



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship

Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre
16-18 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli
(near Milsons Point Station)

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Schedule of Services

Services are held every Sunday at 10:30 at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre

6 August, Martin Horlacher, "Plato and the Philosopher Kings of Ancient Greece"

An examination of the philosopher Plato's ancient political philosophy, and how it has reverberated through the ages.

13 August, No meeting.

20 August, Rev. Geoff Usher, "The Perfume of the Trampled Flower"

Forgiveness has been described as "the perfume that the trampled flower casts upon the heel that crushes it."

27 August, Martin Horlacher, "Existentialism"

As a philosophy and metaphysical theory, existentialism has included individuals as different from each other as Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche, and movements as diverse as atheism and Christianity. This talk will examine what its core ideas are, and how they can apply to today's world.



D. H. Lawrence explored the Etruscan areas of Italy. The images of Etruscan vessels are found on tombstones there (dated the 4th century B. C.) and they, together with Etruscan religious ideas, may have inspired his idea of launching his own soul boat— see poem p.3 (The ship illustrated above is doubtless rather grander than Lawrence's "the little bronze ship of death".) **JT**

The Spiritual Quest of D. H. Lawrence

Dr. Max Lawson

T.S. Eliot, although highly critical of Lawrence, claimed that DH. Lawrence without being a Christian was primarily and always “religious”.
1. Indeed Lawrence has been called “a Christ haunted man.” **2.**

Lawrence was brought up a Congregationalist and tells of his own religious upbringing in his essay “Hymns in a Man’s life”.

“I am grateful to my Congregational upbringing. The Congregationalists are the oldest Nonconformists, descendants of the Oliver Cromwell Independents. They still had the Puritan tradition of no ritual. But they avoided the personal emotionalism which one found among the Primitive Methodists, when I was a boy...The ghastly sentimentalism that came like a leprosy over religion had not yet got hold of our colliery village.” **3.**

Lawrence himself refers to the Puritan tradition and when Richard Hoggart, a prominent academic, was asked by the prosecution on the Lady Chatterley trial how to describe Lawrence, he replied: a Puritan. **4.** Then Hoggart was asked by the prosecution to define a Puritan, Hoggart replied:

“A Puritan has been extended to somebody who is against anything which is pleasurable, particularly sex. The proper meaning of it to a literary man is that it is someone who belongs to the tradition of British puritanism generally and distinguishing features of this is an intense sense of responsibility for one’s own conscience.” **5.**

This sense of responsibility over conscience was certainly Lawrence’s position: neither a pornographer or sex-pervert but a deeply serious writer (not without his lighter side) whose greatest works “deal with the question of how to lead a fuller, richer life.” **6.**

To give examples of this life and death tension let us now refer to his novels:

This contrast between life and death is para-

mount in Lawrence. It is not for nothing that in the last line of Sons and Lovers the central character, Paul, rejects suicide and walks “towards the faintly humming glowing town quickly.”(The quick and the dead). **7.**

Lawrence believed in Resurrection - a key term in Lawrence. In Lawrence’s review of Tolstoy’s late novel Resurrection Lawrence proclaims “The Lord is Risen. Let us be risen as well.”

Lawrence’s personal symbol for Resurrection is the Phoenix (The Heinemann Twenty volume collection of Lawrence’s writing is called The Phoenix edition.)

The Phoenix still stands above the concrete slab encasing Lawrence’s ashes in the shrine erected by his widow at Taos New Mexico. (Lawrence died at Vence, France) with a phoenix headstone over his grave there - which is now at the Lawrence Museum in Eastwood, formerly a mining village, now a suburb of Nottingham. (Lawrence’s widow Frieda had Lawrence’s body cremated and the ashes brought to New Mexico.)

On a personal note Ginna and I now live in Thirroul where Lawrence stayed for some two months and wrote most of his novel Kangaroo. Two doors down from the “Lawrence” house there is a small D.H. Lawrence Reserve in which there is a large headstone with a phoenix, a memorial to Lawrence.

Lawrence’s belief is that in this life we have Resurrection with a capital R. I have a poster at home with a Picasso-style Phoenix. Under it is a caption from the Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda: “Mi deber es vivir, morir, vivir”. (my obligation is to live, to die, to live). This is precisely the Lawrentian credo.

As Lawrence’s friend and fellow novelist Aldous Huxley remarked:
For Lawrence, existence was one continuous convalescence; it was as though he were newly re-born from a mortal illness every day of his life. What these convalescent eyes saw his most casual speech would reveal. A walk with him in the country was a walk through that rich and significant landscape which is at once the background and the

principal personage of all his novels. He seemed to know by personal experience what it is like to be a tree or a daisy or a breaking wave or even the mysterious moon itself. He could get inside the skin of an animal and tell you in the most convincing detail how it felt. 8.

