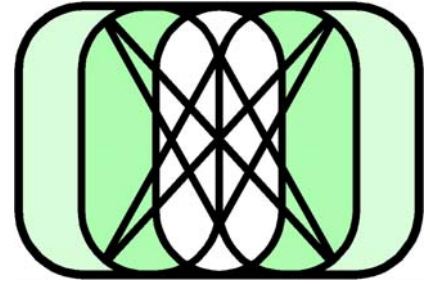


Church of Creation

Order of Service

Sunday, January 25, 2009 8:00 AM



Welcome:

You are always already chosen

Hymn: Blah-Blah

Announcements and sharing

This week in Semiotics: **It's a Sign of the Times...**

Lost In Space...

Birthday acknowledgment:

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (January 25, 1743 - March 10, 1819)
German Philosopher

W. Somerset Maugham (January 25, 1874 - December 16, 1965)
British Author and Playwright

Process:

No-thing-ness...

Message:

The Illusion of Pragmatism

Dialogue on The Illusion of Pragmatism

Next week: February 1

Groundhog Day: This Again?

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:

Four times in American history, poetry has been read at presidential swearing in ceremonies. Robert Frost read his poetry for John F. Kennedy in 1961. Bill Clinton asked Maya Angelou to read her work for his 1993 inauguration. In 1997 Clinton asked an Arkansas poet, Miller Williams, to read for the inauguration. Barack Obama invited Dr. Elizabeth Alexander to write and read a poem especially for the occasion of his inauguration. She is a professor of English language/literature, African-American literature and gender studies at Yale and was an academic fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard, for the 2007-'08 academic year.

Praise song for the day. by Elizabeth Alexander

Each day we go about our business, walking past each other,
catching each others' eyes or not, about to speak or speaking.
All about us is noise. All about us is noise and bramble,
thorn and din, each one of our ancestors on our tongues.
Someone is stitching up a hem, darning a hole in a uniform,
patching a tire, repairing the things in need of repair.

Someone is trying to make music somewhere
with a pair of wooden spoons on an oil drum
with cello, boom box, harmonica, voice.

A woman and her son wait for the bus.

A farmer considers the changing sky;
A teacher says, "Take out your pencils. Begin."

We encounter each other in words, words spiny or smooth,
whispered or declaimed; words to consider, reconsider.

We cross dirt roads and highways that mark the will of someone
and then others who said, "I need to see what's on the other side;
I know there's something better down the road."

We need to find a place where we are safe;
We walk into that which we cannot yet see.

Say it plain, that many have died for this day.
Sing the names of the dead who brought us here,
who laid the train tracks, raised the bridges,
picked the cotton and the lettuce,
built brick by brick the glittering edifices
they would then keep clean and work inside of.

Praise song for struggle; praise song for the day.
Praise song for every hand-lettered sign; The figuring it out at kitchen tables.

Some live by "Love thy neighbor as thy self."

Others by first do no harm, or take no more than you need.

What if the mightiest word is love, love beyond marital, filial, national.
Love that casts a widening pool of light.
Love with no need to preempt grievance.

In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air,
anything can be made, any sentence begun.

On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp --
praise song for walking forward in that light.

This is an occasional poem — translation of the French *vers d'occasion* (literally, verse of the moment or occasion) — a poem written to commemorate a specific occasion. A Praise Song, or Song of Praise, is a hymn — perhaps like the *blah-blah* hymn.

Inaugural Address by Barack Obama

CROWD: Obama! Obama! Obama! Obama!

My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.

I thank President Bush for his service to our nation... (APPLAUSE)

... as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forebears, and true to our founding documents.

So it has been. So it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age.

Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly, our schools fail too many, and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable, but no less profound, is a sapping of confidence across our land; a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights.

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real, they are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this America: They will be met. (APPLAUSE)

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas that for far too long have strangled our politics.

We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness. (APPLAUSE)

In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted, for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things -- some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor -- who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth. For us, they fought and died in places Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sanh.

Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or

last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions -- that time has surely passed.

Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America. (APPLAUSE)

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of our economy calls for action: bold and swift. And we will act not only to create new jobs but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality...

(APPLAUSE) ... and lower its costs.

We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age.

All this we can do. All this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short, for they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose and necessity to courage. What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long, no longer apply.

The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works, whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified.

Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account, to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day, because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched.

But this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control. The nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous.

The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity; on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart -- not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good. (APPLAUSE)

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our founding fathers faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations.

Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expediencies' sake.

And so, to all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born: know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and we are ready to lead once more. (APPLAUSE)

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use. Our security emanates from the justness of our cause; the force of our example; the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy, guided by these principles once more, we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort, even greater cooperation and

understanding between nations. We'll begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan.

With old friends and former foes, we'll work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming planet. **We will not apologize for our way of life nor will we waver in its defense.**

And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that, "Our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken. You cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you." (APPLAUSE)

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness.

We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth.

And because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy.

To those... (APPLAUSE) **To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist. (APPLAUSE)**

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

As we consider the road that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. **We honor them not only because they are guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service: a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves. And yet, at this moment, a moment that will define a generation, it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all.**

For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break; the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new, the instruments with which we meet them may be new, but those values upon which our success depends, honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism -- these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.

What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility -- a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship.

This is the source of our confidence: the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny.

This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed, why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall. And why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath. (APPLAUSE)

So let us mark this day in remembrance of who we are and how far we have traveled.

In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At a moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words be read to the people:

"Let it be told to the future world that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet it."

America, in the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words; with hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come; let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you. (APPLAUSE)

And God bless the United States of America.

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: It's a Sign of the Times...

We are going to apply semiotic analysis to some of the signifiers in Barack Obama's Inaugural Address.

hope (3)

openness to what is possible

willing to hope / willingness (used by Obama twice)

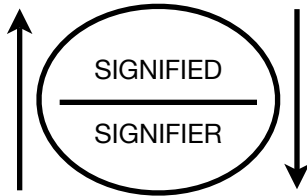
crisis (4)

opposite of hope? not a disaster; objective

something to be addressed; a decision point

from a crisis, hope may arise.

network of violence and hatred



new age (2)

reaffirming the greatness of our nation

whether it works

remaking America

expediencies' sake

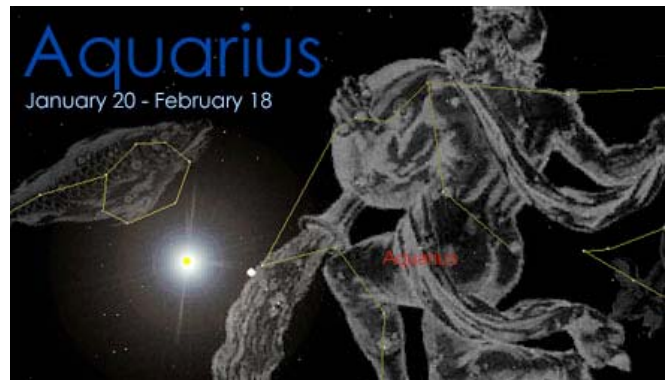
specter of a warming planet

nonbelievers (1)

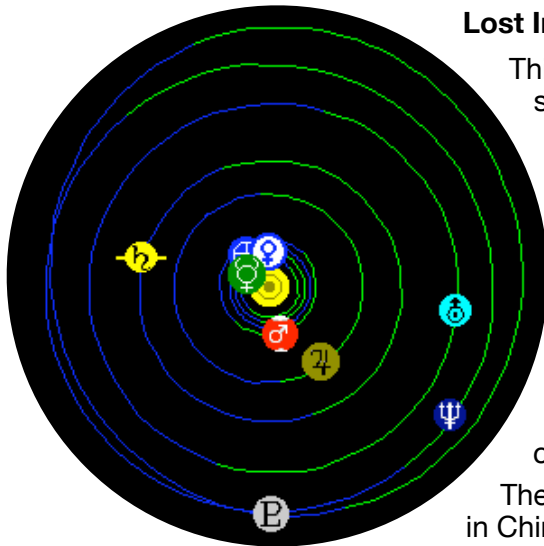
God (5)

Another name you call yourself?

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 25th through January 31st**, we begin with a strong, dynamic new energy. The New Moon becomes empowered by the Solar Eclipse energy late on Sunday/early Monday (1:56 AM CST). This sets a new pace as many of the issues that were carried over from 2008 are now propelling us into 2009. With the celebration of the Chinese New Year - Year of the Earth Ox - our new environment begins to unfold our new life. This New Moon spotlights the new arena that is unfolding. Mercury retrograde also connects with action-oriented Mars giving us a push into our new directions. This powerful week opens major doors within our connections to humanity that give us the opportunity to expand beyond our comfort zone with purpose, passion and integrity.

