

# Julian Huxley

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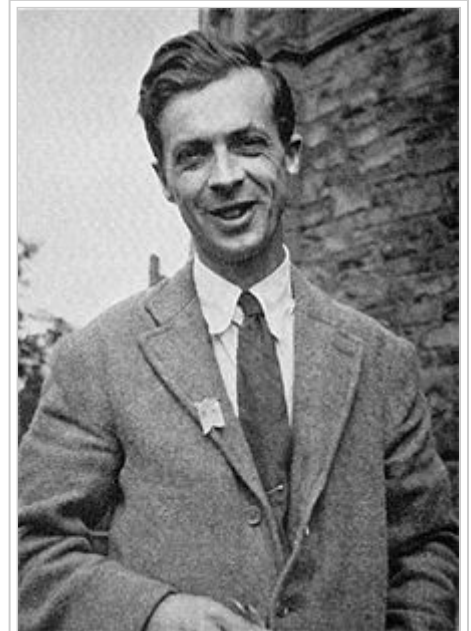
**Sir Julian Sorell Huxley** FRS (June 22 1887 – February 14 1975) was an English evolutionary biologist, author, humanist and internationalist, known for his popularisations of science in books and lectures. He was the elder brother of Aldous Huxley.

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## Quotes

- In the actual duration of his life, the individual ranges from the bacterium's hour to the the big tree's five thousand years.** Man in this again stands at the pinnacle of individuality — not in mere length of days, but in having found a means to perpetuate a part of himself in spite of death.  
**By speech first, but far more by writing, man has been able to put something of himself beyond death. In tradition and in books an integral part of the individual persists, for it can influence the minds and actions of other people in different places and at different times: a row of black marks on a page can move a man to tears, though the bones of him that wrote it are long ago crumbled to dust.** In truth, the whole progress of civilization is based upon this power. Once more the upward progress of terrestrial life towards individuality has found apparently insurmountable obstacles, gross material difficulties before it, but once more through consciousness it finds wings, and, laughing at matter, flies over lightly where it could not climb.  
To such an individuality, one that can thus transcend the limits of its substance, the name Personality is commonly given. Man alone possesses true personality, though there is as it were an aspiration towards it visible among the higher vertebrates, stirring their placid automatism with airs of consciousness.
  - "The Individual in the Animal Kingdom" (1912); quoted in *From Gaia to Selfish Genes: Selected Writings in the Life Sciences* (1992) by Connie Barlow, Ch. 6 "Blurred Bounds of Individuality"
- In man, personality is usually defined with reference to self-consciousness rather than to individuality; but the power of reflection and self-knowledge is linked up, in our type of personality at least, with the new flight of individuality — conscious memory seems necessarily to imply a vast increase of independence, so that it is all one whether we define the possessor of personality as a self-conscious individual, or as an individual whose individuality is more extensive both in space and time than the material substance of his body. Personality, as we know it, is free compared with the individuality of the lower animals; but it is still weighted down with the body. There may be personalities which have not merely transcended substance, but are rid of it altogether: in all ages the theologian and the mystic have told of such "disembodied spirits," postulated by the one, felt by the other, and now the psychical investigator with his automatic writing and his cross-correspondences is seeking to give us rigorous demonstration of them. **If such exist, they crown Life's**



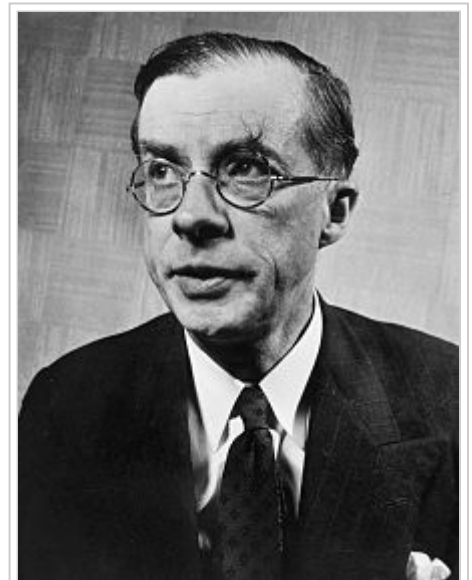
We are beginning to realize that even the most fortunate people are living far below capacity, and that most human beings develop not more than a small fraction of their potential mental and spiritual efficiency.

