



Schedule of Services

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

6 September, Ginna Hastings Religion and Violence

The violence today in the Middle East often causes many to conclude that religion itself is often a cause of wars and violence. After reading Karen Armstrong's Fields of Blood – Religion and the History of Violence, I've developed another viewpoint on this matter. This talk will briefly explain Armstrong's complex theories to which I'll add some comments of my own and from a Unitarian perspective. Discussion to follow, so the actual worship part of the meeting will be smaller than usual. The book is not required reading for the talk, but it is certainly recommended reading to all!

13 September, Jan Tendys "The First Humanist Manifesto Part 1"

Many Unitarians count themselves as humanists. What can we learn from a look at the founding document of modern humanism?

20 September, Jan Tendys "The First Humanist Manifesto Part 2"

This will complete our examination of this historically important document.

27 September, Rev Geoff Usher "Celebrating Spring"

This service will be an anthology of readings and reflections on the theme of the return of Spring after the cold, dark days of winter.

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**To take you beyond the threshold of want,  
Where all your diverse strainings  
Can come to wholesome ease.**

**~ John O'Donohue ~**

**(To Bless the Space Between Us)**

*This poem is given in its entirety on p. 8.*

## Prayer of an Anonymous Abbess:

Lord, thou knowest better than myself that I am growing older and will soon be old. Keep me from becoming too talkative, and especially from the unfortunate habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and at every opportunity.

Release me from the idea that I must straighten out other peoples' affairs. With my immense treasure of experience and wisdom, it seems a pity not to let everybody partake of it. But thou knowest, Lord, that in the end I will need a few friends.

Keep me from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.

Grant me the patience to listen to the complaints of others; help me to endure them with charity. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains -- they increase with the increasing years and my inclination to recount them is also increasing.

I will not ask thee for improved memory, only for a little more humility and less self-assurance when my own memory doesn't agree with that of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.

Keep me reasonably gentle. I do not have the ambition to become a saint -- it is so hard to live with some of them -- but a harsh old person is one of the devil's masterpieces.

Make me sympathetic without being sentimental, helpful but not bossy. Let me discover merits where I had not expected them, and talents in people whom I had not thought to possess any. And, Lord, give me the grace to tell them so. Amen

—  
**Contributed by Laurence Gormley.**

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Do what you love. Know your own bone; gnaw at it, bury it, unearth it, and gnaw it still.

Henry David Thoreau

Contributed by Ginna Hastings

From the ***Victorian Humanist*** (Melbourne), 54 (6), July 2015: 1 & 7. Newsletter of the *Humanist Society of Victoria*, www.victorianhumanist.com
Editor: Rosslyn Ives, EDITORIAL

Living with less: Humanism inspired by Epicurus

Human success as a species has caused many grave problems:

- **Overpopulation**, too many people vying for the Earth's finite resources.
- **Over consumption**, too many people wanting material goods and energy so that the earth cannot provide for the billions of us
- **Loss of biodiversity**, as humans appropriate more and more of the planet for our use
- **Pollution**, huge volumes of waste and toxic human-made products polluting water, air and land.
- **Global warming**, caused primarily by humans. Already weather patterns and animal and plant distributions have changed, the oceans are acidifying, glaciers and ice caps are melting.

Individually we can take measures that address these problems, but if the majority are not doing the same then little is achieved. Governments, typically driven by a growth and consumption economy, expect science and technology to provide solutions. But is more of the same a rational response when the problems are threatening to overwhelm us?

An alternative is to radically change the way we live: use less energy, consume less, more recycling, conserve what is left of natural ecosystems, have fewer children, source goods and services locally, i.e. live with less.

Could a Humanist world-view offer any directives on living with less?

Yes, because Humanism is an open-ended world-view, guided by reason and the best available evidence.

Since the 1930s Humanism has been recognised as a secular world-view that articulates an ethical, responsible life based on reason and experience; its central focus, as the term indicates, are human beings. However, modern Humanism now includes statements expressing concern for other species and the environment; unsurprisingly, these are recent additions.

For example the Amsterdam Declaration [of] 2002 includes the following sentence, under point 4:

Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility.