The Chinese New begins the Year of the Ox. What the placemats in Chinese restaurants don't tell you is that the 12 year cycle occurs within a 60 year cycle when the *Wu Xing* (or five elements) are applied.

Wood controls Earth;
Earth controls Water;
Water controls Fire;
Fire controls Metal;
Metal controls Wood.

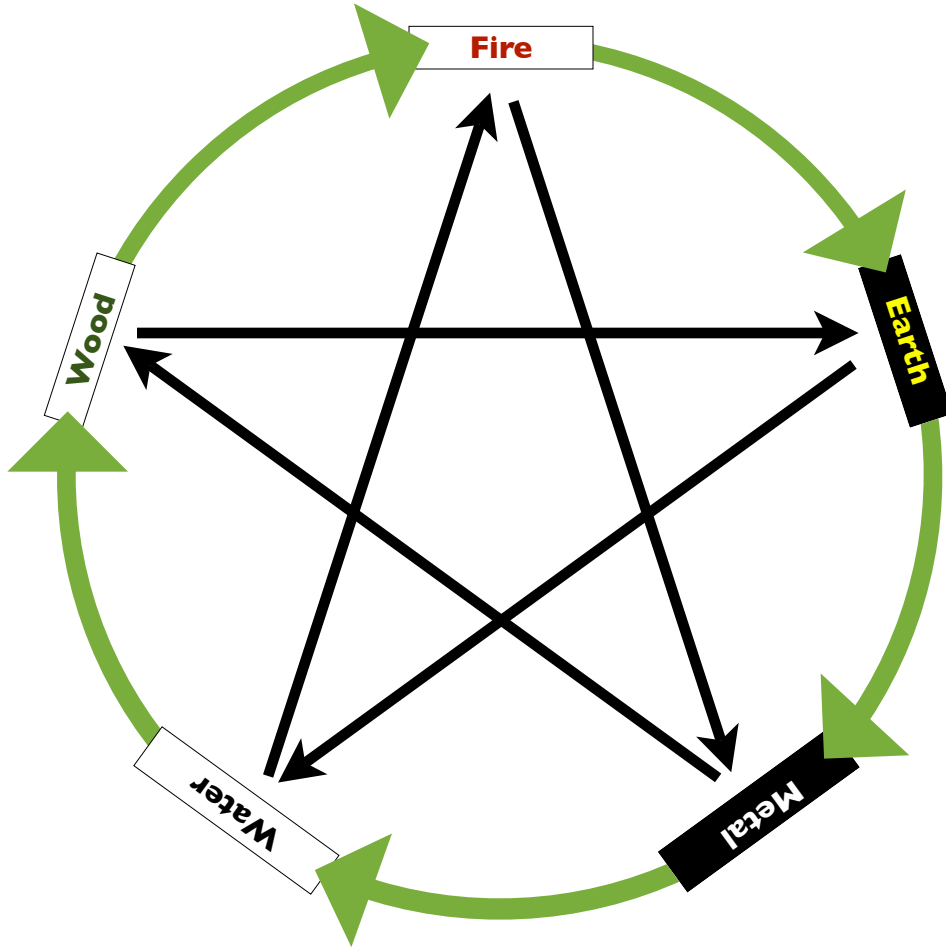
Wood generates Fire;
Fire generates Earth (ash);
Earth generates Metal;
Metal generates Water;
Water generates Wood.

Feb 20 1985 - Feb 8 1986
Feb 7 1997 - Jan 28 1998
Jan 26 2009 - Feb 14 2010
Feb 15 1961 - Feb 4 1962
Feb 3 1973 - Jan 22 1974

Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Planet	Jupiter	Mars	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
Mental Quality	Sensitivity	Creativity	Clarity	Intuition	Spontaneity
Negative Emotion	anger, frustration	over-excitation	worry, anxiety	grief, sadness	fear, lack of will
Positive Emotion	Patience	Joy	Empathy, Love	Courage	Calmness
Zang (yin organs)	liver	heart/pericardium	spleen/pancreas	lung	kidney
Fu (yang organs)	gall bladder	small intestine/San Jiao	stomach	large intestine	urinary bladder
Sensory organ	eye	tongue	Mouth	nose	ears
Body Part	Tendons	Pulse	Muscle	Skin	Bones
Body Fluid	Tears	Sweat	Saliva	Mucus	Urine
Finger	index finger	middle finger	thumb	ring finger	little finger
Sense	sight	speech	taste	smell	hearing
Taste	sour	bitter	sweet	pungent	salty
Smell	Rancid	Scorched	Fragrant	Putrid	Rotten
Life	birth	youth	adulthood	old age	death

Wu Xing The Five Elements of the Chinese Cosmology

The generating cycle of the elements is shown in green arrows;
The controlling cycle is shown in black arrows.