**progress...**

- "The Individual in the Animal Kingdom" (1912); quoted in *From Gaia to Selfish Genes: Selected Writings in the Life Sciences* (1992) by Connie Barlow, Ch. 6 "Blurred Bounds of Individuality"
- **Some day no one will have to work more than two days a week...**  
The human being can consume so much and no more. When we reach the point when the world produces all the goods that it needs in two days, as it inevitably will, we must curtail our production of goods and turn our attention to the great problem of what to do with our new leisure.
  - "Prof. Huxley Predicts 2-Day Working Week" *The New York Times* (17 November 1930) p. 42
- **We all know how the size of sums of money appears to vary in a remarkable way according as they are being paid in or paid out.**
  - "Philosophic Ants" in *The Borzoi Reader* (1936) edited by Carl Van Doren, p. 548
- **Sooner or later, false thinking brings wrong conduct.**
  - "Religion and Science: Old Wine in New Bottles" in the *Traveller's Library* (1933) edited by William Somerset Maugham, p. 1248
- The supernatural is being swept out of the universe in the flood of new knowledge of what is natural. It will soon be as impossible for an intelligent, educated man or woman to believe in a god as it is now to believe the earth is flat, that flies can be spontaneously generated... or that death is always due to witchcraft... The god hypothesis is no longer of any pragmatic value for the interpretation or comprehension of nature, and indeed often stands in the way of better and truer interpretation. **Operationally, God is beginning to resemble not a ruler but the last fading smile of a cosmic Cheshire cat.**
  - *Religion without Revelation* (1957) p. 58
- In the evolutionary pattern of thought, there is neither need nor room for the supernatural. **The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion.**
  - *The Humanist Frame* (1961) p. 18
- If I am to be remembered, I hope it will not be primarily for my specialized scientific work, but as a generalist; one to whom, enlarging Terence's words, nothing human and nothing in external nature was alien.
  - *Memories* (1970)



By writing, man has been able to put something of himself beyond death... A row of black marks on a page can move a man to tears, though the bones of him that wrote it are long ago crumbled to dust...



Sooner or later, false thinking brings wrong conduct.

**Transhumanism (1957)**

"Transhumanism" in *New Bottles for New Wine* (1957) p. 13 - 17 (<http://www.transhumanism.org/index.php/WTa/more/huxley>)

- **As a result of a thousand million years of evolution, the universe is becoming conscious of itself, able to understand something of its past history and its possible future.** This cosmic self-awareness is being

realized in one tiny fragment of the universe — in a few of us human beings. Perhaps it has been realized elsewhere too, through the evolution of conscious living creatures on the planets of other stars. But on this our planet, it has never happened before.

- **The new understanding of the universe has come about through the new knowledge amassed in the last hundred years — by psychologists, biologists, and other scientists, by archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians. It has defined man's responsibility and destiny — to be an agent for the rest of the world in the job of realizing its inherent potentialities as fully as possible.**

It is as if man had been suddenly appointed managing director of the biggest business of all, the business of evolution — appointed without being asked if he wanted it, and without proper warning and preparation. What is more, he can't refuse the job. **Whether he wants to or not, whether he is conscious of what he is doing or not, he is in point of fact determining the future direction of evolution on this earth.** That is his inescapable destiny, and the sooner he realizes it and starts believing in it, the better for all concerned.

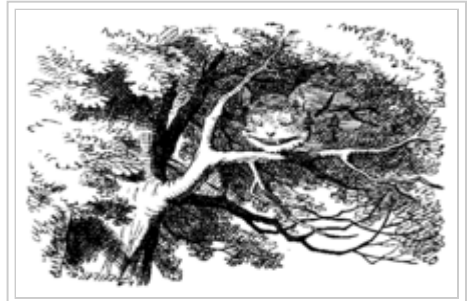
- **What the job really boils down to is this — the fullest realization of man's possibilities, whether by the individual, by the community, or by the species in its processional adventure along the corridors of time.** Every man-jack of us begins as a mere speck of potentiality, a spherical and microscopic egg-cell. During the nine months before birth, this automatically unfolds into a truly miraculous range of organization: after birth, in addition to continuing automatic growth and development, the individual begins to realize his mental possibilities — by building up a personality, by developing special talents, by acquiring knowledge and skills of various kinds, by playing his part in keeping society going.

- The personality may grievously fail in attaining any real wholeness. **One thing is certain, that the well-developed, well-integrated personality is the highest product of evolution, the fullest realization we know of in the universe.**

- The first thing that the human species has to do to prepare itself for the cosmic office to which it finds itself appointed is to explore human nature, to find out what are the possibilities open to it (including, of course, its limitations, whether inherent or imposed by the facts of external nature)...

**The great men of the past have given us glimpses of what is possible in the way of personality, of intellectual understanding, of spiritual achievement, of artistic creation. But these are scarcely more than Pisgah glimpses.** We need to explore and map the whole realm of human possibility, as the realm of physical geography has been explored and mapped.

How to create new possibilities for ordinary living? What can be done to bring out the latent capacities of the ordinary man and woman for understanding and enjoyment; to teach people the techniques of achieving spiritual experience (after all, one can acquire the technique of dancing or tennis, so why not of mystical ecstasy or spiritual peace?); to develop native talent and intelligence in the growing child, Instead of frustrating or distorting them?



