

# **FRANCIS HUXLEY AND THE HUMAN CONDITION**

**ANTHROPOLOGY, ANCESTRY AND KNOWLEDGE**

Ron Roberts and Theodor Itten



# Francis Huxley and the Human Condition

Focused on the life and work of Francis Huxley (1923–2016), this book offers an exploration of the search to understand the human condition, one which is simultaneously biographical, philosophical, cultural, historical, political and epistemological.

A member of the illustrious Huxley dynasty, Francis Huxley forged an unusual and innovative career, making key contributions to social anthropology, mental health care and the protection of indigenous peoples. His story reveals how the production and dissemination of ideas can be understood in an intergenerational context which is familial and sociological. The book reflects on the contemporary relevance of Huxley's work, forging links between the central philosophical, cultural, scientific and political themes that dominate the turbulent early 21st century and the enduring questions that have driven human beings in the search to understand themselves and their place in the world. It will be of interest to scholars from across the social sciences and humanities.

**Ron Roberts** is a chartered psychologist and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society with over 30 years' experience in higher education. [www.ronroberts.co.uk](http://www.ronroberts.co.uk)

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“A thorough and fascinating portrayal of my Uncle Francis, warts and all, which well conveys his mercurial character together with a sure-footed appraisal of his life’s work and writing.”

*Victoria Huxley, Niece*

“This study of Francis Huxley is welcome and overdue, because he was one of the greatest anthropologists of Amazonian indigenous peoples. His observations were thorough and scientifically accurate, to the highest standards of his discipline. But Francis was exceptional in two other ways. His delightful writing style communicated his passion to general readers as well as academics. And he was a warm friend, almost a compatriot of the indigenous peoples he studied. He was fascinated by and empathised with mythology and their spirit and spiritual worlds, so that he almost thought as one of them.”

*John Hemming, Author of People of the Rainforest*

“This is an immensely engaging and absorbing book. Thoughtful and well written, it skilfully conveys the many fascinating layers of Francis Huxley and his rich and varied life, loves and philosophy with great empathy.”

*Fiona Watson, Survival International*

# **Francis Huxley and the Human Condition**

**Anthropology, Ancestry and Knowledge**

**Ron Roberts and Theodor Itten**

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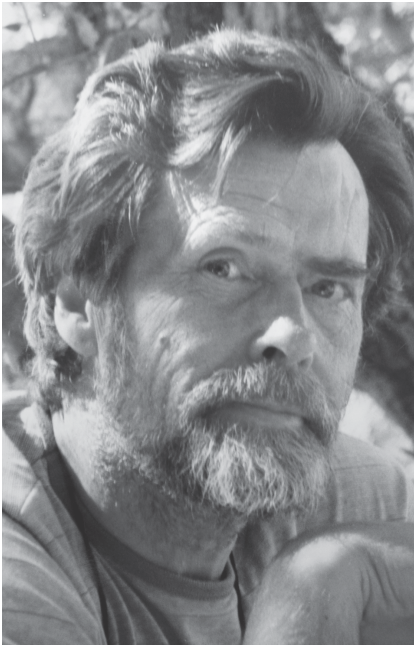
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Finally, we must thank the man himself, the late Francis Huxley, who never dreamt of this book, but made possible the very real privilege of writing it.



*Figure 0.1* Francis Huxley.

**Official sources**

- FHA Francis Huxley Archive, 1105 Wagon Road, Sebastopol, CA.  
JHP Juliette Huxley papers, 1895–1994, MS 474, Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University.  
JSH The Papers of Julian Sorell Huxley, Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University.  
SCC St Catherine’s College Oxford Archive Staff File.  
TLD Theodor Itten’s London Diaries

# Prelude

## Disturbing the river

“Scientist Huxley’s whereabouts a mystery,” is the front-page title in a Brazilian newspaper. Where is Francis Huxley? Lost, it seems, in the Brazilian Jungle. All we know is, that together with the French linguist, Boudin, and Brazilian anthropologist, Darcy Riberio, he was on his way from Belem, via Pará, up the Gurupi river in the dense Amazonian rain forest, to conduct his first ethnographic fieldwork with the Ka’apor – descendants of the Tupinamba tribes – their name literally means forest dwellers. So, had he now vanished without a trace?

