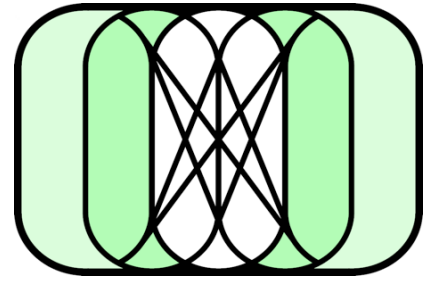


Church of Creation

Order of Service

Sunday, March 8, 2009 8:00 AM



Welcome:

You are always already chosen

Hymn: Blah-Blah

Announcements and sharing

This week in Semiotics: **More on Codes**

Lost In Space...

The Moon, Saturn and the Heart of a Lion

Birthday acknowledgment:

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (March 8, 1841 – March 6, 1935)

American jurist and influential Supreme Court Justice

Process:

An Audible *Ko-moi-n...*

Message:

Unconscious? Who? Me?

Dialogue on Unconscious? Who? Me?

Next week: March 8

Beware the Ides of March: Superstition

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 Truth, Truisms and Truthiness, after looking for your internal motivational conversation that limited you through lies, truisms and truthiness, and telling yourself the truth (revealed through inquiry). What happened?...

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: More on Codes

Codes are interpretive frameworks which are used by both producers and interpreters of texts. In creating texts we select and combine signs in relation to the codes with which we are familiar, to limit the range of possible meanings they are likely to generate when read by others. Codes help to simplify phenomena, making it easier to communicate experiences. In reading texts, we interpret signs with reference to what seem to be appropriate codes. Usually the appropriate codes are obvious, 'overdetermined' by all sorts of contextual cues. Signs within texts can be seen as embodying cues to the codes which are appropriate for interpreting them. The medium employed clearly influences the choice of codes. The frame of a painting or the cover of a book highlights the nature of the code; the title of a work of art refers to the code adopted much more often than to the content of the message. In this sense we routinely 'judge a

book by its cover.' We can typically identify a text as a poem simply by the way in which it is set out on the page. The use of what is sometimes called 'scholarly apparatus' (such as introductions, acknowledgements, section headings, tables, diagrams, notes, references, bibliographies, appendices and indexes) - is what makes academic texts immediately identifiable as such to readers. Such cueing is part of the metalingual function of signs. With familiar codes we are rarely conscious of our acts of interpretation, but occasionally a text requires us to work a little harder — for instance, by pinning down the most appropriate signified for a key signifier — before we can identify the relevant codes for making sense of the text as a whole. This is how jokes based on wordplay work. For instance, a man phones his doctor and cries, "My wife keeps shouting 'don't - won't - can't - shouldn't - couldn't.' What's happening?" The doctor responds, "That depends. How far apart are the contractions?"

Social Codes [In a broader sense all semiotic codes are 'social codes'] The World

- verbal language (phonological, syntactical, lexical, prosodic and paralinguistic sub-codes);
- bodily codes (bodily contact, proximity, physical orientation, appearance, facial expression, gaze, head nods, gestures and posture);
- commodity codes (fashions, clothing, cars);
- behavioral codes (protocols, rituals, role-playing, games).

Textual Codes [Representational codes] The Medium and Genre

- scientific codes, including mathematics;
- aesthetic codes within the various expressive arts (poetry, drama, painting, sculpture, music, etc.) - including classicism, romanticism, realism;
- genre, rhetorical and stylistic codes: narrative (plot, character, action, dialogue, setting, etc.), exposition, argument and so on;
- mass media codes including photographic, televisual, filmic, radio, newspaper and magazine codes, both technical and conventional (including format).

Interpretative Codes [Semiotic codes] Relationship of World and Word - Modality

- perceptual codes: e.g. of visual, auditory or other sense perception (note that this code does not assume intentional communication);
- ideological codes: More broadly, these include codes for 'encoding' and 'decoding' texts - dominant (or 'hegemonic'), negotiated or oppositional. More specifically, we may list the '-isms', such as individualism, liberalism, conservatism, communitarianism, feminism, racism, materialism, capitalism, progressivism, socialism, objectivism, consumerism and so on. (However, all codes can be seen as ideological).

Interpretive codes, bringing together the first two categories, give us the code by which we make modality judgments of possibility, essence, necessity or quality.