Lawrence's religious beliefs, particularly Resurrection, are connected to his life-long problematic relationship with Jesus with whose life Lawrence found many parallels with his own.

Physically, the gaunt, bearded figure of Lawrence made many who knew him think of Christ. For example, Dorothy Brett, a close follower of Lawrence, painted him on a cross. Another friend, Earl Brewster (a Buddhist and masseur) spoke of Lawrence's "martyrised body." 9.

Remember the fate of the two novels considered his masterpieces - The Rainbow (as many copies as possible that could be retrieved were burnt by the public Hangman) and Women in Love could not find a publisher until 1920 (albeit a small one) and till 1960 Lady Chattersley's Lover was banned in the English speaking world.

Lawrence was indeed like Jesus, a prophet, but with his own kind of honour. Lawrence directly compared himself to Christ in the tomb during his period in England during the First World War. He and his German wife Frieda were accused of being spies and had to move frequently. With the war's end, the Lawrences went abroad, Lawrence speaking both of his Resurrection and Exodus. Lawrence's works were full of Biblical references and Christian concepts. 10.

Lawrence's affection for the figure of Jesus was "deep and abiding". Lawrence identified with Christ who in Lawrence's words "gave too much love."

In a story "The Man who Died" (written in 1929 but not published till after his death), Lawrence rewrites the Christian story in a way that many Christians would find offensive.

The story in question was published in two parts: the first part was called "The Escaped Cock" and appeared in 1929. The revised version, which added a second part created all the controversy in which the resurrected Christ figure travels to Egypt where he has a relationship with a Priestess of the Egyptian god Osiris. Thus "the Man who Died" is now totally whole and his mission completed.

Lawrence told the story in "The Man that Died" that the gospel of love preached by the man who died was, at first, "defective". When he returned to the world this man needed to possess himself of the one piece of saving knowledge that he was previously without and by this means completes his gospel of love and makes it wholly redemptive. 11.

The story emphasises the spiritual dimension of sexuality, with an access to the sense of the eternal. Lawrence's last story "The Man Who Died" has much in common with his last novel, Lady Chatterley's Lover. This novel is written with a solemn purpose. Indeed, on being cross-examined in the Lady Chatterley trial, the Bishop of Woolwich, John Robinson, stated, "I think it is clear that what Lawrence was trying to do was to portray the sex relationship as something essentially sacred, in a real sense an act of holy communion." 12.

As with "The Man who Died," Lady Chatterley's Lover ends with a quest and hopeful close: Lady Chatterley is pregnant and is planning to go to Canada to start a new life with her lover, the gamekeeper, Mellors.

The above mentioned works were written in 1928 while Lawrence was gravely ill with tuberculosis. They were matched in hopefulness by his long, final poem "The Ship of Death." This was written just four months before his own death. Here is the second part of the poem as read by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas:

*Oh build your ship of death, oh build it in time
and build it lovingly, and put it between the
hands of your soul.*

*Once outside the gate of the walled silvery
life of days,*

*once outside, upon the grey marsh beaches,
where lost souls moan in millions, unable to
depart,
having no boat to launch upon the shaken,
soundless,
deepest and longest of seas,
once outside the gate,
what will you do, if you have no ship of the
soul?*

*Oh pity the dead that are dead, but cannot
take
the journey, still they moan and beat
against the silvery adamant walls of this our
exclusive existence.
They moan and beat, they gnash, they rage
they fall upon the new outcoming souls with
rage
and they send arrows of anger, bullets and
bombs of frustration
over the adamant walls of this, our by-no-
means impregnable existence.*

*Pity, oh pity the poor dead that are only
ousted from life
and crowd there on the grey mud beaches of
the margins,
gaunt and horrible,
waiting, waiting till at last the ancient boat-
man with the common barge
shall take him aboard, towards the great goal
of oblivion.*

*Pity the poor gaunt dead that cannot die
into the distance with receding oars
but must roam like outcast dogs on the mar-
gins of life,
and think of them, with the soul's deep sigh
waft nearer to them the bark of delivery.*

*But for myself, but for my soul, dear soul.
let me build a little ship with oars and food
and little dishes, and all the accoutrements
dainty and ready for the departing soul.*

*And put it between the hands of the trembling
soul.*

*So that when the hour comes, and the last
door closes behind him
he shall slip down the shores invisible
between the half-visible hordes
to where the furthest and longest sea
touches the margins of our life's existence
with wincing unwilling waves.*

