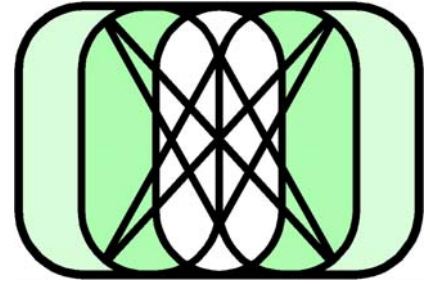


Church of Creation

Order of Service

Sunday, January 18, 2009 8:00 AM



Welcome:

You are always already chosen

Hymn: Blah-Blah

Announcements and sharing

This week in Semiotics: **Two, Two, Two Signs in One**

Lost In Space...

Birthday acknowledgment:

Montesquieu (January 18, 1689 – February 10, 1755, aged 66)

Gilles Deleuze (January 18, 1925 – November 4 1995, aged 70)

Process:

Be Your Word...

Message:

What Is Your Dream?

Dialogue on What Is Your Dream?

Next week: January 25

The Illusion of Pragmatism

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.

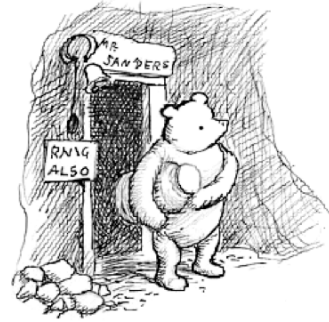
Inquiring into the unknowable produces distinctions that make a difference in one’s experience of life. We promise that an open inquiry will give you power over the matter in question.

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:

Happy Winnie-the-Pooh Day!

Today is the 18th of January, which is celebrated as Winnie-the-Pooh Day. The holiday commemorates the birthday of A. A. Milne, author and creator of the character. Alan Alexander Milne was born on this day in 1882. Pooh first appeared in 1926, illustrated by E. H. Shepard.



If You Gotta Ditch, Ditch It Like Sully...

No matter how hard we try to ignore it, we've all heard the flight attendant: "In the unlikely event of a water landing..." More often than not, 'water landing' is a euphemism for transforming an aircraft into a submarine. On Thursday, for the first time in 50 years of commercial jet flight, the pilots of US Airways Flight 1549 successfully executed one of the most technically challenging maneuvers: landing a jetliner on water without fatalities. We acknowledge the pilot of the A320 Airbus, Chesley B. Sullenberger III, known by his friends as 'Sully,' for his mastery. Although you may not have heard his name before, the co-pilot was Jeffrey Skiles. We acknowledge him also.

Gaza Update

The Israeli Knesset voted in favor of a unilateral cease-fire, characterized by Ehud Ohlmert as "fragile and tentative." Israel had waged its 'eye for an eyelash' campaign against the Palestinian people of Gaza for four weeks. As of Saturday, about 1200 Human Beings had died in the attacks. Three of the dead were Israeli civilians. Eleven were IDF soldiers, eight of whom were killed by Israeli 'friendly' fire.

Norwegian doctor Mads Gilbert, one of two foreign doctors working at Gaza's biggest hospital, *al-Shifa*, comments:

"I've seen one military person among the hundreds that we have seen and treated. So anyone who tries to portray this as sort of a clean war against another army are lying. This is an all-out war against the civilian Palestinian population in Gaza and we can prove that with the numbers."

If it talks like a duck...

Thursday night, George Bush delivered his farewell address to the nation. He stumbled to the podium and gave his speech, which was at times self-aggrandizing, at times self-pitying and self-delusional through and through. In part he said, "While our nation is safer than it was seven years ago, the gravest threat to our people remains another terrorist attack. Our enemies are patient and determined to strike again. America did nothing to seek or deserve this conflict. But we have been given solemn responsibilities, and we must meet them. We must resist complacency. We must keep our resolve. And we must never let down our guard.

"At the same time, we must continue to engage the world with confidence and clear purpose. In the face of threats from abroad, it can be tempting to seek comfort by turning inward. But we must reject isolationism and its companion, protectionism. Retreating behind our borders would only invite danger. In the 21st century, security and prosperity at home depend on the expansion of liberty abroad. If America does not lead the cause of freedom, that cause will not be led.

