

to the editor

R.L.S., drugs and creativity

If Dr. Myron G. Schultz had devoted a little time to investigation he might not have been so quick to cast aspersions on the character of Robert Louis Stevenson with several unwarranted suppositions. He suggests, as quoted in your magazine and elsewhere, that "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" was written under the influence of cocaine (SN: 4/17/71, p. 264).

This would account, Dr. Schultz says, for the demoniacal (?) pace at which Stevenson wrote the story; this would also account, he says, for the theme of the story.

Well, Dr. Schultz should have talked to a few professional writers before he made himself ridiculous. In the first place, many writers write best when they write fast; Shakespeare was a very fast writer. We have today at least 50 writers of whom I am personally aware who write occasionally or always at that speed. . . .

As for the theme: the story of personality change is as old as storytelling; it needs no cocaine, no other drug. Such stories are current in the folklore of every country (the Frog and the Handsome Prince, for example) and every writer is aware of many versions of such stories.

No writer ever wrote with more conscious awareness of what he was doing than Stevenson. He has written much upon the art of writing, and expresses himself with clarity. It is obvious from his writings on the subject that he knew just what he was doing, what effect he was creating at any given moment. He was a master of mood, of atmosphere. Furthermore, he wrote a number of stories in the same general mood, for example "Markheim," and "The Merry Men."

Drugs and alcohol are not a means to creativity, but rather a deadend street for any creative artist, as a good many would-be writers have discovered. There is but one formula for success in any of the arts: belief in oneself and persistence, in equal quantities.

The writer of this letter has written 54 novels to date, and is not unacquainted with the problems.

*Louis L'Amour
Los Angeles, Calif.*

China's politics

I was amazed that your discussion of scientific communication with China (SN: 5/8/71, p. 313) ignored one very important thing: the nature of China. It's as if in 1937 we were talking about scientific communication with Nazi Germany. After all, weren't the 1936 Olympics held in Berlin? Perhaps we

could have sent Goddard on a tour. Might have improved the V-2's aim.

In a dictatorship such as Nazi Germany or Communist China there can be no such thing as science for science's sake. Everything is geared to serve the interests of the state. And in a free society we must not let our scientific curiosity override our moral conscience. China is still technically at war with the United Nations in Korea. The International Commission of Jurists has found China guilty of genocide against Tibet. At least 20 million Chinese have been liquidated since 1949.

Chou is smiling, to be sure. But so did an Austrian paper hanger.

*Daniel John Sobieski
Chicago, Ill.*

Nader report

In your recent news account of the investigation of the influence of the National Academy of Sciences on public policy which is to be undertaken by Messrs. Nader and Boffey (SN: 4/10/71, p. 247), you indicated that I had publicly taken exception to the report on air pollution issued by Mr. Nader. Since I am quite unaware of ever having commented on this report, I hope that you will either document your statement or inform your readers of this error.

*Philip Handler
President
National Academy of Sciences
Washington, D.C.*

(We misinterpreted a comment to us by one of Dr. Handler's associates, but that does not affect the basic point that NAS officials are decidedly uneasy about the Nader investigation of their organization.—Ed.)

Race and heredity

Your article on the National Academy of Sciences (SN: 5/1/71, p. 299) fails to report the new methodology that I proposed to reduce racial aspects of the environment-heredity uncertainty.

The new research finding in my paper at the Academy was that one typical "Negro" population has individuals that differ greatly in percentage of Caucasian ancestry—probably from 5 percent to 60 percent. I also reported that 12 presidents of predominantly black colleges concur in the opinion that their majority students, who are black in their colleges, are relatively advantaged academically by attitudes toward race: i.e., as if "inverted prejudice" gave blacks a motivational advantage over whites. If my recom-

mended research on such students confirms my estimate of one I.Q. point increase for each 1 percent increase of Caucasian ancestry, we must dismally predict that elimination of prejudice will not remedy the tragic disadvantages of our black minority and must search for other solutions. But if white genes are disadvantageous in these colleges, then this new fact may unlock the door to a cure for unjust discrimination. No matter what is found, the truth should contribute to diagnosis and treatment.

My faith in the power of reason and the goodness of man is what puts me at odds with my articulate, but often anonymous, critics. I was distressed that many members of the Academy, who opposed accepting the report of the Academy's Committee on Policy with Respect to Studies of Genetic Quality, did so, not on scientific grounds, but because misunderstanding of it might tarnish the Academy's image. The tone of the report did contribute to intellectual integrity by emphasizing that, regardless of politics, science must seek and express truths about national problems.

*W. Shockley
Stanford Electronics Laboratories
Stanford, Calif.*

Helium monoatomic

In your article, "Helium: Should it be conserved?" (SN: 4/17/71, p. 261) you state that helium forms a molecule containing two atoms. Helium is a monoatomic gas and never forms any type of molecule. The error, I'm sure, was an oversight in an otherwise well written and informative article.

*Joseph W. Grande
Chairman, Science Dept.
Abington JHS
Abington, Pa.*

SO₂ standard

In a recent article on ambient air standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (SN: 5/8/71, p. 314) SCIENCE NEWS quoted the standard for sulfur dioxide as 1.03 parts per million. This is in error, and the error arises from other published misprints. The correct standard should be 0.03 ppm by volume, which corresponds to 80 micrograms per cubic meter.

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