could aim to fund the project either by attracting some specific funding from the physics–astronomy community, NSF and so on, and some from subscribers to the resulting volumes; or as an addition to the standard *SCI* volumes, at a small increase in cost to current subscribers.

I hope this idea will strike a chord with others. I believe it would make available a valuable resource for the study of the history and development of science.

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Of Book Reviews and Benchmarks

A review of my book *Essentials of Modern Physics* appeared in the December 1989 issue (page 64). The reviewer claimed to be making an objective comparison between my book and a "benchmark" text. Not having the space for all his factual errors, I would like to point out just three.

He claims that my "discussion of elementary particles is brief to the point of complete inadequacy." The facts are that I discuss every topic that the benchmark text does, and discuss or mention—albeit briefly because of the level of the intended student audience—several other topics. I do not consider verbosity a true measure of depth of coverage and consciously avoid it, yet I take at least as many pages and words in my discussion, including many more worked-out examples. One factual comparison might have been between our respective treatments of the Big Bang. The benchmark text treats it as an explosion in space of an evidently spherical universe with a definite edge, which has left a plasma shell (with the Earth at its center) emitting Doppler-shifted wavelengths characteristic of 2.7 K or 2.9 K or 3 K; my text disagrees with these assertions.

The reviewer then claims that "nuclear physics does not fare much better." Of course, every author must pick and choose, but my text has three times the number of exclusive topics found in the benchmark. Topics discussed in my text but not the benchmark range from Q values for beta decay and threshold energy to synchrotron radiation and muon-catalyzed fusion. Again the page and word counts are comparable.

The reviewer's disparaging remark that my book "would be inappropriate for schools with a rigorous curriculum" is countered by the fact that it has been adopted by many leading universities, in the US and overseas, in groups such as the Ivy League, Big Ten and Big Eight.

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Corrections

September, page 47—The photo of Ludwig Boltzmann is from the University of Vienna.

August, page BG9—Barry N. Taylor is head of the Fundamental Constants Data Center at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. ■