

Deism: the child of the renaissance essay

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Deism (Lat. Deus - God) is a philosophical standpoint that provides a specific attitude to religious beliefs. The deists accepted that the world was created by some supreme being (God), but the world's further development was without His involvement. The time period when this philosophical study occurred is not strictly defined, but there were many philosophers who accepted this point of view.

Among them are Locke, Jefferson and Paine. In this essay, we are going to discuss and explain the deism of the period of Enlightenment and show the relations between ideas of deism and Enlightenment philosophy through the analysis of teaching such great people as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson.

In order to understand why deism was so popular during the period of enlightenment, we should briefly examine the main philosophical ideas of this époque.

The main idea of this period was the glorification of a human being. The philosophers provided the idea that man was a creator of his life and of all things around him. They proclaimed the power of knowledge and the ability to control nature with the help of it. Thus, people were not dependent on the God's will and were masters of their fates. These ideas were basically central on the theory of deism.

The common feature of deism and philosophy of enlightenment was the attitude to God and religion. Thus, deism, as well as enlightenment, identified the creative power of God through "nature and reason, not revelation" ("Deism - Enlightened Emptiness" n. p.). The deists did not

identify only one God for one religion, on the contrary, they considered that one power or a “divine being” created the world and this power is common for all religions.

Furthermore, deism presupposed that God does not rule over one’s life and nature, as opposed to this idea, they proclaimed that human beings are in charge of the world. Thus, enlightenment and deism were common in one thing: “God became no more than the supreme intelligence” (Kramnick 12).

The ideas of deism were supported by such philosophers as Franklin, Paine and Jefferson. In the book *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine claims that he believes in: “equality of man, and that religious duty consists in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavor to make our fellow-creatures happy” (Paine 18).

He believed in religion “cleaned” from superstitions and dogmas. He also assumed that it was not necessary to go to Church to prove one’s fate. The same ideas of deism, but more traditional ones, were provided by Benjamin Franklin. As opposed to Paine, Franklin approved that God “governs by his providence.

That he ought to be worshiped” (Franklin and Bigelow 79). Franklin also believed in immortal soul and afterlife. President Thomas Jefferson’s religious views were also inspired by English Deists. He supported the teaching of Jesus and considered it to be the supreme morality. This president supported the religious freedom. Though this man had never identified himself with

particular deism movement, he shared their ideas, but in his personal interpretation.

Thus, we can come to a conclusion that many philosophers, politicians, writers and other famous people shared the ideas of deism, especially the ones that lived and worked during the period of enlightenment. Furthermore, it would be fair to suggest that deism and the age of enlightenment had the same philosophical milestone and attitude to God and human. The deists accepted that world was created by God, however, at the same time they gave people right to be masters of their lives.

Kramnick, Issac. *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Paine, Thomas. *The Age of Reason*. Forgotten Books, 1923.

Franklin, Benjamin, and John Bigelo. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Forgotten Books, 1945.

“ Deism – Enlightened Emptiness”. *All about Philosophy – The Big Questions*. Web.