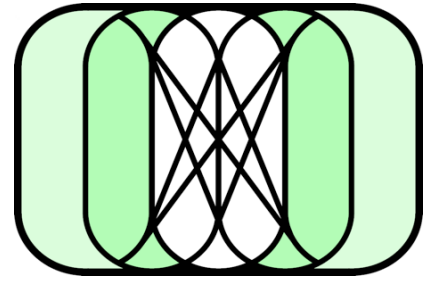


Church of Creation

Order of Service

Sunday, February 22, 2009 8:00 AM



Welcome:

You are always already chosen

Hymn: Blah-Blah

Announcements and sharing

This week in Semiotics: **The Silence**

Lost In Space...

Birthday acknowledgment:

Arthur Schopenhauer (February 22, 1788 – September 21, 1860, aged 72)

German philosopher, and all-around pessimist

Process:

Embodiment...

Message:

Last Chance - Fat Chance

Dialogue on Last Chance - Fat Chance

Next week: March 1

Truth, Truisms and Truthiness

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:

Sharing what showed up this week inside of our conversation on Purity vs. Perfection or Ideal vs. Possibility...

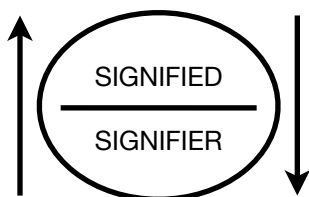
Church Charter

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 Silence

Last week, we spoke of opposition in binary pairs of what we call opposites. Two signs — two related signified concepts along with their signifiers — are set in opposition to convey meaning, preference or comparison and contrast. We considered that opposites do not really oppose each other, except in language.

Maya (Sanskrit, *māyā*), in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, is the illusion and dream of duality in the phenomenal Universe — the Universe we perceive and experience in consciousness. Maya has three basic functions: concealing, projecting and revealing. As a metaphor for the process of opposites, we can consider the projecting function of maya. It acts as a sort of prism, and you recall how a prism takes in white light and fragments it into a spectrum of colors, like a rainbow. Maya has this projecting function of taking in the ultimate ground of Being or Existence and shattering it into a multiplicity of forms and apparent opposites within our sphere of consciousness. Through inquiry, one who had never seen white light could, perhaps, distinguish white from colors, although it would be difficult. Through study we have extended our grasp of the spectrum into infrared, ultraviolet, radio waves and gamma radiation, and put them to use. We are great at defining and redefining the forms in maya, in finer and finer detail. We look at things on the microscopic, molecular, atomic and sub-atomic levels of perception. This is **The Drift** that we have spoken of previously. More difficult perhaps, or maybe just neglected, is the inquiry into the wholeness and unification of forms in their existence, as such. This inquiry remains available to us. To take the multiplicity of forms in their apparent oppositions and inquire into their wholeness and unity brings us to **The Silence**. If we give up the notion of opposites, looking not at the binary opposition, not favoring one or the other, but rather allowing the interplay between them and recognizing their complementarity, we approach their Being. If we further give up our ratio of relative values, in favor of authentic inquiry, then we are left in The Silence.

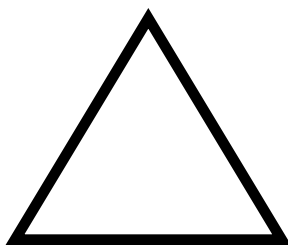


Saussure's Model



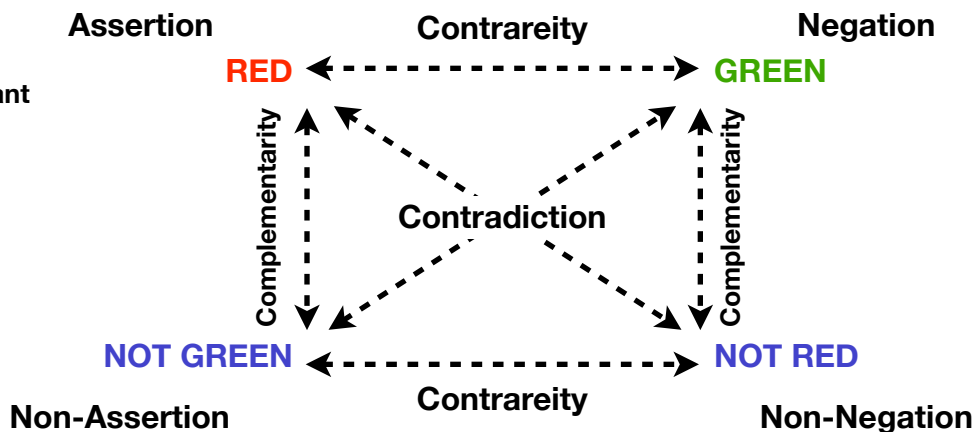
Lacan's Model

(2) Object



(1) Sign/
Representamen (3) Interpretant

Peirce's Model



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...

