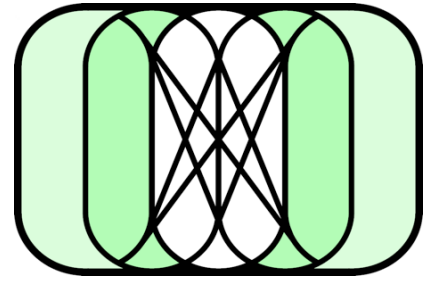


Church of Creation

Order of Service

Sunday, March 1, 2009 8:00 AM



Welcome:

You are always already chosen

Hymn: Blah-Blah

Announcements and sharing

This week in Semiotics: **Orders of Signification**

Lost In Space...

Birthday acknowledgment:

Watsuji Tetsurô (March 1, 1889 – December 26, 1960, aged 71)

Japanese philosopher, cultural historian, and intellectual historian.

Process:

Relocation...

Message:

Truth, Truisms and Truthiness

Dialogue on Truth, Truisms and Truthiness

Next week: March 8

Unconscious? Who? Me?

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 Last Chance – Fat Chance, the distinction between living for now and Being Present in Now...

Has our new President sold out already?

How tender is your tushie?

Greenpeace suggests recycled toilet tissue.

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: Orders of Signification

1. Denotative Sign (Extension)

The signifier (word or physical manifestation of the sign) and the signified concept relate simply and without added meaning or *significance*. Everyone who recognizes the signifier can also understand the significance. This would be the first definition in a dictionary, usually.

2. Connotative Sign (Intension)

The Denotative Sign, taken as a whole, acquires another layer of significance by convention: its connotation. Most people in a given society will understand the connotation

3. Mythic Sign (Mythos)

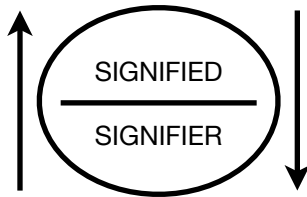
Another layer of significance is added to the sign, along the thematic lines of the interpreter. The reader or interpreter of the sign add this meaning based on the Myth. Different interpreters of the same sign may ascribe different readings, based on the Mythic Themes they choose.

Human Beings translate everything, immediately, into code. As Derrida would put it, "perception is always already representation." Coded meanings can be very powerful in shaping knowledge, manipulating responses and maintaining order. It is a way to say something without saying it.

Signs and codes are generated by myths and in turn serve to preserve them. Popular usage of the term 'myth' suggests that it refers to beliefs which are demonstrably false, but the semiotic use of the term does not suggest this. Myths can be seen as extended metaphors. As metaphors, myths help us to make sense of our experiences within a culture.

Differences between the three orders of signification are not clear-cut, but for descriptive and analytic purposes theorists distinguish them along the following lines: the first (denotative) order (or level) of signification is seen as primarily representational and relatively self-contained. The second (connotative) order of signification reflects 'expressive' values which are attached to a sign. In the third (mythological or ideological) order of signification the sign reflects major culturally-variable concepts underpinning a particular worldview - such as masculinity, femininity, freedom, individualism, objectivism, Americanism and so on.

The semiotic analysis of cultural myths involves an attempt to deconstruct the ways in which codes operate within particular popular texts or genres, with the goal of revealing how certain values, attitudes and beliefs are supported, while others are suppressed.

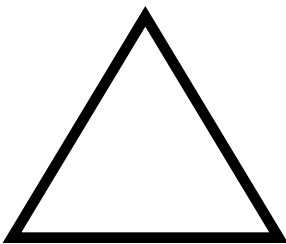


Saussure's Model



Lacan's Model

(2) Object



(1) Sign/
Representamen (3) Interpretant

Peirce's Model

Signifier	Signified Concept
Denotative Sign	Connotative Signified
Connotative Sign	
Mythic Signified	
Mythic Sign	

Flag	Stars, Stripes, etc.
American Flag	Freedom, Republic, etc.
"The American Way"	
"greatest"/oppressive	
Truth, Justice, Democracy, etc. / Imperialistic, Bellicose, etc.	

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...

