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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

January 22, 1991

Douglas R. Hofstadter
Professor of Cognitive Science
and Computer Science
Center for Research on Concepts and Cognition
Indiana University
510 North Fess Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47408

Dear Doug:

After a concentrated effort, mainly at the Hopkins Marine Station, Paul and I have finished revising "Dealing with Genes." By working very long days, and stealing only occasional glances at the seals, otters, and sea birds just outside the window of the work room, we almost finished in four days. The rest was completed after we each returned home.

We had minor comments from a couple of other readers but yours were the most extensive and far and away the most useful. There is no question but that the text reads more easily and that the clarity is significantly improved. It was fascinating (and humbling) to recognize that we had slipped on some obviously confused statements; we both pride ourselves on clarity. In other places you taught us how deep go the habits that hide the use of jargon, not only in nouns and verbs but also in sentence construction.

All of the above explains why we are so very grateful to you for the wise and straightforward assistance. Thank you.

We resisted some of your suggestions to describe some issues more fully. We too find them fascinating, but we had long ago resolved to keep the book short. Unless it is short, no one will read it. If it is short there is at least a chance. We will, however, send a copy of the BIG book, "Genes and Genomes." Some of the things you're fascinated by are explained there - probably in more detail than you might wish.

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You asked repeatedly about the four-year old girl who is being treated for adenosine deaminase deficiency by somatic gene therapy at the NIH. We did finally mention this experiment in one place. But it is very much an experiment at this time and it is not possible to assume that the therapy will be effective and broadly usable.

Finally, we believe sexism has been banished. The term "daughter" cell or chromosome remains; it is not sexist at all to our way of thinking because there is no value attached to the term. Moreover, it is very widely used and has been for a long time. Perhaps the term was chosen because "son cell" doesn't sound so good.

Again, enormous thanks from both of us.

Sincerely,

Maxine F. Singer

MFS/sb

cc: Paul Berg