Humanism ventures to build a world on the idea of a free person, responsible to society, and recognises our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world.

Our HSV introductory leaflet has the following under “Ethical Values”: “Humanists value human rights and environmental protection as set out in the declaration of the United Nations.”

Further, in submissions and letters to authorities the Humanist Society of Victoria regularly expresses a firm commitment to conserving the natural environment.

Do we need to go further and incorporate a stronger message within Humanism in response to the environmental problems listed above?

The Humanist world-view had its origins back in ancient Greek and Roman times, so going back to our foundational thinkers is a good place to start.

Luke Slattery, in his recent book, Reclaiming Epicurus, points to a way to incorporate concern for other species and the environment into a Humanist world-view. The Greek philosopher Epicurus (341 – 270 BCE) led a group of followers (men, women, free citizens and slaves) to live in a semi-rural retreat out of Athens. Their guiding principle was the pursuit of pleasure, which they understood not so much as the fulfilment of desire as its rational mas-

tery. A few surviving writings by Epicurus explain his egalitarian band of followers aimed to live frugally and at peace amid “nature’s wealth”. Epicurus urged followers to “learn to be content with what satisfies fundamental needs, while renouncing what is superfluous”.

Epicurean schools of philosophy flourished in Greek settlements, and were influential with many Romans. However, along with other philosophy schools, these were closed down after the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity. Fortunately, during the Renaissance the human-centred ideas from Greek and Roman times were rediscovered by the first humanist scholars.

The final paragraph of Reclaiming Epicurus starts:

If Epicurean ideals were actively at work in our world they would serve to moderate our mania for more gadgets and consumer goods, cool the culture of insatiability, reconnect us to community and rephrase our conversation about happiness. The acquisitive impulse would be checked by a deeper sensitivity to nature. We might not work so hard. We would prize relaxation over acquisition. For as the Epicurean reminds us, true pleasure — such as the pleasure of friendship and the enjoyment of simple things — is easily attained. But these Epicurean constraints are perfectly consistent with a creative economy, with the rationalism of science, with change and dynamism, with social evolution.

Guided by Epicurean values such as these, Humanism can be made to be far more instructive on the enormous environmental problems humanity now faces.

Rosslyn Ives

Jan Tendys: Thank you, Rosslyn, for giving permission for this editorial to be printed here.

Thanks also to Nigel Sinnott

nigelsinnott@optusnet.com.au

who manages the excellent Proxima Thule Press Extracts Service

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*Emphases by present editor, JT*

## George Orwell's 1940 review of Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf"

It is a sign of the speed at which events are moving that Hurst and Blackett's unexpurgated edition of Mein Kampf, published only a year ago, is edited from a pro-Hitler angle. The obvious intention of the translator's preface and notes is to tone down the book's ferocity and present Hitler in as kindly a light as possible. For at that date Hitler was still respectable. He had crushed the German labour movement, and for that the property-owning classes were willing to forgive him almost anything. Both Left and Right concurred in the very shallow notion that National Socialism was merely a version of Conservatism.

Then suddenly it turned out that Hitler was not respectable after all. As one result of this, Hurst and Blackett's edition was reissued in a new jacket explaining that all profits would be devoted to the Red Cross. Nevertheless, simply on the internal evidence of Mein Kampf, it is difficult to believe that any real change has taken place in Hitler's aims and opinions. When one compares his utterances of a year or so ago with those made fifteen years earlier, a thing that strikes one is the rigidity of his mind, the way in which his world-view doesn't develop. It is the fixed vision of a monomaniac and not likely to be much affected by the temporary manoeuvres of power politics. Probably, in Hitler's own mind, the Russo-German Pact represents no more than an alteration of time-table. The plan laid down in Mein Kampf was to smash Russia first, with the implied intention of smashing England afterwards. Now, as it has turned out, England has got to be dealt with first, because Russia was the more easily bribed of the two. But Russia's turn will come when England is out of the picture—that, no doubt, is how Hitler sees it. Whether it will turn out that way is of course a different question.

