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## This Week

- 324 Do Antihistamines Spur Cancer Growth?
- 325 Margarine is anything but a marginal fat
- 325 Young scientists win big in Birmingham
- 326 Trapping cold atoms in microwave webs
- 326 The social brain: New clues from old skull
- 326 Clementine's spin may cancel asteroid visit
- 327 Is this the way Bobby Fischer does it?
- 327 Seeing quantum leaps at room temperature

## Research Notes

- 333 Behavior
- 333 Earth Science

## Articles

- 328 Images of Inner Space  
Cover: Centuries ago, science and art often overlapped. Today, they exist largely apart, except for the work of individuals like Arnold Kolb. His magnifications of ordinary materials bear the signature of art. ("The Phoenix: Spirit of New Hope." Microscope image of recrystallized progesterone, magnified 50 times and viewed with transmitted cross-polarized light.)
- 330 What's in a Cigarette?
- 335 A Room of Their Own

## Departments

- 322 Books
- 323 Letters

Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Programs it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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## Letters

### Countering K-T conversion

In his review of the recent K-T conference in Houston ("Impact Wars," SN: 3/5/94, p.156), Richard Monastersky portrays my address as the "theatrical conversion" of a nonbeliever into a proponent of the impact theory. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, my aping of evangelical mannerisms was intended to parody aspects of the impact model as articles of faith rather than consequences of evidence.

Through many technical articles and public lectures my position has always been, and remains, that a detailed examination of the trans-K-T fossil record shows the extinction event to have proceeded in a progressive, rather than catastrophic, mode. This conclusion is based on studies of the fossil record and in no way addresses the question of whether or not a K-T impact occurred.

That being the case, I can hardly be described as having converted to, or retreated from, a position on the impact event itself

that I have never advocated.

*Norman MacLeod  
Senior Research Fellow  
The Natural History Museum  
London, England*

### Recalling psychology's past research

"Piecing Together Personality" (SN: 3/5/94, p.152) exemplifies psychology's failure to recognize and build upon earlier work.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, Raymond B. Cattell found 16 primary personality factors, with 5 to 8 higher-order factors, of which the largest 5 are the current Big 5. What has been ignored is the Mershon and Gorsuch finding that the 16 factors predict twice the variance in real-life situations as the Big 5.

Furthermore, 40 years' research with these detailed personality factors and the Big 5 is being ignored. For example, the identification of a dimension such as paranoid suspiciousness has now been rediscovered, and data such as those reported by Cattell and Scheier in *The Meaning and Measurement of Neuroticism and Anxiety* (1961, Reinhold Press) have

been ignored.

This means that considerable resources are lost rediscovering the same phenomena.

*Richard L. Gorsuch  
Professor of Psychology  
Fuller Theological Seminary  
Pasadena, Calif.*

*Five-factor advocates argue only that their model offers the best "global" description of personality traits. Studies such as that of Mershon and Gorsuch look at specific individual differences that occur within the broader five-factor framework, in their view. Further research may or may not support Gorsuch's interpretation of his findings, but five-factor supporters consistently cite Cattell's work as an important influence on their research.*

— B. Bower

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MAY 21, 1994

323