

## SCIENCE, REASON AND CONSCIENCE: A PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNEY FROM THE CHAIR TO THE CREATOR – 22

### "The Mask of Nature Falls: Creator or Work of Art?"

The silence that echoed within the room was not merely stillness; it was the manifestation of growing questions and uncertainties in the minds of those present. The Believer's words had challenged deeply ingrained perceptions about the reality of nature, stirring a storm of thought in everyone's mind. This was far more than an ordinary conversation; it was a confrontation with the profound meaning of existence. While each person felt the reverberation of these striking expressions within their inner world, the calm and determination on the Believer's face hinted at the unspoken power of the words yet to come.

The ticking of the clock on the wall seemed to resonate louder in this intense atmosphere, as if time itself had slowed down. The silence was not an end but rather a mental preparation—a deep anticipation before the unveiling of a great truth.

**Believer:** Let it not be me, but Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, who explains what nature truly is.

Bediüzzaman states, "**Nature can only be an art, but it cannot be an artist**". The essence of all the debates we are having here today lies hidden within this statement. Now, let us together question the reality of **the concept** you call "nature."

With these words, the atmosphere of the room shifted once again. The Believer, with a composed demeanor, reached for their bag. From within, they carefully retrieved a book with the title "**On Nature**" embossed in golden letters on its cover. The mere presence of the book altered the room's ambiance; it was as though each page offered a glimpse into the truth.

The Believer began turning the pages with great care. Their fingers moved as if searching for the most precious jewel in a treasure chest. Finally, they stopped at a particular passage, as though they had found precisely what was needed. As their gaze fixed on the selected lines, the serenity on their face reflected the weight of the words about to be spoken.

The earlier silence in the room had now given way to intense focus and anticipation. Everyone waited, hoping that the words they were about to hear would provide answers to the questions in their minds. This moment was not merely the start of a narrative; it was the first step for each individual in confronting their own beliefs.

This journey into the reality of nature was far more than a clash of ideas or an attempt to persuade. **It was a quest for truth, a path for those searching for light in the darkness.** Everything was about to take on a new dimension. **Was nature truly a deity, or was it the masterpiece of a divine order?** This question once again invited the minds in the room to a profound inquiry.

**And so, the curtain was slowly being drawn back...**

The Believer took a deep breath, grasping the book with both hands. Looking at each person in the room, they began to read carefully, their voice deliberate and emphasizing every meaning. It resonated calmly yet resolutely, imprinting the words like beams of light into the listeners' minds. This was not merely the reading of a text; it was an invitation to deep contemplation.

***“The imaginary and insubstantial thing that Naturalists call Nature, if it has an external reality, can at the very most be work of art; it cannot be the Artist. It is an embroidery, and cannot be the Embroiderer. It is a set of decrees; it cannot be the Issuer of the decrees. It is a body of the laws of creation, and cannot be the Lawgiver. It is but a created screen to the dignity of God, and cannot be the Creator. It is passive and created, and cannot be a Creative Maker. It is a law, not a power, and cannot possess power. It is the recipient, and cannot be the source.”<sup>1</sup>***

These words pierced through the claims that nature is a creator, like spears striking at the core of such ideas, sparking new questions in the minds of everyone present. This was not just a passage but a luminous mirror reflecting the truth-and everyone could see their own reflection within it.

The words read by the Believer echoed throughout the room, like a bolt of lightning striking from mind to mind. Each word seemed to be an invisible hand touching the hearts of the listeners, causing a profound mental upheaval. In that moment, the Atheist jumped up reflexively, his eyes wide, both hands covering his mouth, overwhelmed by the weight of the words. It was as if his entire being wanted to shout the magnificence of these expressions, yet the words were caught in his throat. Only his hands and the light in his eyes conveyed the admiration he felt. It was evident that these words had illuminated his mind; the answer he had been searching for seemed to have materialized in the form of these statements.

The Agnostic, as if suddenly struck, brought his hands to his head. The deep astonishment on his face, merging with his posture, resembled a living portrait. His eyes were lost in a whirlwind of thoughts; every word he heard dismantled old constructs in his mind, replacing them with an entirely new order. He was caught between awe and inquiry; each phrase seeped into the long-unfilled voids of his understanding. It was clear that these words were opening the door to a new world for him.