According to the newspaper *Folha Verspertina*, on 14 November 1951, Huxley had last been seen on 24 October.<sup>1</sup> The National Directorate of Serviço de Proteção aos Índios (SPI)<sup>2</sup> sent a telegram to the Regional inspectorate, begging them to inquire as to the whereabouts of the 28-year-old English ethnologist. It had all begun so well. When Huxley came to Brazil in November 1950, the recipient of a government grant to pursue his sociological and anthropological interests, his arrival made the Sao Paulo press. Coming from the renowned, “noble” British traditional university, Oxford, as the press had it, to conduct research with an Amazonian tribe. *A Gazeta* interviewed signor Francis Huxley, in the company of Mr. Donald Darling, press attaché of the British Consulate. He is presented as an inquisitive spirit, the nephew of one of the most sagacious British writers of our time, Aldous Huxley, and son of the famed natural scientist, first Director General of UNESCO, Julian Huxley. The tone is clearly set. This young Huxley, belonged to the fourth generation of the intellectual family founded by T. H. Huxley (1825–1895), following others who had made their mark in biology, zoology, botany, horticulture, literature, art and exploration.

Given that ‘Huxley’ was such a household name, it is still something of a surprise that Francis Huxley made such headlines. His name, it is true, had already appeared in English newspapers after his expeditions to the Arctic and Gambia. He had studied the Tupinamba tribes of Brazil, for his anthropological B.Litt. at Oxford University, and before embarking on this journey, he had been cordially invited by the Brazilian government, aware of his Tupi literature research, to hear lectures in anthropology and sociology at São Paulo

University. “Why did you choose South America and specially the Tupi for your field of research?” one journalist asked. Huxley replied:

To be honest, nowadays when anthropology in Europe is concerned, tribal peoples in Africa, Oceania and North America are favoured. This makes me tired, always to hear and read the same. That is why I have decided to research the natives of South America and chosen the Tupi, about whom the most was written so far.

He went on to say, in front of a sizeable gathering, that he did not regret his decision. Following his disappearance, weeks passed with no information. Fortunately, *O Globo* the third largest daily newspaper in Brazil would eventually report: “Surgiram da Mata!” – “they emerged from the forest!” Since his vanishing act had caused a veritable sensation, it was important for the press to report that this unsettling riddle was now solved. All three companions, Riberio, Boudin and Huxley stayed for six months in the region of Gurupi and in various villages of the Urubu tribes. They emerged richer for their experience, replete with copious research data and numerous colourful tribal artefacts. *O Globo* reported them safe and sound in Belem do Para, carrying a charming picture of a young, smart looking Huxley, adorned with a tie and, as was his usual habit, quite the English gentleman, sporting a tweed jacket.

In accord with the level of interest generated, Huxley and his fellow travellers into the unknown gave an evening of talks, spiced with music by Villa-Lobos and a showing of the film ‘Uirapuru,’ to an invited audience of the Institute of Anthropology of Pará and the North American Consulate. News of their return from the forest had attracted a sizeable and varied crowd. One journalist remarked that he found Huxley to be modest and slightly reserved when talking about his father and his uncle, though otherwise ably, and in an easy-going fashion, entertaining his listeners about his experiences with the natives. His comfortable ways with words would become a hallmark of his social presence and a feature of the narrative anthropology he was to introduce, which deftly navigated the rivers of his own life as they merged into the flowing tropical waters of the people he encountered in the rainforest.

Francis Huxley was a complex figure. This, no doubt is true of us all, as we necessarily confront the times and tides within which we move. As an exercise in biography, we hope our exploration of his life and work will have something to say about that general truth. We have no interest in fixing or identifying an essential ‘Huxley’ who will emerge as a constant figure in all periods of his life; rather, we wish to convey something of the journey – emotional, spiritual and intellectual – undertaken through a long and eventful life, and the various conflicts, personal, familial and epistemological, he sought to resolve along the way. We have therefore set out to write this in terms of two interlocking strands. The first of these comprises the ‘facts of life’ – detailing the Huxley

family background, setting out the key relationships (familial, intellectual and romantic) – and institutions (educational, professional and vocational) through which his life was navigated. The second strand is chiefly concerned with the anthropological and psychotherapeutic dramas which he grappled with, both practically and as a writer intellectually. These are necessarily not entirely independent of one another.

To achieve an appropriate balance of wisdom and knowledge is difficult. One's heart and voice are seldom at peace. As members of the 'psy' professions – we will both be concerned with the means by which Huxley sustained (or failed to sustain) his well-being. Our efforts to understand the man must inevitably seek to map the external world he lived in – born as he was into the turbulent 1920s – with the inner worlds which developed in response to it. We must therefore contend with the forces and expectations which saturate, and continue to saturate, the social class landscape of the country in which he was raised.