Operationally, God is beginning to resemble not a ruler but the last fading smile of a cosmic Cheshire cat.



The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion.

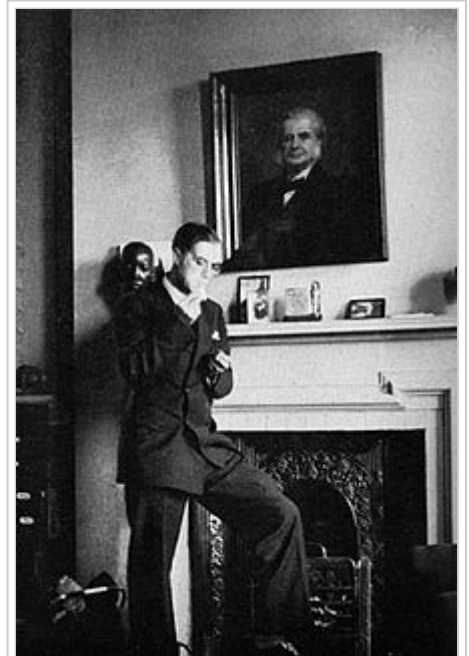


As a result of a thousand million years of evolution, the universe is becoming conscious of itself...

- **We are beginning to realize that even the most fortunate people are living far below capacity, and that most human beings develop not more than a small fraction of their potential mental and spiritual efficiency.** The human race, in fact, is surrounded by a large area of unrealized possibilities, a challenge to the spirit of exploration.
- Thanks to science, the under-privileged are coming to believe that no one need be underfed or chronically diseased, or deprived of the benefits of its technical and practical applications. The world's unrest is largely due to this new belief. People are determined not to put up with a subnormal standard of physical health and material living now that science has revealed the possibility of raising it. **The unrest will produce some unpleasant consequences before it is dissipated; but it is in essence a beneficent unrest, a dynamic force which will not be stilled until it has laid the physiological foundations of human destiny.**
- Up till now human life has generally been, as Hobbes described it, "nasty, brutish and short"; the great majority of human beings (if they have not already died young) have been afflicted with misery in one form or another — poverty, disease, ill-health, over-work, cruelty, or oppression. They have attempted to lighten their misery by means of their hopes and their ideals. The trouble has been that the hopes have generally been unjustified, the ideals have generally failed to correspond with reality. The zestful but scientific exploration of possibilities and of the techniques for realizing them will make our hopes rational, and will set our ideals within the framework of reality, by showing how much of them are indeed realizable.
- We are already justified in the conviction that human life as we know it in history is a wretched makeshift, rooted in ignorance; and that it could be transcended by a state of existence based on the illumination of knowledge and comprehension, just as our modern control of physical nature based on science transcends the tentative fumbings of our ancestors, that were rooted in superstition and professional secrecy. To do this, we must study the possibilities of creating a more favourable social environment, as we have already done in large measure with our physical environment.
- **We shall start from new premises. ... The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself — not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity.** We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature. "I believe in transhumanism": once there are enough people who can truly say that, the human species will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence, as different from ours as ours is from that of Peking man. It will at last be consciously fulfilling its real destiny.



The fullest realization of man's possibilities, whether by the individual, by the community, or by the species in its processional adventure along the corridors of time.



The well-developed, well-integrated personality is the highest product of evolution, the fullest realization we know of in the universe.

## The New Divinity (1964)



"The New Divinity" in *Essays of a Humanist* (1964)

