

R. Stamen

Dear Joshua:

Enclosed is a copy of André's and my publicity offers for the Pasteur anniversary.

In answer to your question about the general acceptance of Cohen's assertion - both with respect to bacteria and to blue-green algae - it seems to me that the answer is fairly simple. In eukaryotic algae, fungi and protozoa, simple microscopic observations very early revealed phenomena of various kinds - conjugation, gamete release and fusion, production of structurally distinctive zygotes - which could be more or less unambiguously interpreted as concomitants of a sexual process. Hence it was evident that at least some members of these assemblages were capable of undergoing sexual reproduction. ~~It~~ It was the failure of microscopists to observe comparable phenomena in any representatives of the bacteria & blue-green algae which led to the dogma of asexuality. To this should be added, of course, that the analysis of sexual processes in eukaryotes led to the establishment of a certain idea of the nature of sexuality which made it no doubt very difficult to entertain the possibility that bacteria might handle matters differently. I think there is an analogy here to the difficulty of accepting the notion of a bacterial photosynthesis which didn't conform to the rules of the game in plants. Once natural laws of wide validity are established, there's a natural tendency to treat them as universal.

All the best from Germaine & myself,

Roger