for the Creator; in fact, it emphasizes how perfectly He created the universe.<sup>10</sup>

**Believer:** But what about the precise order and harmony in the cosmos? Can these really be the product of processes left to run on their own?

**Deist:** The complex order and harmony are the result of natural laws. These laws were established by the Creator at the beginning and have governed the universe ever since. After setting this mechanism in place, there was no need for the Creator to intervene.<sup>11</sup>

The Atheist took a deep breath, nodded, and rubbed his hands together. He remained silent, as if weighed down by the words, his gaze momentarily drifting off in thought. The Agnostic, on the other hand, had a satisfied smile on his face, nodding constantly to show his agreement with the speaker's ideas. It was as if he was not only approving of what was being said but also discovering a deeper understanding within his own thoughts. His eyes were focused on the heart of the discussion, nodding continuously. He refocused his attention and continued to watch the conversation with curiosity.

**Believer:** First and foremost, I must clearly express this: From the beginning, I have carefully questioned every piece of information you've shared with me in our dialogues. I've listened to you attentively, and throughout this process, I've aimed to uncover the "truth" using your own words. In doing so, I've scrutinized your statements by referring to your own sources. I appreciate your honest and sincere responses.

However, before we continue, I want to emphasize the following point: From what I've observed, you, along with our Deist and Agnostic friends, seem to be indirectly supporting our Atheist friend. There's a recurring trace of atheistic thought behind all your arguments. When people showed reluctance towards atheism, agnosticism was introduced to keep atheism alive through a softer approach. And for those who were unwilling to accept agnosticism and insisted on believing in a Creator, the Deist perspective was presented. In this way, atheistic thought continued to be supported, indirectly leading everything back to atheism.

I can't say whether you're aware of this, but perhaps you are. Maybe I'm wrong, but this is my personal observation.

Deist thinking, in my view, is so incompatible with logic, science, and knowledge that you might not realize it because of other underlying thoughts or feelings. By "other thoughts," I mean this: The majority of people who have recognized the inevitability of believing in a Creator have sought a way to escape the responsibilities and obligations that come with this belief. They found solace in Deism, as it freed them from the constraints of religion, prophets, holy books, and rules, which they found burdensome. This approach was comforting for them because they believed they could avoid accountability and responsibility. Therefore, they quickly embraced Deist ideas without questioning them.

Now, for the sake of our audience, let's address this completely irrational, inconsistent, and uninformed line of thought together. I say this for the sake of our audience because you've stubbornly resisted and worn me out. You keep bringing up the same points over and over again. Now, the Deist is repeating the same argument: The workings of the universe are governed by natural processes and laws. I've already rejected this notion and refuted it with evidence. I believe you've accepted it but cannot admit or confirm it. Going back to the beginning again and again tires me, and your stubbornness is testing my patience.

I'd like to remind you of an example frequently emphasized by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi in the *Risale-i Nur* Collection:<sup>12</sup>

*"They said to the ostrich: 'You have wings, fly!' But it tucked its wings and said, 'I am a camel,' and didn't fly. However, it fell into the hunter's trap. Thinking the hunter wouldn't see it, it buried its head in the sand. Yet, it left its large body exposed, making itself an easy target for the hunter. Then they said to it: 'If you claim to be a camel, carry a load!' This time it spread its wings and said, 'I am a bird,' escaping the burden of carrying the load. But without protection or food, it became an easy target for hunters."*

Your situation is no different. As Bediüzzaman Said Nursi also expressed in the *Risale-i Nur* Collection, *"Like an ostrich, you neither fully become a bird nor a camel."*<sup>13</sup> Despite the internal contradiction you're facing, you refuse to give up this stubbornness for the sake of certain emotions.

In previous discussions, I shared Hazrat Ali's (ra) 'What if' argument with you. When that argument comes to mind, you bury your head in the sand, just like the ostrich, trying to ignore

it. But even if your head is in the sand, your whole body remains exposed. "Reality" will catch up with you, and you will pay the price for not aligning with these truths.