Suppose that Hitler's programme could be put into effect. What he envisages, a hundred years hence, is a continuous state of 250 million Germans with plenty of "living room" (i.e. stretching to Afghanistan or thereabouts), a horrible brainless empire in which, essen-

tially, nothing ever happens except the training of young men for war and the endless breeding of fresh cannon-fodder. How was it that he was able to put this monstrous vision across? It is easy to say that at one stage of his career he was financed by the heavy industrialists, who saw in him the man who would smash the Socialists and Communists. They would not have backed him, however, if he had not talked a great movement into existence already. Again, the situation in Germany, with its seven million unemployed, was obviously favourable for demagogues. But Hitler could not have succeeded against his many rivals if it had not been for the attraction of his own personality, which one can feel even in the clumsy writing of Mein Kampf, and which is no doubt overwhelming when one hears his speeches .... The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him. One feels it again when one sees his photographs—and I recommend especially the photograph at the beginning of Hurst and Blackett's edition, which shows Hitler in his early Brownshirt days. It is a pathetic, dog-like face, the face of a man suffering under intolerable wrongs. In a rather more manly way it reproduces the expression of innumerable pictures of Christ crucified, and there is little doubt that that is how Hitler sees himself. The initial, personal cause of his grievance against the universe can only be guessed at; but at any rate the grievance is here. He is the martyr, the victim, Prometheus chained to the rock, the self-sacrificing hero who fights single-handed against impossible odds. If he were killing a mouse he would know how to make it seem like a dragon. One feels, as with Napoleon, that he is fighting against destiny, that he can't win, and yet that he somehow deserves to. The attraction of such a pose is of course enormous; half the films that one sees turn upon some such theme.

Also he has grasped the falsity of the hedonistic attitude to life. Nearly all western thought since the last war, certainly all "progressive" thought, has assumed tacitly that human beings desire nothing beyond ease, security and avoidance of pain. In such a view of life there is no room, for instance, for patriotism and the military virtues. The Socialist who finds his children playing with soldiers is usu-

-ally upset, but he is never able to think of a substitute for the tin soldiers; tin pacifists somehow won't do. Hitler, because in his own joyless mind he feels it with exceptional strength, knows that human beings don't only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth-control and, in general, common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags and loyalty-parades. However they may be as economic theories, Fascism and Nazism are psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life. The same is probably true of Stalin's militarised version of Socialism. All three of the great dictators have enhanced their power by imposing intolerable burdens on their peoples. Whereas Socialism, and even capitalism in a more grudging way, have said to people "I offer you a good time," Hitler has said to them "I offer you struggle, danger and death," and as a result a whole nation flings itself at his feet. Perhaps later on they will get sick of it and change their minds, as at the end of the last war. After a few years of slaughter and starvation "Greatest happiness of the greatest number" is a good slogan, but at this moment "Better an end with horror than a horror without end" is a winner. Now that we are fighting against the man who coined it, we ought not to underrate its emotional appeal.

***A comment on authenticity by Jan Tendys:***

The above is apparently the version that was printed in Orwell's collected essays. However, having been made curious by the following comment added to the link which I had found .....

**Rob Kenyon: This is Bowdlerised. In the original Orwell states that while he would kill Hitler if he met him, he cannot actually dislike him. Which is pure Orwell.**

...I looked for the original newspaper version, which I haven't been able to find, However, I did come across this alleged extract:

**"I should like to put it on record that I have never been able to dislike Hitler. Ever since he came to power — till then, like nearly everyone, I had been**

**deceived into thinking that he did not matter — I have reflected that I would certainly kill him if I could get within reach of him, but that I could feel no personal animosity. The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him."**

**George Orwell's ambivalent attitude towards Hitler is reflected in the attitude of Winston Smith towards Big Brother, suddenly realizing during the 'Two Minutes Hate', that "his secret loathing of Big Brother changed into adoration, and Big Brother seemed to tower up, an invincible, fearless protector, standing like a rock against the hordes of Asia." The latter is a typical motif in the war-propaganda of Joseph Goebbels, who regarded the Soviet Union and soviet bolshevism as an "Ansturm der Steppe [assault of the steppe]".**

The above comes from an essay by Michael Rademacher

[http://www.orwell.ru/a\\_life/MR/english/e\\_oah](http://www.orwell.ru/a_life/MR/english/e_oah)

in which he examines how Orwell's thinking about his novel Nineteen Eighty-Four was influenced by the Nazis as much as the Communists. Rademacher gives the following reference for the extract:

**In: New English Weekly, 21 March 1940.**

The only intact copy of this reference (written in English) which I have been able to find, is described as an "unabridged translation"!

