

THE JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21205

November 10, 1993

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
The Rockefeller University
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Dear Josh,

Thanks very much for the article from The New Scientist. I've seen some of the articles by Williams, Ness and Profet in the Quarterly Review of Biology. I've also read Eaton's book. It's all grist for what seems to me to be not a new mill but an underused one. Such ideas are certainly alien to medical thinking but must become, in time, the conventional wisdom. Or so I think. It's particularly kind of you to think of me and to send things as you do. I'm very grateful.

Most medical academics would say they think biologically, and so they do but in a limited way, while the biologist's view of medicine is even more limited. I recall you have commented on the need for biologists to be more aware of how disease is perceived by medicals. But things are changing now and I want to be catalytic in hastening the change. So I greatly appreciate your support in this effort.

I'm in the process of expanding the article you saw (MBID) into a book, and I'm just now working on a section in which I contrast the way biologists see their own work with how medicals perceive theirs. Both see human biology as relevant but look at it differently. This is especially evident in the books they write. The biologist writes of how experiences within some relatively narrow field have provoked thinking of some broad implications of the work. This kind of book about medical thinking is ^{more} ~~now~~ likely to be written by medical historians rather than medical researchers or practitioners. Perhaps an example is the contrast between Lewontin, who expanded on the idea of polymorphism, and Harry Harris who preferred to stick with facts as opposed to implications. I have a shelf of books by biologists conjuring with ideas, but very few by medical types. Do you know of

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books (or articles) in which biologists reflect on the human implications of biology or of medicals examining how biology affects medical thought? I think of Dubos, Haldane, Medawar, Dobzhansky, Fruton and yourself in the first category, but only McKeown, Penrose (The Biology of Mental Defect) and Charles Rosenberg the medical historian in the 2nd.* If something should flit through your mind, I'd be grateful to hear about it.

Again thanks.

Best regards,



Barton Childs, M.D.

* Also B. Davis in the 1st category and J.K. Meel in the 2nd

Not many left in the tradition of A. Barrod. But
consider Alec Blam; and Jerry Weissman.
see attached.