We each have our own different relationship to this landscape, and so there is always more than one way to tell a story and there will be truths and partial truths that go untold or unheard as a result. Facts are always dependent upon a context for their life and understanding. We all enjoy a diverse number of lives – public, private, official and secret, approved and disapproved, fulfilled and unfulfilled. While acknowledging this, we can interrogate the record of Francis Huxley's life as we know it and provide an interpretive account of what propelled change or maintained stasis in the interlocking inner and outer worlds of the man – what truths were successfully reckoned with and which were not. Hermione Lee wrote that “a self that goes on changing is a self that goes on living.”<sup>3</sup> With this in mind, we hope we will document the many changes in Huxley's life in a manner which will raise deep questions about the influences – conscious and unconscious – which not only shaped his life and how he sought to make sense of it, but which also course through the rivers of every person's life. This is, consequently, a biography which asks questions about the society Huxley lived in and whose influences still exact their share of misfortune. In entering the waters that flowed through the Huxley dynasty, we think of the present work, with its central examination of the intergenerational forces of family and class, as actively disturbing that river. We hope our readers will feel enlightened by what we offer.

Francis Huxley's life is unavoidably entwined with that of his ancestors. Often, through no fault of his own, he found himself ensnared in the trap that comes from being born into a famous family. What specific burdens did this entail and how widespread in the family were they? We like to think that his efforts to make sense of this intergenerational trap in part accounts for his narrative wit, as well as his honest and empathic approach to others – an aspect of his character which would lead to his attempted professional rapprochement between anthropology and psychotherapy and situate him at the heart of the 1960s counterculture, in the company of R. D. Laing.

Huxley was at his best when juggling with how human life has a cultural significance yet can never be wholly defined by it, nor its wholeness rendered entirely amenable to a conclusive narration, try as we might. The totality of life is as elusive as the final interpretation of a text. Francis remained aware of the shadows cast by our own body, both in the full light of its living and when the living processes themselves wind down and pass into the repositories of cultural memory. He, after all, grew up in the often-terrifying shadows of his forebears. The creative tension between the living and the dead animated much of his theoretical thinking and his relationships to loved ones and foes alike – and in his many love affairs the reverberations were striking. Francis was in some ways a master in the art of cultivating love but not in dealing with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune which assailed those relationships.

Francis Huxley honed his storytelling skills through a graphic imagination, revealing just enough detail to wet a listener's appetite before exercising his seemingly inexhaustible powers of suggestion to bring closure to the dramatic narrative. The denouement of the tale would often bring the heart of the story into an iconographic familial focus – as his family was an endless source of the strange, the bizarre and the unconventional. His favourite maxims – “Beauty is truth and truth is beauty,” was one; another “the Poet is no liar, for nothing he affirms” – signal to us that between the artistic and scientific poles set out by his illustrious family members he was a man more comfortable with the unpredictable and wayward truths of the arts than the sciences.

His humour carried him far from his more serious anthropological and practical work, writing his own idiosyncratic biography of Lewis Carroll – *The Raven and The Writing Desk* – which exemplified the operation of his own meticulous and playful intelligence as much as it illustrated the life and riddles of Charles L. Dodgson. In terms of writing style, elegance, sagacity, tonality and flow, he marched to his own tune – adhering to his own rulebook, that if one takes care of the sense, “the sounds will take care of themselves.”<sup>4</sup> To his friends he was a witty and gifted master of storytelling, able to summon at the appropriate moment a refined dose of raucous laughter. But the laughs were punctuated by much sadness, and the weight of family silences and intergenerational mores were never far away.

When once, he asked his mother Juliette, why she did not let him know earlier about Aunt Margret, and her lesbian nature, she said: “Oh Francis, we do not talk about these things in our family. Please don't ask, you would not want to know the answer.” Answers, both revealed and concealed, Huxley came to know, had their place in the human heart. We know now that Francis Huxley was hungry for knowledge, enjoyed the fun of knowing and was partial to gossip, for this is part of the emotional fabric which binds a community together. Let him have here, in this prelude, almost the last word: “If some of it now adds up to anything, this can only be coincidence, whatever we may like to mean by the word.”<sup>5</sup>

Naturally we hope that the words which follow do add up to something – and give more than a flavour of a fascinating, fully lived, joyful and, on occasion, a painful and difficult life.

