

June 11, 1958

Dr. P. C. Trexler  
Lobund Institute  
University of Notre Dame  
Notre Dame, Indiana

Dear Dr. Trexler:

Thank you very much for your letter of June 9. There should be much careful and critical discussion of these problems.

I would not really be terribly alarmed about the level of contamination that would be introduced by a clean (not necessarily sterilized) spacecraft mechanism. I would be much more concerned about the contamination that would accompany ill-conceived biological experiment, e.g. the hard landing of a large mammal, or a premature manned expedition. One difficulty is that a hard landing might disperse the contents of a missile over very nearly the entire surface of the moon (witness the "rays" which emanate from the meteoritic craters). In any case, why should there be any hard landing without well-thought out scientific objectives?

This discussion of the moon is a preliminary to the exploration of the planets, and for Mars and Venus I feel there should be extraordinary care not to introduce even minimal contamination until the biological possibilities have been carefully thought out.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Medical Genetics

JL/sw  
cc-Dr. Porter

TREXLER, P. C.