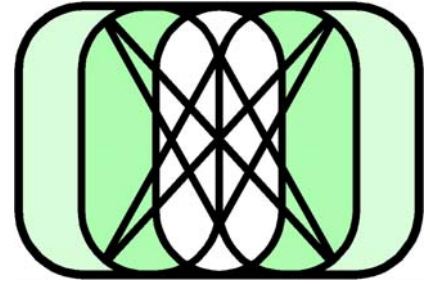


Church of Creation

Order of Service

Sunday, February 8, 2009 8:00 AM



Welcome:

You are always already chosen

Hymn: Blah-Blah

Announcements and sharing

This week in Semiotics: **The Signified Slide**

Lost In Space...

Birthday acknowledgment:

Martin Buber (February 8, 1878 – June 13, 1965)

Austrian-Israeli-Jewish philosopher, translator, and educator

Process:

Chalk it up to experience...

Message:

Nirvāṇa Day: Release From Saṃsāra

Dialogue on Nirvāṇa Day: Release From Saṃsāra

Next week: February 15

Purity vs. Perfection

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:

U-6 Employment Underutilization is 15.4%

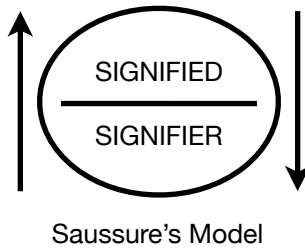
Republicans in the 111th Congress are attempting to make a point.

Sharing what showed up this week inside of our Groundhog Day conversation on repetitive patterns...

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: The Signified Slide

If one accepts the arbitrariness of the relationship between signifier and signified then one may argue counter-intuitively that the signified is determined by the signifier rather than vice versa. Indeed, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, in adapting Saussurean theories, sought to highlight the primacy of the signifier in the psyche by rewriting Saussure's model of the sign in the form of a sort of algebraic sign in which a capital 'S' (representing the signifier) is placed over a lower case and italicized 's' (representing the signified), these two signifiers being separated by a horizontal 'bar' (Lacan 1977, 149). The arrows, representing the bi-directional relatedness of the signifier and signified concept are gone. Now the movement is horizontal with the little-s signified concept sliding freely beneath the signifier.



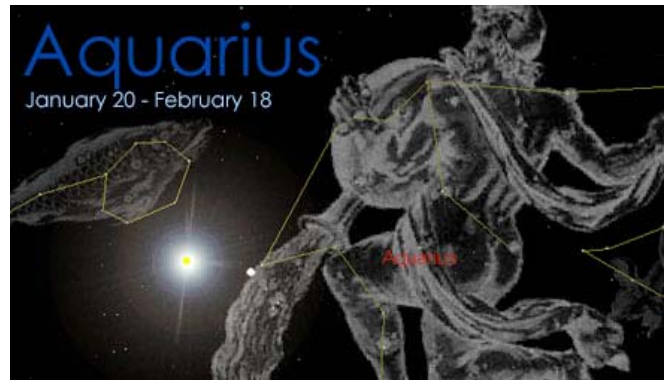
This is a critical overturning of the theoretical structure of language, where Structuralism gives way to Post-structuralism. We can see that both theories can give us insights into how language works. Words can change in meaning and significance over time. For example, the term 'methodist' was once a pejorative term for the followers of John Wesley in the 1700s, a term of derision for their methodical approach to Bible study, as opposed to the ritualistic approach of the Church of England. Now the term is accepted by Methodists who have used it to name their denomination. A similar slide has altered the way we hear the term 'geek.' Once a term for sideshow characters who were not freaks. Freaks were born into their roles: bearded ladies, giants, conjoined twins and so on. Geeks had to earn their way into the sideshow through effort or arcane skill: piercing their skin with nails or biting the heads off of live animals. More recently the term was applied to people with

extensive knowledge of computers, and it was not a nice term. Computer geeks tried to be less 'geeky.' Then Bill Gates got his first billions, and suddenly geeks were proud to be geeks.

