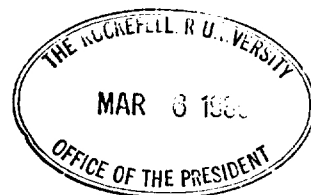


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THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
History and Philosophy of Science



February 24, 1989

Professor Joshua Lederberg, President
The Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York, NY 10021
U.S.A.

Dear Professor Lederberg,

I have returned to the problem of development. I am writing an historical essay on "protozoology and development" for a volume on modern developmental biology and will take this opportunity to address some of your remarks about Beyond the Gene, especially about genic change during the cellular differentiation. Most of the essay concerns the role of the cytoplasm in development and the usefulness of protozoa for studying nucleocytoplasmic relations, cortical inheritance etc. I am beginning the body of the essay with a deconstruction of Weismann's The Germ-Plasm examining his assumptions rhetoric, and so on. From there it moves to embryologists concerned with the physiology of development, and protests against Wiesmannism and morphological theories of development heredity. I have found C.M. Child's writings and his emphasis of the importance of polarity to be most useful. As, Vance Tartar remarked in his Biology of Stentor, "Consciously or not, the tradition he established has continually been drawn upon." My essay begins and ends with recent controversies in embryology (Goodwin versus Wolpert etc) and the involvement of protozoological work in the debate. Actually, I think there is need for a good readable book on the history of developmental biology as it pertains to discussions and debates about genocentric views of the organism. I would like to send you a copy of the draft of this paper when it is completed.

I realise now that I could have done a much better job, been much clearer, in setting up the first chapter of Beyond the Gene. I'd also rewrite the concluding chapter taking out the unnecessary sociological jargon which did not help clarity at all, as I see it now. But that book has done some service. And I don't think I have made the same kind of mistakes in the new book. By the way, my editor at C.U.P has informed me that the Moewus book, is in the production line. At the moment, I am on study leave and have a busy writing and research schedule.

I should also mention, that I am on the look out for a suitable position in North America. Although my wife and I like Australia very much, and the department here is excellent, since we now have two small children taking long flights from Australia have become more and more difficult.

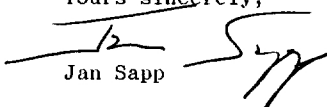
Actually, I am on the short list for a job in the History Department at U.C. San Diego. They are building up a very strong science studies program there, between Martin Rudwick and Bob Westman in the history department, Phil Kitcher and two others in philosophy, and Andrew Scull, Steve Shapin and Bruno Latour in the sociology department. They are all excellent scholars. No doubt they will eventually seek departmental status for their program. I was in San Diego two weeks ago to be interviewed and to give a lecture. My talk was based on my paper "The Nine Lives of Gregor Mendel", its a chapter for a volume on experimentation which I am co-editing. I enclose a draft copy for your interest and scrutiny. I am by no means confident that they will offer me the position. They had 90 applicants and the competition is stiff. But I left San Diego with the feeling that I would really like that job- building up a program from the bottom floor. I know I could also learn a great deal from the group at San Diego. It would also allow me to be closer to archives, conferences to attend, and scientists to interview.

This brings me to another issue. One project that I have been thinking about for a long time, is to write a story of your career. Of course, I have no idea about your feelings about this idea, or if you already have someone working on this, or if you have already begun an autobiography. But, there is no doubt in my mind that a book detailing your career should be written.

There is no need for false modesty. I am not talking about a purely celebratory "great man" book about a creative genius, nor am I talking about a book that would pretend to assess your achievements and judge your rightful place in origins of microbial genetics and in the foundations of molecular biology. I am interested in writing one that would detail your career, your associations, and the process by which you made your scientific and administrative achievements. I am confident that there would be a very large audience for such a book, and that there would be important lessons for all of us to learn from it. As I see it, such a book should be written in a way to embrace, not only biologists in the field, but the scientifically educated public generally. At this stage there is no need to elaborate further. I would just like to express my great interest in such a study and to learn of your feelings about the idea. If you were interested, I would make it a priority, and begin work full-time on the project as soon as I meet my present writing commitments.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,


Jan Sapp