

letters

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JOHN G. BRAINERD

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6/82

Equal opportunity?

"Physics in Saudi Arabia" in May (page 11) poses a most attractive career invitation. My years in research and teaching seem to qualify me.

However, a haunting old phrase intrudes upon me. I "need not apply." For that matter, were they alive and in search of employment, Albert Einstein and J. Robert Oppenheimer, among many others, "need not apply."

As wonderful as Saudi opportunities in physics appear, I don't think I'll apply.

DANIEL M. EKSTEIN

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6/82

Need for differential salaries

Your article "No federal aid for precollege science" (July, page 57) barely mentioned the biggest reason that there is a shortage of math teachers. In most school systems, math teachers are paid no more than teachers of any other subject. Salaries and raises are determined by *how long* they have been in the system and *how many* college courses they have taken past the Bachelor's degree, not by *how good* they are as teachers or by *what* courses they take. A one-week course in local history in the summer is as good as a regular course in math or physics as long as the number of credits is the same. The school systems themselves could greatly improve the situation in mathematics by adopting differential salaries based on merit and area of expertise rather than longevity.

W. THOMAS CATHEY

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9/82

Third-world view

I'd like to applaud the sound stand of APS on the "creationism" issue (February, page 54).

To anyone with a dim knowledge of philosophy of science or theology it should be clear that there is an epistemological cut between science and religion. Furthermore, the theory of evolution, which again is at the focus of

debate, can be, like any other scientific theory, proved wrong sooner or later and this has nothing to do with the existence or nature of God.

The existence of God, by and large, cannot and will not be realized rationally because the perception of God is digital: total or none, at a single stroke. Those who try to prove "scientifically" the existence of the Supreme are fools, to say the least, chasing an illusion and believing in it, unable to perform an exegesis of sacred texts, and neglecting context, historical perspective and the very essence of culture, which is cumulative knowledge.

We in the Third World have a very precise notion of what blind faith can do to society, economy and culture. It is with great surprise that we see the reappearance of creationism in the classroom of the developed countries much in the same fashion as when Darwin was being ridiculed for his "absurd theory." After all, who wants a gorilla for granddaddy? By the same token, what about that "crazy feller who invented the relativity of things"?

The answer to both questions is the same: When extreme rationality takes over, intuition dies. And with it, creativity and liberty (that is, free will). Thence follow theories such as the Nazi anthropology and the Stalinist genetics—and their social consequences.

By Jove, haven't we had enough lunacy?

FELIPE RUDGE

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9/82

More on refuting God

In June (page 86) it was asserted by John Bortz that a logical refutation of the Christian God was not difficult. We wish to demonstrate that Bortz has underestimated the magnitude of his task.

It is not inconsistent to believe both that God exists and that science can reach objective truths. Science and theology are two different modes of inquiry into two different areas of knowledge. Science is the study of the elements of the physical universe and their interrelationships. For example, science can determine what Newton's laws are, but cannot determine why they are. Theology, on the other hand, is the study of God in His relationship to man. The difference between the two may be described as the difference between the "ontical" and the ontological.¹

The creation narratives in Genesis need not be seen as a literal account of the physical origins of the universe. In the light of our previous definitions, we see it as an attempt to describe certain

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