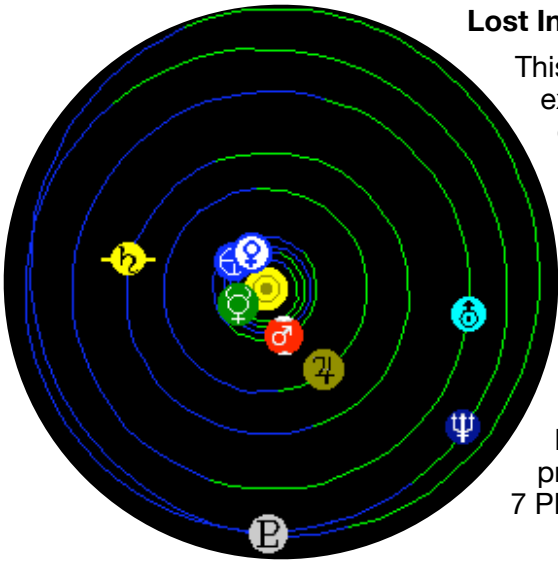
Sliding signified concepts underneath the words we use and hear disrupts the stability of communicative speech. The difficulty that this causes demonstrates the soundness of Saussure's structure and negates it all at once. In the past two-and-a-half weeks, as Congress has addressed the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" (the economic stimulus bill) it has been called "pragmatic" and "populist" Two weeks ago, we looked at pragmatism and how it may be part of the problem with solving problems: part of the failed Modern project. However, 'pragmatic' was the word used by pundits who were defending the bill. Pragmatic is supposed to be a good thing, in our culture, and this may be the result of people wanting to say it is 'practical' and wanting to sound smart at the same time, which is neither practical or smart.

The critics of the bill are calling it 'populist.' Populist means "representing the interests of ordinary people, as opposed to the interests of the elite." It is really interesting that the Republicans who are denouncing the stimulus bill as 'populist' were, just before the election, denouncing the Democrats for being 'elite.' As you can imagine, when signified concepts begin to slide, things can get slippery, and we certainly have some slippery characters on Capitol Hill.

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...



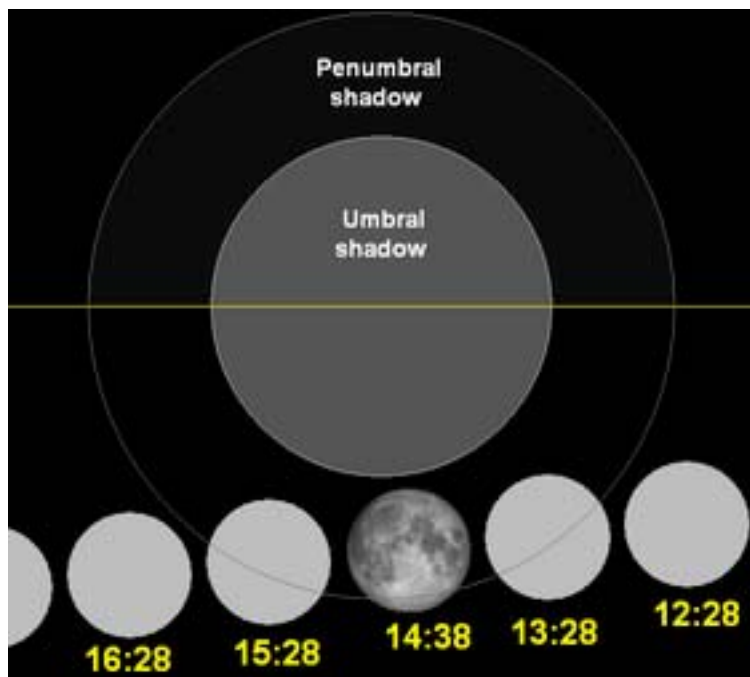
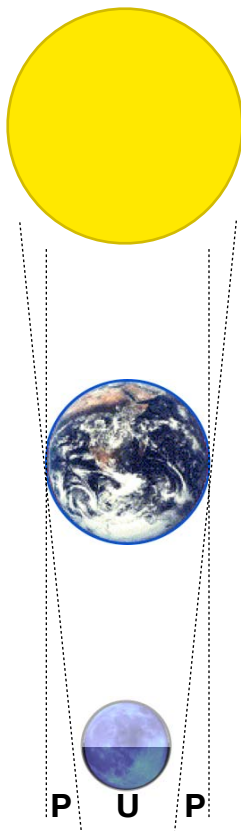
Lost In Space...