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 8th through March 14th**, we begin this evening, if your skies are clear, with the ringed planet Saturn officially at opposition and this means that it will be at its closest, biggest and brightest for the entire year. Furthermore it will be paid a visit by a Moon of many names, which will also visit the heart of Leo the Lion.

About an hour after sunset, facing east, you will see a dazzling almost full Moon, which when it becomes completely full on Tuesday, will be the Sap Moon, the Lenten Moon, the Full Crow Moon or the Worm Moon.

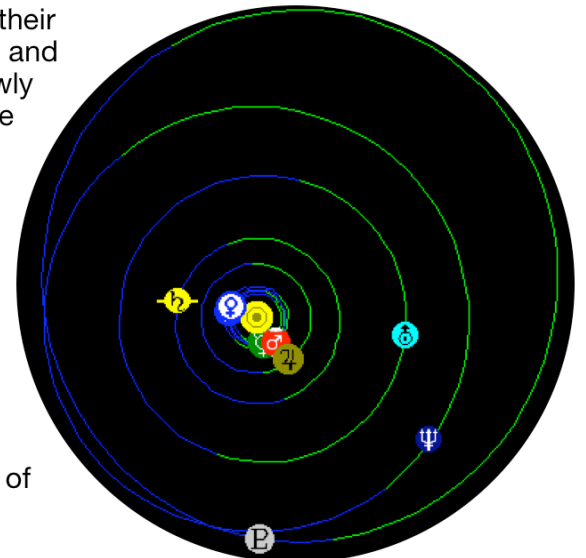
Just below the Moon you should see Regulus, which is the brightest star of the constellation Leo the Lion. The front part of Leo is marked by stars, which if we connect by lines looks like a backwards question mark. The rear part of Leo is marked by three stars, which if we connect by lines forms a perfect right triangle. And it is just off to the side of this rear triangle where we see yellowish Saturn at its brightest and closest for the year.



Tonight use the Moon to find Regulus just below it and 24 hours later on Monday night use the Moon to find Regulus just above it. And then on Tuesday when the Moon is full it will be next to Saturn and you'll be able to watch the two of them glide together across the sky all night long side by side.

That is because all full Moons are visible all night long from sunset to sunrise, and whenever a planet is at opposition it, too is visible all night long from sunset to sunrise. So just after sunset on Tuesday look for them side by side in the east and then watch them climb the heavens hour after hour. They will reach their highest point between midnight and 1 a.m., after which they will slowly descend side by side toward the western horizon, setting just as the Sun gets ready to rise.

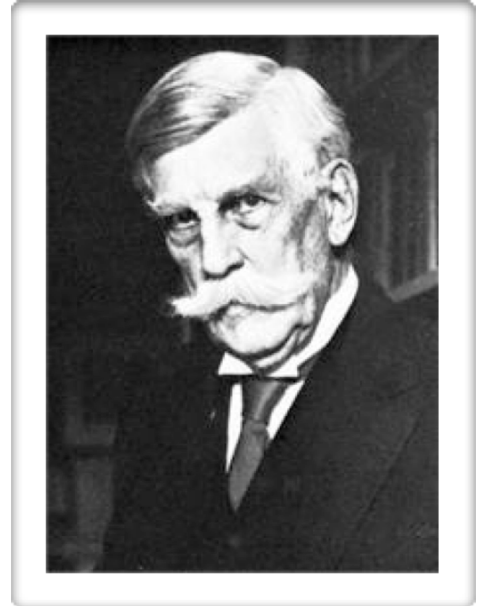
If you have access to a small telescope you may be surprised that Saturn's rings will be almost invisible. And that's because this year they are presenting themselves almost edge on to us, which makes Saturn look much less “Saturny” than usual. This happens approximately every 14 to 15 years, but there is a benefit to not seeing the rings because whenever they are wide open they reflect so much light that it's difficult to see the innermost of Saturn's 52 Moons.



Birthday Acknowledgement: March 8th

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (March 8, 1841 – March 6, 1935) was an American jurist who served on the Supreme Court of the United States from 1902 to 1932.

Holmes was known for his pithy, short, and frequently quoted opinions. In more than thirty years on the Supreme Court bench, he ruled on cases spanning the whole range of federal law. Beginning with his first opinion for the Court, in *Otis v. Parker*, Holmes declared that "due process of law," the fundamental principle of fairness, protected people from unreasonable legislation, but was limited to only those fundamental principles enshrined in the common law and did not protect most economic interests. In a series of opinions during and after the First World War, he held that the freedom of expression guaranteed by federal and state constitutions simply declared a common-law privilege to do harm, except in cases where the expression, in the circumstances in which it was uttered, posed a "clear and present danger" of causing some harm that the legislature had properly forbidden. In *Schenck v. United States*, Holmes announced this doctrine for an unanimous Court, famously declaring that the First Amendment would not protect a person "falsely shouting fire in a theatre and causing a panic."



