

March 8, 1961

Dr. Alfons Metzner
Chief Editor of
"Chemische Industrie"
21, Karlstrasse
Frankfurt/M., Germany

Dear Doctor Metzner:

You may, of course, add my approval to that of Mr. Alexander's for the use of the picture mentioned in your letter of March 1.

I was actually a little alarmed to see the quotation from Fortune that you wrote in your letter. When I went back to the original, I found that there was a slight shift in emphasis: for example, the original text suggests that the U.S. social and intellectual climate may be "in-sufficiently hospitable to the scientific mind" which may convey a slightly different impression than your "Inhospitable to science. Perhaps the main answer to your remarks is that we should be sufficiently concerned for the achievement of an excellence that we would ideally pursue that we raise questions of this sort. I believe that indeed the climate here is "insufficiently hospitable"; there is still a great challenge to the development of intellectual interests in this country. However, I believe that it would be a great mistake to amplify these notes of self-criticism beyond their original intent of exhorting our people to higher and higher achievement.

What may be the inherent mistake in the Fortune article, and therefore of your reporting of it, is the futility of an attempt to summarize American culture in a brief word. We live in a complex society with intimate connections, as you know, with the best of European life, and with many additional elements that have evolved indigenously. In such a society, with its dedication for the personal expression of individual capabilities and aspirations, it is not surprising that one should see a very broad spectrum of interest in scientific and cultural matters. As teachers, we have the deep obligation to communicate the possibilities of human attainment.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

MEZNER, A.