

Feeding the meter isn't always a priority

The over zealousness of by-law officers enforcing Ottawa's parking infraction system is quite well known. Most citizens of Ottawa are well aware of this whether they drive or not. I'm writing about my frustration with the over-arching parking infraction system.

I attended court on July 2. I took the day off work to plead guilty with an explanation, for parking outside of the Univer-

sity of Ottawa Heart Institute, the day my father had a heart attack. I had put money into the parking meter and went inside to find out the condition of my father.

By the time someone came to explain the status of my father's condition, the parking meter was about to expire. I made the "choice" to let the parking meter expire and find out whether my father was alive and recu-

perating or in critical condition nearing death. In my sincere opinion, this was not really a choice. There was only one correct choice and I made it.

When the judge attending my case very calmly told me that she understood my situation but I did have a choice, I was shocked and angered. I wanted to respond with indignation and contempt for her words but I realized this would just

aggravate matters.

I would have liked to ask her if making a decision between finding out whether a loved one is alive or not and putting money in a parking meter is a matter of choice.

I wanted to dispute this based on principle because of the delicate circumstances. Instead I missed work, and wasted my time and energy.

SCOTT VENTUREYRA, Ottawa

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send Letters To The Editor to: The Ottawa Sun, PO Box 9729, Stn. T, Ottawa, Ont., K1G 5H7.
Fax: 613-739-8041. E-mail: ottsun.oped@summedia.ca (Keep 'em short. That's our style. Letters are subject to editing and must contain name, address and phone number. Only names will be published.)

RE: "GERMS lost in the wash" (April 15). Interesting article, but I find it hard to believe that "A busy nurse who is on an eight- or 10-hour shift may have to (wash his/her hands) 200 times a day," as Dr. Michael Baker states.

Assuming the nurse works straight through a 10-hour shift (no break for lunch, supper, coffee, etc.), he/she would be washing his/her hands once every three minutes. If it takes one minute to wash and dry your hands, that means the nurse is working on a patient for two minutes, washing their hands for one minute, and then repeating the process all over again 200 times during the day.

If that's the case, no wonder it is hard to recruit nurses.

BOB WHITE
STITTSVILLE

(What is this, a math test?)

I JUST wanted to express my thanks to the players and staff of the Ottawa Senators. It has been quite a year with the highs and lows. Also, being the first year in 12 that we have not had a post-season to look forward to, I would ask that

Leafs fans in Ottawa offer suggestions on how to fill in the time.

Even with the year the team had, there have been signs of a team coming together. I can't wait until next year; oops, I'm sounding like a Leafs fan. Go Sens go.

RICK CLOWATER
OTTAWA

(Don't forget how to sound like a Sens fan)

RE: "DOG owner falls after coyote chases him up tree" (April 14). My sympathies to Michael Barnes for his harrowing experience. In all due respect, however, the animal he encountered doesn't sound like a coyote. I've run into those creatures, and they have no interest in getting close to a human. A coyote with rabies would be even more unlikely. The disease is relatively rare in Eastern Ontario, and coyotes are not considered to be high-risk rabies carriers. Nor should hunger be a factor at this bountiful time of the year.

Dogs, on the other hand, have no fear of humans. When they run free, they are often up to no good. A big dog on the prowl would

probably be quite interested in checking out Barnes' little dog, probably with no good intentions in mind whatsoever.

PETER JOYCE
GLOUCESTER

(We're sure it was a scary experience, no matter what kind of animal it was)

THE RECENT approval of atheist bus ads seems to be more motivated by a desire to provoke negative reactions from religious believers than a desire to exercise freedom of speech. Freedom must always be coupled with responsibility, otherwise many dangers can arise. If one group is allowed to exercise a faith claim then all religious groups should be allowed to make their own claims in order for there not to be any viewpoint discrimination. Moreover, logical debate about the existence or inexistence of God is a subject appropriate to rigorous philosophical argumentation.

Is there a logical connection between the inexistence of God and enjoying life? Many atheists and religious believers alike would agree that life seems ulti-

mately meaningless if there is no God (or afterlife). The only meaning is the one you create for yourself, where there is ultimately no difference between living the life of a Mahatma Gandhi or that of a Josef Stalin.

Can these advertisements bring anything positive? Well they could potentially stimulate thought about questions regarding the existence of God. Hopefully witnesses to the ads can take the ad to task and examine whether the claim has any validity.

SCOTT VENTUREYRA
OTTAWA

(And thought is always a good thing)

We're looking for your thoughts on a new stadium. Should a new stadium, in any location, be a priority for the city? Send your comments, in 250 words or less, with your full name, home address and phone number to ottsun.oped@summedia.ca. Selected letters will be published in an upcoming edition of the Sun.

LETTERS



THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

ates that the Big Bang Theory is corroborated by a number of different lines of evidences.

However, I disagree when he says that it is not claimed that the universe came out of nothing. The famous astronomer of Cambridge University, Fred Hoyle, who was a proponent of an eternal universe (Steady State Theory) remarked that the Big Bang theory requires the creation of the universe from nothing. Moreover, Abbott states that the simplest explanations tend to be true more often than not. But how does one know what entails something to be the simplest explanation?

If the universe did indeed come into being through the Big Bang, this implies that time, space and matter came into existence a finite time ago (13.7 billion years ago). This tends to be rather awkward for the atheist. If an atheist is indeed a proponent of the Big Bang he/she must believe that the universe came from nothing and by nothing.

I wonder if this seems to be the simplest explanation that becomes apparent, according to Abbott?

As with anything that exists, from atoms to humans to galaxies, all require an explanation, no matter the size or age. So, too, the universe requires an explanation. Lastly, Abbott asks who created or what created God? The answer is no one and nothing since God is eternal. The more logical question is who created the universe since all the evidence points to its commencement.

SCOTT VENTUREYRA,
Ottawa

Universe out of nothing

Re: We shouldn't toss out Big Bang theory just yet, April 23.

I agree with letter-writer Dustin Abbott when he iter-

Rigorous arguments

BY SCOTT VENTUREYRA, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Re: Academic theologian says science and religion will save planet, Nov. 8.

It is unfortunate that in discussing one of the leading figures in the science-religion dialogue, Philip Clayton, a philosopher-theologian, writer Jennifer Green has fallen into the common practice of offering bland platitudes to mischaracterize the controversies behind intelligent design and evolution. She falsely dichotomizes evolution and intelligent design.

Green then seems to suggest that what she refers to as "evolution" is purely the activity of rational inquiry, whereas intelligent design seems to trump reason. This is a simplistic and false outlook. There are rigorously developed arguments for intelligent design that are attributable to both logic and reason.

An example is in Stephen C. Meyer's new book, *Signature in the Cell*. Meyer makes the case for intelligent design as the inference to the best explanation for the origin of information in the cell.

He even uses Charles Darwin's and Charles Lyell's methodology for inferential reasoning, for the historical sciences, where one seeks to explain phenomenon in the past by currently acting causes. He asks what the acting cause for the origin of specified, complex and functional information is. He argues that intelligent causation is a rationally justifiable candidate.

I wonder how this type of logic can put "the squeeze on reason?"

Scott Ventureyra,

Ottawa

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Invocation of fear

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN MARCH 26, 2010

It's a shame that Ann Coulter's speech at the University of Ottawa was cancelled. Although many of her views are considered to be outlandish, contrived and extreme to many, her platform to speak at the University of Ottawa should not have been taken away because of safety concerns.

Unfortunately, it reflects badly on the University of Ottawa and permits her to play the victim card. Like many others, I have been robbed of the right to partake in what many of us deemed a free and open democratic society.

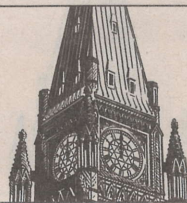
It would have been much more pleasurable to expose Coulter's ignorance and the fragility of her "arguments" through some well-reasoned questions. Instead, Coulter's silencing presents an inescapable irony, by which the university, a place which is supposed to allow a modicum of free speech and thought, has been mutated into a place that shuts one up through the invocation of fear.

Scott Ventureyra,

Ottawa

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LETTERS

**Science intersects with theology**

Re: God did not create the universe: Hawking, Sept. 2.

I look forward to reading Stephen Hawking's new book when *The Grand Design* comes out. I've always found it a curious thing when a scientist dabbles in philosophical and theological issues.

When dealing with scientific issues such as origins, it is inevitable that science will intersect with philosophical and theological notions. Some scientists are unaware of their metaphysical presuppositions. In this *Citizen* article, Hawking seems to substitute a particular physical law (the law of gravity) with that of God. The question will arise where did the law come from and how does nothing produce something? It is important to ask what is "nothing"? We know that a physical law certainly is not nothing, neither is a quantum fluctuation, nothing.

Language seems to inhibit us with respect to these abstract ideas.

It does not seem that Hawking has put God out of a job with respect to creation of the universe. The concept of creation is a theological notion that does not necessarily have to do with, perhaps, his ideas of causation. Science and reason ultimately break down when one reflects on the proposition that nothingness brings something into being

without that of a law, energy field or God.

For nothingness to eventually bring everything that evolved into being is an ontological absurdity. This is precisely the position represented as Hawking's own through a quote from his new book.

SCOTT VENTUREYRA,
Ottawa

Examine all claims, not just religious

OTTAWA CITIZEN DECEMBER 4, 2010

Re: Christ meets Big Foot: more irreverent atheist bus ads set to hit Canadian cities, Dec. 2.

I'm glad to see that Justin Trottier and the Center for Inquiry are at least finding a bit more precision with their bus poster slogans. The author of the 2009 bus slogan: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life" equivocated with the first sentence, since it is evident that God either exists or does not exist (the word "probably" should have been removed). Moreover, who is to say one would stop worrying and enjoy their lives with such a realization? Existentialist philosophers realized the implications of the inexistence of God long ago. Needless to say, the implications are quite grim. We have seen its ramifications in the past century with the bloodshed of two world wars.