<https://danymihalache.wordpress.com/george-orwell-collected-essays-journalism-and-letters-my-country-right-or-left/george-orwell-the-collected-essays-journalism-and-letters-2-review-mein-kampf-by-adolf-hitler-unabridged-translation/>

**So anyone with time to spare who wants to research this can get back to Esprit JT**

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Rich Land, Wasteland

Jan Tendys

Speaking of rural activists, such as those currently battling the Shenhua mine, Sharyn Munro says:

“Their enemy is coal, which includes its more recent insidious offside, coal seam gas (CSG). Its backers are Big Business and government. In fact, government is largely perceived as the real opponent, because it hands Big Business the legal weapons, the loose legislation, the special exemptions and subsidies, and it has ignored both the war crimes and the collateral damage.

Just because there is a ‘demand’ does not mean the profiteers should satisfy it at any cost. The economy is not the only aspect of Australia that needs to be healthy; what about its people, its air, its land and water, its food-growing areas, its remnant natural heritage, its fast-diminishing unique plants and animals? Doesn't government know about Triple Bottom Line full cost accounting: people, planet, profit? They are repeatedly told of the adverse impacts on the first two of these, but the companies say the opposite in their submissions, and it is these that governments choose to accept without questioning. All of which adds greatly to the victims' feelings of helplessness, and hopelessness.”

Colin Whatmough gave the Fellowship a talk on Munro's book: [Rich Land, Wasteland](#). The above quote is taken from the introduction. The author tells how she started out in a small way just investigating what was happening in her own locality where mining was “invading” local land and proving exceedingly intrusive, in terms of noise, disruption, pollution and dirt particularly, upon the lives of landowners and small town property owners alike.

She was inspired to investigate further and ended up criss-crossing Australia and finding similar things happening practically all across our land, with much resentment against big “development” on the part of Australians, wealthy and not wealthy. The total insensitivity to the impact on the lives of local people was staggering and Munro describes how commu-

nity groups have formed to resist the invaders, sometimes with success.

Part of the resentment she found was directed against the fact that so many of the developer corporations were foreign owned. Indeed, Munro herself feels this resentment.

It is easy to tag such feelings as xenophobic or even racist when directed at, for example, Chinese or Indian development. Haven't we always had plenty of foreign investment in rural Australia as well as in our cities? Think of the huge tracks of land owned by Vestey's, the British cattle firm, in the Northern Territory. Haven't we just accepted British and later American investment as a necessary evil?

One could reply, “But that was in the days of the colonial cringe—we've surely outgrown that!” However, Munro would argue that the modern developers, mainly miners, are even more arrogant than the “investors” of old. Worst of all, they are backed up by state and federal governments who just don't seem to care about what happens to their own citizens, especially if they haven't got the clout to be able to resist in their own right. Even sympathetic local Councils are bamboozled in their attempts to deal with the higher levels of government..

Mining is still one of the ways Australia earns its bread-and-butter in our globalised world. And mining provides a great deal of what we use in our everyday lives. But does this have to come at the cost of the kind of treatment that is being meted out in the countryside? No wonder “**Lock the Gate**” has become such a powerful slogan for small and even large farmers as they resist miners having the right to just walk on to their property and make use of it - with the promise of restoration in the sweet bye and bye, a promise usually sloppily fulfilled. No worries about methane escape! Those who have followed the coal seam gas story know what hazards the local people are being asked to accept. Clearing the land of people is frequently a result, intentional or not. Rural Australia can't be blamed for asking “What would an invasion look like if it didn't look like this?”

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## No More Clichés

Beautiful face  
That like a daisy opens its petals to the sun  
So do you  
Open your face to me as I turn the page.

Enchanting smile  
Any man would be under your spell,  
Oh, beauty of a magazine.

How many poems have been written to you?  
How many Dantes have written to you,  
Beatrice?  
To your obsessive illusion  
To your manufactured fantasy.

