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Letters

Brooding over mood

Reading "Mood swings and creativity: New clues" (SN: 10/24/87, p.262) as a victim of affective disorder myself, I think of other questions about mood that such studies might investigate. How do writers and artists habitually use mood-affecting chemicals, including alcohol, tobacco, coffee and perhaps meat? What is their background as to religious and social training in mood control? Much as children learn to manage their tempers, we may learn through faith and rituals how to adjust our mood to fit an occasion or to fit our will. And to what degree has the development of mood control been disrupted by family alcoholism, divorce, tragedy and the like? Have writers and artists experienced more disruptions of training in mood control than others? And do these people, noted for working alone, tend to neglect the social ritual that might temper their difficulty with moods?

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Cover: Shadows and reflections play on the inner gorge of the Grand Canyon as the setting sun warms a distant limestone wall. For more than a century, scientists, prospectors and adventurers have been delving into the mysteries of the canyon, and on a recent river trip, geologists discussed how nature's largest classroom continues to stimulate new research and ideas. (Photo: Richard Monastersky)



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These questions might illuminate both mood swings and creativity, and data about the questions need not be precisely quantified to be revealing.

Dick Gardner
Menomonie, Wis.

Martin's theory has more to do with our cultural outlook than it does with what actually happened at the end of the Pleistocene epoch.

Alan Bernstein
Seattle, Wash.

On cultural 'advancement'

I was surprised to read about Paul Martin's theory concerning the extinction of North American mammals ("Extinctions on Ice," SN: 10/31/87, p.284). Although I'm not a scientist, from the reading I've done on primitive cultures, it seems unlikely that they would exhibit the belief systems and behaviors necessary to bring about the extinctions of so many mammal classes.

What does not surprise me, however, is that such a theory would be suggested at a time when the human race is unquestionably wiping out many life forms and bringing about a new mass extinction on the planet. I suspect

Point well taken

Table tennis is not a sport "in which points can be scored only by the server," as it was erroneously described in "The ratings game for rally sports" (SN: 10/24/87, p.269). Moreover, table tennis already has a quite satisfactory ratings system which is used by the U.S. Table Tennis Association and local clubs. This system does not measure scores or games won, only matches. I suppose this reflects a competitive, bottom-line attitude that "close doesn't count," that winning your match is the only true measure of ability.

Boulden Griffith
Portland, Ore.

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