I believe it is good to question all things. This is how more understanding is reached. Evidence must be presented for all claims. The question that remains before us is the following: Is the Center for Inquiry prepared to use the same level of scrutiny towards its own beliefs? Is it prepared to question its own views of materialism and naturalism? It's important to note that materialism is even more ancient than Christianity. The question of its validity has remained with us since the time of its origination with the pre-Socratic philosophers. Nonetheless, philosophy and science seem to be pointing more than ever away from the view of materialism and towards a transcendent reality.

To be more objective, I think the Center for Inquiry should change its new posters to: "Extraordinary Claims Require Extraordinary Evidence -- Naturalism -- Atheism -- Materialism -- Scientism -- Allah -- Zeus -- Christ." Let's examine claims, but let's examine all of them honestly and objectively.

Scott Ventureyra,

Ottawa

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Finding truth, sans fear

BY SCOTT VENTUREYRA, OTTAWA CITIZEN DECEMBER 12, 2011

Re: Museum gracefully handles volatile subject of God, Dec. 2.

The Museum of Civilization's new cultural event of the God(s), A User's Guide exhibit that recently commenced and ends Sept. 3, 2012 seems like a unique and potentially fruitful idea.

It is my hope that the exhibit builds people's awareness of the world's major religions. Whether one is an adherent to a particular religion or not it is important to try to understand other individuals' beliefs and practices.

It seems as though such an understanding is vital in today's world because of the opposition and hostility towards religious outlooks in recent years with the writings of particular atheistic authors. Much of which has unfortunately been caricatures of what these faiths entail. A deepening appreciation of different traditions will, on the whole, help the popular understanding of religion.

Another important realization that such an exhibit can bring to its participants is that although many of the world's great religions share a number of similarities, they also possess a number of great dissimilarities.

Inevitably, all of the faiths make claims about truth that contradict one another. This is not a view of intolerance but one of simple logic.

The implication of this is that either one of these religions is solely correct with respect to its major claims or they are all ultimately wrong.

Awareness of these religions and their differences can hopefully build upon the partakers' ability for truth seeking. Despite esoteric postmodern claims of the possibility that contradictory views can hold true at the same time and be more conducive to unity, unity can possibly come about by a sincere pursuit of truth.

If one wants to find truth, one need not be afraid of it.

Scott Ventureyra, Ottawa

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Post readers remember Christopher Hitchens



National Post | Dec 16, 2011 3:04 PM ET | Last Updated: Dec 16, 2011 4:23 PM ET
More from National Post

Christopher Hitchens possessed an unparalleled polemical wit. He constantly found himself in the thick of controversy whether it was through his role as devil's advocate against the canonization of Mother Theresa or his denouncements of Henry Kissinger and Bill Clinton. His provocative notoriety reached its peak with his vitriolic critique of monotheistic religions.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with his position, one must admit he always utilized colourful phraseology. Indeed, we have lost a charismatic public figure. One need not condemn Mr. Hitchens for his anti-theistic positions. The best remedy over such a position, as Mother Theresa's order has done for Mr. Hitchens is prayer. Mirroring, Jesus's words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Scott Ventureyra, Ottawa.

Mensa toddler should be allowed to flourish

BY SCOTT VENTUREYRA, TIMES COLONIST APRIL 29, 2012

Re: "Still in diapers, he's in Mensa," April 24.

Undoubtedly, Anthony Popa Urria's IQ score of 154 and his distinction as Mensa's youngest Canadian member is highly impressive. Already at the age of two, he seems to possess a greater ability to reason than a number of adults I have come across throughout my life.

Anthony's extraordinary intellectual abilities should be embraced but in such a way that it will allow him to grow socially as well. It is my hope that academic institutions and society have sufficiently advanced to appreciate the emergence of great minds that can significantly contribute to human advancement and understanding, and that an individual such as Anthony can be provided with an adequate environment to flourish.

William James Sidis was said to have an IQ score close to 300. He had a long list of impressive intellectual achievements at a young age, including becoming the youngest professor in history and even positing the possible existence of black holes and dark matter. Unfortunately, instead of being embraced and treasured for all of his intellectual accomplishments and gifts, Sidis was regarded as an extreme oddity, that of a freak. Eventually, in part because of being under the media's perpetual scrutiny, he end up resigning from his professorship at Rice University and disappearing into obscurity.

We should let what happened to Sidis serve as an example in helping society avoid the mistakes of the past with respect to future bright minds such as Anthony Urria.

Scott Ventureyra

Ottawa

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Psychopathic traits

Re: Hunt on for killer, May 30.

