

Books

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Agent Orange on Trial: Mass Toxic Disasters in the Courts — Peter H. Schuck. Exposes the human forces that have shaped the Agent Orange case, the personal injury class-action suit brought by Vietnam veterans, and explores the larger meaning of the case for American law and public policy. Harvard U Pr, 1986, 347 p., \$25.

Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Vol. 24 — Geoffrey Burbidge, Ed. Discusses such topics as the molecules in stars and the global structure of magnetic fields in spiral galaxies. Annual Reviews, 1986, 627 p., illus., \$44.

The Fabric of Mind — Richard Bergland. A prominent neurosurgeon presents the view that the brain is actually a gland controlled by the hormones within it. Bergland feels that the mysteries of behavior can be unraveled through a better understanding of brain hormones and that many kinds of illness will be more easily treated by understanding the hormonal signals that move back and forth between the body and the brain. Originally published in Australia in 1985. Viking, 1986, 202 p., illus., \$16.95.

The Jade Kingdom — Paul E. Desautels. A beautifully illustrated guide to the history, sources, lore, mineralogy, gemology and art of jade worldwide. Van Nos Reinhold, 1986, 118 p., color/b&w illus., \$34.95.

The Last Extinction — Les Kaufman and Kenneth Mallory, Eds. According to the authors, we are rapidly losing the diversity of life on earth. The intent of this book is to awaken the public to the issues involved, in the hope that the mass extinction now in progress can be prevented. Discusses the nature of mass extinctions and the role of people in causing the current one. The plight of the Amazon rain forest is described, as is the ecological situation in North America. Looks at the kind of world we might be living in if we do, or do not, make our best efforts at preserving life's diversity. Includes suggestions for how the public can make a difference and a random sampling of organizations involved in conservation issues. MIT Pr, 1986, 208 p., illus., \$16.95.

Lead Toxicity: History and Environmental Impact — Richard Lansdown and William Yule, Eds. A compilation of articles on lead, its history, uses today, distribution, presence in humans, sources of lead exposure and the effects of lead. Johns Hopkins, 1986, 286 p., charts & graphs, \$35.

The Nature of Reality — Richard Morris. "The reason that many of the theories that constitute the so-called new physics have 'bizarre' elements," says Morris, "is that conceptions of reality are changing. Old ideas are being replaced by new ones that often appear to be 'crazy' simply because they are unfamiliar. As science enters new territory, the structure of scientific thought must change." Here Morris separates speculations from well-established results in his explanation for the general reader of the important new discoveries in physics over the last two decades. McGraw, 1986, 249 p., \$17.95.

Science Fare: An Illustrated Guide and Catalog of Toys, Books and Activities for Kids — Wendy Saul with Alan R. Newman. Discusses ways in which parents can help make science more accessible to children of all ages. Focuses on encouraging inquiry and understanding, answering questions and approaches to science education. Describes community resources, school science fairs and other science competitions. Children's science books, kits, toys and games are described with sources of supply. For the child interested in a specific area of science, suggestions are given for activities, available materials and books in biology, earth science, chemistry, physics, astronomy, electronics, computers, building and engineering. Har-Row, 1986, 295 p., illus., paper, \$14.95.

Science Trivia: From Anteaters to Zeppelins — Charles J. Cazeau. Interesting information on a variety of topics from black holes, cloning, bats, petrified forests and anthropology to the supernatural. Plenum Pr, 1986, 285 p., \$17.95.

Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception — Daniel Goleman. For those who want to increase their awareness and get the most out of human relationships. The book is based on three premises: The mind can protect itself against anxiety by dimming awareness; this mechanism creates a blind spot — a zone of blocked attention and self-deception; such blind spots occur at each major level of behavior, from the psychological to the social. Originally published in hardback in 1985. S&S, 1986, 287 p., paper, \$8.95.

Letters continued from p. 307

observing them, but defining them as separate "things," analogous to our colloquial references to "ice," "water" and "steam."

Steven Lewis
Newton, Mass.

As I understand it, all nine spatial Kaluza-Klein dimensions represent translational degrees of freedom. Most proponents of Kaluza-Klein theories believe in the physical reality of all nine. This leads them to interesting geometric and metaphysical exercises. Whether the extra dimensions can be related to properties like electric charge, etc., is another question.

— D.E. Thomsen

they are not moving! Special relativity says nothing can go faster than light in any reference frame. I simply do not understand what D.E. Thomsen is trying to say unless he is violating the principles of special relativity. Could we get some clarification?

Bruce Harmon
Professor of Physics
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

The blobs are certainly moving in the quasar's reference frame, or at least that's what the observations purport to show. The explanation reduces their velocity there to an acceptable nine-tenths or so of the speed of light.

— D.E. Thomsen

The ultimate rejection

"Survival of the Fetus" (SN: 10/11/86, p. 234) reports elaborate attempts to explain why rejection doesn't occur. But isn't that exactly what does occur? I think it's called parturition!

Jerome S. Schaul
Caldwell, N.J.

Blobs pull a fast one

I was left quite confused by "A handful of high-speed quasars" (SN: 10/18/86, p. 245). How can blobs or anything be going at 99 percent of "the speed of light in their own reference frames"? In their own reference frames

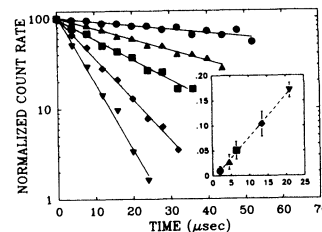
White dwarf: Not so small

"A dizzying orbit for a binary star" (SN: 10/11/86, p. 231) describes a close binary system with an orbital period of 11 minutes, the two components presumably being a neutron star and a white dwarf. However, it then states that either star is only about 10 miles across. That figure is a reasonable number for the diameter of a neutron star, but it is much too small for a white dwarf, which would typically have a diameter on the same order as that of the earth.

Lee T. Shapiro
Morehead Planetarium
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