But today I won't make one more Cliché  
And write this poem to you.  
No, no more clichés.

This poem is dedicated to those women  
Whose beauty is in their charm,  
In their intelligence,  
In their character,  
Not on their fabricated looks.

This poem is to you women,  
That like a Shahrazade wake up  
Everyday with a new story to tell,  
A story that sings for change  
That hopes for battles:  
Battles for the love of the united flesh  
Battles for passions aroused by a new day  
Battles for the neglected rights  
Or just battles to survive one more night.

Yes, to you women in a world of pain  
To you, bright star in this ever-spending  
universe  
To you, fighter of a thousand-and-one fights  
To you, friend of my heart.

From now on, my head won't look down to a  
magazine  
Rather, it will contemplate the night  
And its bright stars,  
And so, no more clichés.

~ **Octavio Paz** ~

(Selected Poems)



## O'MARA'S PUB VERANDA

From O'Mara's pub veranda you can watch  
the busy street.  
The old clock tower, the trees in flower, the  
town is at your feet.  
If you close your eyes & listen you can hear  
the steamies blow,  
Hear clinking jars in the rollicking bar - 100  
years ago.

On O'Mara's pub veranda the velvet night  
comes down,  
The clock strikes nine, the streetlamps shine  
– a quiet night in town.  
If you close your eyes you'll see it - the gas-  
lights' gentle glow,  
And firelight on winter nights - a hundred  
years ago.

Chorus: Here's to this grand veranda as the  
sun goes rolling down.  
The old clock chimes the passing times of a  
little country town.

On O'Mara's pub veranda it's nice to sit and  
look  
As life goes round, this little town's a living  
history book.  
If you close your eyes you'll hear them in the  
hum of life below  
Forgotten sounds of a country town 100  
years ago.

~**Penny Davies & Roger Ilott**~

## For the Unknown Self

So much of what delights and troubles you  
Happens on a surface  
You take for ground.

Your mind thinks your life alone,  
Your eyes consider air your nearest neighbor,  
Yet it seems that a little below your heart  
There houses in you an unknown self  
Who prefers the patterns of the dark  
And is not persuaded by the eye's affection  
Or caught by the flash of thought.

It is a self that enjoys contemplative patience  
With all your unfolding expression,  
Is never drawn to break into light  
Though you entangle yourself in unworthiness  
And misjudge what you do and who you are.

It presides within like an evening freedom  
That will often see you enchanted by twilight  
Without ever recognizing the falling night,  
It resembles the under-earth of your visible life:  
All you do and say and think is fostered  
Deep in its opaque and prevenient clay.

It dwells in a strange, yet rhythmic ease  
That is not ruffled by disappointment;  
It presides in a deeper current of time  
Free from the force of cause and sequence  
That otherwise shapes your life.

Were it to break forth into day,

Its dark light might quench your mind,  
For it knows how your primeval heart  
Sisters every cell of your life  
To all your known mind would avoid,

Thus it knows to dwell in you gently,  
Offering you only discrete glimpses  
Of how you construct your life.

At times, it will lead you strangely,  
Magnetized by some resonance  
That ambushes your vigilance.

It works most resolutely at night  
As the poet who draws your dreams,  
Creating for you many secret doors,  
Decorated with pictures of your hunger;

It has the dignity of the angelic  
That knows you to your roots,  
Always awaiting your deeper befriending  
Where all your diverse strainings  
Can come to wholesome ease.

~ John O'Donohue ~

**Somewhere, something incredible  
is waiting to be known.**

~ Blaise Pascal ~

## 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* . If you would like to join us as an active member of Spirit of Life, please ring **0466 940 461** or consult our website [www.sydneynunitarians.org](http://www.sydneynunitarians.org) . Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher or Ginna Hastings 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: [jtendys@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jtendys@yahoo.com.au) or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

Although we have an Associate Minister, Rev. Geoff Usher, we are primarily a lay-led congregation. **Perhaps you have a topic to share?** We welcome any topic ideas, offers to speak or names of suitable speakers for our meetings whom we could approach. *Please see Caz Donnelly at the Sunday service.*

**Fellowship contact 0466 940 461**