*Ron Roberts and Theodor Itten*  
London and St. Gallen  
March 2020

## Notes

- 1 *Folha Vespertina*: Headline: Misterio No Paradeiro do Cientista Huxley. Belem – Pará, 14 November 1951.
- 2 The Indian Protection Service.
- 3 Lee, H. (1996, p.11) *Virginia Woolf*. London. Vintage.
- 4 Huxley, F. (1976, p. 50) *The Raven and the Writing Desk*. London. Harper and Row.
- 5 Huxley, F. (1976, p.100); he goes on: “But, as the Archbishop said in his Sermon, ‘Nothing is prejudged, and nothing is condemned, but upon such proof, as the nature of things requires, the testimony of others.’”



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**Part I**

**Introduction**



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# 1 Chronology and family tree

Can Wisdom be in a silver rod or Love in a golden bowl?

(William Blake)

- 1887: Julian Sorell Huxley (father) is born on 22 June in London.
- 1896: Marie Juliette Baillot (mother) is born on 6 December in Auvernier, Switzerland.
- 1909: Grandfather Leonard moves to Westbourne Square, London.
- 1912: Leonard marries a second time on 23 February, Ms. Rosalind Bruce.
- 1914: Julian and Noel Trevenen (born in 1889) are in the same rest home due to depression. Trevenen later committed suicide by hanging himself on a tree.
- 1915: Mademoiselle Juliette Baillot becomes Swiss governess to teach and be companion to Julian (1906–1989), daughter of Lady Ottoline Morrell (1873–1938).
- 1916: Juliette Baillot meets Julian Huxley at Garsington Manor.
- 1919: Juliette Baillot marries Julian Huxley, now a Fellow of New College.
- 1920: Anthony Julian Huxley, brother, is born on 20 December.
- 1923: Francis John Heathorn Huxley is born on 28 August, at Holywell, Oxford.
- 1925: Julian becomes Chair of Zoology at Kings College, London. Moves from Oxford to 31 Hillway, Holly Lodge Estate, Hampstead, home for seven years. Francis Prep schools at Byron House and learns to bicycle on lanes of Hampstead Heath. Francis' health also began to give serious trouble.
- 1927: Julian spends winter in Aigle, Chalet des Arolles at Diablerets, Swiss Alps, with parents, grandmother and brother, into 1928. Aldous, Maria and Cousin Matthew, D. H. Lawrence and Frieda joined in.
- 1932: Julian has an affair, with Viola Ilma. Mother loses sleep and health and feels utterly lost. Leonard scolds his eldest to give his affair up, "or he did not wish to see him again."
- 1933: Francis at Frensham Heights School, Farnham, Surrey.
- 1934: Francis at Abinger Hill School, Abinger Lane, Dorking, Surrey.