Now, let's take your arguments, one by one, and see together how illogical, inconsistent, and devoid of knowledge they are. It won't just be you, but everyone around us who will notice this.

The Believer's confident words and his straightforward dismissal of Deism left the Deist utterly astonished. His eyes widened, and his gaze, filled with disbelief and surprise, locked onto the Believer. A sense of curiosity, mixed with a slight unease, began to grow within him as he eagerly awaited the arguments the Believer was about to present.

**Believer:** I understand your perspective, and I'm sure you've given it some thought. However, I must say that I believe this view, this approach, is a "misconception," and it indicates a failure to fully grasp the "truth."

**Deist:** What do you mean by that? How can you make such a definitive statement?

**Believer:** My words are not directed at you personally, but at this idea. You're attributing to the Creator something you wouldn't even accept for yourself. Would you be okay with someone else taking credit for a work you created or giving it away to someone else? Can it be reasonable to think that the Creator made the universe and then withdrew, leaving everything to those within it? Is that logical? Isn't it a mistake to attribute to the Creator something you wouldn't even accept for yourself?

We can also examine your watchmaker analogy. Let's say the watchmaker creates a perfect watch. Then someone comes along and says, "Look, the springs and gears are what make this watch run. The watchmaker built it, but then stepped aside, and now it's all these parts doing the work." Would the watchmaker allow that? Even if the watch runs on its own, the watchmaker wouldn't let others think it operates without his involvement. He would constantly make interventions to remind others of his craftsmanship. Not attributing the watch's functioning to the watchmaker would mean ignoring his effort and will. It's hard to imagine that the watchmaker would allow such a situation.

**Deist:** I had never thought of it this way before. The ideas we proposed seemed right; we thought logic demanded it. It's truly surprising that we couldn't see this.

**Believer:** At the beginning, when I called it a "misconception," you objected, but now you acknowledge this as well. However, the matter doesn't end here. With this line of thinking, you are also attributing divine qualities to the workings of the universe.

First of all, I must clarify that the Creator does not accept any partners in the universe He created. This is an absolute principle.

Secondly, saying, "The Creator made the universe and then withdrew, leaving it to operate on its own," is actually quite similar to the arguments used by atheists. In other words, claiming that beings function independently, relying on their own properties, through natural processes and laws, aligns with the atheist viewpoint. In this case, you would only believe in a Creator to answer the question of "who started it all," but then leave everything else to the laws of

nature. However, claiming that “the universe continues to operate on its own” implies that beings possess the ability to function by themselves, which is a major misconception. From the start of our conversation, we have delved deeply into this topic and clearly demonstrated that this view is incorrect.

Everything in the universe constantly needs the Creator’s intervention. The order of the universe is continuously and actively guided by the Creator. It's like the materials used to build a chair: a hammer has the ability to strike, and a saw has the function to cut, but these tools cannot operate on their own, nor can they use their functions by themselves. Similarly, the beings in the universe cannot function without the constant intervention of their Creator. This shows that the Creator is continuously active, a divine reality that fills every moment of the universe with His involvement.

The Deist, unable to hide his astonishment, stared at the Believer. Inside, it felt as if a storm was raging; the ideas he had believed in and thought were logical for years were now suddenly being questioned. This new perspective had deeply affected him.

The others observing the discussion had also fallen silent. The Believer’s words had sparked new questions in their minds as well. Whispering began: "How did we miss such an obvious truth?" and "Thinking that the Creator intervenes in everything at every moment actually makes much more sense."

Noticing the Deist's and the others' astonishment, the Believer glanced at them with a slight smile. Then, after taking a deep breath, he continued:

**Believer:** If the Creator had made the universe and then left it to its own devices, who would be maintaining this perfect order? If natural laws are responsible, then what will behind those laws governs them? Do you really believe that this order could sustain itself by chance, without any intervention?