"As we address these challenges - and others we cannot foresee tonight - America must maintain our moral clarity. I have often spoken to you about good and evil. This has made some uncomfortable. But good and evil are present in this world, and between the two there can be no compromise. Murdering the innocent to advance an ideology is wrong every time, everywhere."

Apparently, he was unaware of the irony of this statement.

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.

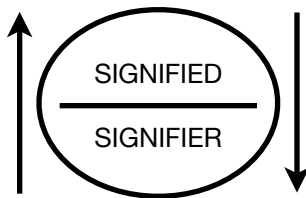
This week in Semiotics: Two, Two, Two Signs in One

The genus trinomial name for the kind of critter that you and I and all of humanity are, is *Homo sapiens sapiens*. So nice, they named it twice. The latin word 'sapiens' is an interesting choice to describe our subspecies, as it is defined as: rational; sane, of sound mind; wise, judicious, understanding; discreet; philosophical and wise. It may be overly optimistic to classify all of us this way. Perhaps it would have been fitting to classify ourselves as *Homo significans*, as we all express our humanity by signifying our World in language. While we seek meaning and understanding everywhere, very few of us have considered how we create our World in language.

This week, we are looking further into the model of the sign, as Ferdinand de Saussure presented it just over a hundred years ago. Saussure offered a 'dyadic' or two-part model of the sign. He defined a sign as being composed of:

- a 'signifier' (signifiant) - the form which the sign takes; and
- the 'signified' (signifié) - the concept it represents.

The sign is the whole that results from the association of the signifier with the signified. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as 'signification', and



this is represented in the Saussurean diagram by the arrows: the signified gives meaning to the signifier, and the signifier gives voice to the signified concept. The horizontal line marking the two elements of the sign is referred to as 'the bar'.

If we take a linguistic example, the word 'Open' (when it is invested with meaning by someone who encounters it in a store window) is a sign consisting of:

- a signifier: the word open;
- a signified concept: that the shop is open for business.

A sign must have both a signifier and a signified. You cannot have a totally meaningless signifier or a completely formless signified. A sign is a recognizable combination of a signifier with a particular signified. The same signifier (the word 'open') could stand for a different signified (and thus be a different sign) if it were on a push-button inside an elevator ('push to open door'). Similarly, many signifiers could stand for the concept 'open' (for instance, on top of a shipping box, for 'open this end') — again, with each unique pairing constituting a different sign. The appropriate concept is available if we have a mental register for it.

Currently, while the basic 'Saussurean' model is commonly adopted, it tends to be a more materialistic model than Saussure intended. The signifier is now commonly interpreted as the material (or physical) form of the sign — it is something which can be seen, heard, touched, smelt or tasted. For Saussure, both the signifier and the signified were purely 'psychological.' Both were form rather than substance:

A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer's psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a 'material' element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other element associated with it in a linguistic sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept.

Saussure was focusing on the linguistic sign (such as a word) and he 'phonocentrically' privileged the spoken word, referring specifically to the *image acoustique* ('sound-image' or 'sound pattern'), seeing writing as a separate, secondary, dependent but comparable sign system. We will return later to the issue of the post-Saussurean 'rematerialization' of the sign.

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...

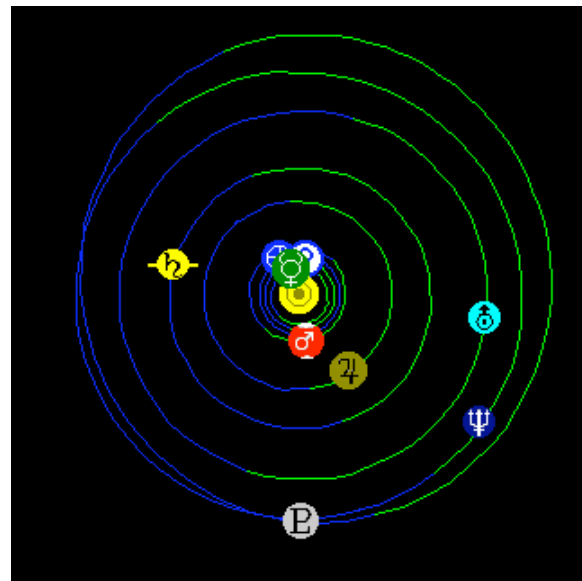


Lost In Space...