The Deist, meanwhile, sat silently, gazing at the Believer. There was profound admiration in his eyes-an admiration not only for the power of the words but also for the unshakable faith of the one who spoke them. His gaze reflected gratitude, the kind felt by someone who recognizes both the wisdom and the profound truth hidden within the words.

***These individuals were no ordinary listeners; they were thinkers, readers, debaters, and analysts. The words read by the Believer were not mere eloquent phrases; they carried profound meanings and powerful truths. Each of them, with their intellectual depth, immediately grasped the value, precision, and depth of these statements.*** The words touched not only their ears but also their hearts and minds, quenching the thirst of their truth-seeking souls, drop by precious drop. These words reverberated through the books they had read, the ideas they had debated, and the dreams they had shaped in their thoughts, clashing with, weighing against, and evaluating those ideas. The atmosphere in the room had transformed, and they sat silent and in

awe, as if listening to a melody they had never heard before. Each word was reshaping itself in the light of an unparalleled truth.

Bediüzzaman's statement possessed a conciseness that transcended the volumes written by great thinkers enshrined in their memories. **At that moment, the Atheist, Agnostic, and Deist realized that the issues debated across countless pages had been distilled into a single formula.** This excerpt from Said Nursi's "*On Nature*" shone like a gem, encapsulating the essence of those discussions in a few luminous words. Each word carried not only its meaning but also the elegance and wholeness of truth itself.

**The Atheist's sudden leap, unable to suppress his admiration and covering his mouth with his hands, stemmed from the clarity with which these words brought order to the chaos in his mind. The Agnostic's gesture of placing his hands on his head and sinking into thought reflected his astonishment at seeing the ideas he had read and debated expressed so concisely. The Deist's silent, admiring gaze at the Believer expressed his deep appreciation for the truth behind these words.**

These individuals understood that these were not mere sentences but mirrors of truth offering formulas to humanity's profound questions. Their moment of enlightenment left them in awe of a truth they had never encountered before. This was not merely a statement but an invitation to deep contemplation. The atmosphere in the room had shifted; the words offered them a glimpse of truth, leaving a profound mark.

At that moment, everyone in the room was experiencing a deep personal reckoning. This reckoning was a turning point, a blend of admiration and the silent sprouting of questions. The clear light of truth illuminated minds previously shrouded in darkness, carrying them to new horizons. What the Believer had read was not merely a speech but the herald of an inner revolution; the words were the elegant crystallization of truth. Now was the time to delve into the depth of these concise expressions and uncover the meanings between the lines. With determination in his eyes, the Believer continued speaking, drawing back the curtain on the truth:

**Believer:** Let us embark on a journey guided by the words of Bediüzzaman to uncover the profound meaning behind these statements and seek answers to the questions in our minds:

In this text, Bediüzzaman presents a powerful critique against the materialists (Tabiiyyun) who attempt to view and explain nature, which they call "tabiat," as a "creator." Through various examples, he illustrates that nature is not a creative force as claimed but rather a "work" or a "result" that has itself been created. Let us analyze each sentence and explore these claims with examples:

***“The imaginary and insubstantial thing that Naturalists call Nature, if it has an external reality, can at the very most be work of art; it cannot be the Artist.”***

This statement forms the cornerstone of Bediüzzaman's argument, and the subsequent explanations build upon this foundational thought. The phrase introduces a logical framework that demonstrates nature's inability to function as a creator. **The central idea expressed here is that the concept of "nature" is either improperly defined or misunderstood.**

Late Mehmet Kirkinci offers an insightful example:

*"What is this thing you call nature? Let us examine it together.*

*Is nature this world? If you say no, then let's set the world aside.*

*Is it the Milky Way? If not, we'll set that aside too.*

*Then, is it the stars? If you say no again, we'll set the stars aside as well.*

*If we isolate each part of the universe, asking, 'Is this nature?' and each time the answer is 'no,' then what remains?*

*If removing all these parts means the universe itself ceases to exist, is the 'nature' you speak of not merely a label, devoid of true existence?*

***And if you claim nature exists independently of the universe, we already know that reality as 'Allah.' But Allah has no name or attribute called 'nature.'"***

Bediüzzaman similarly questions what "nature" truly is. In modern usage, the term nature often refers to the physical world and the order operating within it. However, he emphasizes that this concept is an abstract designation and does not constitute an independent "entity."