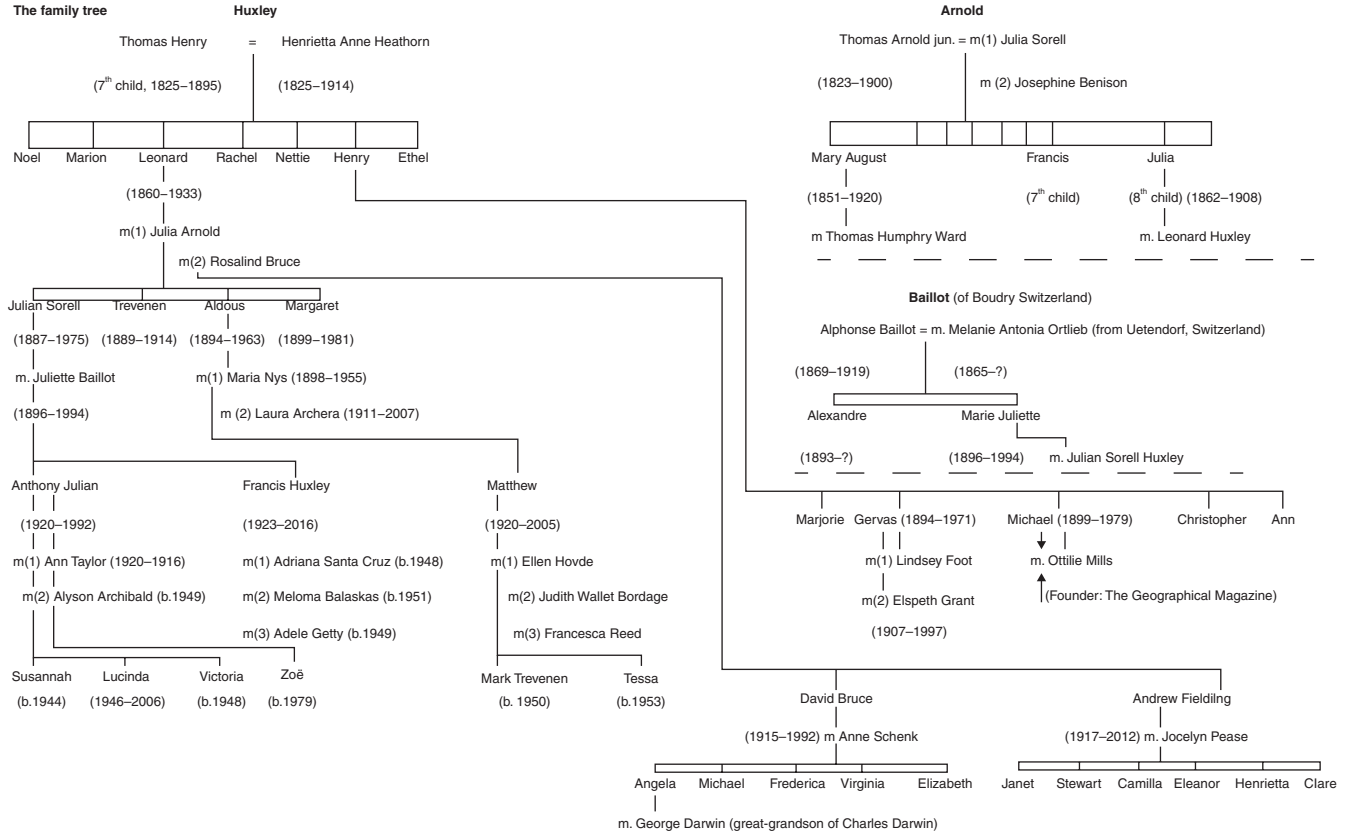


Figure 1.1 Family tree.

- 1935: Julian is appointed secretary to the Zoological Society of London, till 1942. Family lives residentially in the Secretary House, Zoological Gardens.
- 1937: Autumn term: Goes to Gordonstoun School, Elgin, Scotland (till Spring 1942).
- 1938: Julian gets elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society.
- 1939: Anthony goes up to Trinity College Cambridge. Francis, at Gordonstoun, evacuated to Wales.
- 1942: Lives with parents at the Secretary House, Zoological Gardens. Friendship with Ferelyth Howard, takes up sculptures. Francis joins the Royal Navy, till July 1946.
- 1944: Becomes Assistant Navigating Officer on HMS *Ramilles*, on D-Day, 6 June, in the Channel to Normandy.
- 1945: August, first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Huxley is on a warship preparing for invasion of Japan.
- 1946: Julian becomes the first Director General of UNESCO. Francis meets Claude Lévi-Strauss.
- 1947: Oxford student from July until 1951, Balliol College.
- 1948: Leads an Oxford University expedition of young scientists to Gambia. Receives 2nd Class Honours in Zoology. Becomes a member of the Anthropological Institute, which his great-grandfather, T. H. Huxley, co-founded and becomes an Emslie Horniman Scholar.
- 1950: Receives MSc. in Social Anthropology, Oxford, under Professor Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard. In November, goes to Brazil to study Social Anthropology of Indian tribes – with grants from Brazilian Government, in cooperation with the British Council and from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research – aiming to write his PhD.
- 1951: Conducts Brazilian fieldwork with the Ka'apor (Urubus), with Darcy Ribeiro, June till November.
- 1952: Returns in Spring to the UK for consultation with Professor Meyer Fortes, now in Cambridge University, and further studies. Goes back to Brazil in August.
- 1953: Second visit to Ka'apor, Urubus, in the Amazonian basin of Brazil, February till June, this time on his own.
- 1954: Becomes Curator of Ethnography, City of Liverpool Public Museum until 1955. Friendship with Sheila.
- 1956: *The Affable Savages*. Receives Viking Found Grant to visit American Universities, till 1957.
- 1958: Conducts fieldwork in Weyburn Mental Hospital, Saskatchewan, Canada. Julian is knighted.
- 1959: Conducts fieldwork in Parapsychological Institute, New York. Fieldwork in Haiti, for nine months, till 1960. Writes the long essay *Charles Darwin – Life and Habit*.