Birthday Acknowledgement: January 25

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (January 25, 1743 - March 10, 1819. aged 76)

Polemicist, socialite, and literary figure, Jacobi was an outspoken critic, first of the rationalism of German late Enlightenment philosophy, then of Kant's Transcendental Idealism, and finally of Romantic Idealism. In all cases, his opposition to the philosophers was based on his belief that their passion for explanation unwittingly led them to confuse conditions of conceptualization with conditions of existence, thereby denying all room for individual freedom or for a personal God. Jacobi made this point, in defense of individualism and personalistic values, in a number of public controversies. In doing so, he put expressions and themes into circulation that still resonate today. He was the one who invited Gotthold Lessing, who he thought was walking on his head in the manner of all philosophers, to perform a *salto mortale* (the death leap, head over heels) that would redress his position and thus allow him to move again on the ground of common sense. He was also responsible for forging the concept of 'nihilism' — a condition of which he accused the philosophers — and thereby initiating the discourse associated with it. Jacobi complained that Enlightenment philosophers had subverted the language of the 'I' (ego) by reintroducing it on the basis of abstractions that in fact negated its original value. They had thus replaced authentic selfhood with the mere illusion of it. Consequently, Jacobi was ridiculed for trying to reintroduce into philosophy the antiquated notion of unreasoning belief, was denounced as an enemy of reason, as a pietist, and as a Jesuit in disguise, and was especially attacked for his use of the ambiguous term "belief."

But perhaps the most influential of Jacobi's formulas was the claim that there is **no 'I' without a 'Thou.'** He noted that philosophers are temperamentally inclined to reconstruct reality according to the requirements of explanation, in total disregard of the requirements of existence. They are possessed, as it were, by a logical fanaticism that leads them to mistake the abstractive principles of explanation for principles of existence. Since the individuality of things is the first victim of this confusion, yet individuality is the necessary condition of all existence, it follows that in the world as reconstructed by philosophers there is no room left for truly existing subjects — least of all for agents who can seriously take responsibility for their actions and relate to one another as person to person, an 'I' to a 'Thou.' For him, the two can recognize and respect one another only in the presence of a transcendent and personal God. Because of his defense of the individual and personal responsibility, Jacobi is sometime taken as a proto-existentialist. This view must be balanced by the consideration that Jacobi was a defender of conservative values that he felt were being threatened by the culture of the day; that he never considered himself an irrationalist; on the contrary, that he thought his 'faith' (*glaube*) to be essentially and truly rational; and that he attempted to develop a positive theory of reason. As a literary figure, he criticized the *Sturm und Drang* movement and dramatized in two novels the problem of reconciling individualism with social obligation. An exponent of British economic and political liberalism, Jacobi was an early critic of the French revolution, the destructiveness of which he considered the practical counterpart of the speculative nihilism of the philosophers.

Quotes

- It is never too late with us, so long as we are aware of our faults and bear them *impatiently*.
- To lay aside all prejudices, is to lay aside all principles. He who is destitute of principles is governed by whims.
- What is there in man so worthy of honor and reverence as this: that he is capable of contemplating something higher than his own reason, more sublime than the whole Universe — that Spirit which alone is self-subsistent, from which all truth proceeds, without which there is no truth?

William Somerset Maugham (January 25, 1874 - December 16, 1965, aged 91) was an English playwright, novelist and short story writer.

As a child, Maugham developed a stammer for which he was self-conscious throughout his life. This may be one of the sources of his literary work, as he avoided speaking.

By 1914 Maugham was famous, with 10 plays produced and 10 novels published. Too old to enlist (40) when World War I broke out, Maugham served in France as a member of the British Red Cross's so-called "Literary Ambulance Drivers", a group of some 23 well-known poets, novelists and playwrights including Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Louis Bromfield and E. E. Cummings.

Among his short stories, some of the most memorable are those dealing with the lives of Western, mostly British, colonists in the Far East, and are typically concerned with the emotional toll exacted on the colonists by their isolation. Some of his more outstanding works in this genre include *Rain*, *Footprints In The Jungle* and *The Outstation*. Maugham's elegant and restrained prose allows him to explore excruciating tensions and strong passions without appearing melodramatic.

