

March 4, 1990

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Dear Mickey,

I read the three editorials "Cold Beans & Bacon", "The N.I.M.I.", and "Persona Non Grata" with interest and amusement. The three seek to deliver a message through humor -- a commodity sorely lacking in our scientific dialogues. They make points like Russell Baker in the New York Times and Art Buchwald did some years ago. While I have editorial critiques with some of the remarks -- they may be improved with a few deft editorial amendments, I am neither dismayed nor turned off nor unhappy with their publication.

Indeed, if I could write like Russell Baker I would attempt to use such style to get some messages across. For example, at the APPA meetings this week, some players argued that the diagnosis of schizophrenia could not be made with any assurance since more than 40% of the known schizophrenics in a carefully studied sample changed their behavior (and the resulting diagnosis) in follow-up studies; while others asked for 10 million dollars annually to find the gene of schizophrenia! Such a ridiculous situation cries for humorous treatment since no logical arguments seem to make a dent.

While it is not usual for 'scholarly' journals to include pieces by the likes of Russell Baker, many do include articles that are not 'straight science'. I recall (with some pleasure) the JAMA section "Piece of My Mind"; the BMJ commentaries by Minerva; Lancet's 'Occasional Notes'; and Dick Shader's jokes as part of the J. clin. Psychopharmacology. These complement the solid science of these journals, and as a reader, I enjoy these interludes as much (occasionally more than) the straight science.

I made some marginal Editor's notes on each of the articles; these are attached for your use.

My best regards.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
A Fellow Editor