

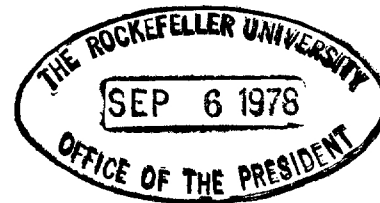
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August 27 1978

Dr Joshua Lederberg, President
Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York New York 10021



Dear Dr Lederberg

First of all I want to apologize for writing what will be a long letter for an initial contact such as this. I assure you I will be as succinct as possible given the purpose of my approach.

I am, as an independent documentary film producer/director/writer, the creator of a 13-part film series known by the working title In Quest of the Sacred. The series is for national public television (PBS) as well as probable international distribution. Soon the project will enter its formal, year-long research and script development phase and this is specifically why I am writing to you. First however I need to explain the nature and aims of the series, which should, I hope, convey its unprecedented scope.

In Quest of the Sacred will deal with the deepest realities of the human situation. The series will evoke for a broad television audience the human quest for meaning and values in the late 20th century. Combining documentary, drama, animation, and special effects, the 13 films will elucidate in 13 stages perennial human issues shared by all people in all cultures at all times, as they are in our own. Our commitment has been to thus make available a story to live by with the kind of evolutionary energy necessary to sustain the continuing human enterprise on into the future age.

The overall movement of the series, the plot so to speak, will take the viewer on an archetypal journey. The emphasis will be on the spiritual quest in its broadest sense, not dealing with 'religion' per se but with what the wisdom in the sacred traditions, history, myth, as well as science, have to tell us about the quest for what it is to be human.

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No attempt such as this would be effective for the viewer let alone valid without a sharp focus on the most contemporary scientific understanding of the world. Science will be integrated laterally throughout the successive 13 stages (programs) of the journey. It will

be shown as the enormous expansion of our cognitive horizon it is; as a stunning achievement the full meaning and philosophical ramifications of which we need to investigate.

The value of this comprehensive series will be to make accessible through the visual medium resources and potentialities that are not available to most people. We will demonstrate dramatically that peoples have developed a number of ways to symbolize the totality and the individual's meaning in relation to the cosmos, in order to open up for the viewer a new range of symbolic resources that can offer a dynamizing, meaningful vision.

All this we will ambitiously offer as the 'other side of the coin', a kind of antidote to the prevailing notion among many that people are nothing more than a bundle of desires, which allows them to try to get as much of what they want without doing (too much) harm to others. It also will present for our late 20th century audience a sense that modern life need not be considered trivial (as the media so often trivialize men and women).

The project has gained considerable momentum since its inception two years ago, not least of which is reflected in the diverse group of distinguished scholars who are participating as consultants during the coming year.

Among the individuals already committed are Robert N. Bellah, the sociologist of religion here at UC Berkeley; Thomas Berry, cultural historian, President of the Teilhard Association, and director of the Riverdale Center for Religious Research; mythologist Joseph Campbell; physicist Fritjof Capra; Mircea Eliade; native American expert N. Scott Momaday; anthropologist Barbara G. Myerhoff; philosopher Jacob Needleman, author of A Sense of the Cosmos; philosopher of religion Raimundo Panikkar, at UC Santa Barbara; Chinese scholar Tu Wei-ming here at Berkeley.

Throughout we have had the support of PBS (Public Broadcasting Service, through which the completed series, projected for 1982, will be aired nationwide). A major application to the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1977 won their highest research and development award. Grants from private foundations have been received.

The series itself has evolved through many stages. It grew out of an earlier idea of mine submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a film series on the spiritual/humanist dimensions of science. In response the NEH asked me to develop a series strictly in the area of religion and philosophy (leaving the science to the National Science Foundation). This I did, working closely with Thomas Berry and Robert Bellah. The final document had the science dimension discreetly tamed, although not obliterated.

Even with the projected financial support of the NEH this very costly series -- to be created over four years from start up of research and writing through production of the thirteenth hour-long film -- required additional sizeable funding before work could responsibly begin. This process of garnering funds recently underwent a shift that affects the content and scope of the series. We have received indication of a major funding commitment from a private international foundation whose interest centers precisely on the holistic intent of the original idea, allowing us to open up the series and once again allow modern science in as a key part of the spiritual quest for what it is to be human.

Because of this most recent development I am now in the process of expanding my consultants to embrace the natural sciences, hoping to attract to an already unusual gathering of creative scholarship individuals such as yourself who play leading roles in modern scientific thought. We will be inviting Sir Bernard Lovell, Geoffrey Chew, among other scientists, to participate also.

May I therefore send to you a synopsis of the rather extensive written documentation that exists on this series, with a view to further discussion between us and your potential participation during the research and script development phase? Arrangements with consultants as to the amount of time they make available to the project have been done on an individual basis. We might meet and then discuss this. We expect to start up in October, certainly no later than November.

Between now and then I hope to have been able to send you some written material, spoken with you on the telephone and if possible to have met personally with you. There is a great deal more to say about In Quest of the Sacred than I have said here. I hope that in my genuine attempt to be concise I have not failed to convey the excitement and importance of this undertaking.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With all good wishes,



I leave for London on August 29 and will be returning through New York for a few days on September 15, when it might be ideal to meet. A reply to this letter would best be addressed to me at my friends where I will be staying from the 15th: c/o Keith Reemtsma MD, 211 Central Park West, Apt 22K, New York NY 10028, telephone 595 0704.