This week, **January 18th through January 24th**, we begin with Mercury retrograde reconnecting with Jupiter in Aquarius. According to astrology, this brings forward the opportunities to assess new directions and the priority we place on humanity. Many events spring into action from this conjunction and fill in the week's events. Monday night, the Sun moves into Aquarius to shine light onto the subject, spotlighting these very issues. Tuesday, the Sun connects with Mercury retrograde to

prompt us to make important decisions from the humanitarian perspective. This is considered a favorable aspect for the inauguration of Barack Obama.

In ancient Greece, Aquarius is identified with a man named Deucalion and his wife, Pyrrha. According to the myth, sometime before 1500 BCE, Aquarius caused a great flood to wash over Earth. Deucalion's father advised his son and daughter-in-law to build a great boat and stock it with animals and provisions. They did and the two floated in the world-sea for nine days and nine nights, eventually running aground on Mount Parnassus. What were they to do then? They appealed to an oracle spirit and were told to "... throw over your shoulders the bones of your mother." Deucalion guessed, "The bones of our mother, Mother Earth, must be stones." So as the two walked along they picked up stones and kept tossing them over their shoulders. After a while, they looked behind them and there were people. The stones that Deucalion had thrown had become men



and those thrown by Pyrrha had become women. Therefore, Aquarius became known as the taker of life and the giver of life. This myth of a world flood and then a rebirth of life on Earth is a common one and can be found in many cultures.



In Egyptian mythology, Aquarius pours water into the Nile River at the season when the Nile normally overflows its banks; this brings the much-needed water to the farmlands bordering that great river. This may be how Aquarius became associated with the provision of humanitarian needs.

Birthday Acknowledgement: January 18

Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu (January 18, 1689 – February 10, 1755, aged 66) was a French social commentator and political thinker who lived during the **Era of the Enlightenment**. He is famous for his articulation of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, characterized by the theory of **separation of powers**, which was highly influential in the development of modern government, in general, and the Constitution of the United States, in particular.

Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* (Esprit de lois, 1748) presented groundbreaking political thought. His foundational precepts were the *uniformity* of human nature and the *diversity* produced by environment and culture. Rather than attributing natural laws to divine intervention, he claimed that they arise from our own consistent nature.

“

There are certain laws of nature that apply to all men, since they are derived from the Constitution of our Being.”

He postulated a ‘spirit’ behind each form of government that was considered at that time. Behind monarchies was **honor** — the sense of responsibility in conduct and bearing that characterized a functioning nobility. Behind republics, the spirit was **virtue** — a sense of civic consciousness, belonging, generosity and participation. The spirit behind despotism was fear — the mutual tension between the people's fear of the despot and the despot's fear of the people. Whenever the spirit supporting these governments began to weaken, the government itself would weaken and fail.

The founding fathers of the American experiment drew heavily on Montesquieu's work. For the most part, all they new of French, Italian and German, and even English Enlightenment thought was what Montesquieu included in his works. Thus, the theories of John Locke (of which they had some knowledge), Rousseau, Cesare Beccaria, Emmanuel Kant, and others, influenced the American constitution, but primarily, they came through Montesquieu.

Montesquieu was a great writer and he invented the form of the epistolary novel, with his bestseller, *The Persian Letters* (1721).

“

The king is a great magician. He exerts authority even over the minds of his subjects; he makes them think what he wants. If there are only a million crowns in the exchequer, and he needs two million, all he needs to do is persuade them that one crown is worth two, and they believe it.” Letter 24, Ricca to Ibben at Smyrna

Gilles Deleuze (January 18, 1925 – November 4 1995, aged 70) was a French philosopher of the late 20th century. From the early 1960s until his death, Deleuze wrote many influential works on philosophy, literature, film, and fine art.