This week, **February 8th through February 15th**, we experience the Full Moon bringing in the high tide of events on February 9th, which also provides a penumbral Lunar Eclipse. The fullest part of the eclipse will occur at 8:38 AM CST, and since the Sun is visible at that time, the Lunar Eclipse will not be seen here. This will be the first of four penumbral Lunar Eclipses this year. Typically, there are two per year.

With the Moon in Leo and the Sun in Aquarius, astrologers are looking for visionary leadership to take humanity in new directions.

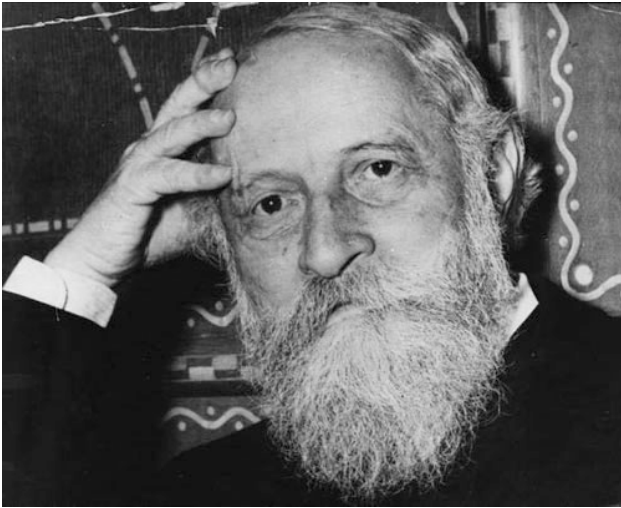
By the way, President Barack Obama will be seen in a press conference on Monday evening at 8 PM Eastern / 7 PM Central.



Times are UTC, subtract six hours for Central Time.

Birthday Acknowledgement: February 8th

Martin Buber (February 8, 1878 – June 13, 1965) was an Austrian-Israeli-Jewish philosopher, translator, and educator, whose work centered on theistic ideals of religious consciousness, interpersonal relations, and community. Buber's evocative, sometimes poetic writing style has marked the major themes in his work: the retelling of



Hasidic tales, Biblical commentary, and metaphysical dialogue. A cultural Zionist, Buber was active in the Jewish and educational communities of Germany and Israel. He was also a staunch supporter of a binational solution in Palestine, instead of a two-state solution. His influence extends across the humanities, particularly in the fields of social psychology, social philosophy, philosophical anarchism, and religious existentialism.

Buber's best known work is the short philosophical essay *Ich und Du* (1923), first translated into English in 1937 by Ronald Gregor Smith. In the 1950's and 60's, when Buber first traveled and lectured in the USA, the essay became rather popular in the English

speaking world. Since then it has been associated with the intellectual culture of the student movement's spontaneity, authenticity, and anti-establishment sentiment.

I and Thou is considered to have inaugurated "a Copernican revolution in theology (...) against the scientific-realistic attitude" (Bloch, 1983), but it has also been criticized for its reduction of fundamental human relations to just two — the *I-Thou* and the *I-It* — of which the latter appears as a mere 'cripple.'