Maugham's masterpiece is generally agreed to be *Of Human Bondage*, a semi-autobiographical novel that deals with the life of the main character Philip Carey, who like Maugham, was orphaned, and brought up by his pious uncle. Philip's clubfoot causes him endless self-consciousness and embarrassment, echoing Maugham's struggles with his stutter. Maugham's last major novel, *The Razor's Edge*, published in 1944, was ground-breaking. While much of the novel takes place in Europe, its main characters are American, not British. The protagonist is a disillusioned veteran of World War I who abandons his wealthy friends and lifestyle, traveling to India seeking enlightenment. The story's themes of Eastern mysticism and war-weariness struck a chord with readers as World War II waned, and a movie adaptation quickly followed.

In 1984, *The Razor's Edge* was remade, starring Bill Murray. It is much more faithful to the novel than the first adaptation, made in 1946, starring Tyrone Power. The 1984 version combines the brilliant storytelling of Maugham with the subtle wit of Bill Murray, along with breathtaking cinematography. We have a VHS copy in the Church Library, if anyone would like to borrow it.

The epigraph of the novel is, "**The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path to Salvation is hard.**" — *Katha-Upanishad*.

Maugham, like Hermann Hesse, was among the first authors to include Eastern enlightenment themes into his writing. He preceded and perhaps inspired the embrace of Eastern culture by Americans and Europeans, almost a decade before the 'Beat Generation' of the 1950s began to popularize it. Maugham himself visited an ashram in India in 1938.

Quotes

- Excess on occasion is exhilarating. It prevents moderation from acquiring the deadening effect of a habit
- It's a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it.
- There are three rules for writing the novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.
- Tradition is a guide and not a jailer.

A God that can be understood is no God. Who can explain the Infinite in words?

I'm not only my spirit but my body, and who can decide how much I, my individual self, am conditioned by the accident of my body? Would Byron have been Byron but for his club foot, or Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky without his epilepsy?

Nothing in the world is permanent, and we're foolish when we ask anything to last, but surely we're still more foolish not to take delight in it while we have it. If change is of the essence of existence one would have thought it only sensible to make it the premise of our philosophy.

Process:

No-thing-ness...

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, imagine and create for yourself the experience of being in a world where the house or building that you are in does not exist. Create for yourself that the house or building never existed. In fact, no house or building has ever existed. You remain fully conscious, feeling calm and relaxed as you observe and explore a very strange existence. Please create for yourself a world where no cars or trucks ever existed, as the buildings, the factories where such things might be produced, never existed. No paved roads or driveways or parkways ever existed as there was no need for them in a world without cars and trucks. In this world without houses and roads and driveways, green lawns of evenly mowed grass never existed. Now consider a world where no horses or carts, wagons or even wheels ever existed. Human life would be very different in this world, so human life as we know it would have never existed. Create for yourself a world of no people.

Still fully conscious and feeling very safe in your explorations, create the experience of the silence and lack of meaning that the lack of human life would produce. In the silence and lack of meaning, create the experience of a Universe where the Earth and the Moon and the other planets never existed. Imagine that the Sun never existed. Consider that no star has ever existed in this universe. Create for yourself the experience of being in a Universe where no matter has ever existed. No energy exists in this Universe either, nor has energy ever existed in this Universe. No light, no energy, no matter, no thing.

You are now in a Universe of no-thing: Nothing. In the midst of this no-thing-ness, consider the possibility of a Universe of your own design. Consider for a moment that when there is no-thing, the possibility of some-thing is all that exists. Create for yourself the possibility of a Universe that is perfect as it is: a Universe where everything is as it should be. What is the possibility of Your Universe? Notice that when you create the possibility, a new realm of activity comes into being? What will you create? Light and energy? Matter and no-matter? Light and energy located within conglomerations of matter and visible across vast expanses of no-matter? Stars and the Sun? A planet on which to live?

As you create your perfect Universe, consider that the matter and energy come from your consciousness — your expansive creative power. Create for yourself energy and vitality, health and prosperity, abundance and freedom, joy and appreciation for the Universe you create. You are here and You are at home.

As you continue to create your Universe, create the house or building that you are in and create yourSelf within a physical expression of yourSelf within. When you are ready, please open your eyes.