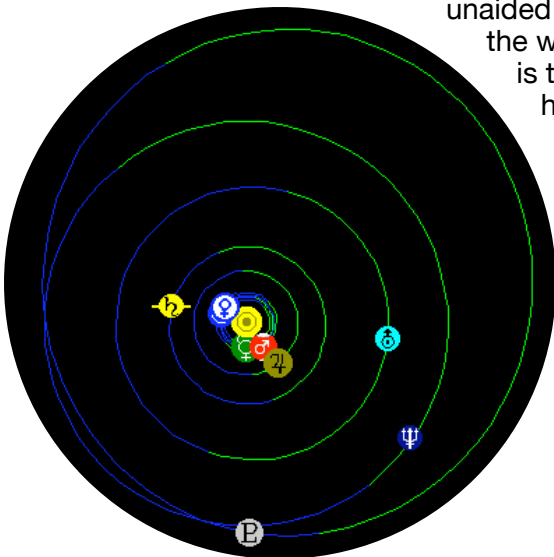
This week, **March 1st through March 7th**, Mercury is in conjunction with Mars. They'll be a little too close to the sunrise for us to see, unfortunately. Astrologers say that the information gathered over the past year can now be put into action, as though this were a hand-off from Mercury to action-oriented Mars. On Thursday of this week, Venus begins its retrograde motion. This is the phenomenon in which the inner planets

sometimes appear to reverse their path through our sky. Venus goes retrograde about once every sixteen to twenty-two months. I looked up the astrological significance of this retrograde, and unlike Mercury's retros, Venus retrograde is not necessarily disruptive. In our relationships — to ourselves, each other, and the World — we will make a transition over the six week retrograde period, from passions, feelings and preferences to imagination, creation and possibilities. I didn't make that up. It sounds like something I would make up, and I didn't.

Today, March comes in like a lion. At sunset, Leo, the lion constellation in the zodiac, rises in the East: coming in like a lion. At the end of the month, sunset reveals Leo in place overhead. In the west, however, Aries the ram (a lamb ram) will be setting with the Sun, going out like a lamb. This has been the visible identifier of March throughout recorded time. It became associated with the weather, since it is also a time of seasonal transition. This year, we get a bonus — not like the bonus that the Wall Streeters get. The three bright stars of Leo (Regulus, Denebola, and Algieba) will be accompanied by Saturn. the three stars and a planet will look like a rectangle with Saturn being the lower left corner, Regulus on the lower right, Denebola, upper left and Algieba, upper right.

Aries is a very dim constellation with only two stars easily seen with the unaided eye, Hamal and Sheratan. Fortunately, Venus will be lighting the way to Aries this month, and after the Sun and Moon, Venus is the brightest object in the sky. Venus and Aries will be hanging with each other with the retrograde occurring entirely in the Aries zone.

Whenever you look up and see the grandeur of the Universe on display, remember to acknowledge your wonderful creation of it.



Birthday Acknowledgement: March 1st

Watsuji Tetsurō (March 1, 1889–December 26, 1960) was a Japanese philosopher, cultural historian, and intellectual historian.

The foundations of Watsuji's thought were the extensive studies in Western philosophy that he engaged in during his earlier years, up until 1917 or 1918, followed by his extensive studies in Japanese and Far Eastern philosophy and culture. Upon his return from Europe in 1928, and as a direct result of being among the very first to read Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, Watsuji began work on *Fūdo* (*Fūdo ningen-gakuteki kōsatsu*), translated into English as *Climate and Culture*. For Watsuji 'Fūdo' means "wind and earth...the natural environment of a given land." We are all inescapably environed by our land, its geography and topography, its climate and weather patterns, temperature and humidity, soils and oceans, its flora and fauna, and so on, in addition to the resultant human styles of living, related artifacts, architecture, food choices, and clothing.



This is but a partial list, but even this sketchy list makes clear that Watsuji is calling attention to the many ways in which our environment, taken in the broad sense, shapes who we are from birth to death. According to Watsuji, Heidegger's emphasis was on time and the individual, and too little on space and the social dimensions of human beings. When we add to our sense of climate as including not only the natural geographic setting of a people and a regions' weather patterns, but also the social environment of family, community, society at large, lifestyle, and even the technological apparatus that supports community survival and interaction, then we begin to glimpse what Watsuji had in mind by climate, and how there exists a mutuality of influence from human to environment, and environment to human being which allows for the continued evolution of both. Climate is the entire interconnected network of influences that together create an entire people's attitudes and values. "History and nature," remarks Yuasa Yasuo, "like man's mind and body, are in an inseparable relationship" (Yuasa 1996, 168). Culture is that mutuality of influence, recorded over eons of time past, which continues to effect the cultural present of a people. Who we are is not simply what we think, or what we choose as individuals in our aloneness, but is also the result of the climatic space into which we are born, live, love, and die.