As Mehmet Kirkinci's example illustrates, when we attempt to concretely define nature, it becomes apparent that it is merely a term encompassing the components of the physical universe. Whether we examine the Earth, stars, galaxies, living beings, or elements, none of these individually qualify as "nature." **Thus, "nature" is a label denoting a sense of unity and operation; it cannot exist as a self-sustaining, independent creator.**

To better understand this, let us consider the example of a car.

First, we point to the tires and ask, "Is this a car?" The answer is "No."

Next, we indicate the steering wheel, and the answer remains "No."

We then point to the body of the car, and again, we receive the same response-it is merely a part of the car. Finally, we turn to the engine. "Is this the car?" The answer is still "No."

If we were to set all these parts aside, nothing would remain. **So, where did the car go?**

From this, we understand that what we call a car is the sum of its parts coming together as a whole. It is not an independent, tangible entity. **The term "car" is a concept we assign to the assembly of these components; it does not exist as a stand-alone physical object. Similarly, "nature" is not an independent entity; it is merely a term we use to describe the order and unity we observe in the universe.**

In this context, Bediüzzaman's central argument is that the concept referred to as "nature" is neither a concrete nor an independent entity but rather a mental construct or an abstract idea. If, in some way, an external reality were attributed to "nature," that reality could only be a work of art, not a creator, regulator, or absolute force.

The deep inquiries into the reality of nature continued to open new doors in minds while simultaneously shaking deeply ingrained beliefs. As the Believer's words marked the beginning

of an intellectual journey, each individual reflected on the resonance of those words within themselves. Yet this quest for truth was not only about acceptance or admiration but also brought with it the need for questioning and challenging. It was at this precise moment that the Agnostic, who had been listening with silent attention, stepped forward with their own questions-questions that seemed like an invitation to delve even deeper into the intricacies of truth.

**Agnostic:** You said, “If a reality (hakikat-ı hariciye) is to be attributed to nature, it can only be a work of art.” However, isn’t this conclusion of “**a work of art**” itself a kind of presumption or a personal inference? By arriving at the idea of a “**work of art**,” it seems you are directly leading us toward the notion of an “**artist**.” Doesn’t this create a scenario where you’re imposing a perspective or guiding us toward your own view?

The Believer, after listening attentively to the Agnostic’s remarks, began speaking with a slight smile:

**Believer:** Let’s first clarify this: From Bediüzzaman Said Nursi’s perspective, the concept of “**nature**” is treated as a “**hypothesis**” or a “**construct**” used to explain the order and functioning of the universe. However, it is emphasized that this concept does not represent an independent reality or a tangible entity. My conclusion that it is a “**work of art**” is a direct reflection of the observed order and aesthetic harmony.

After taking a deep breath and pausing briefly, the Believer continued:

**Believer:** If we accept nature as a reality (hakikat-ı hariciye), the order, dynamism, aesthetic harmony, and precise structure inherent in its essence inevitably lead us to the notion of design. This is not a presumption but a natural conclusion arising from the observable order and meaning-it is a necessity. Recognizing something as a work of art means acknowledging that it is too harmonious and meaningful to have emerged randomly. This is not a matter of persuasion but a straightforward logical reasoning. If what we call nature represents the universe, then it is a result-a creation.

Art is a structure that embodies order, aesthetics, and purpose. A work of art has the following characteristics:

- **It serves a purpose** (e.g., a painting conveys a message or holds meaning).
- **It follows an order** (e.g., an architectural structure is designed within specific principles).
- **It exhibits an aesthetic, precise, and refined composition** (e.g., a musical piece relies on melody and rhythm).

