

Deism Today

Summer 2009

Deist Alliance Quarterly Newsletter



Positive vs. Negative

by Peter Hilbig

Which is right in an electrical charge – positive or negative? Or in magnetism, north or south? Now I ask the question, which is the correct answer – yes or no? We regard yes as being positive and no as being negative but it depends on the question which response is correct, and this is further complicated by individual viewpoint.

Consider up and down – positive and negative. In ancient Latin right was *dexter* and left was *sinister*, from which derive the words dextrous and sinister; light is regarded as positive and dark negative and right-handed people were always regarded with favour where left-handed people were regarded with suspicion as being dark. White / black, front / back, beginning / end, the list goes on and on. We have this learned automatic response which continues to stifle our ability and potential to look beneath the surface of our daily lives.

These days we hear much about the need to think positively. It is a ploy much used in the corporate world and the resulting positive buoyancy can lead to boom times. Yet unchecked, we observe the artificial bubble bursting and times of recession ensuing. So what is missing in the formula for a successful economy? - and indeed we now have a global economy rather than a number of local ones. Can it be said that we are so busy being positive that we have not paid enough attention to the negative? – until the negative comes crashing in unbidden?

Optimism is positive and pessimism negative, yet I wonder if any of us could be realistic if we did not have an equal dose of the two. Optimism unchecked would see us leaping off cliffs hoping that those trees and bushes down there would cushion our fall Rambo-style. It is right in this case to be downright pessimistic

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Welcome to the latest issue of Deism Today, the quarterly newsletter of the Deist Alliance. We offer you authors familiar and new. And we are always seeking new material. Contact us at the Positive Deism discussion board.

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Deist Alliance News



There has been quite a bit going on around the Deist Alliance websites.

First, we want to welcome John Casler and his site, Deistpoet.com, to the Deist Alliance. Many Deists love poetry, and the poets on his site speak a language we understand.

We have added a Christian Deism forum on the Positive Deism discussion board. It has been quite active since its inception.

The Positive Deism board continues to grow with over 260 members, many of whom are active every day.

Positive Deism is also still seeking updates for its website home page.

The Nature's God discussion board has grown slowly, but steadily and now has a few regulars.

We have seen an interesting and eclectic group of folks with very diverse backgrounds visit us on our boards this year. We have seen a Muslim Deist and a Jehovah's Witness Deist. They are either genuine, or they are among the best actors I've ever seen.

All in all, it has been a very good year. We're looking forward to the second half.



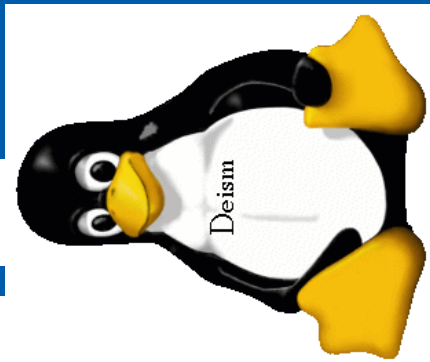
Freethinker Quiz

~ Name the Freethinker ~

We read the pagan sacred books with profit and delight. With myth and fable we are ever charmed, and find a pleasure in the endless repetition of the beautiful, poetic and absurd. We find, in all these records of the past, philosophies and dreams, and efforts stained with tears, of great and tender souls who tried to pierce the mystery of life and death, to answer the eternal questions of the Whence and Whither, and vainly sought to make, with bits of shattered glass, a mirror that would, in very truth, reflect the face and form of Nature's perfect self.