## 6 Introduction

- 1962: Meets Joan Wescott, fellow anthropologist and one-time secretary to R. D. Laing. Lives from now on in a flat at 18 Belsize Park Gardens, London NW3.  
Translates *Africa Before the White Man* by Henri Labouret.
- 1963: Translates *The Origins of Life* by Jules Carles.  
In October, becomes a Research Fellow in Social Anthropology, at St Catherine's College Oxford, till 1968. Plans to write *Anthropology and the Body*.
- 1964: Publishes *Peoples of the World*. Gets to know R. D. Laing.
- 1965: Organises a Royal Society Conference on Ritualisation for Behaviour in Animals and Man, together with Julian. R. D. Laing is invited by Julian to participate.
- 1966: Publishes *The Invisibles*. Julian has his last nervous breakdown. Consultation with R. D. Laing.
- 1967: On stage at the Dialectics of Liberation Conference. Laing moves to 65A Belsize Park Gardens, London NW3.
- 1968: Teaches at the Anti-University, 49 Rivington Street, London EC2. He appears as an invited guest on the prestigious Eamonn Andrews Show on ITV.
- 1969: Co-founds Survival International and active as a member of the Executive Board until 1990.
- 1970: Becomes a member of the Philadelphia Association, London.
- 1972: Becomes a member of the mission, "Tribes of the Amazon basin in Brazil 1972" sponsored by the Aborigines' Protection Society London and the Brazilian Government.
- 1973: Marries Adriana Paula Santa Cruz on 7 April, London.  
Publishes *Tribes of the Amazon Basin in Brazil*.
- 1974: Publishes *The Way of the Sacred*. Becomes the Principal of Studies at the Philadelphia Association.
- 1975: Father Julian dies on 14 February.
- 1976: Divorces Adriana Santa Cruz on 17 September, London. Publishes *The Raven and the Writing Desk*. Marries Meloma Balaskas in November.
- 1977: Lives at 18b Wedderburn Road, London NW3, as a writer and private scholar.
- 1979: Publishes *The Dragon – Nature of Spirit, Spirit of Nature*.
- 1980: Separates from Meloma Balaskas-Huxley.
- 1981: Begins Friendship with Avice Simpson. Goes to Sheffield University Hospital by invitation of Professor Jenner, to study his wards.
- 1982: Leaves the Philadelphia Association London. Gives workshops in Switzerland on Mythology and Rites.
- 1983: 60th birthday, in London. Gives a talk at the Lewis Carroll Society.
- 1984: Meets Adele Getty in Happy Valley, at a conference: "The Way of the Warrior." Separates from Avice Simpson. Delivers the Prestigious Chichele Lecture, in All Souls, Oxford, on *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology*.

- 1986: In February, fire in his London flat, caused by a careless tenant. Divorces Meloma Huxley on 25 February. Juliette Huxley's *Leaves of the Tulip Tree* is published, which Francis Huxley substantially helped her write. She is 90 in December. Marries Adele Marie Getty on 10 November at Camden Register Office. Lives at Berkley Hills, Kensington until the 1990s.
- 1989: 23 August, R. D. Laing dies in St. Tropez. Writes: *Liberating Shaman of Kingsley Hall*. R. D. Laing Obituary, *The Guardian*, 25 August.
- 1990: Publishes *The Eye – Seer and the Seen*. Farewell talk at Laing memorial gathering, Piccadilly. 3 January.
- 1990: Lives in Santa Fee and environs in various places. In October, lectures at Conference in Korea on Shamanism.
- 1992: Brother Anthony Julian dies on 26 December. Starts to write *The Mutual Self*.
- 1993: Visits London and supports Mother after brother's death. Festschrift for his 70th Birthday: *A Letter to Francis Huxley*. Ed. T. Itten
- 1994: Lady Juliette Baillot-Huxley dies in her 98th year, 28 September in London.
- 1995: Sells family home, 31. Pond Street, Hampstead. Lives in a hamlet in Pojoaque valley, New Mexico.
- 1998: In autumn, separates from Adele Getty-Huxley. She moves back to California.
- 2000: 3rd R. D. Laing Conference in SOAS, London – Talk on “Laing and Shamanism.”
- 2001: Publishes *Shamans Through Time – 500 Years on the Path to Knowledge*, edited with Jeremy Narby.
- 2002: Gives a workshop in Manaus, the capital and largest city of the Brazilian state of Amazonas.
- 2005: Moves to 1105 Wagnon Road, Sebastopol, California, 15 March. Lives in a small three-room cabin, in the middle of woodland, on the same patch as Adele and Michael Patrick Williams.
- 2007: Huxley is ill with cancer and has it treated with radiation and chemotherapy. Has an operation for cataract in one eye, whose first effect was to flood his vision with blue.
- 2012: Car accident. Gives up driving. Uncle Andrew Fielding Huxley (1917–2012), only six years his senior, dies.
- 2016: Ann Huxley, first wife of brother Anthony, dies on 2 January. Francis dies at home, 10:30 AM on 29 October, surrounded by closest friends, Adele, Michael and Cal.



