To Dr. June Maier-schein, May 1995

I have read with particular interest your article on epistemic style. I agree with most of it, and I have some comments. It is very amusing that in the generation of your point occurred to me in the title of Spemann's book, which is in the collection of the Silliman Lectures at Yale, given in 1933. The German title is: "Experimentelle Entwicklungslehre," for Anglo-Saxon, "Theorie der Entwicklung." For Anglo-American consumption, the "Theory" was dropped.

In the English title, which became "Embryonic Development and Induction," I don't know who made the change, but the person was extremely sensitive to epistemic style. Along the same line: it is inconceivable that Harrison, or any American, could have used "organizer" as an idiom in embryology. It was very critical even of Roux! I am self-didactic, the presentation (see p. 181 of my Spemann book) I think that in the experimental work of the younger generation following Roux-Holm, it is more and more to that in Harrison-Spemann, and even more so that in: Harrison-Spemann, Heider, in the subsequent generation: Holm, after all, without myself, the differences in style were less distinct, and the abstract theorists were less explicit, lacking "visual imagination" disappeared from the German scene.

I don't tell you anything new, when I point out that your ideas of stylistic differences reflect more general cultural differences.

Generally speaking: "ideological" versus "pragmatic." A key element is the philosophical tradition. Getting a Doctor of Philosophy, at least in my time, required passing of courses in philosophy. I had the good fortune of taking courses with T. Husserl in Phenomenology (and later, after my Ph.D., I sat in a Heidegger Seminar...
Every good University in Germany had a good Philosophy Department. Since I joined Washington University in 1935, I knew one distinguished professor in the Philosophy Department. I doubt that in all these years a biologist who was granted a Ph.D. had taken a course in Philosophy. If one day our Philosophy Department would disappear, no biologist (except Gay Allen) would notice it. I am sure Arizona is better off, and I am also sure that there are good Philosophy Departments at Harvard etc. But do the graduate students of biology at Harvard care? In the midst of multiculturalism the European tradition will soon be further reduced.

Well, I am glad that guardians of the old tradition like you and Gay are still around. In my curriculum your courses would be required.