The following year, in *Abrams v. United States*, Holmes delivered a strongly worded dissent in which he criticized the majority's use of the clear and present danger test, arguing that protests by political dissidents posed no actual risk of interfering with war effort. In his dissent, he accused the Court of punishing the defendants for their opinions rather than their acts. The Supreme Court departed from his views where the validity of a statute was in question, adopting the principle that a legislature could properly declare that some forms of speech posed a clear and present danger, regardless of the circumstances in which they were uttered.

By the time Holmes was 80, he had dissented in so many opinions that he became known as "The Great Dissenter." Holmes was criticized during his lifetime and afterward for his philosophical views, which his opponents characterized as **moral relativism**. This was a consistent extension of his own version of strict **utilitarianism**, which weighed the morality of policies according to their overall measurable consequences in society and not according to their own normative worth. Holmes's critics believe that he saw few restraints on the power of a governing class to enact its interests into law. Holmes served on the court until January 12, 1932, when his fellow justices, citing his advanced age, suggested that the time had come for him to step down. By that time, at 90 years of age, he was the oldest justice to serve in the court's history.

Quotes

- A child's education should begin at least one hundred years before he is born.
- It seems to me that at this time we need education in the obvious more than the investigation of the obscure.
- A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.
- A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience.
- A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged; it is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and time in which it is used.
- Any two philosophers can tell each other all they know in two hours.
- Carve every word before you let it fall.

- Certitude is not the test of certainty. We have been cocksure of many things that were not so.
- Lawyers spend a great deal of their time shoveling smoke.
- Man's mind, stretched by a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions.
- Most of the things we do, we do for no better reason than that our fathers have done them or our neighbors do them, and the same is true of a larger part than what we suspect of what we think.
- Nothing is so commonplace has the wish to be remarkable.
- The mind of a bigot is like the pupil of the eye. The more light you shine on it, the more it will contract.
- The right to swing my fist ends where the other man's nose begins.
- To have doubted one's own first principles is the mark of a civilized man.
- We should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinions that we loathe.

Process: **An Audible Ko-moi-n...**

With today's process, we are going to do an experiment. We are going to create an audible communion. I do not like the word, communion. Augustine gave the name to the sacrament instituted at the Last Supper. It comes from the Latin, *com-munio*: within the walls, as against those outside the walls. Going back to Proto-Indo-European (which is similar to Sanskrit) we find *ko-moi-n*: with unity and sharing.

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 very still within yourSelf, and allow yourself to consider the world of waking consciousness that surrounds you. Consider that the content of this world seems to be separate from you and that all forms seem to be partially concealed and partially revealed in their brokenness and imperfection. Consider further that these broken and imperfect forms are as they should be in this world of waking consciousness and that it is all right with you. All of these forms are unified in their brokenness. For the moment, you can give up any notions that they should be some other way, give up any resistance to things being exactly as they are, give up any tension or anxiety about this world or your body, allow yourself to relax and express your generosity to this world of waking consciousness with the sound of 'Ahhhhhhh.' You can express this 'Ahhh' sound at any pitch or tone that resonates with you and expresses you. Repeat the Ahhhhh.

Still breathing and smiling with joy and feeling very safe and calm, create for yourself the experience of Being fully aware of the dream consciousness in the world of dreams. In a dream state, there are no stable meanings, nothing has to conform to any specific reality and everything is You. All of the forms and apparent opposites are one in the same You. Male and female is You; black and white is You; up and down is You. All that ever was is You. In the dream state, there is a complete unification of all in You. Allow this unification to extend to yourSelf and your body sensations, such that all pain and tension, weakness, illness or discomfort can unify and heal into perfect You. Express this perfect union with the sound of 'Oooooooh.' Allow the Oooh to express and resonate with You at any pitch or tone that is comfortable and pleasant for You. Repeat Ooooooh.