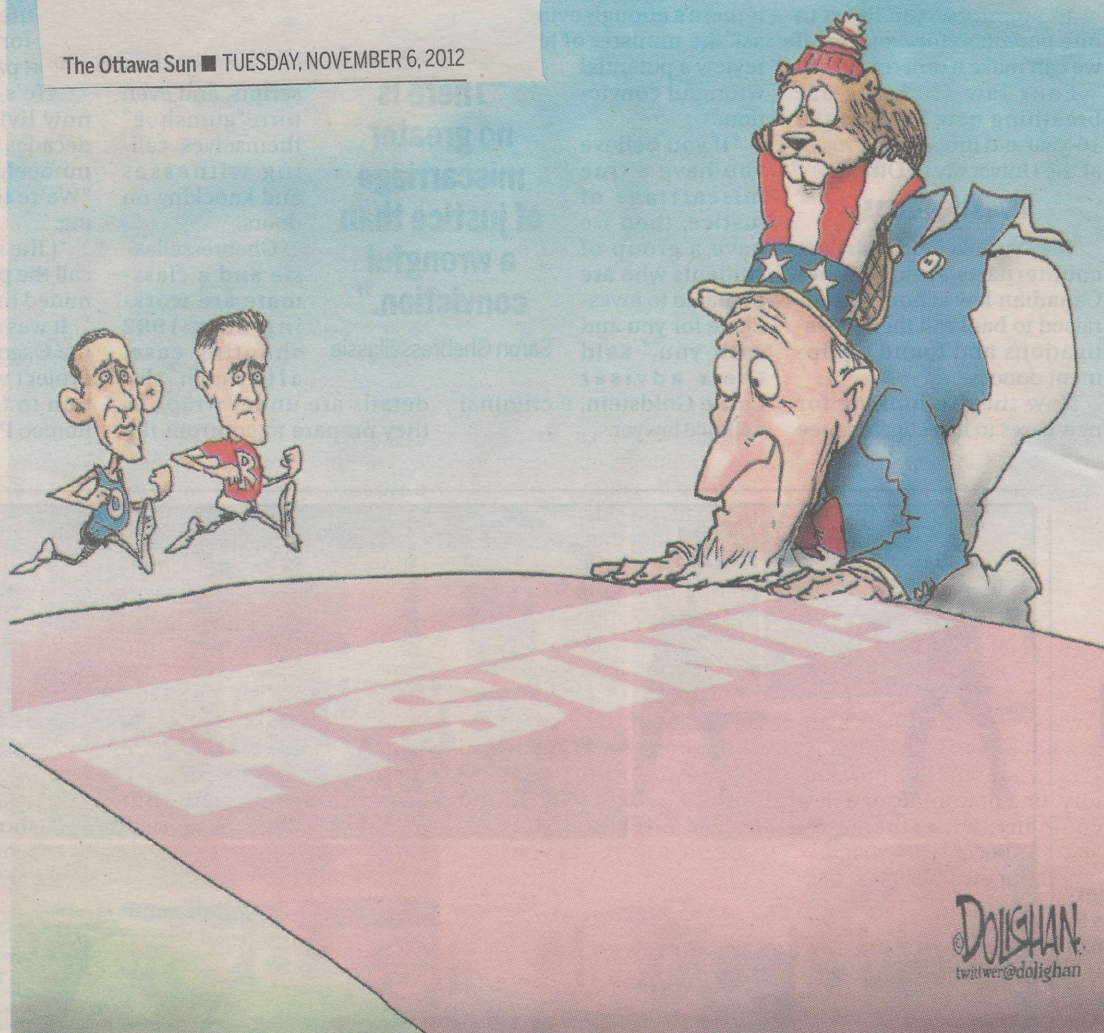
One would expect Luka Rocco Magnotta to score very high on Canadian psychologist Robert Hare's famous psychopathy checklist.

A sense of his psychopathic traits could perhaps be discerned alone from his Internet presence, including such symptoms as glibness, manipulation, lack of empathy and remorse, impulsivity and a host of others that will follow inevitably if he indeed did commit the murder he is under suspicion for. Someone possessing the personality he does must be enthralled with the sensationalism and global media attention drawn from his case — his alleged previous ties to Karla Homolka would strongly suggest this. It is most likely what he was hoping for when deciding to mail those packages to the Conservative Party of Canada's headquarters in Ottawa and to the Liberal Party of Canada.

The perpetrator of this crime seems to be a peculiar hybrid of Jeffrey Dahmer (including the similitudes of an Asian male victim, dismemberment, cannibalism and necrophilia as allegedly portrayed in the leaked gore video of his heinous crime), coupled with the Zodiac Killer's desire for the media's limelight. Could this be another example of a multiple or serial murderer in Canada's relatively unknown shocking history of more than 60 such murderers?

Through Western society's obsession over violence and murder, it is worth pondering what role the public has in the construction of such a person. Does our fascination, revulsion and other projected idealizations of personas like his indicate a level of complicity with such acts that many would prefer not acknowledge?

SCOTT VENTUREYRA,
Ottawa



YOUR CALL

Ottawa Sun online poll

Today's question

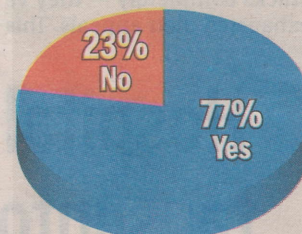
Have you been following the U.S. election?

■ Yes

■ No

Yesterday's results

Have you seen a moose, coyote or deer in Ottawa?



Vote at ottawasun.com



WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

We edit letters for brevity and do not acknowledge receipt. Please include full name and contact information.