These myths were born of hopes, and fears, and tears, and smiles, and they were touched and colored by all there is of joy and grief between the rosy dawn of birth, and death's sad night. They clothed even the stars with passion, and gave to gods the faults and frailties of the sons of men. In them, the winds and waves were music, and all the lakes, and streams, and springs, the mountains, woods and perfumed dells were haunted by a thousand fairy forms. They thrilled the veins of Spring with tremulous desire; made tawny Summer's billowed breast the throne and home of love; filled Autumn's arms with sun-kissed grapes, and gathered sheaves; and pictured Winter as a weak old king who felt, like Lear upon his withered face, Cordelia's tears. These myths, though false, are beautiful, and have for many ages and in countless ways, enriched the heart and kindled thought. But if the world were taught that all these things are true and all inspired of God, and that eternal punishment will be the lot of him who dares deny or doubt, the sweetest myth of all the Fable World would lose its beauty, and become a scorned and hateful thing to every brave and thoughtful man.

Answer
on
page
seven



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about our chances. Being realistic is a matter of weighing up the pros (positive) and cons (negative).

Before I went onto medication I used to be bi-polar, or as it was termed then, manic-depressive. It is a fairly common condition where the mood swings from looking at the world with overly rose-coloured glasses and feeling really good, and looking at a bleak world and feeling downright awful. They are simply excesses on the normal range of people's little ups and downs, but how debilitating, both of them! It feels absolutely great to be elated, and how nice that would be to experience often. But how deep the sadness which always follows that experience – it is the way things are, a balance. And elation can take us into an unreal world, just the same as depression.

Some people are so negative all the time their company can be a burden on the spirits. On the other hand others are so positive with boundless enthusiasm that can be equally draining to the average person with a mix of each. I find this to be particularly so in the workplace where a manager is continually urging for better and the worker is increasingly overburdened. An exaggeration of one leads to an equal and opposite response in the other, both ways.

And the older I get the more I become aware of the irony of all this.

Deism 2.1

by Charles Clendenen

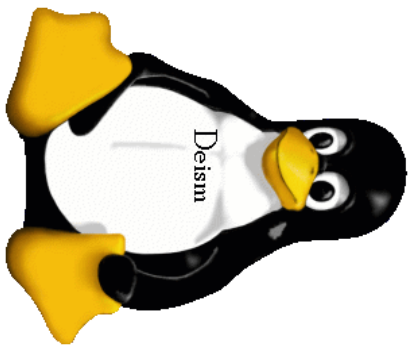
(for the geek at heart)

I use a fair amount of open source software. Everyone has heard of Linux, the open source operating system. It is a free alternative to the Windows operating system. In my opinion, Linux is not quite as user-friendly as consumer-oriented Windows, but it does not have many of the security vulnerabilities either. And as a server, Linux is much more secure and solid. I'm a fan, and I do use Linux sometimes, but the applications I need the most require Windows, so that's where I spend most of my computing time.

Open Office is a free alternative to Microsoft Office. The applications in the Open Office suite are very good imitations of their Microsoft Office counterparts. I use open source CD/DVD burning software as well. Imgburn may not be as slick as Nero, but it works flawlessly, and it is free. Firefox is my browser. I am not a big fan of Internet Explorer.

If you are so inclined, you can modify the source code of open source products and completely alter the look & feel or the behavior of the software. You can add or remove features, combine functionality with other programs or modify the software in any way that suits you. If you don't like one desktop interface in Linux, use a different one. Change it around any way you wish. Make it distinctly yours.

Deism is an open source religion. No one "owns" it. Deism carries no brand name. No one can claim to speak for all Deists. Deism has no rigid standards, no dogma, no sacred operating manual. There are different "distributions" (Classical, Panendeism, Christian Deism, etc.) just as there are different Linux distributions, each with a slightly different feature set (Red Hat,



Ubuntu, Slackware, etc.). Deism has no terms of service or conditions of use to meet. The only requirement for adopting Deism is that you think for yourself, although I suppose you could always just adopt someone else's ideas about Deism. I don't know many Deists that settle very long for plain, vanilla, out-of-the-box Deism.

Linux is a part of the GNU community (Gnu's Not Unix), a movement to create completely free, non-commercial software. GNU is a rejection of commercial ownership and a celebration of freedom.