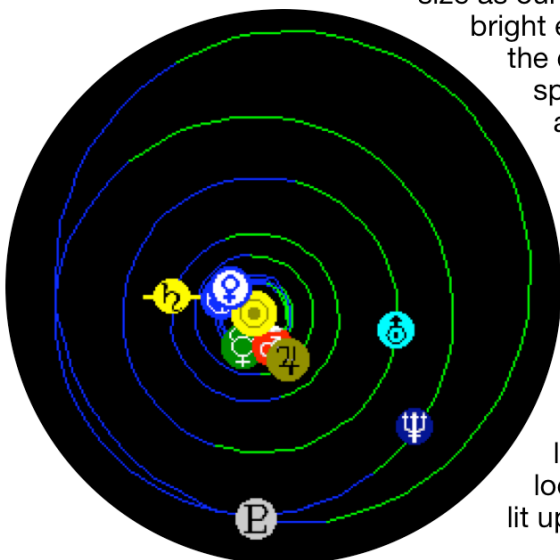
This week, **February 22nd through February 28th**, we have a New Moon on Tuesday, which coincides with the conjunction of Jupiter and Mercury. Astrologically, this would indicate the opening of doors to new options, especially in the realm of human relationships, and our humanitarian goals and projects.

Friday February 27th just after dark— about an hour or so after Sunset — facing due west you’ll see the brilliant light of the object the ancient Greeks named Hesperus. Hesperus was very special because he was the son of a mortal and the Greek goddess of the dawn, Eos, whom the Romans called Aurora. He was as famous as his brother Phosphorus/Lucifer, whose names meant the bearer of light who was just as bright but only appeared just before dawn.

The ancient Romans renamed Hesperus, Vesper, as in evening vespers, which relates to evening and the west. But to simplify things they also called Hesperus “the evening star” and Phosphorus/Lucifer, “the morning star.” Eventually however, the Greeks and Romans realized that the Babylonians were much better astronomers and adopted the Babylonian position that the two brothers were actually one and the same, but which they had named for their great goddess Ishtar, which the Greeks then decided to call Aphrodite and the Romans Venus. And it’s been Venus ever since.



So on February 27th this most wondrous evening star, which is not a star at all, but our nearest planetary neighbor, 8,000 mile wide, same size as our Earth, Venus reaches its greatest brilliancy and will be bright enough to cast a shadow. In fact, it can even be seen in the daytime if you know exactly where to look. But something special will be added because only one and a half degrees away will be a three day old exquisite waxing, that is growing, crescent Moon complete with earthshine, which will look like a darkish grey full Moon nestled within the crescent. Don’t miss this please. But if you do, on Saturday night the 28th, a still exquisite crescent Moon will be up and to the left of Venus and will still make a fabulous sight.



Although appearing close together, our Moon will be a mere 238,000 miles away from Earth whereas Venus will be 35,000,000 miles away. With the aid of a telescope at low power, or even in a good pair of binoculars, Venus will look like a tiny crescent Moon because it will be only 20% lit up by the Sun.

Birthday Acknowledgement: February 22nd

Arthur Schopenhauer (February 22, 1788 – September 21, 1860, aged 72)

German philosopher, and all-around pessimist

Arthur Schopenhauer is one of the most important 19th century philosophers, most famous for his work, *The World as Will and Representation*. The word “will” designated, for him, force, power, impulse, energy, and desire; it is the closest word we have that can signify both the real essence of all external things and also our own direct, inner experience. Since everything is basically Will, then humans and animals are fundamentally the same and can recognize themselves in each other.

Schopenhauer is known for having promoted a sort of philosophical pessimism that sees life as being essentially evil and futile, but he saw hope in aesthetics, sympathy for others and simple living. His work is also notable for its uncharacteristic clarity and direct readability.

Friedrich Nietzsche studied the writings of Schopenhauer in 1865, and this was a profound influence on his development of nihilism: the meaninglessness of life. Others who claim to have been moved and influenced by Schopenhauer include:

Composers - Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Arnold Schoenberg, *Novelists, Poets and Playwrights* - Eugene O'Neill, Machado de Assis, Dylan Thomas, Leo Tolstoy, Samuel Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges, George Gissing; *Sociologists and Psychologists* - Max Horkheimer, C. G. Jung, Sigmund Freud; *Scientists* - Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin; *Philosophers* - John Gray, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl Popper, Thomas Mann, Joseph Campbell.