The Social Construction of Self

There are cultural differences in how people socially construct the concept of the social self. A good example of this can be found in how the Japanese concept of the social self differs from that of North Americans, especially those of the United States. First, consider the concept of the social self in Japan. During the Meiji Restoration Period (1868-1912), the city of Kyoto gave rise to modern Japanese academic philosophy (*tetsugaku*). One of the foremost contributors to the Kyoto School was Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960). Like many of the members of his generation, the question of individualism dominated his intellectual life. At first he turned to the West for intellectual sustenance and wrote monographs on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, but with the passage of time, he began to abandon his belief in individualism and turned, instead, towards the study of ancient Japanese culture, in particular, Zen and Confucian models of the world. In that early work, Watsuji noted that Heidegger's concept of being was characteristic of Western thought in that it was highly individualistic. In particular, Heidegger's model lacked the concept of a social self. The self is only meaningful, Watsuji noted, when it includes both the individual and the social aspect of being in the world (Watsuji, 1988).

The term that he coined for this interconnectedness is *ningen*. It consists of two Kanji characters, the first for person (*hito*) and the second for betweenness (*aida*). This term refers to the betweenness among selves in the world. From his point of view, the concept of the individual in the West is not allocentric, but egocentric. In the West, for

風土	Fûdo - the social space between Self and Others	<p>example, individuals tend to focus on the self as a concrete object. They do this by rejecting society and the social self. In the East, however, a person becomes a social self by rejecting one's individuality.</p> <p>The real self of Zen Buddhism, he noted, occurs between these two contradictions. It is the empty center that results from the double negation the individual and society. This results in an ethical harmony in which the individual ego emerges as a social sign that is integrated into a network of social relations. The space in which this occurs is called <i>fûdo</i>.</p>
人間	Ningen - the real self that is located between one and others, <i>the empty self (of Nothing)</i>	
人	Hito - human, person	
間	Aida - being between. betweenness	

The Self as a Social Sign

In Japan, the social self functions as a semiotic sign. It has no stable signified concept (the *empty self* is devoid of significance) but it is defined by its relationship to other signs. This is how the self is defined as *ningen* (the in-betweenness among persons). The person (*hito*) does not fully reside in the individual. Nor does the person fully reside in society (*seken*). The real self (*ningen*) resides in a relationship (*aidagara*, betweenness among persons) with others. The real self is a sign that captures the relationship between two juxtaposed concepts: self and society. If one wants to stand out as an individual, he must negate his social self. If one wants to become a part of society, he must negate his ego. By means of this double-negation, one creates a self that is both social and individual. Watsuji calls this self by the name of *ningen*, a self that is between other selves, an empty self. Hence, this concept of self was socially defined by the Japanese society. It was constructed as a social concept but in the context of the western concept of self, it becomes culturally distinct. In this case, cultural constructs "single out" persons who differ from the host society.

Quotes

- Betweenness consists in the fact that self and other are divided from each other (i.e., *wake-rareru* in Japanese) and at the same time that what is thus divided becomes unified. In order that they be divided from each other, they had to be one originally; and in order that they may become unified, they must be absolutely separated...Totality subsists only in this movement.
- The individual dimension of existence 'empties' the social dimension and, conversely, the social dimension 'empties' the individual one. Existence is a finely balanced mutuality of dependence.

Kyoto School of Philosophy, Kyoto University

Nishida Kitaro (1870 - 1945)

Kuki Shūzō (1888 - 1941) Met with Heidegger

Watsuji Tetsuro (1889 - 1960) Studied with Heidegger

Tezuka Tomio (1903 - 1983) Dialogue with Heidegger

Process: **Relocation...**

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 fully alive and alert and relaxed and calm, right where you are. With your eyes closed, recall the room that you are in, whoever or whatever is with you in the space where you are. Begin to create for yourself the experience of seeing those people or animals or things as mere illusions. No matter how solid or real they seemed, consider for now that they are illusions, and the illusions are beginning to fade and vanish. Breathing and smiling, feeling calm and relaxed, allow everything that you thought was real a moment ago to disappear as dreams disappear after you've become fully awake.