Send your letters to:

ottsun.oped@sunmedia.ca

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SURVEILLANCE NEEDS

Re "Kent: The final frontier," Nov. 5: Thank you for the comprehensive summary of the new icebreaker developments under way around the world with an eye on operations in our Arctic regions. However, there is some disappointing irony in the development of Canada's icebreaker, the CCGS *John G. Diefenbaker*, and the Harper government's delay in the completion of the necessary RADARSAT Constellation Mission (RCM). In 2010 the Harper government approved the building of the Canadian-made RCM satellites, but without warning has delayed further construction of the spacecraft, with serious adverse implications for our aerospace industry and its users. More than ever, there is a growing need for the continuous, all-weather surveillance that will be provided by the RCM satellites. Without the RCM space-

craft, the CCGS *John G. Diefenbaker* will be operating blind in a hazardous arena populated with other blind icebreakers and foreign ships.

MIKE KIRBY
ORLÉANS

(Unfortunately aerospace has been getting the cold shoulder from a number of countries lately)

MORE FOREIGN AID

The news that the Harper government quietly cut \$8 billion in public spending during 2012, much of it from stimulus spending that was no longer considered necessary, speaks well of the strength of the Canadian economy, but does not speak well of the government's priorities. A tiny fraction of the savings would have restored the \$319 million proposed to be cut from the foreign aid budget — pocket change for the Harper government but a priceless gift of health and edu-

cation to untold numbers of people around the world. It is indeed good news that the federal government budget is well on its way to being balanced by 2015. But is it not time to reconsider our responsibility to our fellow humans and the role that Canada's foreign aid can play in giving the poorest a fair chance in life?

CHITRA RAMASWAMI
CALGARY

(Not when our own house is in disarray)

DINESH'S CONSPIRACY

The presidential debates have ended and Election Day is upon us. One wonders what has swayed many of the undecided voters. President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney have been extremely close throughout. Top strategists from both parties have said that the "battleground" states will be vital to securing their 270 electoral votes. But is there any other pos-

sible ingredient that has played some sort of a role in the outcome of the upcoming elections? Conservative author and intellectual Dinesh D'Souza has hoped so. D'Souza co-produced and wrote a documentary, titled *2016: Obama's America*, that was released in July 2012, based on his book, *The Roots of Obama's Rage*. Only time will tell if D'Souza's arguments do indeed have any basis in reality or if they are part of a carefully concocted conspiracy seeking to push conservative and republican agendas through undermining Obama's future prospect as president. As neighbours who have close economic ties to the U.S., how concerned for the future should Canadians be?

SCOTT VENTUREYRA
OTTAWA

(Openly producing books and films isn't "carefully concocted conspiracy," it's just people sharing their arguments)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mud, blood and misery

Re: Has the War of 1812 been overhyped?, Nov. 8.

Page A11 of Thursday's Citizen — in the editorial section, recently vacated by two fine columnists — sparked again with an absorbing debate of the War of 1812 by Jeffrey Simpson and J. L. Granatstein.

Too bad Granatstein yielded to his bias in his closing paragraphs, speculating on how the opposition parties would have marked the anniversary.

For myself, I doubt if they would have filled the Canada Day stage with inept dancers swirling around to mindless music in spotless (but inaccurate) costumes. War is always mud, blood and misery.

PATRICK MCDUGALL, Ottawa

War did not end in a draw

Jeffrey Simpson's argument that the War of 1812 has been overhyped seems to rest to a considerable extent on what I believe is a mistake in his analysis. He states that the war ended "in a draw."

It did not. The war was an attempt by the United States to conquer Upper and Lower Canada, and it ended in failure, not a draw. For Britain and its Canadian militia and Indian allies, it was a war to avoid that conquest, and it ended in victory, not a draw.

When one country tries to conquer another, or the possessions of another, and fails, that is defeat, not a draw. Had both sides been trying to conquer the other, and both failed, then that would have been a draw, but Britain was not trying to conquer the United States.

Had the United States won, Upper and Lower Canada would be states of the U.S. (like Texas, conquered from Mexico), and there would be no Dominion of Canada. That makes the victory in the War of 1812 an absolutely crucial event leading to the existence of the present-day Canada. That is some-

thing all Canadians should know, and the government's campaign seems to be achieving that, in spite of its distortions and exaggerations. And knowing that we won and that the battle was crucial to our development as a nation is what matters.

ED WHITCOMB, Ottawa

Plausible answers?

Re: Man Created God, Nov. 6.

In his letter, Richard Deaton, equivocates on a number of issues.

He alludes to the problem of evil and suffering. It is worth noting that philosophical atheists have abandoned what is called the "internal problem of evil," namely that: an omnipotent and omni-benevolent God exists; and, the quantity and kinds of suffering that exist, are logically inconsistent or improbable with one another.

Recently they have turned to the "external problem of evil," namely, that the amount of evil in the world is gratuitous. To demonstrate this, one would have to demonstrate that God lacks morally sufficient reasons to permit particular amounts of evil — only an omniscient mind would be qualified to assess such a thing.

I believe Deaton commits the genetic fallacy when he argues that the evolution of the conception of God is sufficient to explain God away. To explain the origin of a particular belief does nothing to explain its truth and is simply irrelevant to the existence of God.

He puts his faith in the "laws" of science. This is an a-theological statement, not a scientific one. Are these laws self-existent, caused by nothingness or God? Combining logic with modern cosmology, God appears to be the most plausible answer.

