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COVER: This is the ring that CERN built. These are the antiprotons that live in the ring that CERN built. The antiprotons live a good long time for antiprotons, up to 85, indicating that the Initial Cooling Experiment, as the ring is called, is successful in holding and circulating beams of antiprotons. The ultimate aim is colliding beams of protons and antiprotons. See p. 234. (Photo: CERN)

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LETTERS

Pushing and pulling

"May the force be with you," quipped SCIENCE NEWS in presenting a letter from Gary J. Cook (SN: 7/29/78, p. 67) suggesting a *one force* approach to theories of gravity, etc. SCIENCE NEWS is particularly adept at scattering those delightful witticisms among the profundities.

If Mr. Cook is, in effect, suggesting sighting down only one research barrel, it might be prudent to load the gun with scatter shot to increase the chances of a hit. Suppose, for instance, gravity is the target and all research efforts are pointed toward some sort of pulling force. Generally speaking, nature is as much a pusher as a puller, and may even have the option of combining the two. It might then be advantageous for research purposes to shoot for (1) a directional impulse emanating from all matter and (2) a responding power thrust within all matter shoving everything toward those impulses.

Viz.: Earth to falling Skylab, "We're down here." Skylab to Earth, "On target!"

And speaking of Skylab, perhaps the Russians could be prevailed upon to boost our Skylab back into a safe orbit on their next trip out. While such a maneuver may not solve any field force problems, I wouldn't want to miss SN's handling of the story.

Glenn D. Reyner
Norris, Tenn.

Looking at the big picture

Let me be the first to say that we shall miss Dietrick Thomsen — he's been an excellent translator of the various private languages of the sciences. In his recent think-piece, however (SN: 8/26/78, p.141), it is clear that the man is beginning to come apart at the Snovian seam between the "two cultures."

This is not surprising. The strangeness and the lack of communication between our intellectual and scientific communities will disturb any sophisticated mind, as it disturbed C. P. Snow and Santayana and Schrodinger and Korzybski and even Aquinas, for that matter.

But it seems to me that SCIENCE NEWS is in an excellent position to do something about this schizoid condition of Western culture. Why not start beating the editorial drums for academic budgets for studies in the restructuring and resynthesis of Western thought, in both its scientific and religious dimensions? Let's get our intellectuals off their nit-picking Positivism and their navel-inspecting Freudianism, and get them back to the original and proper business of philosophy — the Big Picture! The Ionian tradition. The grand manner of the Greek intellectual before Alexander.

God knows Western man is in sore need of a big picture — he's beginning to choke on the accumulated trivia of his knowledge, suffering acute cerebral dyspepsia, as he stumbles about in the growing dark and disorder of his burgeoning works.

John Wise
St. Louis, Mo.

Input on metric

As the recently appointed Science Representative to the United States Metric Board, I would appreciate receiving input from the readers of SCIENCE NEWS on your experiences and concerns with the increasing use of the SI metric system in the United States. The United States Metric Board was created by Public Law 94-168 "to declare a national policy of coordinating the increasing use of the metric system in the United States and to establish a United States Metric Board to coordinate the voluntary conversion to the metric system." The Board will be most effective in its task with your input. I will look forward to hearing from you.

Bruce P. Johnson, Ph.D.
3190 West 7th St.
Reno, Nev. 89503

Let's put science to work

Why has the research on test tube fertilization (SN: 8/5/78, p.84) become a moral and religious issue? Why can't scientists be allowed to conduct research to help people overcome the limitations of their own biology? We remove life-threatening cancers and fit prostheses to amputees, but when the system involved is that of reproduction the whole thing explodes into an Awful Moral Issue. Who cares, besides some self-appointed moral watchdog, whether an unimplanted fertilized egg constitutes an abortion. Call it what you like! I submit that a more pressing question is how many angels can dance on the head of a pin — they never have answered that one.

And to fear the technique's misuse is to fear all of science and mistrust the judgment and integrity of scientists. Most of us are not fiends bent on controlling the world with super-weapons or a race of controlled supermen. We have babies or suffer from infertility like everybody else. But instead of fearing our bodies we seek ways of bypassing our individual imperfections and thereby fulfilling our lives. Please, let us stop the witch hunts and let scientists resume research on a most promising technique for the relief of human suffering.

Merry Makela, Ph.D.
Houston, Tex.

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Please limit letters to 250 words.

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