The Deist hesitated for a moment, taken aback by the Believer's questioning approach. He could feel that the views he had confidently defended up until now were about to be dismantled. It was as if all the certainties he held were crumbling, making way for deep introspection.

The silence in the room grew deeper as these unexpected questions took hold. The Atheist and the Agnostic, without looking at each other, weighed the weight of these new questions within themselves. Whispers spread throughout the room: "Why hadn't we thought of this before? Could this really be true?"

**Deist:** (With a look of disbelief) I hadn't thought about it this deeply... These questions had never crossed my mind.

As the Believer's calm yet resolute gaze met the Deist's eyes filled with astonishment, the room fell into complete silence. Everyone was trying to figure out how to interpret this new development. The

discussion had taken an unexpected turn, and now, everyone eagerly awaited the answers to these questions.

**Believer:** “If you seek the truth, keep questioning. For a sincere search will ultimately lead one to the truth.”

These words seemed to cut through the air sharply, dividing the atmosphere once more. The tension in the room noticeably rose as everyone, curious about what would unfold next, felt the weight of this pivotal moment. No one could shake off the impact of the conversation, as the same question echoed in everyone’s mind: “Could it really be true?”

Breaking the silence, the Believer continued softly:

**Believer:** My Deist friend, we’re only at the beginning of our discussion. So far, we’ve touched on just a few fundamental points. In the next section, we’ll explore the other misconceptions of Deist thought together. It will be an enlightening journey for all of us.

And so, the fifteenth chapter ended, leaving the audience with new questions and a sense of curiosity. In the sixteenth chapter, the deeper aspects of Deist thought would be thoroughly examined, and the Believer would present arguments that would further shake the beliefs of the Deist and the others. Where this philosophical journey would ultimately lead remained to be seen...

## **TO BE CONTINUED (GOD WILLING)**

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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.

<sup>1</sup> In the first section, we detailed the perspectives of the Atheist and the Agnostic. We presented both the "statements" and "explanations" of their views. Similarly, we will now present the statements and explanations of the Deist:

- **Deist’s Statement (Believing in a Creator, but Rejecting the Necessity of Religion):** "There is a Creator who brought about this perfect order and creation; however, after creating the universe, this Creator does not intervene, and the universe continues to operate according to its own laws. Therefore, religions and prophets might simply be social constructs invented by humans."
- **Explanation:** According to the Deist perspective, the existence and operation of the universe were initiated by a conscious Creator. However, after creating the universe, the Creator does not intervene, and the universe continues to function according to its natural laws. Deists generally believe that organized religions, prophets, and holy books are human inventions and were not revealed by a Creator. For them, the workings of the universe can be explained through scientific laws, and while they acknowledge the existence of a Creator, they do not believe in the necessity of religion or worship. This belief represents a system of faith that accepts a Creator while consciously avoiding religious dogmas.

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Deism has been explored by various thinkers throughout history and interpreted in different ways. Some key works that describe the fundamental principles of Deism include:

1. *The Age of Reason* (1794-1807) - Thomas Paine
2. *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740) - David Hume
3. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) - David Hume
4. *Common Sense* (1776) - Thomas Paine
5. *Deism: A Revolution in Religion, A Revolution in You* (2016) - Bob Johnson
6. *God and Natural Order: Physics, Philosophy, and the Universe* (2021) - Paul Davies

<sup>2</sup> The Deist view, which posits that a Creator exists but withdrew after creating the universe and left it to be governed by natural processes, is discussed in the following sources:

- Buckley, M. J. (2002). *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*. Yale University Press.
- Holmes, R. (2009). *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science*. HarperPress.
- Armstrong, K. (2000). *The Battle for God*. Ballantine Books.
- Paine, T. (1794). *The Age of Reason*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Tindal, M. (1730). *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. London: M. A. Barker.
- Voltaire. (1764). *Dictionnaire Philosophique*.
- Diderot, D. (1746). *Pensées Philosophiques*.