Atheists like Deaton and columnist Andrew Potter seem to base their reasoning on a dead philosophy, i.e. verificationism. However, insightful atheists, like the late An-

tony Flew realized the problems with naturalism. Similarly, Thomas Nagel, in his book, *Mind & Cosmos*, argues why naturalism cannot account for the existence of consciousness.

SCOTT VENTUREYRA, Ottawa

No god required for morals

Re: An act of faith, guidance, Nov. 6.

Arguably, it wasn't columnist Andrew Potter who "strayed into muddy waters." His column was clear and on the mark.

I think it was letter-writer Rafal Pomian's introduction of faith and religion into a discussion which tends to confuse.

His comments concerning life and its origins are a case in point. That "nobody knows" is precisely the reason that humans, as a species, are continuously searching for answers. It's a good thing, because to simply stop looking, researching and exploring is a cop-out.

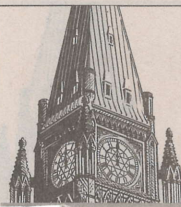
While it is true that evolution doesn't necessarily negate the belief in "god(s)," it does make the probability of the existence of a deity much less likely. The existence of "god" also opens up the door to the problem of infinite regression. After all, if "god" created everything, what or who created "god"? And so it goes, ad infinitum.

In this day, it is no longer adequate to simply assert that people and societies require "god" to be moral. To the contrary, it is well established that societies that have largely done away with organized religious oversight and universally held supernatural beliefs do fare better overall in terms of health, wealth, harmony and stability.

The mention of communist societies remains a weak and desperate ploy, for they are very much like religions in the manner in which they often encourage cult-like adherence, belief in dogma and blind obedience to authority.

STEVE BELER, Ottawa

Share your views: letters@ottawacitizen.com



EDITORIAL

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2012

Complex faith and reason

Re: Faith vs. reason, Dec. 20 and Faith is not estranged from reason, Dec. 18.

I believe letter-writer Richard Paukstaitis misunderstands the relationship between faith and reason. These notions also touch upon the concepts of belief and knowledge, which also share a complex inter-relationship.

Unfortunately, he misses the point of Richard Bastien's opinion piece. He seems to think the two concepts are mutually exclusive. The two cannot be separated and operate closely with one another. He seems to trivialize the inherent complexity between the two notions which have been debated by some of the greatest thinkers of the West.

It is akin to Stephen Hawking's bold proclamation, on the very first page of his book *The Grand Design*, that philosophy is dead at the hand of science. One need not be a philosopher to understand that such a statement is not a scientific one but a philosophical one and literally self-refuting. It is important to note that faith is not a term that only carries religious or theological baggage.

Inescapably, any world view will inevitably carry forth its own particular view of faith whether it's some form of scientism, a-theological or theological interpretative framework.

As humans, it is very difficult to remove ourselves from our presuppositions, assumptions and biases. To think that reason stands alone untainted or uninfluenced is an epistemological naiveté of the worst kind.

I wonder which manifestation of reason Paukstaitis alludes to and which faith is it based upon.

SCOTT VENTUREYRA, Ottawa

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



CHRIS MIKULA/OTTAWA CITIZEN

Scott Ventureyra, who has had four irreparable flat tires caused by potholes, says we need to improve Ottawa's roads.

City potholes damage vehicles, pocketbook

On Sunday Jan. 13, in the evening, while driving on Bank Street, I got a flat tire. The cause of the flat tire was a very deep pothole that was difficult to avoid, particularly because it was dark. It's worth mentioning that even if one were driving during the day it would be difficult to avoid because of the lack of space to swerve around it with all the surrounding traffic.

Over the past five years, I have experienced four flat irreparable tires combined with damaged rims. These damages have been very costly and directly attributable to the City of Ottawa's poorly maintained infrastructure. Moreover, it seems the city is having an extremely difficult time allocating proper budgets to road repairs and to accommodating the increased number of vehicles on the roads because of the significant population increase in Ottawa over the past 20 years. Not only has the quality of our roads suffered, but also our traffic is apparently now worse than Boston's and we have more congestion than Philadelphia and Houston. Needless to say, a

better solution must be sought out to improve our roadways.

In the past few years my tires have been damaged on the following roads: Main Street, AltaVista Drive and Carling Avenue. I believe the City of Ottawa has been incredibly negligent in allowing such a large number of potholes to remain over extended periods of times. If the repairs were done in a timely fashion, much of the costs resulting from tire and rim damage could have been largely avoided.

Portions of Bank Street, particularly in the south of Ottawa, resemble a microcosm of the moon's surface with all its cracks and potholes. Driving on streets similar to Bank is like being in a nightmarish video game where the objective is to make it out alive without doing any permanent damage to your tires and rims. However, the reality is we aren't in a video game and there's nothing enjoyable about driving on such poorly maintained roads. Our below-par roads have been the cause of much stress, many wasted hours

and a significant amount of money, much of which could have been avoided if our tax money was properly allocated.

A few years ago, I submitted a claim for an irreparable tire but I was never reimbursed for the costs and was told that the city isn't an insurance company. I wonder what percentage of people actually are reimbursed, if anyone is? It is especially frustrating when one returns to Ottawa after visiting countries with supposedly less economic prowess but that possess superiorly maintained infrastructures with more travel-friendly roads.