Deism began as a rejection of the dominant religion, Christianity. Different Deists adopt different beliefs, but we all celebrate a belief in God with an emphasis on reason and nature rather than supernatural revelation and miracles found in revealed religion.

Today, Deism is about more than just being critical. Deism is more than just reason, nature and experience. Deists are enhancing their religion's basic operating system and installing positive and affirmative enhancements to make it richer and more useful. Deists are also extending Deism's spiritual side in several ways that make it much more relevant for them here in the 21st century.

Contemporary Deism has become a transcendent form of Deism. Today's Deism blends natural religion, traditional Enlightenment Deism, contemporary scientific knowledge and more. This synthesized and transcendent form allows us to reach beyond the limits of Classical Deism. I think that the various forms of Deism representing the Deist Alliance could be designated Deism 2.0. We are now engaged in

the process of taking Deism to the next level. The upcoming release will be version 2.1. We are all developers in this project. We all play a part in shaping this new product. It will be through our collective contributions that we will achieve General Availability of Deism's next release.

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Credit:

This idea came from an article entitled *Open To Revisions* by Sam Kean in the May/June issue of Search Magazine



Life Goes On

By Charles Clendenen

How the breeze moves through the trees
And verdant shadows hide the stars
Now the moon shines through the leaves
And promises to light the dark
Chase away the lonely dark

Still I watch, alone I wait now
Then a bird's wings split the night
Comes a simple twist of fate now
Silent, deadly shadow flies
Solitary shadow flies

Then I see it, now it hovers
Shadow plummets like a stone
Time and death embrace like lovers
Nature rules the world alone
One life ends, and one goes on

So I sit alone in wonder
But I do not wonder long
For a voice in distant thunder
Says for certain nothing's wrong
Life goes on and nothing's wrong

Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church

By Emily Dickinson

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church –
I keep it, staying at Home –
With a Bobolink for a Chorister –
And an Orchard, for a Dome –

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice –
I just wear my Wings
And instead of tolling the Bell for Church,
Our little Sexton – sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman –
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last –
I'm going, all along.



Native American Prayer

translated by Lakota Sioux Chief
Yellow Lark in 1887

Oh, Great Spirit
Whose voice I hear in the winds,
And whose breath gives life to all the world,
hear me, I am small and weak,
I need your strength and wisdom.
Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever
behold
the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect the things you have
made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.
Make me wise so that I may understand the
things
you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have
hidden in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my
brother,
but to fight my greatest enemy - myself.
Make me always ready to come to you
with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my Spirit may come to you without shame.



Answer to Freethinker Quiz on page three:

Robert G. Ingersoll

quoted in Washington, D.C., October 7, 1879.



Join the Deist Alliance

Your newsletter needs YOU!

The Deist Alliance is looking for authors. We all certainly express ourselves regularly in the discussion forums available at Deist Alliance sites such as PositiveDeism.com, Panendeism.org, Naturesgod.org and GodOnlineHome.com. The newsletter represents one more way we can spread the word about Deism in a positive fashion.

The newsletter is a perfect way to share your opinions, theories, hopes and dreams with your fellow Deists and freethinking folks who subscribe. It is also a good way to share a poem, a photo or a sketch.

Volunteer, contribute and express yourself! Promise yourself to make a positive statement in the next quarterly issue. Just watch for a call for submissions on the Positive Deism discussion board.

The Deist Alliance is just what it sounds like, an alliance of groups that promote Deism. If you have a website or discussion forum or blog that celebrates a positive and independent form of Deism, you might consider the Deist Alliance.

Just go to <http://deistalliance.org> or email webmaster@deistalliance.org. Come on over to the Positive Deism discussion group so we can get a chance to know you, and you can get to know us.

Editor's Note:

The views expressed by the authors of the articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of all Deists or of all the members of the Deist Alliance.

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Deist Alliance

<http://deistalliance.org>