Quotes

- Play is the exultation of the possible.
- The world is not comprehensible, but it is embraceable: through the embracing of one of its beings.
- There are three principles in a man's being and life, the principle of thought, the principle of speech, and the principle of action. The origin of all conflict between me and my fellow-men is that I do not say what I mean and I don't do what I say.
- The atheist staring from his attic window is often nearer to God than the believer caught up in his own false image of God.
- I can look on (a tree) as a picture: stiff column in a shock of light, or splash of green shot with the delicate blue and silver of the background.
 - I can perceive it as movement: flowing veins on clinging, pressing pith, suck of the roots, breathing of the leaves, ceaseless commerce with earth and air - and the obscure growth itself.
 - I can classify it in a species and study it as a type in its structure and mode of life.
 - I can subdue its actual presence and form so sternly that I recognize it only as an expression of law...
 - I can dissipate it and perpetuate it in number...
 - In all this the tree remains my object, occupies space and time, and has its nature and constitution.
 - It can, however, also come about, if I have both will and grace, that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it. The tree is no longer It. I have been seized by the power of exclusiveness.

- Through the Thou a person becomes I.
- The primary word I-Thou can be spoken only with the whole being. Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the Thou; and as I become the I, I say Thou. All real living is meeting.
- Man's threefold living relation is:
 1. His relation to the world and to things;
 2. His relation to men – both individuals and to the many;
 3. His relationship to the mystery of being – which is dimly apparent through all this but infinitely transcends it – which the philosopher calls the absolute and the believer calls God, and which cannot in fact be eliminated from the situation even by one who rejects both designations.”
- There is genuine dialogue - no matter whether spoken or silent - where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. There is technical dialogue, which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding. And there is monologue disguised as dialogue, in which two or more men, meeting in space, speak each with himself in strangely tortuous and circuitous ways and yet imagine they have escaped the torment of being thrown back on their own resources.
- Each of us is encased in an armor which we soon, out of familiarity, cease to notice. There are only moments which penetrate it and stir the soul to sensibility.
- Man is no longer able to master the world which he himself brought about: it is becoming stronger than he is, it is winning free of him, it confronts him in an almost elemental independence, and he no longer knows the word which could subdue and render harmless the golem he has created ... Man faced the terrible fact that he was the father of demons whose master he could not become.
- To be old can be glorious if one has not unlearned how to begin.
- I do not accept any absolute formulas for living. No preconceived code can see ahead to everything that can happen in a man's life. As we live, we grow and our beliefs change. They must change. So I think we should live with this constant discovery. We should be open to this adventure in heightened awareness of living. We should stake our whole existence on our willingness to explore and experience.

1937, *I and Thou*, transl. by Ronald Gregor Smith, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2nd Edition New York: Scribners, 1958. 1st Scribner Classics ed. New York, NY: Scribner, 2000, c1986

1952, *Eclipse of God*, New York: Harper and Bros. Publ. 2nd Edition Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977.

1957, *Pointing the Way*, transl. Maurice Friedman. New York: Harper, 1957, 2nd Edition New York: Schocken, 1974.

1960, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, transl. M. Friedman, New York: Horizon Press.

1965, *The Knowledge of Man*, transl. Ronald Gregor Smith and Maurice Friedman, New York: Harper & Row. 2nd Edition New York, 1966.

1966, *The way of response: Martin Buber; selections from his writings*, edited by N. N. Glatzer. New York: Schocken Books.

1967a, *A Believing Humanism: My Testament*, translation of *Nachlese* (Heidelberg 1965), transl. by M. Friedman, New York: Simon and Schuster.

1967b, *On Judaism*, edited by Nahum Glatzer and transl. by Eva Jospe and others, New York: Schocken Books.

1968, *On the Bible: Eighteen Studies*, edited by Nahum Glatzer, New York: Schocken Books.

1970, *I and Thou*, a new translation with a prologue "I and you" and notes by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Scribner's Sons.

Process:

Chalk it up to experience...

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. If you are comfortable sitting on the floor, it may be useful to the experience, and not necessary to the experience. 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 outdoors on a warm and sunny Spring day, sitting on the ground in a field, where the grasses are beginning to grow again. As you sit on the ground, breathing and smiling, create for yourself the sense of being firmly rooted to the ground, in the same way that the grasses and trees are rooted to the ground. Create the experience of energy and vitality rising from the Earth, into your body, ensuring your survival and safety. Release any fear or anxiety you may have been holding on to. Breathing and smiling, create the experience of sinking about six inches into the warm ground, giving you more stability and allowing you to relax in your sitting. At this level, you can experience life just below the surface, where the creative power generates new growth in the grasses and trees. Now allow yourself to release any unfulfilled desires or any emotions that you've been resisting.