<sup>3</sup> Deist thought, which argues that the Creator made the universe and then left it to operate under its own laws without further intervention, is explored in numerous historical texts:

- Armstrong, Karen. (1993). *A History of God*. Ballantine Books.
- Royle, Edward. (2004). *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791-1866*. Manchester University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Deism posits that the Creator, after creating the universe, left it to operate according to natural laws and does not intervene in our daily lives. Deists reject the necessity of religion, asserting that humans can arrive at the existence of a Creator through reason and logic. This view is also discussed in:

- Buckley, M. J. (2002). *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*. Yale University Press.

<sup>5</sup> The idea that the meaning of life must be created by ourselves—through exploring the universe, gaining knowledge, helping others, and engaging in art—comes from Deist origins. The view that individuals should determine their own purpose rather than expecting it from the Creator is emphasized in:

- Shermer, M. (2018). *Heavens on Earth: The Scientific Search for the Afterlife, Immortality, and Utopia*. Henry Holt and Co.

<sup>6</sup> Deist thought accepts the existence of a Creator while rejecting the necessity of religion. This approach emphasizes individual freedom of belief and supports the right of everyone to choose their own faith. This view is discussed in detail in the following sources:

- Campbell, Colin. (1975). *Toward a Sociology of Irreligion*. Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Armstrong, Karen. (2009). *The Case for God*. Alfred A. Knopf.
  - Buckley, M. J. (2002). *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*. Yale University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Deist philosophy advocates for reason and logic as the most important tools in the search for truth. It argues that individuals should realize their own potential, rather than waiting for everything to be provided by the Creator, and add meaning to life through reason and logic. These ideas are also reflected in the works of the following authors:

- Shermer, M. (2000). *How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God*. W. H. Freeman.
- Harris, Sam. (2004). *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Dennett, Daniel C. (2006). *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. Viking.

<sup>8</sup> This view is also expressed in various sources, including:

- Holmes, Richard. (2009). *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science*. HarperPress.
- Taves, Ann. (2016). *Revelatory Events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths*. Princeton University Press.
- Ferris, Timothy. (1992). *The Mind's Sky: Human Intelligence in a Cosmic Context*. Bantam.

<sup>9</sup> The idea that moral values arise from human nature and societal needs, with religions systematizing these values, but that they are not commands from the Creator, is discussed in the following works:

- Shermer, Michael. (2015). *The Moral Arc: How Science and Reason Lead Humanity Toward Truth, Justice, and Freedom*. Henry Holt and Co.
- Harris, Sam. (2010). *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*. Free Press.

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- De Waal, Frans. (2006). *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>10</sup> The view that the Creator is like a philosopher who set the laws of the universe and then stepped back to observe the natural processes at work is discussed in the following sources:

- Stenger, Victor J. (2008). *God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist*. Prometheus Books.
- Schoen, Edward L. (2005). *Religious Extremism: A Brief History*. Prometheus Books.
- Wright, Robert. (2009). *The Evolution of God*. Little, Brown and Company.

<sup>11</sup> The notion that the complex order and harmony of the universe are the result of natural laws set in motion by the Creator, with no need for constant intervention, is explored in the following texts:

- Haught, John F. (2000). *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*. Westview Press.
- Peters, Ted. (2008). *God in the Age of Science: Can the Divine Be Reconciled with the Modern World?*. Yale University Press.
- Dacey, Austin. (2009). *The Secular Conscience: Why Belief Belongs in Public Life*. Prometheus Books.

<sup>12</sup> From the Risale-i Nur Collection by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi the Flashes 79: Thirteenth Lem'a / EIGHTEENTH SIGN

<sup>13</sup> From the Risale-i Nur Collection by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi the Mesnevi-i Nuriye 81 : Katre / Katre's Addendum