

# Letters from our readers

30 March 2006

*The following is a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.*

*On "Religion and science: a reply to a right-wing attack on philosopher Daniel Dennett"*

It's always encouraging to read that others are aware—as you so clearly stated it in your well-written essay—that there is a societal fear of disturbing the theists lest one appear to be skeptical of their nonsense. It is this fear that is paving the way for an insidious move toward theocracy in this country that is already under way and gaining momentum.

GG

Hobe Sound, Florida, US

28 March 2006

Excellent paper about an excellent book. If you read French, you could be interested in my own paper about the necessity of a new "Strong materialism." It is published in the scientific online magazine of which I am one of the editors, at <http://www.admiroutes.asso.fr/larevue/2006/72/materialisme.htm>

Best regards,

BJ

Meudon, France

21 March 2006

The study of religion must include the study of its history as well. Most of us are aware of the theories of great scientists and their influences on today's systems of knowledge. We must become aware of the effects of religion on our history to grasp what influences they have had and why. I propose that humanity progressed not because of religion, but in spite of it. Much of the time, religion has had an extremely negative influence, and for good reason since it has often been the means of controlling people for the benefit of Church and State. In fact, after the fourth century Council of Nicea rulings and establishment of the "universal" a.k.a. Roman Catholic Church, all scientific inquiry came to a halt and the Church and Her puppet States started getting extremely wealthy. That "halt" became known as the Dark Ages where religion ruled and destruction with the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocents became rather routine.

There is nothing wrong with philosophy; however, religion

differs markedly from philosophy in that it resents debate. Where debate has taken effect, there arose splinters within those sects and splinters within them again. To argue about whose ghost is more real has been the essential argument of religion for centuries and an argument easily used to direct emotional responses from the ignorant masses to go to war where the principal winners were (are) the elite.

Perhaps the most emotional reason mankind needs to believe "in something" is his/her fear of death. Would suicide bombers race to their deaths if they believed there were no God to greet them? Would the masses go so willingly to kill and be killed if they thought that this was their one and only life? I think this is what gives religion its power: We know, but we desperately do not want to know and we will do anything to keep from knowing, the truth—that this world is it—even if it means turning our quite rational minds away from the light of scientific inquiry and delving into quite ridiculous belief systems.

Daniel C. Dennett is right on target. Something that has grossly influenced history, as it grossly influences events today, must be examined. The religious find no problem in "examining" science; they should find no problem in science examining religion—or is it that they fear the truth exposed?

SN

Canada

21 March 2006

Terrific reply to Wieseltier, thanks for your patient and thorough rebuttal.

Tom Clark

Center for Naturalism, [www.naturalism.org](http://www.naturalism.org)

22 March 2006

Just a comment. Not all religion is regressive. I'm Episcopalian and my partner of 15 years is Corellian nativist trad Wiccan. Both of us are fairly active. I don't know whether there is a god or not and Jonathan doesn't know if there is a goddess, but we find comfort in our faiths—and that is what they are there for. The danger is fundamentalism, and as our young friend Khalid said after carefully reading the signs held by fundamentalist protestors in Salem, Massachusetts the day before Halloween, "they are the same as our fundamentalists." The left would be better off

embracing the part of the faith community that supports it. Please note I certainly accept evolution, as all or nearly all Episcopalians do. I also support Dennett's idea, but I am religious.

RJ

21 March 2006

*On "Democratic rights and the attack on constitutionalism"*

I just wanted to congratulate you on an excellent essay that, for me as a history professor, is quite refreshing. So few of the arguments against the Bush regime supply accurate and sophisticated historical connections. Yours correctly taps both the English and American revolutions as sources of social democracy that are entirely relevant to our own times. Excellent. Keep up the good work!

DH

Lawrence, Kansas

23 March 2006

*On "Iraq's 'National Security Council': a move toward open dictatorship"*

Excellent article. If the National Security Council in Iraq needs advice from an experienced head of State they can always consult with their predecessor, Saddam Hussein. He has shown himself to be an expert in dealing with dissent.

WH

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

24 March 2006

*On "Iraq: US mosque massacre deepens occupation's crisis"*

My interpretation of the US-led attack on the Shia mosque is a bit different than yours. It looks to me to be an attempt at provoking a Shia uprising against the US occupation, not an attempt to stir up a civil war between Iraqis. The US would blame a Shia uprising on Iran and the large increase in US casualties would create the required bloodlust in the American public for an invasion of Iran.

LG

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

28 March 2006

*On "North American protests mark third anniversary of Iraq war"*

I am surprised you did not mention the antiwar demonstration in Minneapolis, which was larger than any you did mention. There were more than 4,000 in the Minneapolis Peace March on Saturday.

PK

Minneapolis, Minnesota

20 March 2006

You missed mentioning Portland, Oregon in your article, where police estimated 9,000-10,000 protesters.

MW

20 March 2006

*On "Belarus: imperialist intervention in presidential election"*

I am White Russian and follow with anguish the recent developments in my country. What will these people in Washington and Brussels come up with to destabilize the country and take it as a new domino to encircle Russia, if they succeed? The cry for Democracy as we hear it in the mainstream press is only dictated by selfish interests. I have lived for 18 years in Tunisia, which is not really a democracy, but in Washington and Brussels they don't care, because Ben Ali suits their needs. So the indignation is selective. And with respect to White Russia, the majority of the people indeed are happy with Lukashenko. Cannot they accept that? That is democracy. My compliments for your comprehensive analysis of the situation in Minsk.

VK

Menthon St.-Bernard, France

21 March 2006

*On "Hunger in America: 25 million depend on emergency food aid"*

I congratulate you for your very in-depth analysis and very informative writing in your article. Your valued views should receive world acclaim. Your pen has exposed the facts of the self-styled superpower, which is crushing its own people and spending huge amounts on its war mania, giving no consideration to the degrading economic conditions of its people. Sir! I would only say that such exposures would let the world know what is behind the screen.

MA

Karachi, Pakistan

24 March 2006



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