Inevitably, one can't help but wonder why our city's services are not improving (particularly with respect to better road maintenance) alongside the increasing property taxes. **SCOTT VENTUREYRA**, Ottawa

WATCH Scott Ventureyra discuss our city's potholes at

OTTAWACITIZEN.COM

/OPINION

Stay on God's path to avoid our disposition toward violence

Ottawa Citizen · 23 Jan 2018

Re: Bullets strike three east-end homes on second anniversary of gang homicide, Jan. 11. This article documenting the shooting on Jan. 10 on Claremont Drive finished with an interesting note. It quoted a translation of a biblical verse in Spanish, found on one of the resident's doors, that is taken from Joshua 1:9. It states: "Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

The context of this verse refers to God's promise to Joshua and Israel, in order to provide Joshua with courage amid his struggles while leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. Such a message is still relevant today — and in the aftermath of the shooting, worth pondering.

Despite the unfortunate fear instilled in the residents of these townhouses because of this violence, the remarkable thing was that no one was killed or harmed that evening.

Moreover, my daughter, who lives part-time in the area, was with me that evening. Nevertheless, when people lose their sense of restraint and moral accountability, these sorts of acts occur.

It is precisely when humanity lives as if there is no God that its sense of objective moral values and duties is abandoned. After all, how can we consistently praise or blame anyone for their actions if there is no objective morality or free will?

It is only when we consistently live as if a God — who grounds objectively good moral values and duties — truly exists, that we can one day transcend our archaic violent evolutionary predispositions. Scott Ventureyra, Ottawa

YOU SAID IT

Ottawa Sun · 25 Feb 2017

PROTECT CANADIANS

Like most Canadians, I expect the Liberal government's primary job is to protect us from terrorism and the RCMP's is to enforce laws, not act like social workers.

By saying that unlike President Trump, refugees would be welcomed, Trudeau has undoubtedly created the ongoing border crossings of undocumented, illegal asylum seekers. Under the Safe Third Country agreement, as Candice Malcolm rightly points out, these border crossers should be returned to the U.S., where their refugee claims should have been made. With the United Nations saying there are 60 million refugees worldwide, it is time the Trudeau government shows some common sense, as we cannot help them all. Justin Trudeau needs to stop politicking with the refugee crisis! LARRY COMEAU

OTTAWA (The laws in these instances are complicated; it's a troubling situation that the government must keep atop of.)

FEAR DEPENDS

Political correctness has unleashed a ubiquitous malaise throughout Western civilization at the expense of our freedoms and liberties.

In lieu of M-103, it should be stated that no religion or worldview should have special protection or rights over another. All should be protected, with the small caveat that they conform to Western democratic values. We would not want to uphold any view that is antithetical to Western values.

Phobia signifies an irrational fear or aversion to something. The question arises, do those who oppose M-103 have an irrational fear or aversion? The answer is: it depends. For instance, I do not think most sensible people would have a fear of Ahmadis. The Ahmadiyya Islamic sect is a very peaceful version of Islam.

But what are we to make of the Montreal imam Sayyid alGhitaoui's comments against Jews which were distributed as sermons on YouTube? Would fear of this brand of Islam be considered irrational? I think not. SCOTT VENTUREYRA OTTAWA (Point taken.)

QUEBEC DRIVERS

What on Earth are the qualifications for a driver's licence in Quebec (if any?) A couple of weeks ago when I turned south on Highway 105 for Ottawa, after visiting some friends at the ski resort in Mont Ste-Marie, I couldn't believe the speed of these drivers.

There was no respectable slowing down for 90-degree turns, and they came down the hills and the mountain sides like hungry wolves looking for prey. I gave a large sigh of relief when I pulled into my driveway, and vowed I would pick up that very memorable sign, I spotted in a Quebec general store, that read, "I survived the drive on 105." BILL WEBB OTTAWA (There have been some horrible crashes along that highway.)

Covering education costs

Ottawa Citizen · 5 Feb 2014

Re: Late fees adding up for area students, Feb. 3.

This Citizen story on the costliness of tuition fees for university students in Ottawa epitomizes the disgracefulness with which students are met by post-secondary institutions for pursuing higher education throughout much of Canada. Despite the several justifications for such a thing, it is still disheartening. Students are relying on fulltime to part-time jobs and OSAP to keep their heads above water while covering living expenses, books, other study material and rapidly increasing tuition fees.

While OSAP may provide the capital for students who do not have the upfront financial means to pay for their tuition, it will inevitably be extremely costly to pay back in the long run. Debt seems inescapable. The varying amounts of research grants, scholarships and bursaries can be of great aid, but most students do not receive such help. Even if they do, much of that money is still taxed. Tax legislation is ruthless to many hardworking Canadians and to those seeking the best possible education to increase their future livelihood (through greater employability).

As a PhD candidate I'm quite sympathetic. Tuition has almost tripled since 1990. Dalton McGuinty's unjustified consecutive record-breaking tuition hikes have really hurt a great number of students, especially post-graduate students who have completed their course work — some seeing at least 400-per-cent increases in tuition. This is a rather frightening prospect considering that there is no guarantee of a good-paying job after graduation. With Canada's high income tax rates, one can't help wonder why greater aid is not available, like that of many European countries. Or are there more pressing costs like the expenses of certain senators and government officials?