Quotes

Philosophy ... is a science, and as such has no articles of faith; accordingly, in it nothing can be assumed as existing except what is either positively given empirically, or demonstrated through indubitable conclusions.

This actual world of what is knowable, in which we are and which is in us, remains both the material and the limit of our consideration.

Two Chinamen traveling in Europe went to the theatre for the first time. One of them did nothing but study the machinery, and he succeeded in finding out how it was worked. The other tried to get at the meaning of the piece in spite of his ignorance of the language. Here you have the Astronomer and the Philosopher.

A number of porcupines huddled together for warmth on a cold day in winter; but, as they began to prick one another with their quills, they were obliged to disperse. However the cold drove them together again, when just the same thing happened. At last, after many turns of huddling and dispersing, they discovered that they would be best off by remaining at a little distance from one another. In the same way the need of society drives the human porcupines together, only to be mutually repelled by the many prickly and disagreeable qualities of their nature. The moderate distance which they at last discover to be the only tolerable condition of intercourse, is the code of politeness and fine manners; and those who transgress it are roughly told—in the English phrase—to *keep their distance*. By this arrangement the mutual need of warmth is only very moderately satisfied; but then people do not get pricked. A man who has some heat in himself prefers to remain outside, where he will neither prick other people nor get pricked himself.



Process: **Embodiment...**

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

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

As you breathe and smile, create for yourself the experience of Being Silent within yourSelf and whole and complete. Create the experience of bringing your consciousness into the center of your body and shrinking so that you are small, whole and complete within your body — within your physical form. Allow your whole self to shrink within your body so that you create for yourself an entire You within your body. If you cannot see anything inside your body, wait for a moment to allow your vision to adjust and look for the ever-present light within yourself and move toward that light. Shrink your inner self to the size of a single cell, so that you can move about the spaciousness of your body freely and without fear, without any feelings of claustrophobia. Feeling very relaxed and warm and whole within your body, begin to travel to any area of pain or tension within your body and bring your inner light with you to illuminate the substance of your body.

Travel on the fluids and gases within your body to get to any place that is a concern for you and bring healing energy and light to that area. Create for yourself the experience of warming and energizing your cells and organs and muscles, bones, skin and mucous membranes from the inside. Direct the flow of fluids and energy into those areas. You have the freedom to move quickly and effortlessly within your body, from your head to your toes, from the left to the right. When you have brought energy and light to an area of concern for you, you may move to another area of concern. If you have no concern about any area of your body, explore your body, bringing light and energy to any area that needs to be relaxed or strengthened or energized.

Notice that you are not your body. You have a body and you have concerns for it and its function. In this process we are giving our body of concern the gift of our attention, providing whatever it needs or wants. Continue to travel the pathways of your body, giving generously of your care and light and energy.

When you have completed your rounds, and are satisfied with your journey through your body, bring yourSelf to the center of your body and begin to expand yourself to fill your body again. Allow your consciousness to reach into every finger and toe and fully inhabit your body again, feeling the renewed vigor, ease, comfort and health of your body. Create for yourself the experience of overall well-being.

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

Message:

Last Chance – Fat Chance

Sunday, February 22, 2009

Fat Tuesday / Mardi Gras The terms “Mardi Gras” and “Mardi Gras season,” in English, refer to events of the Carnival celebrations, ending on the day before Ash Wednesday. From the French term “Mardi Gras” (literally “Fat Tuesday”), the term has come to mean the whole period of activity related to those events, beyond just the single day, often called Mardi Gras Day or Fat Tuesday, which is this week. The season can be designated by the year, as in “Mardi Gras 2009”.

The time period varies from city to city, as some traditions consider Mardi Gras as the Carnival period between Epiphany (January 7) or Twelfth Night and Ash Wednesday. Others treat the final three-day period as being Mardi Gras. In Mobile, Alabama, Mardi Gras events begin in November, followed by mystic society balls on Thanksgiving, then New Year’s Eve, with parades on New Year’s Day, followed by parades and balls in January & February, celebrating up to midnight before Ash Wednesday.

Other cities most famous for their Mardi Gras celebrations include Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and New Orleans, Louisiana. Many other places have important Mardi Gras celebrations as well.

An inspiration for the carnival lies in the fact that during Lent, traditionally, no parties may be held and many foods, such as meat, are forbidden; the forty days of Lent serve to commemorate the Passion of Jesus. It is natural for people to have the desire to hold a large celebration at the **last possible opportunity** before fasting.

