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Dear Colleagues,

I have known Ido for 3.5 years, he has worked as a Lewis Thomas Fellow in Ted Cox's lab, Ted and I are colleagues and share, somewhat uneasily I would say, several grants. I say uneasily because Ted doesn't seem to trust physicists very much unless they turn into biologists, and I sort of resist doing that. I try to work with biologists, but don't try to become one of them. A risky business!

That is the world Ido landed in. I think Ted really put the screws on Ido to become a biologist, or at least be able to do all the laboratory procedures that biologists do, and that is a very heavy and time-consuming task. When Ido first came I really learned a lot from him about biological networks and gene switches, he was a real pleasure to talk to because he had a physics perspective to things and understood the basics behind biology. Ido has worked VERY hard on a project to observe the time-dependence of mRNA expression in a single cell. As I mentioned, Ido did ALL of the biological development, I myself would have farmed it out to a technician (what with the famous rule of "publish or perish" ...) and concentrated on understanding the dynamics of time-dependent gene expression. I did sponsor the final result in PNAS, and it is a fine paper after all the very detailed molecular biology work, high-resolution fluorescence microscopy and polymer dynamics analysis. Through all this Ido to his credit keep plugging along and even was a faithful attendee in my group meetings in spite of his clear skepticism about my approach to science.

So, what will be the future for Ido? He clearly is very, very smart. His original work with Prof. Ben-Jacob I like a lot. He has made a big effort to learn experimental biology with Ted. They chose a very hard project and got some results but it did cost Ido a lot of quality time.

I guess the question that may be on your mind is: could Ido be the next Stan Leibler? I don't think so at this point, but I am always so wrong about people that I would take this with less than a grain of salt. Stan does have impeccable taste and picks his colleagues and projects very carefully, and he is a very deep thinker. I don't feel that Ido is as deep as Stan is. However, if Ido is as tough minded as I think he is in terms of survival instincts, he'll learn a lesson from what he has done with Ted and go on to do some truly great work. I think he was and is capable of doing great work in the right environment

Sincerely,



Robert H. Austin
Professor of Physics