

September 13, 1971

Dr. Philip C. Ritterbush  
Archives of Institutional Change  
3233 P Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Dr. Ritterbush,

Thank you for your letter of August 19th and the attached material which I have just read with great interest promptly upon my return from a trip.

I am pleased to see a number of areas of overlapping interest and am already grateful to you for having brought my attention to the books by Bertram Morris and Eugene S. Schwartz, which I had not hitherto encountered. Professor Morris' book in particular - judging from the review in Prometheus, No. 2, promises to be a partial answer to some questions that have been bothering me recently.

These are summarized in a draft problem statement which is motivated by some tentative arrangements I am working out with the Center for Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences. The very fact that I felt impelled, over a period of time, to look beyond the resources of my own university is a phenomenon that provoked this reflection. I still have certain prejudices about the wanton "population explosion" of new organizations in response to the perceived failure of existing forms to deal with certain kinds of problems. For example, if I may put it hypothetically, is it necessary or even efficacious to establish a new organization to study the sociology of institutions? I would point to people like Bill Scott, here at Stanford, for an example of a man who just gets down to do the job within the framework of the timeworn tradition of the academic career. I expect that there is a very real answer to my question but as the attached memo suggests I do approach it with some skepticism - not the complacency that we are now doing the job all that well but can we really expect other forms to do any better?

At any rate let me also draw your attention to Professor Scott in connection with your solicitation for Prometheus No. 6.

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I am glad to respond to your questionnaire for "correspondence". I do not think I can realistically obligate myself for any regular responsibilities, but I may be able to return your courtesies on a catch as catch can basis.

If you still have a copy of Prometheus No. 1 I would be grateful if you would send it on to me.

Are you much interested in the history of the "Prometheus Concept"? It is, of course, laden with ambiguity and I could collect a few of the references I have been perusing on its literary history.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr