January 21, 1953

Dr. Harold F. Blum
Department of Biology
Princeton University
Princeton, N.J.

Dear Dr. Blum:

Thank you for your message of January 16. I regret the misunderstanding that may have developed. The citations, e.g. to your book, mean that the problem in question is discussed in the reference, not necessarily that a particular viewpoint is represented. Youwwill note the same procedure on, e.g., p. 423, line 3: most of the authors cited are not holists by any means. I shall be very sorry if this condensation leads to further misrepresentations. Perhaps it was unwise not to have included a note to this effect.

No one will disagree concerning the improbability of protein neogenesis. The problem is to furnish a sufficiently detailed picture of the transition from chemical to biological evolution. As best as I can recall your text, you developed this question rather thoroughly, but primarily in its energetic aspects. The most prevalent fallacy, to my mind, is the assumption that neabiogenesis was a unique event in history. I can see no refutation of the suggestion that the individual steps are continually recurrent, even today, but that competition from existing organisms makes it virtually certain that new forms will have any perceptible role in future evolution.

I am hoping sometime to collect my thoughts on the origin of life, from the genetacist's viewpoint, in somewhat more coherent and satisfactory fashion than the recent review. I would count it a considerable favor if you could send me reprints of your papers on the subject, or failing these, specific references to publications or the pages in your book that most emphatically reflect your own contributions to this subject.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg