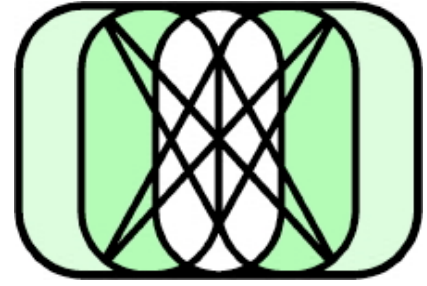


Church of Creation

Order of Service

Sunday, January 11, 2009 8:00 AM

Carmentalia



Welcome:

You are always already chosen

Hymn: Blah-Blah

Announcements and sharing

This week in Semiotics: **Is your medium too small?**

Lost In Space...

Birthday acknowledgment:

William James (January 11, 1842 – August 26, 1910, aged 68)

Edward B. Titchener (January 11, 1867 – August 3, 1927)

Process:

Singularity...

Message:

Chaos and Order

Dialogue on Chaos and Order

Next week: January 18

What Is Your Dream?

Welcome:

Welcome to the Church of Creation! ‘Welcome’ is one of those everyday words mostly spoken and heard automatically. ‘Welcome’ comes to us from the Old English, *wilcuma*, which means, “Your arrival is in alignment with our choice.” This coming together and welcoming is an act of choosing. By welcoming you, we are communicating that you are always already chosen. You don’t have to do anything to be chosen; you already are. Thank you for Being.

There is also nothing to believe or disbelieve. This is a church without a creed or a code. Recognizing that believing or disbelieving may get in the way of living authentically, one of our practices is to suspend belief in favor of inquiries into the unknowable infinity of Being. Notice that I said suspend: you do not have to give up your beliefs. Your beliefs will still be available to you, if you want to take them up again. It is always your choice.

Inquiring into the unknowable produces distinctions that make a difference in one’s experience of life. We promise that an open inquiry will give you power over the matter in question.

The distinction between what and that is a basic example of a distinction. The what-it-is of something (its whatness) describes the properties of the thing: its weight and measure, its content and dimensions, how it shows up in consciousness. That-it-is, or thatness, is the ontological aspect of a subject: the fullness of its existence. While whatness is considered important, it is mostly a matter of preference or point-of-view. Thatness is crucial and primary. **What** you eat is important to your life and health. **That** you eat is crucial. This distinction shows up everywhere. Given the subject of church music, we could say that **what** you sing is merely important. What matters is **that** you are joyfully expressed. In our ongoing experiment on bringing aliveness to our music, we invite you to...

Announcements and Sharing:

Felix Carmentalia

Today is the 11th of January, which is, as I mentioned last week, the Ancient Roman festival of *Carmentalia*, which was primarily celebrated by women. For those of you who were wondering how there could be holidays, when I told you a few weeks ago that this part of the year wasn't on the Roman calendar, January and February were added to the calendar sometime between 700 and 450 BCE. Carmenta was deified much later. Carmenta was an oracle who was said to be able to see the past and the future clearly, so it is fitting that she would be celebrated in the first month. January wasn't the first month until 153 BCE. She was deified as the goddess of childbirth and prophecy, associated with technological innovation as well as the protection of mothers and children, and the patron of midwives and nurses. She was also said to have invented the Latin alphabet, so she may have started Semiotics also. I still think it's a great idea to leave January and February off the calendar so we can hibernate.

Labor Underutilization

The U-3 unemployment rate hit a 16 year high at 7.2%. The US economy lost 2.6 million jobs in 2008. The U-6 measure is up to 13.5%. Roughly one in seven workers is not working or not working as many hours as they would like to. Many of these workers have also lost their healthcare benefits as well. Meanwhile the President-elect continues to tell us that we only have one President at a time. This sounds like an overestimate to me. That one President was on the deck of a spiffy new Nimitz class aircraft carrier, which was commissioned as the *George H. W. Bush* (CVN-77), named to honor his father. It cost 6.2 billion dollars to build this instrument of global terror. That's twenty bucks from each of us. I'd like to take my twenty dollars worth from the bottom hull, thank you very much.

Bomb Overutilization

Israel continues to drop hundreds of tons of bombs on mostly Muslim, Palestinian people in Gaza. The people in Gaza continue to respond with a dozen or so rockets per day. These rockets have a maximum payload of about 6kg. (13 lbs.) of gunpowder and urea nitrate fertilizer. The application of force is roughly a 10,000 to one ratio, and somehow the Israelis are still portrayed in the US as the injured party. As of this week, the IDF is also waging a ground assault on Gaza. More IDF soldiers have been killed by "friendly fire" than by Palestinians. The death toll is roughly 800 to one — mostly civilians, many children. How can people go from being the targets of genocide to the perpetrators of genocide in a single lifespan? I'm not taking sides on an ideological basis. I'm just asking.

Semiotics is a general term for the theory of sign systems. It is an inquiry into the way human beings signify their world in language and derive meaning. Through the study of semiotics, we can see how sign systems are used by media, politics and popular culture to manipulate reactions and manufacture consent. It provides us with a valuable look behind the curtain, and insights into how it works and how it doesn't. Beyond what is merely important and interesting about semiotics, we find that language is the medium in which human beings create the Universe. Using language rigorously and precisely supports complete communications and the fulfillment of possibilities.

This week in Semiotics: Is Your Medium Too Small?

Our inquiry into the possibilities of Semiotics continues with some basic concepts about the media and channels that may be considered within the Semiotic scope. Semiotics is often employed in the analysis of texts (although it is far more than just a mode of textual analysis). Here it should perhaps be noted that a 'text' can exist in any medium and may be verbal, non-verbal, or both, despite the logocentric bias of this distinction. The term text usually refers to a message which has been recorded in some way (e.g. writing, audio- and video-recording) so that it is physically independent of its sender or receiver. A **text** is an assemblage of signs (such as words, images, sounds and/or gestures) constructed (and interpreted) with reference to the conventions associated with a genre and

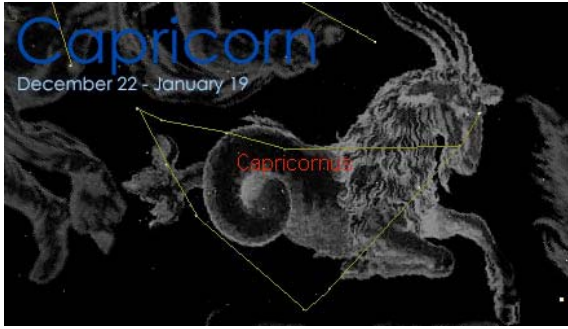
in a particular medium of communication.

The term '**medium**' is used in a variety of ways by different theorists, and may include such broad categories as speech and writing or print and broadcasting or relate to specific technical forms within the mass media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, photographs, films and records) or the media of interpersonal communication (telephone, letter, fax, e-mail, video-conferencing, computer-based chat systems). Some theorists classify media according to the '**channels**' involved (visual, auditory, tactile and so on). Human experience is inherently multi-sensory, and every representation of experience is subject to the constraints and affordances of the medium involved. Every medium is constrained by the channels which it utilizes. For instance, even in the very flexible medium of language "*words fail us*" in attempting to represent some experiences, and we have no way at all of representing smell or touch with conventional media. Different media and genres provide different frameworks for representing experience, facilitating some forms of expression and inhibiting others. The differences between media lead Emile Benveniste to argue that the "first principle of semiotic systems is that they are not *synonymous*: we are not able to say the same thing in systems based on different units." This point-of-view is in contrast to Hjelmslev, who asserted that "in practice, language is a semiotic into which all other semiotics may be translated."

The everyday use of a medium, by someone who knows how to use it, typically passes unquestioned as unproblematic and neutral. This is hardly surprising since media evolve as a means of accomplishing purposes in which they are usually intended to be incidental. The more frequently and fluently a medium is used, the more '**transparent**' to its users it tends to become. For most routine purposes, awareness of a medium may hamper its effectiveness as a means to an end. Indeed, it is typically when the medium acquires transparency that its potential to fulfill its primary function is greatest.

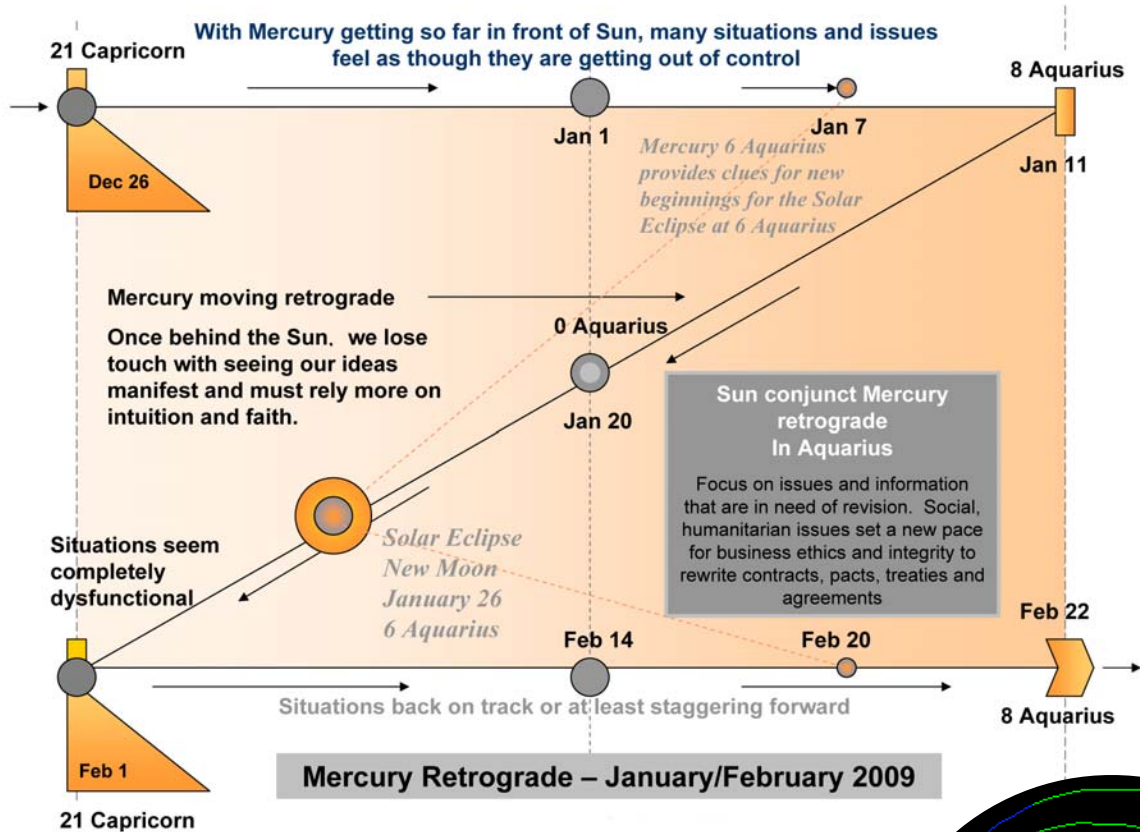
The selectivity of any medium leads to its use having influences of which the user may not always be aware, and which may not have been part of the purpose in using it. We can be so familiar with the medium that we are 'anesthetized' to the mediation it involves. We don't know what we're missing. Insofar as we are numbed to the processes involved we cannot be said to be exercising 'choices' in its use. In this way the means we use may modify our ends. Among the phenomena enhanced or reduced by media selectivity are the ends for which a medium was used. In some cases, our 'purposes' may be subtly (and perhaps invisibly), redefined by our use of a particular medium. This is the opposite of the pragmatic and rationalistic stance, according to which the means are chosen to suit the user's ends, and are entirely under the user's control. An awareness of this phenomenon of transformation by media has often led media theorists to argue deterministically that our technical means and systems always and inevitably become 'ends in themselves' (Marshall McLuhan's famous aphorism, 'the medium is the message'), and has even led some to present media as wholly autonomous entities with 'purposes' (as opposed to functions) of their own.

The ever-present sky is, in a way, an overarching context for all that happens here on Earth. Reason would give us doubts that the stars could move us any more than we could move the stars, although it is possible. Even when astrological projections correlate with what is going on with our lives, it is useful to remember that correlation does not indicate causation, and whenever one considers a possibility to be the "Truth," it becomes a lie. For us of course, it is just inspiring to look upward and see the Universe showing off. Our purpose here is to expand our awareness and explore all inquiries, and so we look outward from this planet to get...

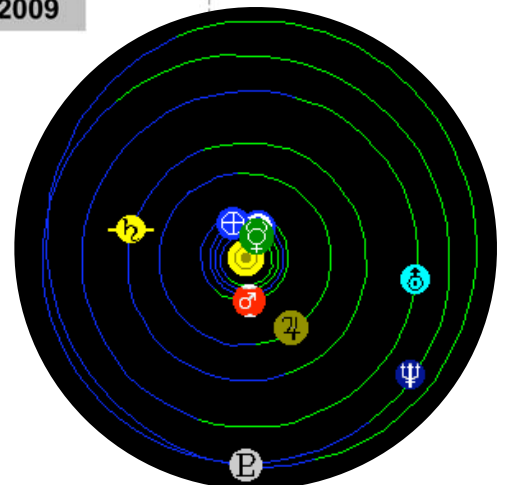


Lost In Space...

This week, **January 11th through January 17th**, begins the Mercury retrograde effect for the month and sets the pace for the year. Mercury rolled into Aquarius on January 1st and is now turning retrograde. Mercury will move back to 21° Capricorn, which is where the Full Moon on the 10th (biggest and brightest of 2009) provided a moment to reflect on how our new directions will affect humanity.



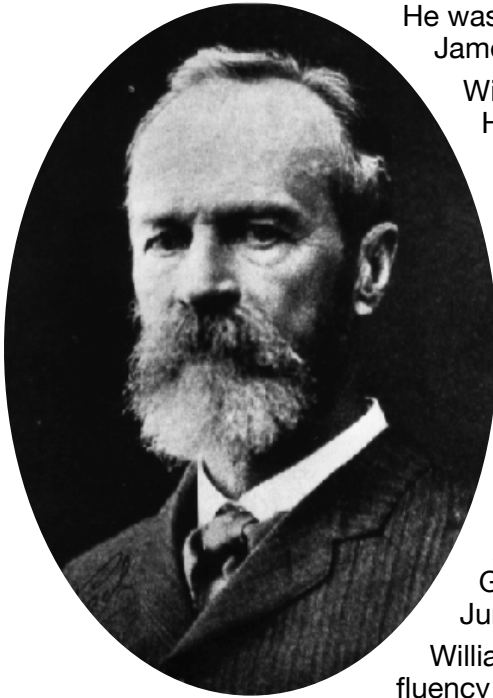
It is interesting to note that the retrograde path of Mercury this year is the same as 1930. If the economy follows the same path as it did in 1930, it will stagger up until April, and end the year about 20% lower than last year's lows (DJIA around 6,000). However, there are many, many variables, both on Earth and in the sky, so keep looking up!



Birthday Acknowledgement: January 11

William James (January 11, 1842 – August 26, 1910, aged 68) was a pioneering American psychologist and philosopher trained as a medical doctor. He wrote influential books on the young science of psychology, educational psychology, psychology of religious experience and mysticism, and the philosophy of pragmatism.

He was the brother of novelist Henry James and of diarist Alice James.



William James was born at the Astor House in New York City. He was the son of Henry James Sr., an independently wealthy and notoriously eccentric amateur theologian well acquainted with the literary and intellectual elites of his day. The intellectual brilliance of the James family home and the remarkable literary talents of several of its members have made them a subject of continuing interest to historians, biographers, and critics.

James interacted with a wide array of writers and scholars throughout his life, including his godfather Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as Bertrand Russell, Horace Greeley, William Cullen Bryant, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Charles Peirce, Josiah Royce, George Santayana, Ernst Mach, John Dewey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Helen Keller, Mark Twain, Horatio Alger, Jr., James George Frazer, Henri Bergson, H. G. Wells, G. K. Chesterton, Sigmund Freud, Gertrude Stein, and Carl Jung.

William James had an eclectic, transatlantic education, developing fluency in both German and French languages along with a cosmopolitan manner. His family made two trips to Europe while he was still a child, setting a pattern that resulted in thirteen more European journeys during his life. His early artistic bent led to an early apprenticeship in the studio of William Morris Hunt in Newport, Rhode Island, but yielded in 1861 to scientific studies at Harvard University's Lawrence Scientific School.

In his early adulthood, James suffered from a variety of physical ailments, including those of the eyes, back, stomach, and skin. He was also subject to a variety of psychological symptoms which were diagnosed at the time as neurasthenia, and which included periods of depression during which he contemplated suicide.

James switched to medical studies at Harvard Medical School in 1864. He took a break in the spring of 1865 to join Harvard's Louis Agassiz on a scientific expedition up the Amazon River, but aborted his trip after eight months, having suffered bouts of severe seasickness and a mild case of smallpox. His studies were interrupted once again due to illness in April 1867. He traveled to Germany in search of a cure and remained until November 1868. (During this period he began to publish, with reviews appearing in literary periodicals like the *North American Review*.) He finally earned his M.D. degree in June 1869, but never practiced medicine. What he called his "soul-sickness" would only be resolved in 1872, after an extended period of philosophical searching. James' time in Germany proved intellectually fertile, helping him find that his true interests lay not in medicine but in philosophy and psychology. Later, in 1902 he would write:

"I originally studied medicine in order to be a physiologist, but I drifted into psychology and philosophy from a sort of fatality. I never had any philosophic instruction, the first lecture on psychology I ever heard being the first I ever gave."

James spent his entire academic career at Harvard. He was appointed instructor in physiology for the spring 1873 term, instructor in anatomy and physiology in 1873, assistant professor of psychology in 1876, assistant professor of philosophy in 1881, full professor in 1885, endowed chair in psychology in 1889, return to philosophy in 1897, and emeritus professor of philosophy in 1907. He died in 1910.

William James is considered to be one of the “Fathers of Psychology.” In his thousand-plus page treatise, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), James proposed early statements of his main philosophical ideas in extraordinarily rich chapters on “The Stream of Thought,” “The Consciousness of Self,” “Emotion,” “Will,” and many other topics. Many of his psychological insights are derived from his own introspection:

The rhythm of a lost word may be there without a sound to clothe it.... Everyone must know the tantalizing effect of the blank rhythm of some forgotten verse, restlessly dancing in one’s mind, striving to be filled out with words (PP 244).

Our father and mother, our wife and babes, are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When they die, a part of our very selves is gone. If they do anything wrong, it is our shame. If they are insulted, our anger flashes forth as readily as if we stood in their place. (PP 280).

There is an excitement during the crying fit which is not without a certain pungent pleasure of its own; but it would take a genius for felicity to discover any dash of redeeming quality in the feeling of dry and shrunken sorrow (PP, p. 1061).

“Will you or won’t you have it so?” is the most probing question we are ever asked; we are asked it every hour of the day, and about the largest as well as the smallest, the most theoretical as well as the most practical, things. We answer by consents or non-consents and not by words. What wonder that these dumb responses should seem our deepest organs of communication with the nature of things! (PP, p. 1182).

Radical Empiricism

James defined true beliefs as those that prove useful to the believer. Truth, he said, is that which works in the way of belief. “True ideas lead us into useful verbal and conceptual quarters as well as directly up to useful sensible termini. They lead to consistency, stability and flowing human [communication]” but “all true processes must lead to the face of directly verifying sensible experiences somewhere,” he wrote.

James’s assertion that the value of a truth depends upon its use to the individual who holds it is known as **pragmatism**. Additional tenets of James’s pragmatism include the view that the world is a mosaic of diverse experiences that can only be properly understood through an application of “radical empiricism.” Radical empiricism, distinct from everyday scientific empiricism, presumes that nature and experience can never be frozen for absolutely objective analysis, that, at the very least, the mind of the observer will affect the outcome of any empirical approach to truth since, empirically, the mind and nature are inseparable. James’s emphasis on diversity as the default human condition — over and against duality, especially Hegelian dialectical duality — has maintained a strong influence in American culture, especially among liberals, and his radical empiricism lies in the background of contemporary relativism. James’s description of the mind-world connection, which he described in terms of a “stream of consciousness,” had a direct and significant impact on avant-garde and modernist literature and art.

In *What Pragmatism Means*, James writes that the central point of his own doctrine of truth is, in brief, that “truth is one species of good, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct from good, and coordinate with it. Truth is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons.”

In *The Meaning of Truth*, James speaks of truth in relativistic terms: “The critic’s [sc., the critic of pragmatism] trouble...seems to come from his taking the word ‘true’ irrelatively, whereas the pragmatist always means ‘true for him who experiences the workings.’ “

In William James’s lecture of 1897 titled “The Will to Believe,” James defends the right to violate the principle of evidentialism in order to justify hypothesis venturing. Although this doctrine is often seen as a way for William James to justify religious beliefs, his philosophy of pragmatism allows him to use the results of his hypothetical venturing as evidence to support the hypothesis’ truth. Therefore, this doctrine allows one to assume belief in God and prove its existence by what the belief brings to one’s life.

Edward Bradford Titchener, D.Sc., Ph.D., LL.D., Litt.D. (January 11, 1867 – August 3, 1927) was an early and influential professor of psychology, founding a psychology laboratory in the United States at Cornell University.

Titchener was an Englishman, who was educated in Europe. He did his graduate studies with Wilhelm Wundt, who along with William James is considered one of the “Fathers of Psychology.” Titchener rejected his teacher’s *völkerpsychologie* and put his own spin on Wundt’s psychology of consciousness after he emigrated to the United States.

Titchener had been deeply influenced by positivist optimism as to the scope of science, and he hoped to study even the “higher” thought processes through experimentation). Thus he attempted to push the method of controlled laboratory introspection far beyond the bounds that Wundt had so carefully set for it. Although he certainly knew why Wundt dismissed introspection as a method for studying these processes, he believed its pitfalls could be avoided if the introspectors were suitably trained. Thus, an important part of the education of a psychologist in Titchener’s laboratory was a rigorous training in how to introspect reliably.

Titchener appears to have been both a particularly vivid imager, and a firm believer in imagery’s cognitive importance. He had studied British Empiricist philosophy while an undergraduate at Oxford, and was well aware of Berkeley’s argument that “general ideas” (i.e. mental images that, in-and-of-themselves, represent kinds or categories of things, rather than particulars) are inconceivable. Many philosophers today take Berkeley’s argument as a knock-down refutation of the traditional theory that images (ideas) are the primary vehicles of thought and that they ground linguistic meaning. If mental images can only, intrinsically represent particulars, as Berkeley held, then they are surely inadequate for grounding the meanings of the general, categorical terms that are fundamental to thought and language. Titchener, however, flatly rejected Berkeley’s claim, not because he found a flaw in his logic, but on introspective grounds. Commenting on Berkeley’s remark about the impossibility of having an idea (image) of a general triangle, Titchener replies:

But I can quite well get ... the triangle that is no triangle at all and all triangles at one and the same time. It is a flashy thing, come and gone from moment to moment: it hints two or three red angles, with the red lines deepening into black, seen on a dark green ground. It is not there long enough to say whether the angles join to form the complete figure, or even whether all three of the necessary angles are given. Nevertheless, it means triangle; it is Locke’s general idea of a triangle; (Titchener, 1909).

Titchener attempted to classify the structures of the mind, not unlike the way a chemist breaks down chemicals into their component parts. Thus Titchener conceived of atoms, such as hydrogen and oxygen as structures of a chemical compound, and sensations and thoughts as structures of the mind. This approach became known as **structuralism**. Together, Saussure’s linguistic theories and Titchener’s psychology, form the basis of philosophical structuralism

The world of psychology contains looks and tones and feelings; it is the world of dark and light, of noise and silence, of rough and smooth; its space is sometimes large and sometimes small, as everyone knows who in adult life has gone back to his childhood’s home; its time is sometimes short and sometimes long, it has no invariables. It contains all the thoughts, emotions, memories, imaginations, volitions that you naturally ascribe to mind.



Process:

Singularity...

We are about to participate in a process. The process is a way to bring something that has not been experienced or experienced fully — or even something impossible to experience — into ordinary experience. There is nothing that you are supposed to get from it. There is no way that it is supposed to look. You get to experience what you experience and you get whatever you get.

Please position yourself comfortably, and close your eyes, if you would like to. Bring your awareness to your breathing and the words you are hearing. Allow your attention to your own thoughts to fade into the background. Create a rhythmic method for your breathing, inhaling through the nose, pausing after you inhale to allow the air to fully enliven your cells, then exhaling completely and pausing for a moment to consider the precious gift of air before receiving it gratefully, inhaling and smiling with joy.

As you breathe and smile, create for yourself the experience of standing outside in a meadow on a warm and sunny day, looking up at a few puffy, white clouds as they move lazily across the expanse of cerulean blue sky. There is a gentle breeze that reminds you to breathe deeply, and you smile at the beauty and peace of sky and clouds and meadow. Create for yourself the experience of seeing a small circular hole in the sky that you had never noticed before. It is extremely dark inside of this hole, and although it seems like you should be able to see stars in the black area, you see nothing but a hole. Create yourself noticing that the blue of the sky and the part of the Sun closest to the hole appear to be streaming into the hole. Feeling very safe and warm, without any anxiety or fear, you recognize that this is a Black Hole — a gravitational field so strong that nothing can escape from it.

As the clouds are pulled into the hole, you begin to notice that the gravitational force is pulling you toward it, and you do not fear it or resist it. Create for yourself the experience of being stretched as the hole overwhelms the gravity of the Earth on which you stand. You stretch upward, becoming lighter and taller and thinner than you ever thought you could be. As you stretch, you notice that all the tension in your muscles and joints has been relieved and you feel powerful and enlivened. Lifting your arms toward the hole, create the experience of diving up into it.

Breathing and smiling, remaining fully conscious and alert, feeling very safe and warm and light, create the experience of passing through your event horizon and being compressed into a singularity at the center of the Black Hole. You have become One with the Black Hole. You are conscious of your holeness and your wholeness, your Nothingness and your powerful everythingness, you understand that you overstand the Universe. You are the powerful gravitational center of the entire Universe.

Remembering to breathe and smile, you also remember that you are the Nothing from which all things come. You begin to recreate yourself and your World, exactly as it is: Perfect, Whole, Lacking no-thing, abundant and magnificent. You are Yin as well as Yang, this as well as that, diverse and still the same, complex and beautifully simple. All that there is and ever shall be comes radiating from your creativity. The Universe is alive with You. There are great galaxies of You. Great nebulae of You. Blue and yellow and red stars of You. Whole Worlds of You.

On one particular World of you, there is a meadow, and one perfect expression of you is standing in the meadow on a warm and sunny day, looking up at a few puffy, white clouds as they move lazily across the expanse of cerulean blue sky. As you breathe and smile, reflect on Being the perfect expression of a perfect Universe, just as you are and just as it is. The release of tension and pain from your muscles and joints, which you got from your long stretch will be a reminder of your experience.

When you are ready to do so, please open your eyes.

Message:

**Chaos and Order
Sunday, January 11, 2009**

Genesis, Chapter 1

- 1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
- 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

Insert Notes...

The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe. Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?

— Stephen Hawking

Life cannot wait until the sciences may have explained the universe scientifically. We cannot put off living until we are ready. The most salient characteristic of life is its coerciveness: it is always urgent, “here and now” without any possible postponement. Life is fired at us point blank.

— José Ortega y Gasset

Acknowledgement: These inquiries are keeping Yin and Yang in balance, allowing us to live life completely, while retaining the awe and wonder before an unknowable and chaotic infinity. Thank you for Being in these inquiries. Otherwise, we would be mere robots, heading rapidly toward obsolescence.

Dialogue on Chaos and Order

Completion

Next week:

Next Sunday is the 18th of January, the Sunday that precedes the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday on Monday the 19th, as well as the Inauguration of our 44th President, Barack Obama on the 20th. A lot of people will be praying on that day. Here at the Church of Creation, we don't pray; we CREATE. We will be inquiring into our dreams and visions, transforming complaints to promises, resurrecting ideals into living possibilities and constituting ourselves as signifiers for a future of our own creation. The message and theme of next Sunday's service is **What is Your Dream?**. Please join us next Sunday as we explore the question of Being a visionary.