

SCIENCE AND THE HUMAN PHENOMENON:
MARKINGS FROM A COSMIC ORPHAN

I am being driven forward
into an unknown land.
The pass grows steeper,
the air colder and sharper.
A wind from my unknown goal
stirs the strings of expectation.

Still the question:
Shall I ever get there?
There where life resounds,
a clear pure note
in the silence.

Perhaps an unusual opening for a paper which will predominantly discuss the issues surrounding neuroscience, consciousness research and human therapeutic cloning in a phenomenological context. Yet the solitary stillness and closeness expressed by the words lend themselves to existential reflection when these topics of present day science are discussed in recognition of the human being as a phenomenon in nature, as a 'cosmic orphan.'

It was the brilliant former Secretary-General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld who wrote them down to open his book *Markings*, a diary of personal reflection on his emotional life, feelings and thoughts. Already provisionally addressed in an undated covering letter to Leif Belfrage, Swedish Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, it had been locked away, in his house in New York, waiting to be opened, and, after some hesitation, for the possibility of publication after his death.¹

Once an extremely aggressive, ego-driven young lad, Hammarskjöld developed into a very persuasive international civil servant, with calm demeanor and great diplomatic skills, totally given to his task. One of the greatest professional peace builders who ever lived, he became a remorselessly judgmental critic of himself and his own behaviour. Widely respected throughout the world community, his efforts brought great respect and moral leadership to the then fledgling organisation.

Vägmärken, or Markings show us a poetic, a mystic Hammarskjöld, writing that the “longest journey is the journey inwards,” while living a life guided by sensitivity to an unknown goal, a life of indefinite, continuous departure towards his inner self, yet manifesting a most convincing, dynamic leadership to his cherished United Nations.

How closely intertwined the exacting worlds of stepped, goal-directed and consequent action and that of personal, intimate celebration and contemplation are becoming today in spite of all seemingly contradicting indications ... Global science has made humanity bend closer toward its organic self by an ever deeper exploration of the fields of reproductive medicine, cognitive science and the present merging of empirical and philosophical data into a prospective science of consciousness. Hammarskjöld could never have guessed that one of the tasks that United Nations would set itself to do would be to issue a resolution to call the world’s attention to the cellular beginnings and moral use of human embryonic life.

On 8 March 2005 the General Assembly adopted Resolution 59/280, containing in its Annex the text of the United Nations Declaration on Human Cloning, by a recorded vote of 84 to 34, with 37 abstentions, after four years of intense debate. As the British Embassy in the Hague, and I personally, are involved in a bilateral human therapeutic cloning project, hoping to achieve further scientific exchange between Britain and the Netherlands, I personally have reservations about the UN resolution. It is effectively a non-binding statement, urging member states to adopt laws banning all cloning, including therapeutic cloning for medical research, that would offer hope to millions of people, suffering from presently incurable diseases.²

But the fact remains that United Nations, once started as an organisation to balance the crude powers of defensive action, now also has added research that has the potential to alter – at the deepest genetic level – what it means to be human, to its fields of interests and global agenda of human life protection activities, is in itself an incredible achievement. It is a sign of further unison, a sign of understanding the urgency for a deeper, a more comprehensive and stable awareness of the discoveries of the life sciences against the fragile, the breakable, existential meaning of human life on this planet.

A human being can not be ‘human’ without finding a role in society. The paradox of separateness demands the complementary need to individualise into personhood which drives us to forge a “self,” an independent personal identity and integrity that fits and protects each of us individually. And yet, underneath this seemingly secure scaffold holding up personal existential meaning, today’s world of knowledge is bending deeper and deeper towards the *existential essence* of the human phenomenon in nature, driven by the