These features align with the observable qualities of nature: its order, aesthetics, dynamism, and intricate structure. However, art cannot exist on its own; its existence

depends on the knowledge, will, and skill of an artist. In other words, art is the product of an artist; it cannot come into being spontaneously.

When we examine nature, we observe these key characteristics:

- **Order:** The physical laws of the universe (e.g., gravity, thermodynamics) and biological processes (e.g., cellular functions) display remarkable organization.
- **Dynamic, Precise, and Intricate Design:** Processes such as the structure of DNA or the formation of galaxies exhibit extraordinary precision and complexity.
- **Aesthetic:** Natural beauty (e.g., a flower, a sunset) carries both visual and functional aesthetics.

These features make nature appear as a work of art. However, **a work of art cannot explain its own existence**; its presence necessarily requires the deliberate intervention and will of an artist. **Qualities such as order, aesthetics, and harmony are not the products of random processes but rather of conscious design.** Therefore, the order and beauty we observe in nature compel us to acknowledge the existence of a conscious artist who created it.

Speaking in a calmer tone, the Believer continued:

**Believer:** According to Bediüzzaman, what we refer to as "nature" is far from being a creative force; rather, it is a reflection of a greater truth that establishes order. If we were to accept "**nature**" as a creator or an absolute power, we would face two primary problems: **ontological inadequacy** and the **explanation of causal processes**.

Turning his gaze toward those in the room to reinforce his point, the Believer elaborated:

**Believer: 1. ONTOLOGICAL INADEQUACY:**

Let's first clarify what "**ontological inadequacy**" means: It refers to the insufficiency of an entity's existence or intrinsic nature (its inherent structure) to explain a specific function, role, or state. In philosophy, "**ontology**" is the study of existence and deals with the nature (essence), fundamental characteristics, and reality of being. Therefore, ontological inadequacy highlights the inability of an entity, due to inherent deficiencies, to fulfill a specific role or function attributed to it.

To say something is "ontologically inadequate" means:

- a. The entity, by its nature, lacks the qualities required to perform a particular function on its own.
- b. Its nature is shown to be insufficiently robust, comprehensive, or coherent to support a claim or theory.

**Illustrative Examples:**

**a. The Nature Example:**

The claim that nature is a creative force suffers from "ontological inadequacy" because:

- **Nature itself lacks essential qualities of a creative being, such as consciousness, will, or power.**
- Therefore, it falls short of explaining the intricate order and precision observed in the universe.

**b. The Clock Example:**

If it were claimed that a clock regulates itself and came into existence independently, it would be considered "ontologically inadequate" because:

- The clock's orderly function requires design and intention.
- A clock cannot design itself or bring itself into being.

The assertion that "nature" possesses the consciousness, will, and power necessary to create and sustain the order of the universe is ontologically inadequate. This is because nature itself displays the characteristics of a work of art-orderly and harmonious in structure. Just as a painting cannot draw itself, it is logically contradictory to claim that nature, on its own, could exist and maintain such delicate and intricate order.

The Believer's explanations had left a profound impact on those in the room, with each word attentively absorbed. However, the excitement sparked by these words was not limited to admiration; it also ignited a desire for questions and debate. At this moment, the Deist, driven by an eager curiosity, sat up straight and joined the conversation. The brightness in his eyes revealed the rapid formation of thoughts in his mind.

**Deist:** "Please forgive me, but these examples have opened new horizons in my thinking. Your metaphors of the clock and nature are quite compelling, but could we expand the scope of these examples further? Specifically, could you elaborate more concretely on the connection between nature's qualities-such as aesthetics, order, and precision-and the concepts of art and artist? Additional explanations would help me visualize this connection more clearly in my mind."

This unexpected interjection recaptured everyone's attention, signaling that the discussion was about to delve into a deeper dimension. The Believer, nodding with a slight smile, began to speak again.

