

a discussion with Laura Huxley

BY RICK DOBLIN



Laura Huxley

(This telephone discussion took place on March 12, 1994. Laura's conference was scheduled to begin April 28 in LA.)

RD: What inspired you to organize your upcoming conference?

LH: The main inspiration is that this is a one and only opportunity to unite Aldous's birth centennial with Children: Our Ultimate Investment. Celebrating Aldous with children is a natural merging.

He dedicated much of his writing to making us aware of our choices and our creative capacities. Yet, the creative capacity of children is being stifled. This event is a unique moment in time, not just because of the fact of only ONE birth centennial, but also because of the extraordinary group of pioneers and leaders who have responded to this call with enthusiasm.

RD: What do you hope the conference will accomplish?

LH: I hope that people become more aware of Aldous's suggestions and advice. More than anything, that they become more aware of the importance that each one of us has in the making of the whole society. We think that we are not important because society is so overpowering. If we remember that while we may not do

great things, great revolutions, we can do small things with great love. This is the advice of Mother Theresa. Each one of us can become more conscious, more clear about what society is and what it can be. If people read *Island*, they will find a lot of ideas on how to live. Of course, they cannot all be actualized but if we do a little bit, a little bit goes a long way.

RD: Brother David Steindl-Rast also talks about the sense that we should be

grateful just for the breath and for the little things that we can do.

LH: Yes, and too often we stifle our natural will to live and to love.

RD: I think that some of the people who may read this interview in the newsletter, particularly some of the younger people, might not have read anything by Aldous. What would you recommend them to read first?

LH: I definitely recommend that they read *Island*, because that is Aldous' legacy. That way they can see a little of all of the great panorama that covers his life. Jean Houston, who will speak at the conference, has done a lot of work with Aldous' books. She has applied his philosophy in her work. During the conference, Ram Dass will take the two books by Aldous that are opposite to each other, *Brave New World* and *Island*, and make the comparison. Then, he will ask which way do we want to go? We are already into *Brave New World*. Do we want to go more into *Island*, or maybe there is still another possibility? It's fascinating to think about a discussion like that. There is the example in *Brave New World*, where the babies about 7 or 8 months old are brought into a room where there are roses and books. They see the colored things and eagerly go toward them but in the moment in which they are just about to touch them, they receive an electric shock. That cures them for good from books. In *Island*, there is the other example. When the mother is breast feeding the baby, and it is just heaven, the most wonderful time of its life when it's so near the mother and being breast fed, at this moment she introduces the baby to the other members of the family or the household, even an animal, whatever, she makes the introduction in that moment. As the baby is touched by this person the mother says good, good, good. That is the way to introduce a baby to the world.

RD: During the sixties, people were

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explicitly trying to recreate the world like the society in Island. People were using psychedelics for inspiration and were dropping out of excess materialism and going back to the land.

LH: It started then, and then it stopped.

RD: What do you think made it stop?

LH: Well, the abuse, and the confusion of issues. You can't drop out, you have to stay in and very much so. Aldous wrote in *Island* about how the young people who, in a ritual of puberty, are taken into the mountains and given the moshka medicine. Their teacher asks, "will you merely enjoy this experience as you would enjoy an evening at a show and then go back to business as usual?" The answer is not in the wonder of the day, the answer is finding value and wonder in everyday acts.

RD: *Do you think that the idea of rites of passage for dying with moksha medicine, is that something that you think we should try to bring into our culture?*

LH: Well I only assisted two dying persons with LSD, Aldous and another person. [Editor's note: Aldous asked Laura to inject him with LSD as he lay dying. See *This Timeless Moment* by Laura Huxley.] For Aldous it was very good, for the other person it wasn't. The point is it needs to be studied in the proper way. Aldous thought that LSD may be used with terminal patients, and he was in contact with Dr. Kast in Chicago, who was doing [LSD sessions] with terminally ill patients.

RD: *FDA-approved MDMA research will first look at its safety in normal, healthy people but then we're going to start a study with terminally ill cancer patients.*

LH: You have done beautifully, convincing the most impossible people that everything can be used in two ways, even water. You can die if you drink too much water but you cannot live without it. It's really difficult, because the responsibility comes back to each one of us, again and again for the way we do things, as with sex and love. Aldous always tried to offer some ideas, either in a novel form or in a play form, about the situation of the human race, about making us realize we have some choice. Our *Ultimate Investment* does exactly the same thing, by focusing on being conscious that children

and parents will be happier and healthier if treated well. Even before they're born, before conception. The idea is that if we are loved even before being conceived, then the family is prepared for conception, in grateful and loving ways.

