

September 28, 1959

Dr. Ruggero Ceppellini
TEMPO MEDICO
Edizioni Pierrel
Via Turati 30
Milano, Italy

Dear Roger:

Thank you for your two letters. The issue of TEMPO MEDICO itself has arrived and I could read the extensive article with great interest. Where in the world did you dig up that marvelous picture of Luria?

As concerns Moondust I am afraid almost nothing has been published on this question aside from our paper in Science. There has been a great deal of interest and activity on these questions, which are not secret, but which have not been published so far. The Space Science Board of the National Academy of Sciences of the U.S. may be making some more announcements in the future. The Symposium at which the paper was given is not yet in print but in any case would not have very much else of interest in this immediate connection although there are other kinds of physiological studies.

I have been told that a writer for the New Yorker magazine is also preparing an article on the subject.

You may want to refer to an article which appeared in Science for July 24, 1959 which has at least some general statements about space research in the United States. An international committee on the question of extraterrestrial exploration and contamination of celestial objects has met twice and its report is published in Nature for April 4, 1959. I will, of course, agree with the main conclusions of the Cetex Committee although some of their statements, both on the negative and positive side are perhaps too sweeping. This may reflect the composition of the Committee which was represented mainly by the physical sciences.

I was very much encouraged to hear, according to the newspapers, that Lunik II had been decontaminated. According to a statement by Tupchiev, quoted by Associated Press from Moscow, the payload of this mission was chemically sterilized. We have been working in this country on the practical use of gaseous fumigants, especially ethylene oxide, as an obvious solution to this problem.

For background material I am enclosing a private writing of my own; however, until this is published elsewhere I would prefer that you not quote me as the immediate source of the statements therein.

There is a rather remarkable book by Jonathan Leonard called Flight Into Space which has been published as a Modern Library Paperback. His remark on 'other worldly life' is a very penetrating one: 'There is a curious blank in the scientific literature of Space. So far as this observer knows there is no full-scale responsible and informed study of the kinds of life that might develop under circumstances different from those on earth.' Though even Leonard drifts off into some meaningless fantasy too, this is a surprisingly informative and sound book. It was, however, written before the accomplishments of the last two years.

With best regards.

Yours as ever,

Joshua Lederberg

Encl.