*And launching there his little ship,
wrapped in the dark-red mantle of the body's
memories,
the little, slender soul sits swiftly down, and
takes the oars
and draws away, away, away, towards the
dark depths,
fathomless deep ahead, far, far from the grey
shores
that fringe with shadow all this world's
existence.*

*Over the sea, over the farthest sea,
on the longest journey,
past the jutting rocks of shadow,
past the lurking, octopus arms of agonised
memory,
past the strange whirlpools of remembered
greed,
through the dead weed of a life-time's falsity,
slow, slow my soul, in his little ship
on the most soundless of all seas
taking the longest journey. 13.*

In Lawrence's last travel book, Etruscan Places, Lawrence writes of "the little bronze ship of death which symbolised for the Etruscans the journey out of life and into death and the sojourn in the after life." 14.

The poem reflects not only Lawrence's resignation in the face of death but an exhilarating journey into the unknown. Indeed the poem is not one of despair - it is a time, simply a time, Lawrence says, when one must move on to a new world and accept the reality of the flux of life."15.

What is important is "being in life" the central Lawrence preoccupation. In real terms this means that Lawrence can not only be read as a great literary artist but "a guide", (it was particularly in the 1960's) to genuine living and to personal resistance against a soulless civilisation. 16.

It is chastening to remember that the works discussed here were written when Lawrence was in the poorest of health but as he wrote to a friend (25th January 1927) "One wishes things were different but there's no help for it. One can only do one's best and stay brave, don't weaken or fret. When we live we must

be game and when we come to die, we'll die game too." 17. Writing till the end of his life, Lawrence did "die game"!

Notes:

1. T.S. Eliot foreword to Father William Tiverton, D.H.Lawrence and Human Existence (New York: Philosophical Library,) p.viii
2. Catherine Brown, "D.H. Lawrence and Christianity", podcasts.ox.ac.uk/dh-lawrence 3.
3. D.H.Lawrence, "Hymns in a Man's Life" reprinted by Anthony Beal (ed) D.H.Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism, (London: Mercury books 1961, pp.9-10.
4. C.H.Rolph (Ed), The Trial of Lady Chatterley (London: Penguin Books, 1961) p. 87.
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. D.H.Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, (London: Heinemann 1983 (1913) p. 403.
8. Aldous Huxley (Ed) The Letters of DH.Lawrence (London: William Heineman 1956(1932) pp xxx-xxxi
9. Quoted in Brown, op. cit
10. Dorothea Krook, Three Traditions of Moral Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1959) p.26.
11. Graham Hough, The Dark Sun: A Study of D.H. Lawrence (London: Penguin 1961 (1956) p. 284
12. The Trial of Lady Chatterley, op.cit, p. 63
13. Viva de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts (Ed) The Complete Poems of D.H.Lawrence Vol.2 (London: Heinemann, 1964) pp. 957-959.
14. George A. Parchas, Adventures in Consciousness: The Meaning of D.H.Lawrence's Religion (The Hague: Mouton and Co, 1964) p. 199.
15. Ibid, p. 201
16. Chris Baldrick "Post-Mortem: Lawrence's Critical and Social Legacy" in Anne Ferghaugh (Ed) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 263.
17. D.H.Lawrence, letter to Gertie Cooper, 23rd January, 1927 quoted on the title page of David Ellis, D.H..Lawrence: The Dying Game Vol III of Cambridge Life of D..H.Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

(The present editor, not Max Lawson, is responsible for these less than academically acceptable "footnotes" JT).

Film: Australian Politics in Lawrence's "Kangaroo".

D.H. LAWRENCE spent only two days in Sydney, Australia, when he arrived there in May of 1922. Yet he wrote several chapters about Sydney in "Kangaroo," the novel about Australia that he composed at a breakneck pace. Though Lawrence had no plans to document his Australian sojourn, he wound up writing 150,000 words in five weeks' time, giving his book an undeniable urgency. But the film version of "Kangaroo" is more staid, a calm and decorous work with a plot of no overwhelming interest. The one fiery thing about it is Judy Davis's performance, as a character modelled on Frieda Lawrence, the author's wife.

"Kangaroo," shapes a story of Australian politics to reflect more familiar Lawrentian ideas about love, loyalty, intellectual audacity and sexual expression. In that, it may sound a lot bolder than it happens to be. It follows a notorious British writer called Richard Somers, who is played by Colin Friels as a serious, tasteful shadow of Alan Bates's Lawrence figure in the far more audacious "Women in Love." Harassed in England, Richard embarks with his German-born wife, Harriet, to Australia, a place that he initially finds dauntingly dull. It seems, as he observes to her, to have "no inside life of any sort."