- The entire cosmos is made out of one and the same world-stuff, operated by the same energy as we ourselves. "Mind" and "matter" appears as two aspects of our unitary mind-bodies. **There is no separate supernatural realm: all phenomena are part of one natural process of evolution. There is no basic cleavage between science and religion; they are both organs of evolving humanity.**
- **This earth is one of the rare spots in the cosmos where mind has flowered.** Man is a product of nearly three billion years of evolution, in whose person the evolutionary process has at last become conscious of itself and its possibilities. **Whether he likes it or not, he is responsible for the whole further evolution of our planet.**
- Man emerged as the dominant type on earth about a million years ago, but has only been really effective as a psychosocial organism for under ten thousand years. In that mere second of cosmic time, he has produced astonishing achievements — but has also been guilty of unprecedented horrors and follies. And looked at in the long perspective of evolution he is singularly imperfect, still incapable of carrying out his planetary responsibilities in a satisfactory manner...
- **Religion in some form is a universal function of man in society**, the organ for dealing with the problems of destiny, the destiny of individual men and women, of societies and nations, and of the human species as a whole. Religions always have some intellectual or ideological framework, whether myth or theological doctrine; some morality or code of behaviour, whether barbaric or ethically rationalized; and some mode of ritualized or symbolic expression, in the form of ceremonial or celebration, collective devotion or thanksgiving, or religious art...
- Eventually the old ideas will no longer serve, the old ideological framework can no longer be tinkered up to bear the weight of the facts, and a radical reconstruction becomes necessary, leading eventually to the emergence of a quite new organisation of thought and belief, just as the emergence of new types of bodily organization was necessary to achieve biological advance. **Such major organizations of thought may be necessary in science as much as in religion.** The classical example, of course, was the re-patterning of cosmological thought which demoted the earth from its central position and led to the replacement of the geocentric pattern of thought by a heliocentric one. **I believe that an equally drastic reorganization of our pattern of religious thought is now becoming necessary, from a god-centered to an evolutionary-centered pattern.**
- The last two thousand years have seen the development of elaborate monotheistic theologies; but in the process their single God has broken into many, or at least has assumed a number of distinct and indeed sometimes actively hostile forms; and their nominal universalism has degenerated into competition for the possession of absolute truth.
- **God is a hypothesis constructed by man to help him understand what existence is all about....** To say that God is ultimate reality is just semantic cheating, as well as being so vague as to become effectively meaningless... Today the god hypothesis has ceased to be scientifically tenable, has lost its explanatory value and is becoming an intellectual and moral burden to our thought. It no longer convinces or comforts, and its abandonment often brings a deep sense of relief. **Many people assert that this abandonment of the god**



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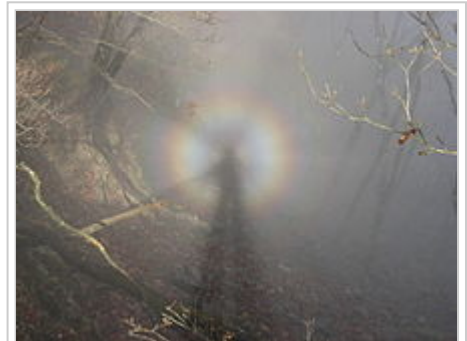
Eventually the old ideas will no longer serve... and a radical reconstruction becomes necessary ... Such major organizations of thought may be necessary in science as much as in religion.

**hypothesis means the abandonment of all religion and all moral sanctions. This is simply not true. But it does mean, once our relief at jettisoning an outdated piece of ideological furniture is over, that we must construct some thing to take its place.**

- Let me remind my readers that the term divine did not originally imply the existence of gods: on the contrary, gods were constructed to interpret man's experiences of this quality.
- **Evolution is a process, of which we are products, and in which we are active agents.** There is no finality about the process, and no automatic or unified progress; but much improvement has occurred in the past, and there could be much further improvement in the future (though there is also the possibility of future failure and regression). Thus the central long-term concern of religion must be to promote further evolutionary improvement and to realise new possibilities; and this means greater fulfilment by more human individuals and fuller achievement by more human societies.
- **Human potentialities constitute the world's greatest resource, but at the moment only a tiny fraction of them is being realized.** The possibility of tapping and directing these vast resources of human possibility provide the religion of the future with a powerful long-term motive. An equally powerful short-term motive is to ensure the fullest possible development and flowering of individual personalities. **In developing a full, deep and rich personality the individual ceases to be a mere cog or cipher, and makes his own particular contribution to evolutionary fulfilment.**
- A religion of fulfilment must provide bustling secular man with contacts with all that is permanent and enduring, with the deeper and higher aspects of existence; indeed, with every possible opportunity of transcending the limitations not only of his day-by-day existence in the equivalents of shared worship, but of his little secular self in acts of meditation and self-examination and in retreats from the secular world of affairs.
- Christianity is a universalist and monotheist religion of salvation. Its long consolidation and explosive spread, achieved through a long period of discussion and zealous ferment, released vast human forces which have largely shaped the western world as we know it. An evolutionary and humanist religion of fulfilment could be more truly universal and could release even vaster human forces, which could in large measure shape the development of the entire world...
- **What we now need is a multitude of participants to take part in the great discussion and to join in the search for the larger truth and the more fruitful patterns of belief which we confidently believe is waiting to be elicited.**



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## External links

- Profile at NNDB (<http://www.nndb.com/people/009/000100706/>)
- Guide to Huxley's papers, 91 linear feet. (<http://www.rice.edu/fondren/woodson/mss/ms050.html>)

- "Transhumanism" from *New Bottles for New Wine* (1957) (<http://www.transhumanism.org/index.php/MTA/more/huxley>)
- "The New Divinity" from *Essays of a Humanist* (1964) ([http://www.update.uu.se/~fbendz/library/jh\\_divin.htm](http://www.update.uu.se/~fbendz/library/jh_divin.htm))

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Categories: Biologists | Humanists

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Evolution is a process, of which we are products, and in which we are active agents.



Human potentialities constitute the world's greatest resource.