**Believer:** Even if nature were to be accepted as a "hakikat-ı hariciye" (an external reality)-that is, endowed with an independent existence-it becomes evident that it lacks the capacity to establish and sustain order. Let's explore this with examples:

**a. The Clock Example:**

Imagine a perfectly functioning clock. Its gears, cogs, and springs operate in harmony to measure time precisely. The term "clock" is simply a name we assign to the whole entity formed by these physical components. However, the concept of a "clock" does not exist independently; it is merely a construct or designation we hold in our minds. The reality of the clock lies in the representation of order created by its gears, cogs, springs, and other parts working together.

If we were to attribute reality (existence) to the concept of a clock, it would only represent the organized structure and functioning it exhibits. This orderly system is a result-a creation-and can be called a "work of art." Yet no one would claim that the clock itself created this system. The clock lacks consciousness, will, knowledge, or power; thus, it is ontologically incapable of producing such artistry.

The existence and operation of the clock clearly point to its design and creation by a clockmaker. The clock can only be explained as a work of art; it could not have come into existence randomly or spontaneously. Art necessarily requires an artist.

#### **b. The Garden Example:**

Imagine a beautiful garden with vibrant flowers, meticulously trimmed grass, and a decorative fountain at its center. The garden's order and beauty are striking. However, "garden" is merely a name for the harmonious combination of flowers, grass, and the fountain. Neither the flowers, grass, nor fountain alone constitutes a garden. The term "garden" represents the orderly structure created by the combination of these elements.

If we were to attribute reality (hakikat-ı hariciye) to the concept of a garden, it would only represent the organized arrangement of all its elements. The garden is a result-a creation-that can only exist through the effort, knowledge, and intention of a gardener. No one would claim that the garden arranged itself into such order and beauty on its own. The existence of this order requires the careful planning and work of a gardener.

Similarly, nature exhibits an extraordinary order, like a garden. Yet this order necessitates the presence of a designer. Just as a garden requires a gardener, the order in nature compels the existence of a creator.

These examples demonstrate that nature itself is a "work of art," and as such, it necessitates the existence of an "artist." Qualities like order and precision cannot arise randomly; they require the presence of a conscious design. Nature, with its orderly and intricate structure, is evidence that it is not a creator but a creation. Order and precision cannot emerge without design.

## **2. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ORDER AND ART:**

At this point, we reach the argument that order or intricate functioning can only be described as a work of art. The processes observed in the universe-such as the functioning of life, the arrangement of atoms and molecules, or the motion of galaxies-all result from organized, interdependent structures requiring intelligence and consciousness. When we encounter order or structures organized with a specific purpose, it becomes difficult to accept them as "spontaneous" or "random." Such organization inherently implies art and conscious intervention. Just as a painting, a building, or a marvel of engineering clearly points to the hand of an artist or designer, the order observed in nature points to a creator.



Thus, if "nature" is to be accepted as a reality, it must be regarded as a creation crafted by an artist. In other words, if nature contains design or order, it only makes sense to see it as a work of art. This understanding shows that nature is not an independent creator or absolute power but rather the product of a creator's work.

### **3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND ARTIST:**

The idea that art cannot exist independently forms the foundation of Bediüzzaman's perspective. A "work of art" inherently points to the existence of an "artist." For instance, when we see a painting, we know it was created by a painter; when we see a building, we assume there is an architect behind it. Similarly, the detailed structures and extraordinary order observed in nature suggest that this order was created by a conscious being. Viewing nature as an artistic creation gains meaning here because such intricate order and perfect harmony are only possible through the intervention of an artist.

This is why the statement, "This reality can only be a work of art," is based on the following logical reasoning: Nature exhibits orderly, harmonious, and detailed functioning, which cannot be spontaneous. Therefore, nature must be understood as a work of art crafted by an artist. This artist is, of course, the Creator of the universe—"Allah". This perspective leads us to understand that nature itself is not a creative force but rather a creation.

As for your concern about bias or misleading argumentation: The transition from a work of art to an artist is not a deception but a necessary conclusion of the observable order in the universe. If you accept this order through your own observations, ignoring the power behind it becomes a logical contradiction. Thus, the concept of an "artist" is not a manipulation but an inevitable conclusion reached by reason.

