Stephen William Hawking (8 January 1942 – 14 March 2018)

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DISTINGUISHED for his seminal work on quantum cosmology, black holes and origin of the universe, Stephen Hawking was well-known for his dissertations about philosophy other than science. Calling to mind one of his memorable quotes: "If aliens visit us, the outcome would be much as when Columbus landed in America, which didn't turn out well for the Native Americans.

We only have to look at ourselves to see how intelligent life might develop into something we wouldn’t want to meet. Moved by uncontaminated and respectful intelligence, Hawking was a professor of mathematics at the University of Cambridge (a position once held by Isaac Newton), retiring in 2009.

Among his numerous books, several for children were co-authored with his daughter Lucy. With great strength throughout his life, he pursued the willingness to go always deeper into the outer reaches of space and to communicate with people, while suffering from a rare form of slowly progressing amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, or Lou Gehrig’s disease), since he was in his twenties. Though, his courage and awareness of the disease were without equal, his charisma as a scientist and a man was truly profound. During an interview for “The Guardian” (May 2011) he said: “I have lived with the prospect of an early death for the last 49 years. I'm not afraid of death, but I'm in no hurry to die. I have so much I want to do first”. Inspired by his cosmic assertiveness, we believe that one thing we want to do first as scientists and physicians is to solve those wrong equations that within our genome and proteome are the causes of ALS. While ALS is almost two centuries old, no treatment is yet on the horizon for ALS patients. We may live in an age when we are surrounded by scientific information, but our knowledge still seeks the outer reaches of biology and drug discovery.

REFERENCES

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