SCOTT VENTUREYRA, Ottawa

Nuances missed in creationism debate

Toronto Star · 10 Feb 2014

Re It's Science Guy vs. creationist, Feb. 4 Despite the debate's hype, it failed to deliver. Although Bill Nye is a gifted science educator for children and Ken Ham a well-meaning Christian, the debate seemed counterproductive.

It pitted Christian fundamentalism on one side and atheistic materialism on the other, while ignoring all the more nuanced positions between these two polar opposites.

It should be pointed out that, in order to be a Christian, one need not accept a literal interpretation of the book of Genesis nor a young earth. However, the debate was fixated on the age of the earth and universe. Nye provided some good arguments for accepting a universe and earth of billions of years, whereas Ham missed his opportunity to discuss and provide evidence for the various signposts to the design of the universe itself, the laws of physics and chemistry, the first self-replicating system, consciousness and other such indicators.

Ironically, it was Nye defending big bang cosmology, one of the most compelling arguments for design and creation. Mr. Ham did make a couple of valid points though, namely that one need not necessarily be an evolutionist to be a good scientist and that the term evolution (which has at least six viable different meanings) is often conflated.

These two represent extremely narrow views in terms of the science-religion debates. Neither seem to have been keeping up with advancements in science, philosophy, nor developments in the science-theology dialogue.

Scott Ventureyra, PhD Theology (candidate), Dominican University College, Ottawa

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protecting the public purse

Re: Ontario ombudsman's over-the-top method, July 11.

So, the provincial ombudsman fears the city's auditor general may lose his job over his recent report critical of city staff?

I wrote a number of reports in my former role as Closed Meetings Investigator that were critical of both staff and members of council and have never to my knowledge been in the least danger of losing my position as a result.

There being no overt sign that the situation with Ken Hughes is any different, I have to wonder if it could possibly be that André Marin is less motivated by a concern for Hughes' security of tenure than by his desire to expand his ever-growing empire.

Hughes has shown in his report that he does not shrink from speaking truth to power just as convincingly as the more flamboyant and inflammatory language favoured by the provincial ombudsman's office.

There can be little doubt in my mind that Hughes's methods will be equally, if not more, effective in protecting the public purse.

Douglas R. Wallace, Ottawa

Third Eye Blind exhibits longevity

Re: Sun sets on Bluesfest, July 14.

The RBC Royal Bank Bluesfest lineup comprised an interesting mélange of American bands with Canadian members including Styx, fronted by Lawrence Gowan, Slash's band with Todd Kern, and California's Third Eye Blind (3eb) with bassist Alex LeCavalier.

Of these, 3eb, with their first Ottawa performance, put on the most memorable one. Frontman Stephan Jenkins was surprised to hear many in the audience singing along, remarking: "I didn't think we were this popular in Canada."

For many years, a toxic myth surrounded 3eb; i.e., that they were corporate sellouts who were essentially a one-hit wonder with the song Semi-Charmed Life. The band has gone through a resurgence in recent years, as one of the most requested bands for concerts on college campuses in the United States.

The band has an inimitable talent for fusing infectious melodies, hard-driving rhythm chord progressions with minimalistic leads, introspective uplifting lyrics together with Stewart Copeland-like drumming.

Many songs induce a nostalgic, bittersweet euphoric and transcendental experience.

Despite multiple-year gaps between albums and legal battles with former guitarists, 3eb has managed to exhibit longevity.

With any luck, Jenkins's promise to return to Ottawa after their next album's release will not be in vain. The band's Bluesfest performance should put the last nail in the coffin among concertgoers of the myth surrounding their misdiagnosed musical talents.

Scott Ventureyra, Ottawa

Loser Lansdowne names?

Re: New Lansdowne street names proposed, July 8.

Ottawa is full to bursting with intelligent, creative people. Apparently they were all out of town when the names of two new streets within the historic Lansdowne Park site got the OK from the city's planning committee. Exhibition Way, Marché Way? Is that the best we can do?

These clever folks were obviously also absent when the CFL franchise was named. I can hardly wait for us to get a baseball team, so we can call them the Blackreds.

Lynne Owen, Richmond

Let's maintain infrastructure

Re: Boom town, July 14.

There has been much talk recently about the demolition of the Sir John Carling Building, built around 1967. Apparently it was an old federal office tower that had come to the end of its useful life.

I bought my two-storey frame house brand new in 1964. I would say that it is in better shape today.

It has better insulation, better windows, and its fourth roof is to be installed later this month. It is in such good shape because I spent money to look after it. Why cannot governments at all levels learn that it pays to maintain the current infrastructure?

I suppose that if funds were to be spent on maintenance so that taxes might have to be increased, then to keep up their chances of being re-elected at the next election they decide that the first thing to be cut is maintenance. And buildings, and streets for that matter, tend to be neglected and start to fall apart.

It always seems to be thus. What can we do about it?

Tudor P. Jones, Ottawa

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