

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

Science Service Publication
Volume 150, No. 13, September 28, 1996

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SCIENCE NEWS (ISSN 0036-8423) is published weekly on Saturday, except the last week in December, for \$49.50 for 1 year or \$88.00 for 2 years (foreign postage \$6.00 additional per year) by Science Service, Inc., 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Preferred Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing office. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to SCIENCE NEWS, P.O. Box 1925, Marion, Ohio 43305. Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required — old and new addresses, including zip codes, must be provided. Copyright © 1996 by Science Service, Inc. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper. ♻️
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Cover: This color-tinted electron micrograph shows a newly identified herpesvirus in the nucleus of a human cell. The tiny spheres are infectious viruses. Medical detectives suggest that human herpesvirus 8 is the perpetrator of Kaposi's sarcoma, a cancer that often strikes gay men with AIDS. (Photo: Nancy W. Abbey and Brian Herndier)



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Letters

Correspondence confirms collision

Some of the letters (SN: 7/20/96, p. 35) objecting to "When Science and Beliefs Collide" only confirm the thrust of the article.

Marilyn M. Cooper claims I was "unwilling to admit that there are any truths other than those arrived at through scientific methods." I have never held that absurd position, but it is similar to the caricature of the scientist perpetuated by Hollywood and bad courses about science. Similarly, she would not have claimed that no postmodernists equate science with myth and fiction if she had read at least the evidence presented in my book referred to in the SCIENCE NEWS article.

Joel J. Mintzes writes that many reject traditional logical positivism as useful in teaching, that observations are theory-laden, and that learning requires more than what he calls a "search for universal truths." These are old findings, with which I agree and which I have incorporated in my science

textbooks and research articles. As one who has long worked to improve the professionalization and working conditions of teachers, my distress is focused chiefly on the well-documented failures of a significant fraction of the educational system—on which Mintzes prefers to be silent.

Gerald Holton
*Professor of Physics and of History of Science
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.*

No confirmation is no contradiction

In "Second look finds no comet reservoir" (SN: 7/22/96, p. 395), you state that we failed to find any distant comets in a second look and falsely imply that perhaps our first observations were not correct.

For reasons that neither I nor the people at the Space Telescope Science Institute can understand (but for which there are possible causes), the later images contained more electronic noise than the first observations. This noise meant that we could not see any-

thing as faint as the brightest of the objects we had in the first data set. We therefore did not detect anything. This is consistent with the first data set, not contradictory.

Anita L. Cochran
*Department of Astronomy
University of Texas
Austin, Texas*

Life on Mars first on Earth?

If a rock can be ejected off Mars' surface and fall on Antarctica, the reverse can happen ("Meteorite Hints at Early Life on Mars," SN: 8/10/96, p. 84). Bacterial spores can survive harsh environments for extended periods, so Antarctica may have yielded little more than a terrestrial colonist returned home.

It is asking too much of extraterrestrial evolution to yield morphologies identical to our own.

Peter B. Humphrey
Washington, D.C.

See "Interplanetary Odyssey," p. 204.

—The Editors