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## Part II

# Family life, ancestry and haunting

To understand Francis Huxley's interests in both the natural and political worlds, it is necessary, we argue, to trace these interests through the dense lineage of the family to which he belonged. This is no easy undertaking – and in intellectual biographies it is generally an aspect of a given story that goes untold. That is in measure due in no small part – not to any deficiency on the part of biographers, but simply because of the fact that it is rare to have available, so much information on the intergenerational familial context of knowledge. We hope therefore that this substantial part of the book will not only cast important light on what drove and shaped Francis' intellectual horizons, but will also raise important questions about the cultural situating of knowledge, how we value those that endeavour to produce it and how we conceive of the origins of knowledge.

We begin this task by considering the most immediate of the family contexts which surrounded Francis – that brought into being by his parents. Later we will enlarge the scope of our investigation to include the very great significance of Aldous Huxley, Francis' uncle, and the far reach of his great-grandfather T. H. Huxley – whose towering influence has persisted in every nook and cranny of intellectual investigation undertaken by members of the Huxley family. It is an influence which has also reached far beyond the intellectual sphere.



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## 2 Parents

The twist of fate that leads to our existence in the world, we owe to our two parents. They in turn owe theirs to their parents, our grandparents – those four extend the ancestral line to our great-grandparents. Going back to four generations involves a branch on our tree of 31 persons. All of these can be considered together as a transgenerational unit, in which various genetic, physiological, emotional, behavioural and social factors of influence are distributed. Where in the world we are born, in what time and in what place in the family and community, all these shape our emergent survival strategies and customary modes of being and behaving in the world. What we can change in later life is not the red thread of the clan or tribe woven into us, but how we live this character we are perpetually in the throes of becoming, and give back to the world the music and language of our own unique rhythms, creations and love. Here we visit some examples from Francis' ancestral figures – a necessarily incomplete list, as is the case in any anthropological exploration.

### **La Maman**

Lady Juliette Marie Baillot-Huxley, opened the account of her life with a quote from T. S. Eliot: “Each generation must translate for itself.”<sup>1</sup> She was born on 6 December 1896, in the fishing village of Auvernier on Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland. Her parents were Alphonse Baillot and Mélanie Antonia Ortlieb, the eldest daughter of a large family, whose father, Anton, was Maître-Ferblantier.<sup>2</sup> Anton Ortlieb's main professional achievement was his invention of a ‘couleuse,’ a container where the laundry is boiled. This invention, for a while at least, contributed to the success of Anton's family business. But as he hadn't bothered to apply for a patent, he gained “neither fortune nor recognition.”<sup>3</sup> His early death from pneumonia left a heavy burden on his young wife. The eldest daughter, 16-year-old Mélanie (Francis' grandmother to be), was given the task of caring for her younger siblings. “Deprived of the enjoyment of her youthful years by the family's changed situation, my mother took her responsibility seriously and, according to her younger sister, became very strict with the small children.”<sup>4</sup> Juliette's

grandmother kept going, reliant on her Swiss faith that ‘life continues, and we manage somehow.’

Tante Juliette, as she eventually became known, left home as early as she could to apprentice as a dressmaker at a prestigious Parisian house. After graduating she set up shop in London as a fashion designer. Whenever she returned to her elder sister Melanie’s household, now set up in Neuchâtel, her daughter Juliette experienced ‘la tante’ as a glamorous person with charming *élan vital*. “I was named after her and received from her much loving kindness and understanding.”<sup>5</sup> Juliette, in hindsight, felt her family of origin was rather prosaic, with little or nothing “to feed the veins of imagination or the hunger for understanding.”<sup>6</sup>

