

PHYSICS
New Perspective on
QUANTUM GRAVITY

NEUROSCIENCE
How Stress Cripples
YOUR BRAIN

SPACE EXPLORATION
Next Missions to
THE MOON

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

April 2012

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Humanity's Beginning

Two-million-year-old
fossils offer a tantalizing
connection to our
forebears



SPECIAL REPORT

**How
Do We
Stop
Polio
for Good?**



Recently discovered fossils from South Africa represent a species new to science, *Australopithecus sediba*, which could be the ancestor of our genus, *Homo*. The skull is part of a spectacularly well-preserved skeleton of a young male—one of several *A. sediba* individuals that died in an underground cave 1.977 million years ago outside what is now Johannesburg. Photograph by Brent Stirton, Getty Images.

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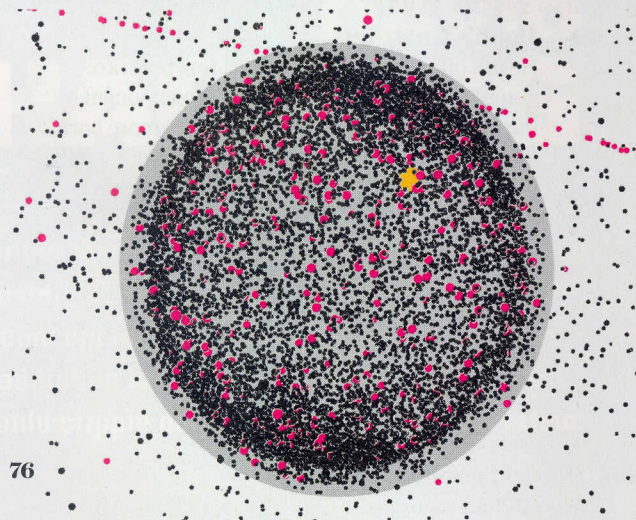
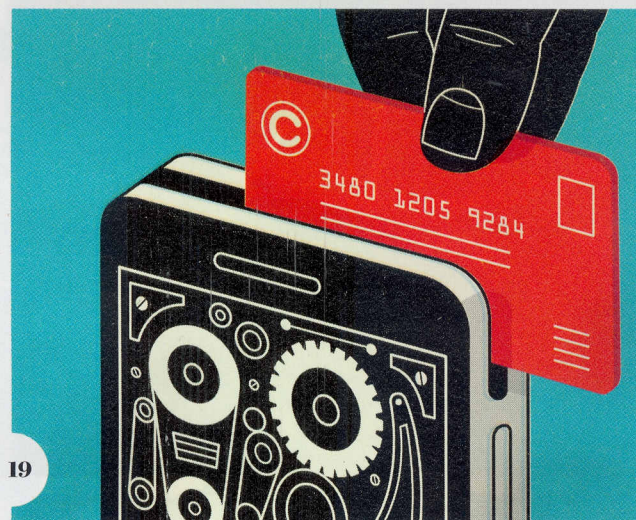
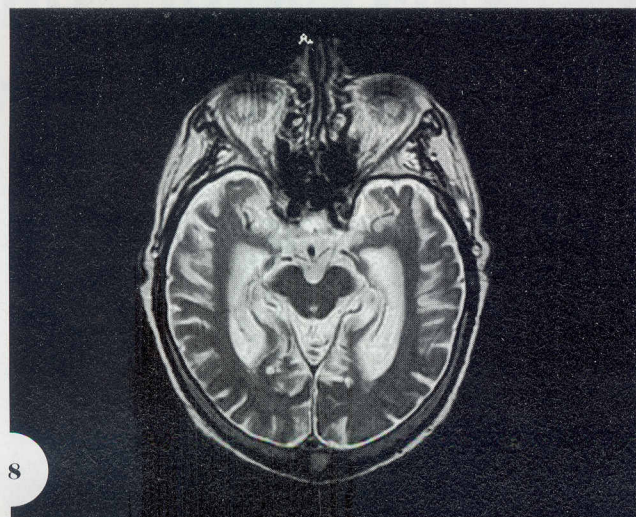
Hazardous space junk orbits Earth. *By John Matson*

ON THE WEB

Thousands of Physicists Descend on Boston

The American Physical Society's March meeting, the largest gathering of physicists in the world, covered everything from quantum optics to the physics of ponytails.

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