

Dept. Genetics,  
University of Wisconsin,  
Madison 6, Wisconsin.

November 2, 1950.

Dr. J. L. Gerard,  
Department of Physiology,  
University of Chicago,  
Chicago 37, Illinois.

Dear Dr. Gerard:

Thank you very much for your letter inviting a contribution to Physiological Reviews. The title suggested, "Unicellular genetics" was particularly appealing, for I have felt that the circumscription of microbial genetics was an artificial one which included subjects (e.g., crossing-over) which belong to formal genetics, and excluded others which would make for a more coherent outlook.

Unfortunately, your letter caught me at a time when I have just been recovering from certain writing commitments, and am involved with others. For this reason, before accepting your cordial invitation, I would like to propose certain qualifications. Since these may not be in accord with your editorial plans or policies, I wish to take this opportunity to discuss them with you informally before closing a definite commitment.

Firstly, the earliest date by which I could conveniently prepare a manuscript would be February 15, 1952. If the paper is scheduled for 1952 publication, this deadline might be unacceptable.

Further, I must confess to a lack of interest in preparing the usual type of summary review. I hope I've done my share of that sort of thing in 1948 (in Heredity) and 1949 (in Annual Review of Microbiology). The Annual Reviews seem to be following a policy of regular publication of reviews in microbial genetics and physiological genetics which takes care of the most acute needs for summarization of publications. It happens, however, that I have had to give some thought to the bearing of modern genetic research on the classical Cell Theory. I propose, therefore, an essay on "Genetics and the Cell Theory", but am not certain how appropriate a vehicle the Physiological Reviews would be. Such an essay would probably include quite as comprehensive review of "unicellular genetics" as would be involved in a more formal review. However, I would hope that it were quite clear that I had a specific point of view to expound.

If the notion of a speculative critique rather than an objective summary appeals to you and to the board of editors, I will be glad to take on the assignment -- indeed will be grateful for the opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg,  
Associate Professor of Genetics.