Richard learns otherwise when his neighbour, Jack Calcott (John Walton), introduces him to the title character, a general who leads a secret paramilitary organization. Committed to stifling Australia's nascent labour movement, Kangaroo urges Richard to become a mouthpiece for this movement. "We need you," he says. "A country does not exist until it has found a voice." Later on, Kangaroo declares, "We shall force the serpent of the left to stir, and we shall stamp on it." Richard, he says, "can justify it to Australia. And to the world."

But Kangaroo, played by Hugh Keays-Byrne, seems mostly bluster, despite the violent confrontation to which his teachings eventually lead. And his pleas that Richard "love" him have none of the glowering masculine

that might give them some mystery. Instead, Kangaroo seems all empty swagger, and Mr. Friels's Richard becomes more timid bystander than intellectually vigorous observer. Only Miss Davis, as the prickly, challenging woman who seems more than a match for her husband, gives the story life. "For years, you rail against class distinctions," she tells him. "Then you come to a place where there aren't any and you can't stand it."

"Kangaroo" has none of Lawrence's intensity, but it does have something of a "Masterpiece Theater" patina. As directed by Tim Burstall, it has an attractive look and a polite, reasonable manner to which Lawrence himself never aspired.

From an article in "The New York Times" by Janet Maslin, March 13, 1987

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**The novel has a better reputation than the film, but it is not regarded as one of Lawrence's finest. Written at Thirroul, it has an excellent description of Lawrence's response to the Australian bush—very old and frightening—and the political aspects may perhaps be seen as an Englishman's view of Australian mateship. Jan Tendys.**

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Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath (October 27, 1932-February 11, 1963) was a poet, literary critic, novelist, diarist, correspondent and sometime social activist. On the evidence of her intensely confessional poetry, Plath's personal theology was humanist, with a leaning toward nature mysticism. Throughout her short life she associated closely with the Unitarian church. After her suicide, Plath was taken up as a martyr and heroine of the feminist movement.

As a child in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, Sylvia attended the Unitarian church with her parents, Otto and Aurelia Plath. She went to a Methodist church when the family lived in Winthrop, Massachusetts, where there was no Unitarian congregation. After Otto died in 1940, Aurelia joined the Wellesley Unitarian

Church, where she taught in the Sunday school. Sylvia joined the church youth group and attended a Star Island Unitarian youth conference in 1949. Concerned about the prospect of nuclear war, Sylvia and her friend Perry Norton wrote an anti-arms race essay, "A Youth's Plea for World Peace," which appeared in the Christian Science Monitor (March 1950). While a student at Smith College, Sylvia wrote her mother that she believed in "the impersonal laws of science as a God of sorts..." In a religion course she wrote a paper on Unitarianism and identified herself as an "agnostic humanist."

Following her third year at Smith and a summer 1953 internship at Mademoiselle magazine, Sylvia became clinically depressed. After enduring a painful series of electroconvulsive shock treatments, she hid herself from her family and attempted an overdose of sleeping pills. Unitarian minister Max Gaebler and his wife, friends of the family, joined the local Unitarian minister, William Rice, who was already trying to console the family. Two days later Sylvia was discovered in the crawl space under the house. After psychiatric counselling, insulin therapy, and more shock treatment she returned to Smith. The expense of this treatment was borne by Unitarian novelist Olive Higgins Prouty, who had already underwritten Sylvia's college education and would remain her counsellor, correspondent, and "literary mother" during the remainder of her life.

In The Bell Jar (1963), a novel based upon these traumatic experiences, made into a film released in 1979, Plath portrayed her mother, Mrs. Prouty, and Rev. Rice unsympathetically. Plath later explained to her mother that she had fictionalized "to add colour" and "to show how isolated a person feels when he is suffering a breakdown." She described her process of transforming life into art by saying, "I've tried to picture my world and the people in it as seen through the distorting lens of a bell jar."

In 1956, while studying at Cambridge on a Fulbright scholarship, Plath married Ted Hughes, later British poet laureate. Although they were married privately by special license from the Archbishop of Canterbury, she

planned a second, public, wedding ceremony in the Wellesley Unitarian Church (which did not, in the event, take place).

While living in England she attended a parish church for a few months during the winter of 1961-62. Although she thought of herself as "a pagan-Unitarian at best," she enjoyed the ceremony and the music. She was driven away from the church by a sermon praising the hydrogen bomb as "the happy prospect of the Second Coming." When she read an American Unitarian sermon on fallout shelters it moved her to tears. She wrote her mother, "I'd really be a church-goer if I was back in Wellesley. . . .the Unitarian Church is my church. How I miss it! There is just no choice here."

Plath and Ted Hughes separated in 1962. Though the pain of her marital problems may have been a factor, Plath's suicide in early 1963 was probably a consequence of her pre-existing depressive illness. Yet even while suffering acute distress, Plath continued to compose original poetry of a high order, including her October poems. These late works garnered mixed posthumous reviews, some calling them sick, while others lauded their nobility. The poet Irving Feldman concluded that her spirituality was mad, being "that religion of one—which cannot distinguish between the self and the world." On the other hand, Stephen Spender rated them the feminine equivalent of Wilfrid Owen's war poems. Though her work had won several prizes and appeared in various magazines, only one volume of Plath's poetry, The Colossus (1960), was published during her lifetime. Since her death, three additional collections of her poetry have seen publication, as well as her diary and a collection of her letters. Her Collected Poems (1981) was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 1983.

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From the biography of Sylvia Plath written by Wesley Hromatko in the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography, an on-line resource of the Unitarian Universalist History & Heritage Society.

Photo ;  
Wikipedia



### Mad Girl's Love Song

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead;  
I lift my lids and all is born again.  
(I think I made you up inside my head.)

The stars go waltzing out in blue and red,  
And arbitrary blackness gallops in:  
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.

I dreamed that you bewitched me into bed  
And sung me moon-struck, kissed me quite  
insane.  
(I think I made you up inside my head.)

God topples from the sky, hell's fires fade:  
Exit seraphim and Satan's men:  
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.

I fancied you'd return the way you said,  
But I grow old and I forget your name.  
(I think I made you up inside my head.)

I should have loved a thunderbird instead;  
At least when spring comes they roar back  
again.  
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.  
(I think I made you up inside my head.)

— Sylvia Plath

Written 1951, when she was a student.

From [Mobilisation Australia <info@climateemergencydeclaration.org>](mailto:info@climateemergencydeclaration.org)

## Senate inquiry on climate change and national security risks

The Australian Senate has resolved to set up an inquiry into the implications of climate change for Australia's national security. It was supported by ALP, Greens and NXT, the government opposed. The motion, which was proposed by Scott Ludlam, said that a committee report investigating the implications of climate change for Australia's national security should be ready by 4 December 2017.

The committee was assigned to look at the capacity and preparedness of Australia's relevant national security agencies to respond to climate change risks in our region. The threats and long-term risks posed by climate change to national security and international security include those canvassed in the National Security Implications of Climate-Related Risks and a Changing Climate Report by the United States Department of Defence.

A number of community climate groups will be putting in a joint submission. Email Darebin Climate Action Now at [DarebinCAN@gmail.com](mailto:DarebinCAN@gmail.com) if your group would like to be included.

Submissions to the inquiry close on 4 August 2017.

» Find more information on [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)

Individual as well as community group submissions are welcome. You may wish to read "Disaster Alley: climate change, conflict and risk" on [www.breakthroughonline.org.au](http://www.breakthroughonline.org.au)

This information comes from: The National Centre for Climate Restoration (Breakthrough) "an independent think tank that develops critical thought leadership to influence the national climate debate and policy making. Breakthrough's mission is to develop and promote strategy innovation and analysis that is essential to deliver safe climate restoration. "

Note from Jan Tendys: While recommending all safe technology, this group asks you to consider that geoengineering (modifying the nature of the planet eg by putting particles into the air to reduce sunlight or adding iron to the seas to spur algae growth and thus take-up of carbon dioxide) may now be necessary to fight climate change. They ignore advanced nuclear reactors eg small modular reactors. I would say these reactors are safer than geoengineering and we should consider them first. Some people think that renewables alone will decarbonise to the extent needed, but this seems increasingly unlikely. See Clack et al <http://www.pnas.org/content/114/26/6722>

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Would you care to join Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship?

Membership is open to all adults and includes this newsletter. *Full membership \$50 concession \$20*. Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher for an application form at the Sunday service.

If you have a news item or written article you believe would be of interest to the congregation, we invite you to submit it for Esprit.

It would be helpful if items for publication, including articles and talk topics with themes could reach Esprit editor by the 15th of each month: jantendys@yahoo.com.au or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

Do you have a topic of a spiritual / ethical nature that you would like to share with the congregation? As Unitarians, we support an "Open Pulpit" and invite members of the congregation to lead the service if they so wish. *Please see Caz Donnelly at the Sunday service*