



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

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Dr. I. B. Cohen
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Dear Bernard:

I very much enjoyed your letter of August 11th and I am sure Harriet did, too. It was forwarded to me while I was in Palo Alto, and I hasten to acknowledge it now that I have just returned.

Really, I am very much looking forward to your book!

Your remarks about penicillin resonate very closely with my own perspective. Had Fleming been more of an organic chemist he might have tried to pursue the extraction and isolation of the very unstable material himself; but as it was he needed to engage the skills and attention of outsiders and that's a much bigger problem! The expectations of magic bullets from Paul Ehrlich's earlier work were dashed by the unhappy experience with germicides through the 1910s and 1920s and any treatment of the history of antibiotics shows the disdain with which the concept of selective antibacterial therapy was greeted after the early flushes of excessive enthusiasm.

But what I have to say echoes so closely your own remarks, that I wonder if I didn't first learn about it from you! Can you give me the reference to your "older publication...1940s"?

Your remarks about Gibbs were also very interesting: I am not in such close touch with that field; so most of what you had to tell me was quite new.

I am sure that Harriet would join me in welcoming the continued discussion you speak of in your letter. Let's certainly be on the lookout for opportunities that we can get together again either in Cambridge or in New York.

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg

cc: Dr. Harriet Zuckerman

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