

superior human beings, who perceive so strongly the endless variety of the world that they are simply not able to classify it as most of us do. Most of us, if we experienced the world as what it actually is—infinitely varied and constantly changing, no two things alike and no one thing ever twice the same—might well be driven crazy by this perception. I suspect that autists escape from this by, in one way or another, creating for themselves a much narrower, more tightly focused area of experience that they can organize, or in which they can keep unpredictable differences down to a minimum.

John Holt, Cambridge, Mass.

The Hazards of Holism

Michael Halberstam's article "Holistic Healing: Limits of the New Medicine" [August] was a scholarly overview of the current wave in health care. Holism—whatever it is—will leave its stamp on the late 70s. If it helps to influence medicine to return to its foundations of caring, it will have served a useful purpose. But holism's danger is that, as Halberstam says, it is not selective; a San Francisco newspaper lists nearly 100 separate organizations. The odds that some good will come to individuals does not balance the potential for harm.

I share Halberstam's sense of sadness for Western medicine, for within the holistic movement are the seeds that nourished modern medicine, and the roots to which we must return.

Paul H. Goodley, Director,
Pain Diagnostics
and Rehabilitation Institute,
Los Angeles, Calif.

Some comments need to be made about Michael Halberstam's implied assumptions about holistic medicine—that there has to be a choice between the Navajo "singer" and Dr. Kildare, that to make medicine holistic all you need to do is to tell your patients to take it easy. Surely holistic treatment includes the physical side of the mind, the mental and spiritual aspects of the body. Holism tries to keep the specialities together, so we don't have patients ping-ponging between those who treat the body and those who treat the mind.

Carol Murphy, Swarthmore, Pa.

Michael Halberstam's point that people are angry at Western medicine is quite an understatement. The reason why alternative healing arts are fast-growing is because of the failure of modern medicine. It's a shame that people waste their time, money, and health on harmful medical

propaganda that seeks to prevent them from receiving certain helpful forms of health care. Medicine is characteristically disease-oriented, which is understandable, since that's where the money is. The medical field is only now discovering the prevention of disease. Physicians, on the whole, have not taught their patients about health, or good health habits. The cures of medicine serve mainly to fill our hospitals with the victims of new resultant diseases. Halberstam's statement that health can be postponed reflects precisely that attitude that will keep us from experiencing health.

Catherine M. Boland,
Spartansburg, S.C.

Mapping a Changing Minority

Unfortunately, neither Alan Bell and Martin Weinberg's *Homosexualities* nor Ashley Montagu's review ["A 'Kinsey Report' on Homosexualities," August] adequately portrays the quality of life within the gay subculture. The politics of liberation, so much a part of minority-group Weltanschauung, obscure vital introspection into personal behavior, as well as broader criticism of the group. Thus, the more apparent shortcomings of the book seem to have escaped Montagu's usually

critical eye, with the exception of a few questioning references.

What appears to be the book's biggest inadequacy is the fact that it involves a sampling done some years ago of an untypical gay population in an untypical American city. Perhaps, at the time, the group surveyed was not so distinguishable from groups elsewhere, but some important differences would emerge if the study were conducted now. Significant sociological changes have taken place within the subculture, and San Francisco has been a leader in their promulgation. For one thing, depersonalized sex has become more widespread; though such sex may not be inherently evil or damaging to the psyche, it does encourage exploitation on a grand scale.

A book based on dated studies of a population of a city that prides itself on being *outré* hardly provides a current and realistic picture of life in that city—and even less so of the gay population nationwide.

[Name Withheld]

Psychologists today seem to be obsessed with predicting human behavior, and to this end seem to have no better means than the arbitrary classification of people and

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