Message:

**The Illusion of Pragmatism
Sunday, January 25, 2009**

pragmatism |'pragmə,tizəm| noun

1 a pragmatic attitude or policy : *ideology was tempered with pragmatism.*

2 Philosophy: an approach that assesses the truth or meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.

Etymology: 1543 (implied in pragmatical), from M.Fr. *pragmatique*, from L. *pragmaticus* "skilled in business or law," from Gk. *pragmatikos* "versed in business," from *pragma* (gen. *pragmatos*) "civil business, deed, act," from *prassein* "to do, act, perform." Pragmatism in philosophy is attested from 1888, first in C. S. Peirce, then in William James, probably from Ger. *Pragmatismus*.

The epistemology of early pragmatism was heavily influenced by Darwinian thinking. Pragmatism was not the first philosophy to see the relevance of evolution for theories of knowledge: the same rationale had for example convinced Schopenhauer we should adopt *biological idealism* because what's useful to an organism to believe might differ wildly from what is actually true. Pragmatism differs from this idealist account because it challenges the assumption that knowledge and action are two separate spheres, and there exists an absolute or transcendental truth above and beyond the sort of inquiry organisms use to cope with life. Pragmatism, in short, provides what might be termed an ecological account of knowledge: inquiry is construed as a means by which organisms can get a grip on their environment. 'Real' and 'true' are labels that have a function in inquiry and cannot be understood outside of that context. It is not realist in a traditional robust sense of realism (metaphysical realism), but it is realist in that it acknowledges an external world which must be dealt with.

Pragmatism asserts that we make things true by verifying them. Further, there can be no truths without a conceptual scheme to express those truths. The pragmatist proceeds from the basic premise that the human capability of theorizing is integral to intelligent practice. Theory and practice are not separate spheres; rather, theories and distinctions are tools or maps for finding our way in the world. As John Dewey put it, there is no question of theory versus practice but rather of intelligent practice versus uninformed, stupid practice. Here is a test of what we have learned, pragmatically, about something that has been well studied: Is milk good or bad for you?

While pragmatism started out simply as a criterion of meaning, it quickly expanded to become a full-fledged epistemology with wide-ranging implications for the entire philosophical field. In our American culture, pragmatism is considered to be a "common sense" approach to the problems of life. this is the **illusion of Pragmatism**.

Voltaire once said, "Common sense is not so common." I say it is not so sensible. Pragmatism reduces inquiry to the immediate solution of problems encountered in 'real life' seen as external to a person. The problems and solutions in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries have been horrific. Industrialism promised leisure and produced oppression. Genetics promised a healthier, happier species and produced eugenics and genocide. Weapons technology promised peace and produced endless war. The automobile, chemistry, plastics, and so on, promised a better life and produced the danger of extinction for many species, including our own.

The method of ontological inquiry (open inquiry or ontological design) is to open questions when something occurs as a problem. We widen the frame (frame of reference) to include other points-of-view. When we find a point-of-view for which the problem no longer occurs as a problem, then we may have unconcealed a distinction.

For instance, we are told that our educational system is in trouble. Students aren't learning the basic tools of readin' writin' and cipherin' that they need to get along in our present culture. If we open the question and widen the frame, we see that for people

who want to perpetuate a stratified society, and those who want to privatize education (and this is mostly the same people), the current state of education is not a problem; it's an opportunity to advance their agenda and get what they want. We can inquire into the history of this point-of-view, and see that the Federal intervention in education, which was previously the province of the most local government, has produced a lot of changes in our educational system. Reading and the Arts have been trivialized, while science and mathematics have been prioritized. The focus has shifted from the commitment **THAT** children learn to specifically **WHAT** children learn. This has not been addressed by any of the "common sense" approaches.

In the coming weeks, please look into problems and widen the frame. See what you may distinguish in the process, and crucially, see **that** you can distinguish.

Dialogue on The Illusion of Pragmatism

Completion

Next week:

Next Sunday is the 1st of February, the day before Candlemas, celebrated traditionally in Christian churches. In England, good weather at Candlemas is taken to indicate severe winter weather later: "If Candlemas Day is clear and bright, / winter will have another bite. / If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain, / winter is gone and will not come again." It is also alleged to be the date that bears emerge from hibernation to inspect the weather as well as wolves, who if they choose to return to their lairs on this day is interpreted as meaning severe weather will continue for another forty days at least. In the United States and Canada, Candlemas evolved into Groundhog Day celebrated on the same date. Come rain or shine, we will return next Sunday at 8 AM with the message and theme of **Groundhog Day: This Again?** Please join us on Sunday as we explore the repetitive, recursive patterns that often play out in our lives.