

Ms. Hashem – What Rules, Dialectics or Religion?

Bishnu Dey

For the last two weeks or so we have been “rewarded” with some delectable presentation by our resident philosopher, political pundit, and acclaimed dialectician Ms. Setara Hashem. The whole set of exchanges between her and her detractors made for interesting reading. Though at times, I must admit that it was rather difficult to keep up with the wide array of complex arguments (often irrelevant) presented by Ms. Hashem as she went along making her case that entire humankind progressed through the dual process of dialectical evolution on the one hand and religious adherence on the other. The claim gets shallower when she tries to suggest that religion had/has a role in this evolutionary process. To the best of my knowledge I have yet to see a true believer of Marxism, accept this as the basis of any scientific blueprint for social advancement.

On the one hand, she boldly proclaims that *“Reactionaries divide people on the basis of religion”*, while simultaneously stating that *“Religion is personal affairs, should not be brought under criticism or bashing along with holy books. These books are part and parcel of elements of history, should be looked in the light of social system, economical system and level of thinking of the people on the time of written of the books”*. My question to Ms. Hashem is which one of the above quotes does she subscribe to? If one were to accept that religion is a tool of the reactionaries, then how come she is not willing to criticize the peddlers of religion, who by her own definition are reactionaries? Interestingly, she tries to make the case that religion is as much a part of history, reflecting on the social and economic conditions at the time of development of those religions in question.

Ms. Hashem’s argues that *“Religion came into existence at the dawn of civilization. Reflection of image on human mind of achievements acquired after generation after generation fight of human against nature and odds are called religion. Creation of religion was historical necessity”*. At the same time she makes this definitive statement that *“It is not religion but hunger compels human being to fight, which creates dialectics in society. This conflict between “have” and “have-nots” keeps society running”*. Now, I admit that I am not as well read as our great stalwart here, who constantly reminds other people through such statements like “It appears also that you have little knowledge of human psychology and society”, and I am afraid that the same epithets will be hurled at me for questioning her knowledge of dialectics, by trying to string the two completely diverse elements, religion on the one hand and the constant fight between “haves and have nots” on the other.

Another intriguing thought arose from the following statement of Ms. Hashem *“Good and bad is relative word depending on time and place”*. I completely disagree with her contention that good and bad are relative aspects subject to interpretation. I firmly believe that there is a clear demarcation between good and bad. This distinction existed since the birth of humanity. This ability to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong is what made the human beings the supreme creation, at least in the context of the planet we live in. Trying to obscure this distinction between good and bad is basically an argument that apologists like to forward to make a case that everything can be excused, subject to judgment and time-place consideration. I would also like to question her faith in material dialectics for proposing that *“Religion played an important role in advancement of human civilization. Some one talk about evolution theory, but what happen when human being was came into being. What made them separate from other animal, why family was grown? Why concept of religion was came into human mind?”* I do not know of any follower of Marxism or believer of material dialectics who will attribute such accolades in the service of human development, and I urge Ms. Hashem to provide some evidence in support of her statement.

Human beings from prehistoric times understood the value of labor, even though the concept of capital came many thousand years later. During this entire period of human development, the social advancement took place through cooperative efforts, first by joint hunting, later on through joint cultivation, etc. Clearly, the evolution of human society was a result of the basic understanding that human beings needed one another and more importantly, needed sharing of LABOR for survival. During this stage of human development, religion was NOT a factor Ms. Hashem, and I make this case that it was those early stages of development that human beings were able to contend against the forces of nature and against the attacks of wild animals and predators far stronger than human beings, in general. This is the period that set into motion what differentiated between mankind and the animal kingdom.

I can further make the case that evolution of religion was not a result of the hard labor of the “have nots”, Ms. Hashem. Quite the contrary, it was a creation by the privileged, the “haves”. They created religion as a tool to use it against the “have nots”, with the exclusive idea of being able to use the labor of their fruits in order to enrich their own interests. In essence the creation of religion was the first baby steps towards the erection of the capitalist system.

I keep my write-up brief, lest I get lost in the jargons that have been so frequently used to give half-baked theories of the evolution of human society. In my opinion, the class of “have nots” were not necessarily the result of oppression by the “haves”, though I concede that once an individual or groups acquired the tools of control, they used it to their advantage to extend their hegemony over the rest, which is a result of human selfishness. Despite that, all societies through every stage of human development have undergone metamorphosis, allowing for reversal of the social order, based on the relative strengths of individuals or groups. Given what we know today, all human beings are not created equal, despite the deep seated belief that god is just and even handed. Individual ability is the most striking feature that enables human beings to make progress, and the society that nourishes such creativity and allows the profusion of individual contributions, is the one that thrives. No wonder why the United States is in the forefront of all social achievements in the current era. Some thought for the mind, Ms. Hashem, nah?

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