RD: *You mentioned giving people a choice: what do think about abortion?*

LH: Well, if you follow the idea of the conference, the first thing to do if you conceive a child is to be conscious that you are doing one of the most important things that the human being can do. You prepare for conception for two years. You prepare your body and your mind, and you care about the relationship between you and your partner. When you do that, the question of abortion doesn't arise because you're not going to abort the child for which you've prepared for so long. In other cases, of course, that is an absolutely personal thing, nobody can tell anybody what to do.

RD: *It's reassuring for me to learn that you value the individual nature of that choice.*

LH: Oh, yes. It seems to me that conception should be a very conscious act. If it happens to be different, if some circumstances arise by which suddenly you find yourself pregnant, then the decision can only be made by yourself. It is depressing to think that it has become a political issue.

RD: *You helped Aldous to die in such a conscious way, in an altered state, are there ways you suggest to help the actual process of birth?*

LH: Well, the actual process of birth has already been helped for about ten million years. Currently, the kind of help that is offered by people in the medical profession is too often very disrespectful and damaging. The whole business of birth has been made into some kind of a disease. The woman arrives in the hospital to have a baby and the first thing is that she is put in a wheel chair as though she were sick. The whole process can be helped a great deal by leaving it as it is. Let it be, let it be, as evolution has prepared for many, many millions of years. Leave the father and

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mother to do what is necessary, with the help of midwives who are doing wonderful work. Birth now has become a medical business. There are very few births now on Saturdays and Sundays because it's not very convenient for the doctor. When the baby isn't ready to be born during the weekdays, sometimes it is obliged to do so. The percentage of cesareans has gone up from 3 or 4 percent to 22, 23, 24 percent.

RD: After the conference do you have other plans for Our Ultimate Investment?

LH: Yes I do. I want to keep on with two basic projects. One is Project Caressing, which is the intergenerational project where senior citizens hold and caress babies. Very often people at the two ends of life are solitary and alone. The baby is sometimes left a long time in a crib with maybe only the television, certainly the most cruel of all babysitters. Old people feel alone, too. So if the two can be matched, the loneliness can melt into tenderness. That is one project. I would like to have a caressing room every few blocks in every metropolis. The other project is Prelude to Conception, to make young people aware of the responsibilities of having a baby. The teenager takes care of a toddler when it begins, at two years old, to say no, no, no. At this demanding time in the

life of the baby, the teenager will take care of this toddler, or two or three toddlers, every week. And also get credit for this in their schools. I had this project one summer, and each teenager became very, very wise and said, "No, I'm not going to have a baby yet, until I'm 25 or 30

or 35." There are many people now who have babies later in life. They are better parents because they've already gone through part of their own personal growth, for example with their own career. I know several parents about 40. They take such wonderful care of the child because they feel more privileged in being parents.

RD: How are you going to try to go about bringing these projects into being?

LH: Ah, the practical side, that is very

difficult. So far, I have financed everything personally, I will have to have a little more help from corporations for Project Caressing. For Prelude to Conception, I would like to put it in high schools. So, there needs to be a recognition of these efforts on the part of the schools. It is a practical recognition because so many kids have kids. That is most often a painful thing because they're not prepared, the babies don't fare as well. Very often they need much more care, and the care is not available. I did try several years ago and did not succeed to involve the unified school district.

RD: So you'll first try to do these things in the Los Angeles area?

LH: Oh, I'll do it anywhere where it's possible, I don't care where, but generally in the big cities. In the small cities, these problems are a little bit better taken care of, I understand.

RD: There's already something like Project Caressing with crack babies in which hospitals arrange for senior citizen volunteers to hold the babies.

LH: It's a natural thing, it's not a brilliant idea. I can assure you that the baboons about two million years ago already did that. So we cannot take any credit.

RD: Sometimes if we'd just be as smart as animals, we'd be doing better.

LH: We are too smart in certain things and not smart enough in others.

RD: It must have been an enormous undertaking to put this conference together.

LH: I'll say, yes. I have a wonderful coordinator, Patricia Gaul, without whom I could not have done it. In any case, I would not miss the opportunity to work on an event which is unique in quality and time. The privilege and the responsibility are bigger than myself – but that's okay. I always had the tendency to attempt things bigger than myself – it is risky, but it gives deeper and tastier fragrance to life. •

All members of MAPS are offered a reduction from \$255 to \$200 on the registration fee for the conference. This includes all main presentations and the Aldous Huxley Symposium all day Sunday, May 1st. Seminars not included. Contact: Our Ultimate Investment (213) 461-8976. Conference dates, April 28-31.

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