Breathing and smiling, create the experience of sinking another six inches into the ground. At this level, you have no difficulty supporting yourself as you sit somewhat submerged in the soil. Directly experience the power of the ground to give life to the grasses and trees and create the experience of being nourished and nurtured by the Earth. Give up any concerns that you may have for your identity, your ego, your outward appearance or your inward thoughts. Breathe and smile and create for yourself the experience of sinking another six inches or so into the ground. You are now submerged into the ground up to your chest. You are half in the above ground world and half in the below ground world. Feeling almost weightless and comfortable at this level, create for yourself the experience of being the mediation between light and dark, up and down. Here between two worlds, experience healing for anything that may be hurting or distressing you. Forgive anything that you may have been resenting.

Breathing and smiling, allow yourself to sink another six inches into the ground, and create the experience of your shoulders sinking just below the surface. Only your head and neck are above ground. At this level, create the experience of complete self-expression. Drawing in wisdom and knowledge from the ground around you, think of what you would say to the world, if you only had the opportunity to say one thing that fully expresses you. Whisper those words to the World now, before sinking into the ground another six inches.

Breathing and smiling, with your eyes just below the surface of the ground, you cannot see light with your eyes anymore. You see light intuitively in extraordinary ways, and you experience peace as you release any conflicts you may have had. Breathing and smiling, now let yourself submerge completely below the surface of the Earth. Experience yourself as One with the Earth and an integral part of the Universe. Now you can see the Sun completely and all the stars and the Moon contribute their light to you at the center of the Universe. Keeping all the health and vitality, wisdom and knowledge that you gained in this process, allow yourself to arise from the ground and take the form of your body. When you are ready to do so, please open your eyes.

Message: Nirvāṇa Day: Release From Saṃsāra
Sunday, February 8, 2009

Nirvāṇa Day is the day celebrated as the death of Gotama Siddhartha, the original Buddha. It is also called Parinirvāṇa Day, meaning complete Nirvāṇa. This is a key distinction. In the West, we often think of Nirvāṇa as something akin to heaven that can only be reached upon death. However, the Buddha reached Nirvāṇa while he was alive and Parinirvāṇa when he died.

Last week, we talked about the repetitive, recursive patterns in our lives. Now we are going to look at the Eastern concept of Saṃsāra, which is the endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth — a powerful metaphor for repetitive patterns, and Nirvāṇa, which is a metaphor for the release from these cycles.

Six Realms of Rebirth

Deva Realm

The Deva realm is the realm of bliss. The disadvantage of this realm is that things are so very comfortable there, that these beings completely neglect to work towards enlightenment. Instead they gradually use up the good karma they had previously accumulated, and so they subsequently fall to a lower rebirth.

The Deva realm is sometimes also referred to as the gods' realm, because its inhabitants are so powerful within their own realm, that compared to humans, they resemble the gods of Greek or Roman mythology.

Human Realm

The Human realm (also known as the Manuṣya realm) is based on passion, desire, doubt, and pride.

Buddhists see this realm as human existence. A human rebirth is in fact considered to be the by far most advantageous of all possible rebirths in samsara because a human rebirth is the only samsaric realm from which one can directly achieve enlightenment. This is because of the unique possibilities that a human rebirth offers.

A human rebirth is considered to have tremendous potential when used correctly, however human rebirths are very rare in occurrence. This is because we usually waste our human lifetime in materialistic pursuits, and end up reinforcing our unhelpful emotions, thoughts, and actions. Because of this, it is almost always the case that one descends to a lower rebirth after a human life, rather than immediately going on to another human birth.

In the lower realms, such as for example, the animal realm, it is a very slow and difficult process to accumulate enough merit to achieve a human birth once again, so it may be countless lifetimes before one has another chance.