One of the most influential philosophers of the second half of the Twentieth Century.

Most remembered for his collaborative works with psychoanalyst, Felix Guattari. The collaboration between philosopher and non-philosopher brought Deleuze into a new stage: from thinking in the multiple to producing multiplicity of thought. Consequently, his writing is highly allusive, using several metaphors to expand on a point. This is sometimes difficult, as he wrote:

Some concepts must be indicated by an extraordinary and sometimes even barbarous or shocking word, whereas others make do with an ordinary, everyday word that is filled with harmonics so distant that it risks being imperceptible to a non-philosophical ear. Some concepts call for archaisms, and others for neologisms, shot through with almost crazy etymological exercises. (1987)

Deleuze's work maintains a tripartite ontological scheme. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (*Milles plateaux*, 1980) Deleuze and Guattari use geological terms of reference. They call the virtual “the Earth,” the intensive is called “consistency,” and the actual is called “the system of the strata.” As the latter term indicates, one of the foci of their investigations is the tendency of some systems to head toward congealment or stratification. More precisely put, any concrete system is composed of intensive processes tending toward the (virtual) plane of consistency and/or toward (actual) stratification. They also lay out the theory of “territories” or sets of environmentally embedded triggers for organizing processes, and the associated processes of deterritorialization (looking beyond assumed meaning) and reterritorialization (what I would call recontextualization, creating newly).

After creating these concepts, Deleuze settles into a form of pragmatism that seems almost the antithesis of the foundation they laid. Perhaps sensing this, in their last work, *What is Philosophy?* — published between Guattari’s death in 1992 and Deleuze’s death in 1995 — they call for philosophers to create a future beyond them, one they would not see or even imagine.

Process:

Being Your Word...

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 being outside on a dark and moonless night. You are warm and comfortable, lying down on a little hill among the grasses and wildflowers. Look up into the dark, night sky, and breathing and smiling, contemplate the darkness and stillness. Without thinking too much about it, allow a simple word that names a thing, a noun like 'ball' or 'apple,' to come to you out of the darkness. As you breathe and smile, feeling very safe and warm, create for yourself the experience of being the meaning of the word. Take the shape and form and substance of whatever the word means. Experience yourself as the meaning of your word.... Now, consider transforming your word into the verb form, the action associated with your word. If there is no verb form that you can think of, make one up. For instance if your word is 'apple,' consider that apple trees apple by growing fruit. An apple tree in late Summer is busy apple-ing. Feeling very secure and confident, be the action your word suggests....

As you are being the action of your word in the World, allow another word to come to you. In full appreciation and completion of the experience of being the first word in its meaning and action, allow yourself to be the new word. Create a full experience of being this word. Create yourself as the meaning, form and substance of the word that chose you. Breathing and smiling and feeling very safe and warm, be the word in the fullness of its meaning to you.... Now, allow yourself to experience an alternative meaning of the word. For instance if your word was ball, a spherical object, you could be a ball as a gala formal dance. If you are unaware of an alternative meaning of your word, invent one for yourself, and be that. Experience the fullness of being your word....

Appreciating and completing your experience of being this word, allow yourself to now be the word Peace, in all its possibility. Constitute yourself as the meaning and form and substance of Peace: the quiet and stillness, tranquility, calm, serenity, freedom from war and conflict, the cessation of any violence, a friendly greeting, a kiss. Create the complete experience of being the meaning and possibility and reality of Peace.

As you breathe and smile, in full appreciation and completion of being the fulfillment of Peace, please create for yourself the experience of being the meaning and form of vitality. Consider all of the aspects of vitality: being active and energetic, being the possibility and power giving life and energy to all living things, being present in all living things, including yourself. Allow yourself to experience yourself as vital to all of life, essential to the continuance of life in your World. Free of pain or physical limitation, free of discomfort, tension or constraint.

As you complete your process of being your word in the World, please hold the experience of being any word you choose, preserve the Peace that you are and retain your vitality for the week you are living into. Complete your experience and begin to come back to here and now as you are: perfect, complete in yourself and whole.