Her father, Alphonse Baillot, as we have seen, orphaned at an early age, was brought up by his uncle Emil, a winegrower, who put Alphonse to work in an office of the notaire Baillot, a distant cousin. Following his then obligatory year in the Swiss Army, Alphonse found that his partner Henrioux had decamped with the securities entrusted to them. Instead of declaring bankruptcy, he assured his clients that he would pay back every cent. With the exception of the equivalent of 40 pounds owed to Tante Juliette, he eventually did. The ‘Debt,’ as it came to be called, plunged the young family into poverty. Alphonse found a job in the Compagnie des Tramways of Neuchâtel, spending most evenings away from home. He turned moody, unsociable and occasionally violent – a source of fear in the lives of his children. The family ceased entertaining at home or having dinner guests. Mother Melanie, directed Juliette to an apprenticeship in the art of lace making, embroidery and handiwork. These artisanal abilities served Juliette well in later life, when she took up sculpture and refined her embroidery skills.

## Neuchâtel

Seeking to escape from poverty, the family moved to 31 Chemin Bel Air, 2000 Neuchâtel, a villa, close to the railway station. Susie Huxley remembers Neuchâtel from an early visit there.

I was taken there aged four, to meet my “Great Grandmaman.” I can remember the train journey ... in the house there was a huge staircase. She gave me a big grey velvet stuffed elephant toy. I remember vividly, her garden which sloped down to a big railway cutting.<sup>7</sup>

At *Ecole Supérieure des Jeunes Filles*,<sup>8</sup> the 18-year-old Juliette gained her baccalaureate. Alphonse had tried to prevent his daughter going there, but was overruled by his wife. There, the beautiful young Juliette met a young English student, “with whom she became affectionate.”<sup>9</sup> In response, her concerned mother decided to send her romancing daughter to London, to stay with Tante Juliette, where her enjoyments were plenty and her brief romance was curtailed. As we will see later, Juliette employed an uncannily similar strategy,

when her son, the 18-year-old Francis, fell in love with Ferelyth Howard, a young talented sculptor who was working for his parents at the London Zoo.

Mélanie set up a pension for young girls who came as language students. This new and hopeful beginning was dampened when another misfortune hit home. Papa Alphonse sank into dark moods, hid in bed for days and died suddenly, aged a mere 47. On the same day, war broke out (28 July 1914). With Alphonse gone, Mélanie sent Juliette back to London, with the onerous task of earning and paying back the outstanding part of 'The Debt,' still amounting 40 pounds, to Tante Juliette. Her best bet, to fulfil this task as quickly as possible, was to look for a job as a governess.

She left Neuchâtel as an 18-year-old, to be with her Tante Juliette in London, who helped her to find a job. Juliette was fortunate to come across an advert placed by Lady Ottoline Morrell seeking a governess. They met for an interview in the waiting room of Oxford railway station. The "unforgettable" Lady Ottoline, as Juliette saw her, offered her the job to be a companion to their daughter Julian, and so began the chain of events which would propel the shy Swiss girl, with a Calvinist upbringing, into an altogether different world – a world which would bring her into the orbit of Julian Huxley. The two years she stayed in the post were to turn around her life.

But to Juliette, as always there is something puzzling about why she had been anointed with the task of dealing with the debt. She would later mull this over with Francis. Why, Juliette wondered did her mother not allot this task to her brother Alexandre? After all he was older, earning a living and the debt had been incurred by the blind faith of Alphonse.

## Garsington

It was at Garsington Manor, the home of Lady Ottoline Morrell, that the half blind Aldous Huxley came to do manual work on the estate. His energetic elder brother, Julian, who already achieved a measure of professional recognition, came to visit him there. At Garsington, the nascent British art and academic world – to be immortalised as the Bloomsbury set – opened up to the young Swiss governess, as talk flowed freely around paintings, poetry, politics and the latest scientific and philosophical books, often written by these unusual visitors whom Juliette was permitted to meet, after duty was done. Political issues of the day were discussed as a matter of course, sometimes in the presence of ministers, as well as the many conscientious objectors who were doing their labour service on Morrell's estate. The leading lights there, Lady Morrell, Philip Morrell, Bertrand Russell, Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant and assorted others, had all signed up to the pacifist cause.

Juliette Huxley presented her own enchanting version of life at Garsington in her memoirs.<sup>10</sup> Lady Ottoline (1873–1938), her employer, was experienced as a kind but dominant personality, a remarkable, middle-aged society dame, who brought Juliette completely under her spell. Green to the eccentricities