Asura Realm

The Asura realm is the realm of the demigods. They are here because of actions based on jealousy, struggle, combat or rationalization of the world. They may be here because in human form they had good intentions but committed bad actions such as harming others.

The Asuras are said to experience a much more pleasurable life than humans, but they are plagued by envy for the devas, whom they can see just as animals can perceive humans.

The Asura realm is also sometimes referred to as the Ashura realm, Titan realm, Jealous God realm, Demigod realm, or Anti-God realm. Asura is also sometimes translated as "demon," "fighting demon," "those without wine," or "angry ghost," which can cause confusion because beings of the hell realm are also sometimes referred to as demons.

Animal Realm

The Animal realm (also known as the Tiryag-yoni realm) is based on strong mental states of stupidity and prejudice cultivated in a previous life or lives.

Buddhists believe that this realm is the realm of existence of the nonhuman animals on Earth. Humans can however be seen by the animals, in the same way that the Asura can see the Devas.

Preta Realm

The Hungry Ghost realm (also known as the Preta realm) is a rebirth based on strong possessiveness and desire which were cultivated in a previous life or lives.

The sentient beings in this realm are known as “hungry ghosts”. They are constantly extremely hungry and thirsty, but they cannot satisfy these needs. In Tibetan versions of the Bhavacakra these beings are drawn with narrow necks and large bellies. This represents the fact that their desires torment them, but they are completely unable to satisfy themselves.

Naraka Realm

The Naraka realm, or “hell realm” is a rebirth based on strong states of hatred cultivated in a previous life or lives.

The Buddhist view of Niraya differs significantly from that of most monotheistic religions in that those being punished in this realm are not trapped permanently. Rather, they remain there until their negative karma is used up, at which point they are reborn into another realm.

The Four Noble Truths

1. The Nature of Suffering (*Dukkha*):

“This is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.”

2. Suffering’s Origin (*Samudaya*):

“This is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there, that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.”

3. Suffering’s Cessation (*Nirodha*):

“This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.”

4. The Way (*Mārga*) Leading to the Cessation of Suffering:

“This is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is the Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.”

The Buddha says that he taught the Four Noble Truths...

“...because it is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, it leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation of suffering, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvāṇa. That is why I have declared it.”

Nirvāṇa

Nirvāṇa is that which ends the identity of the mind (*citta*) with empirical phenomena. Doctrinally Nirvāṇa is said of the mind which “no longer is coming (*bhava*) and going (*vibhava*)”, but which has attained a status in perpetuity, whereby “liberation (*vimutta*) can be said.”

It carries further connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. The realizing of *Nirvāṇa* is compared to the ending of *avidyā* (ignorance) which perpetuates the will (*cetana*) into effecting the incarnation of mind into biological or other form passing on forever

through life after life. *Samsara* is caused principally by craving and ignorance . A person can attain *Nirvāṇa* without dying. When a person who has realized *Nirvāṇa* dies, his death is referred as *parinirvāṇa*, his fully passing away, as his life was his last link to the cycle of death and rebirth, and he will not be reborn again. Buddhism holds that the ultimate goal and end of samsaric existence (of ever “becoming” and “dying” and never truly being) is realization of *Nirvāṇa*; what happens to a person after his *parinirvāṇa* cannot be explained, as it is outside of all conceivable experience.

Tathāgata: The one that comes and the one that comes not. The Self, independent of and unattached to the present form.

Enlightenment, for a wave in the ocean, is the moment the wave realizes it is water.

— Thich Nhat Hanh

Dialogue on Nirvāṇa Day: Release From Saṃsāra

Completion

Next week: February 15

Next Sunday, the 15th of February, coincides with the Ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia. This was a pastoral festival, originating with shepherds, that came to signify purification of the individual and the city, hoping to become deserving of health and prosperity. Please join us Next Sunday as we consider the conflicting and slippery ideal of purity. Our message and theme will be **Purity vs. Perfection**, in which we will expand our inquiry and deepen the distinction of Being Perfect.