Parts of the carnival traditions, however, likely reach back to pre-Christian times. The ancient Roman festivals of the Saturnalia and Bacchanalia is a probable origin of the Italian Carnival. The Saturnalia, in turn, may be based on the Greek Dionysia and Oriental festivals.

The origin of the term, Carnival, is from the Late Latin *carne vale* as “a farewell to the flesh”, a phrase embraced by certain carnival celebrations that encourage letting go of your former (or everyday) self and embracing the carefree nature of the festival. This “letting go” has become associated with the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure.

Hedonism is a type of philosophy that considers pleasure to be of ultimate importance and the most important pursuit for Human Beings. The name derives from the Greek word for “delight” (ἡδονισμός *hēdonismos* from ἡδονή *hēdonē* “pleasure”, a cognate of English sweet + suffix *ισμός* *ismos* “ism”).

The basic idea behind hedonistic thought is that pleasure is the only thing that is good for a person; indeed: the only good. This is often used as a justification for evaluating actions in terms of how much pleasure and how little pain (i.e. suffering) they produce. In very simple terms, a hedonist strives to maximize this net pleasure (pleasure minus pain). The nineteenth-century British philosophers John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham defended the ethical theory of utilitarianism, according to which we should perform whichever action is best for everyone. Conjoining hedonism, as a view as to what is good for people, to utilitarianism has the result that all action should be directed toward achieving the greatest amount of happiness for everyone. Though consistent in their pursuit of happiness, Bentham and Mill’s versions of hedonism differ. There are two somewhat basic schools of thought on hedonism:

- One school, grouped around Jeremy Bentham, defends a quantitative approach. Bentham believed that the value of a pleasure could be quantitatively understood. Essentially, he believed the value of a pleasure to be its intensity multiplied by its duration - so it was not just the number of pleasures, but their intensity and how long they lasted that must be taken into account.
- Other proponents, like John Stuart Mill, argue a qualitative approach. Mill believed that there can be different levels of pleasure - higher quality pleasure is better than

lower quality pleasure. Mill also argues that simpler beings (he often references pigs) have an easier access to the simpler pleasures; since they do not see other aspects of life, they can simply indulge in their pleasures. The more elaborate beings tend to spend more thought on other matters and hence lessen the time for simple pleasure. It is therefore more difficult for them to indulge in such “simple pleasures” in the same manner.

Is pleasure or happiness the purpose of life, as Bentham and Mill suggest, or is life all about suffering, as Schopenhauer would have us believe? In the Declaration of Independence (Jefferson, *et al.* 1776) it reads, “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Is it the truth; is it self-evident?

When we are faced with what seems to be the last chance to get something we want, we become desperate for it. The desperate pursuit of it does not produce happiness. The pursuit of anything opens a gap between you, as subject, and the object of your pursuit. There is no closing to that gap. We are left suffering. Schopenhauer would be pleased, thereby ruining his argument.

Desperate pursuits alter our relationship to time and circumstance. Time seems to be “running out.” The time remaining may seem to be insufficient. Our circumstances seem to be externally applied barriers to getting what we want.

As my father has grown older, I’ve observed him clinging to life as he gets weaker in both mind and body. In lucid moments, I’ve talked with him about it. He really believes that there is a payoff in life, and he’s not leaving until he gets it. He will be disappointed. There is no payoff. There is no bonus for living, unless you work on Wall Street. Your life will end and what will you take with you?

There may be a debt to pay, for the privilege of being alive. There’s no deadline, no last chance. You can always choose to contribute whatever you are here to contribute. A lot of people were so busy pursuing what they wanted, they forgot to contribute whatever they had to contribute, and the World went on without it. Poorer, perhaps.

Maybe the purpose of life is no purpose and the meaning is no meaning. Be appropriate to the moment. Dance and sing while the music is playing and contribute whatever you have to contribute — whatever expresses who you ARE.

Dialogue on Last Chance – Fat Chance

Completion

Next week: March 1

Next Sunday, the 1st of March, we’ll see if March comes in like a lion, as the old saying goes. It is also Self-Injury Awareness Day. They have a day for that! Of course, the intention is to promote the awareness of cutting, burning, head-banging, scratching oneself, and hitting oneself, which seems to be rampant among teenagers, mostly young women, these days. In other words, amateur self-injury. Real bone-crushing, soul-destroying, self-injury seems to be one of the automatic functions of the ego. Lack of awareness of how we are often undermined by our own egos may be one of the most dangerous things in the World. You want the truth? As Jack Nicholson would say, “You can’t handle the truth!” So next week, we’ll be looking at **Truth, Truisms and Truthiness**. Please join us for an inquiry into distinguishing the lies we believe to be true. As I’ve said before, the mastery of anything begins with telling the truth.