Creating the experience of ease and tranquility as you breathe and smile, be with the stillness of no illusion, no reality for a moment. The persistent muscle tension we sometimes call life is also an illusion, and you can create the experience of letting that tension disappear. Any anxiety that you may feel is not related to any reality, so let that go as well. Breathing and smiling, you are fully alive and fully free of illusions. Rest for a moment in the lack of illusions.

Continuing to breathe and smile, and experience relaxation and freedom, create for yourself the recognition that you created the reality that you have just allowed to disappear, and you can create any reality in its place. Feeling very secure and safe and relaxed, begin to create the experience of being in a wonderful place — a place that you know well and love — create this wonderful space in which to Be, and be fully alive in that place, fully relaxed and joyful as you breathe and smile. And when you are ready, let it disappear and create for yourself the experience of being in another wonderful place — a place that you've wanted to experience and never have before. Create this wonderful space and be there, fully alive and safe and content. When you are ready, allow this place to disappear as well, without regret, as this place will always be available to you. Now create for yourself a wonderful space that you have never imagined before — a place out of space and time or anything that you know or ever dreamed could be. You are safe and at home in this space. Experience all tension or pain or illness or discomfort disappearing from your experience as you completely experience this new place to Be.

When you are ready, allow this place to disappear from your experience, keeping the relaxation and ease, as you create for yourself the reality that you left when you began this process. Recreate the people, animals, things that were with you or around you in that reality, give them life from your abundance of Life and vitality. Breathe and smile at the beauty and perfection of your creation.

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

Message: Truth, Truisms and Truthiness
Sunday, March 1, 2009

Truth is one of the most circular and self-referential words in the dictionary:

- truth** |troʊθ| noun (pl. truths |troʊðz; troʊθs|)
the quality or state of being true
- (also the truth) that which is true or in accordance with fact or reality
- true** |troʊ| adjective (truer , truest)
- 1 in accordance with fact or reality
- [attrib.] rightly or strictly so called; genuine
 - [attrib.] real or actual
 - said when conceding a point in argument or discussion
- 2 accurate or exact
- (of a note) exactly in tune.
 - (of a compass bearing) measured relative to true north
 - correctly positioned, balanced, or aligned; upright or level.
- 3 loyal or faithful
- [predic.] (true to) accurately conforming to (a standard or expectation); faithful to

So perhaps the etymology will help. Etymology is the history of a word in its usage, which may change over time, as language developed. Etymology itself has its roots in truth: **etymology** 1398, from Gk. *etymologia*, from *etymon* "true sense" (neut. of *etymos* "true," related to *eteos* "true") + *logos* "word." In classical times, of meanings; later, of histories. Latinized by Cicero as *veriloquium*.

Truth O.E. *triewð* (W.Saxon), *treowð* (Mercian) "faithfulness, quality of being true," from *triewe*, *treowe* "faithful" [**True** O.E. *triewe* (W.Saxon), *treowe* (Mercian) "faithful, trustworthy," from P.Gmc. **trewjaz* "having or characterized by good faith" (cf. O.Fris. *triuwi*, Du. *getrouw*, O.H.G. *gatriuwu*, Ger. *treu*, O.N. *tryggr*, Goth. *triggws* "faithful, trusty"), perhaps ultimately from PIE **dru-* "tree," on the notion of "steadfast as an oak." Cf., from same root, Lith. *drutas* "firm," Welsh *drud*, O.Ir. *dron* "strong," Welsh *derw* "true," O.Ir. *derb* "sure." Sense of "consistent with fact" first recorded c.1205; that of "real, genuine, not counterfeit" is from 1398; that of "agreeing with a certain standard" (as true north) is from c.1550. Of artifacts, "accurately fitted or shaped" it is recorded from 1474; the verb in this sense is from 1841.] Meaning "accuracy, correctness" is from 1570. Unlike lie (v.), there is no primary verb in English for "speak the truth." While it is possible to lie in English, it is impossible to 'truth.' Noun sense of "something that is true" is first recorded c. 1362.