After finishing his words, the Believer takes a deep breath, a gentle weariness appearing in his eyes. The atmosphere in the room has shifted; it feels as though a heavy burden has been lifted, leaving behind a peaceful silence. Thoughtful expressions adorn everyone's faces. In some gazes, there is a sign of profound enlightenment, while in others, the unending quest of inquiry lingers. Observing these varied reactions, the Believer senses that new doors of understanding have been opened in the minds of those present. This realization eases his weariness, even transforming it into a quiet joy.

The Deist leans back in his chair, his gaze fixed on the ceiling. His eyes reflect a newfound tranquility, as if something has fallen into place, filling a once-empty void with meaning. The Agnostic, in contrast, holds his head in his hands, staring silently at the ground. Yet his expression conveys not the darkness of confusion but the intensity of someone glimpsing the first light of newfound understanding. The Atheist rests his hand on his chin, his astonished gaze fixed on the Believer. In his look, the defiance of rejection seems to have been replaced by curiosity, and perhaps even a subtle admiration.

A deep but meaningful silence reigns in the room. Time feels as though it has paused, and the echoes of the Believer's words continue to resonate in everyone's minds. After allowing the moment to linger, the Believer speaks again. His voice is calm but still carries the same unwavering conviction:

**Believer:** (Looking around) Up to this point, we've tried to analyze a portion of a single sentence from Bediüzzaman's masterpiece, "*The On Nature*". However, the other parts of this sentence carry meanings just as profound as what we've discussed here. Now, I ask you: Should we stop here, or shall we continue?

This question feels like a challenge to those in the room-respectful of their thoughts, yet opening the door to deeper inquiry in their minds. The silence is broken by the Atheist's reflexive response:

**Atheist:** (Quickly jumping in) "Let's continue, please..." (Realizing the weight of his words, he abruptly composes himself, trying to conceal the surprise on his face.) "I mean, you've provided some excellent explanations. I, for one, am grateful. However... I am curious to hear more."

This candid admission eases the tension in the room, while also making the curiosity of others more apparent. But the silence doesn't last long; the Deist shakes his head slightly and begins to speak:

**Deist:** I've understood everything up to this point, and we have no objection to the existence of a creator. On that, we're in agreement. However, I want to explain the point where we diverge: the idea that nature operates independently. Yes, nature is a work of art, and this work of art has indeed been created by a creator. **But it has been created in such a way that the universe is self-sufficient, reflecting the creator's power, knowledge, and skill.**

We agree with much of what you've said, but where we differ is in our view of the creator's creation. **You seem to see the universe as incomplete or lacking, while we believe it was created with such perfection that it no longer requires intervention.** You might call this "**deifying nature,**" *but in reality, nature functions as though it were divine.*

The Deist's response seems to unsettle the Atheist, though he chooses to remain silent this time. The Agnostic, on the other hand, lifts his head and looks at the Believer with an expression that seems to agree with the Deist's words, though his hands still rest on the sides of his head.

The Believer's face shows a mix of surprise and slight exasperation at the Deist's interjection. However, he quickly regains his composure and begins to speak in a calm tone:

**Believer:** "Alright, then let's set aside all the explanations for a moment. Let me show you just how powerless the deity you worship truly is. I will demonstrate that this so-called 'nature deity' of yours does not possess the 'divine' qualities you attribute to it. Our discussion was bound to reach this point eventually, but you've hurried things along a bit. So, let me

ask you: If I prove that this 'nature deity' of yours is not divine as you claim, will you accept it?"

This clear challenge causes a fleeting moment of hesitation and fear to cross the Deist's face. The Believer's previous explanations, which were often supported by evidence, logical reasoning, and even scientific data, instill a sense of insecurity in the Deist's arguments. His movements and tone betray his unease as he stammers out a reply:

**Deist:** "Y-yes... Yes, of course. But if you explain it scientifically, logically, and in a way that makes sense, why wouldn't I accept it?"

The Believer meets this answer with a calm smile and continues with confident resolve:

**Believer:** "Alright, then. Prepare yourself.."

**TO BE CONTINUED (GOD WILLING)**

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<sup>1</sup> From the Risale-i Nur Collection by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi the Flashes 186