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

Message:

**What Is Your Dream?
Sunday, January 18, 2009**

Today, we look forward to tomorrow's celebration of the day honoring Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as Tuesday's inauguration of the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama. These two events, and the two people at the center of them, are related in various ways, to the Dreams and Visions that have shaped our present condition and create our future.

How is it that we are celebrating Martin Luther King Day, and there is no Malcolm X Day or Gloria Richardson Day? Malcolm and Gloria had a complaint. It was a legitimate complaint, shared by most of their peers. The complaint, however legitimate or justifiable never inspires. At best, it can motivate; it does not inspire. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a vision. In an article titled "The American Dream" (The Negro History Bulletin 31. May 1968. p 10-15.) he wrote:

I know sometimes we get discouraged and sometimes disappointed with the slow pace of things. At times we begin to talk about racial separation instead of racial integration, feeling that there is no other way out. My only answer is that the problem will never be solved by substituting one tyranny for another. Black supremacy is as dangerous as white supremacy, and God is not interested merely in the freedom of black men and brown men and yellow men. God is interested in the freedom of the whole human race and the creation of a society where all men can live together as brothers, where every man will respect the dignity and the worth of human personality.

Transforming complaints to promises

Resurrecting ideals into living possibilities

— We promise power over the complaint when you promise

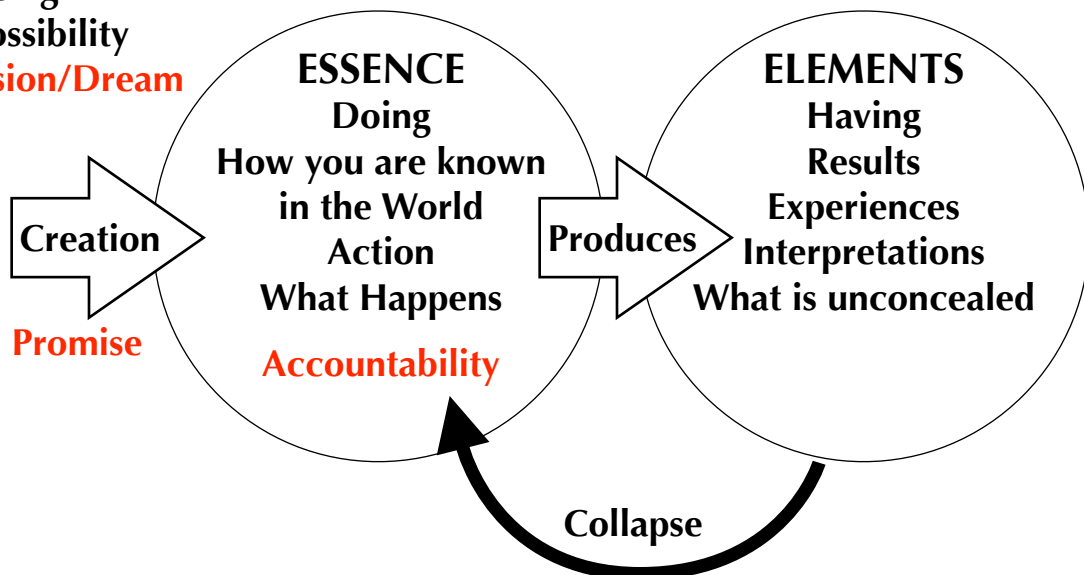
Constituting ourselves as signifiers for a future of our own creation

Standing for the possibilities you create

EXISTENCE

- Being
- Possibility
- **Vision/Dream**

Aspects / Domains:



Dialogue on What Is Your Dream?

Completion

Next week:

Next Sunday is the 25th of January, which is Burns Night, when Burns Dinners are held. Burns Dinners are not about eating spicy, hot chili — they are about celebrating the life and work of poet Robert Burns. So, boil your Haggis and mash your neeps and tatties! Or not. Either way, we will return next Sunday at 8 AM with the message and theme of **The Illusion of Pragmatism**. Pragmatism is one of the pervasive and predominating philosophies in our culture. The word comes from the Greek word '*pragma*' meaning 'work.' Please join us on Sunday as we consider *what works*.