We can see from this history of the concept of truth, that it begins with a foundation of facticity, or correlation with the experiential test of reality. If you smack it with your hand, and it hurts, it is true. That's fine, as far as it goes. I am willing to relate to the apparent reality of physical, present facts, as they seem to be, even if it is all illusion. If I take a roasting pan out of a hot oven with my bare hands, it will hurt. I don't have a sense of being constrained by that. I appreciate my oven mitts.

We make an unfortunate and unwarranted leap to include correlation with experience as truth in non-factual matters. For instance, we have all had enough experiences of "not fitting in" to a situation (one is enough) to believe that to some extent we do not belong. The set of human beings who sometimes feel they don't belong is the same as the set of human beings. Therefore we all belong.

We limit ourselves by our beliefs based in past experiences. We construct reality based on the past. this past appears to be as matter-of-fact as an oak tree, but is it?

The beginning of the mastery of anything is in telling the truth.

ἔτυμος vs. ἀληθία

We saw that etymos in Greek means the ‘true sense’ of something. Just because it is sensible, it doesn’t necessarily follow that it is true. There is another word for true in Greek that is very interesting and illuminates the conversation. The word is *alethéia*. It is the unconcealed truth. It is an apophatic word, a negation of something. the alpha-privatum before the root word reverses it. The root is *léthe*. We get the word lethal from this word. It has to do with killing or hiding. Alethéia is to unhide or unkill. We have a tendency to to kill off our own possibilities and constrain ourselves to more of the past (only we hope it will be different).

One of the ways we kill off the truth is with truisms.

Truism “self-evident truth” is from 1708, first attested in writings of Jonathan Swift. What do we say these things for? “You can’t win ‘em all.” “You can’t fight city hall.” “You can always trust your ‘gut feelings.’” “There will always be poverty and hunger in the World.” Here’s one that is insidious: “anything is possible.” The last one relegates possibility to the realm of fantasy or wishful thinking. What if Everything really is possible? Truisms are not true, but they may be ‘truthy.’

Truthiness “act or quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true, rather than those known to be true,” catch word popularized in this sense by U.S. comedian Stephen Colbert, declared by American Dialect Society to be “2005 Word of the Year.”

Truthiness is a subtle lie dressed up as the truth. “We are winning the war on [fill in the blank].” “The fundamentals of our economy are sound.” We all have personal opinions, and if we have personal ‘facts,’ that is truthiness. Gut feelings and intuition, opinions and preferences, ideology and belief, all get in the way of telling the truth on ourselves. These barriers to truth keep us from mastery.

“I can’t draw.” is a comment that I’ve heard from many people. Telling the truth about it may not produce mastery in drawing (although it could), and it may produce mastery at being the cause of one’s life. I have never heard the word ‘can’t’ used when it did not mean unwillingness. I can’t draw = I am unwilling to draw.

Ludwig van Beethoven composed the Ninth Symphony, the twelfth through the sixteenth quartets and several other masterpieces while completely deaf. There are artists who draw and paint with their feet or their mouths. Don’t tell me you can’t do something. You can always choose. It’s all right if you don’t draw. You don’t have to. Just recognize that it is your choice. The conditions of your life are your choice. What’s possible for you is your choice.

It takes courage to tell the truth: that you are great and magnificent and powerful and perfect. I have compassion for the courage it takes to recognize who you are.

When Pau Casals, the legendary cellist, was in his nineties, old and frail, he could still play the most beautiful music on his cello. His caregivers would tie the bow into his right hand because he could no longer hold it. Someone asked him why he still practiced three hours a day at his age. “I’m beginning to notice some improvement,” he replied. He knew a lot about the truth and mastery, and courage:

“Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If he listens to it and acts on it, he is giving a great deal of what it is the world needs most. It is not complicated but it takes courage. It takes courage for a person to listen to his own goodness and act on it.” — Pau (Pablo) Casals

Look for your internal motivational conversation limits you through lies, truisms and truthiness. Tell yourself the truth (revealed through inquiry) and see what happens. Come back next week and tell us about it.

Dialogue on Truth, Truisms and Truthiness

Completion

Next week: March 8

Next Sunday, the 8th of March, Daylight Saving Time begins. We'll be starting service at the regular time of 8 AM, although the regular time will occur at a different time. We'll call it 8 and be here for **Unconscious? Who? Me?** Please join us for an inquiry into being conscious and present, and the often dramatic alternatives.