Breathing and smiling and feeling very warm and safe and relaxed, allow yourSelf to go further into your exploration to enter the state of deep and dreamless consciousness — the consciousness of no consciousness. A state of nothing like the Nothing from which all things come. In this deep and dreamless consciousness there is no pain, no conflict, no tension, no distress. There is Nothing and you are No Thing in particular. Express this unification of all things in Nothing with the sound of Mmmmmmmmmmm. At any pitch or tone that works for you: Mmmmmmm. Mmmmmmmmm

Experience the unifications of the three states of unification: the unification of everything in its brokenness, the unification of everything in You and the unification of everything in Nothing. Express the unification in all three expressions Ahhhh Oooooh Mmmmmmm. Aum. This is the sound that is not made by two things striking each other. This is the sound of the Universe. Aum.

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

Message:

Unconscious? Who? Me?

Sunday, March 8, 2009

What is Consciousness?

conscious |'kän CH əs| adjective

aware of and responding to one's surroundings; awake.

- having knowledge of something; aware
- (conscious of) painfully aware of; sensitive to
- concerned with or worried about a particular matter
- (of an action or feeling) deliberate and intentional
- (of the mind or a thought) directly perceptible to and under the control of the person concerned.

1601, from L. *consciūs* "knowing, aware," from *conscire*; probably a loan-translation of Gk. *syneidon.*, meaning 'to take a deliberate look at the current state.' Sense of "active and awake" is from 1837.

Most of us are not really conscious most of the time, and we are not even conscious that we are not conscious. It shows up in the mistakes we make: 90% of auto accidents, 90% of workplace accidents and 70% of plane crashes are the product of people not paying attention. You might think that if you are at the controls of a jet airliner, you would pay attention to what you were doing. After your four-thousandth flight from Washington to Buffalo and back, you might not think so. One of the things that gets in the way of consciousness is familiarity. The crash of a commuter jet in Buffalo a few weeks ago was the product of being on autopilot for too long. The plane was on autopilot, and the pilots were also on autopilot. When it seemed like they were in trouble, the pilot overcorrected and made matters worse, crashing into a densely populated area. On the other hand, Chesley Sullenberger was fully conscious of who he was, where he was and what was possible, and he brought his craft down safely in the Hudson with no engines, saving the lives of 155 people. Captain Sullenberger has been honored for what is called heroism, when it was really the uncommon occurrence of a conscious human being.

Once a person is blamed for causing an accident or honored for heroism, we seldom inquire further into it. It seems that, as a culture, we are more interested in the 'who' than the 'what happened.' The 'what happened' could make a difference for all of us.

Impediments to consciousness

1. Being everywhere and always, except for here and now

Being present is being conscious of here and now, the only place and time that one can be alive. Hurrying to what's next, or assuming that the present will be like past experiences can be dangerous. Consciousness is about deliberately being sensitive to *right now*.

2. Attachment to one's point-of-view

People tend to be more attached to their point-of-view than the facts that are apparent in front of them. You can be right or conscious — not both. [Glass on the floor, both parties blaming the other]

3. Listening to the ongoing narrative in your head, rather than listening for what people are saying to you. [Woman asks for directions and won't listen to them.]

4. Pretending to 'multitask'

Multitasking is multiple distractions from being alive. Aside from walking and chewing gum at the same time, there isn't much we can do all at once. Human beings are physically and mentally incapable of doing more than one complex task or two simple tasks at once. Driving seems simple enough, although it can get very complex with very little advanced warning. Do you really need to talk on the phone also?

5. Reasonable expectations

In any given situation, we have reasonable expectations of how it will go. This can lead to errors that I call 'skimming errors.' We relate to the world symbolically, and we often see what we expect to see. Whether reading an article or reading a social situation, we can miss important details because we have skimmed, rather than read. Ask open questions rather than looking for affirmation of your expectations. Instead of a closed question like "Don't you love chocolate," consider asking the open question, "What are your favorite foods?"

Being present, being fully alive in *this* moment, takes courage. You have to be willing to grab the bull by the tail and face the situation.

Courage is the price that life extracts for
granting peace. The Soul that knows it not,
knows no release from little things.

— Amelia Earhart

Create the courage to face your life in the present, exactly as it is, exactly as you are.

Dialogue on Unconscious? Who? Me?

Completion

Next week: March 15

Next Sunday, the 15th of March, is the Ides of March. Julius Caesar was warned of this fateful day, and it was popularized in the English-speaking world by William Shakespeare. In his play, Julius Caesar, Act 1 Scene II a soothsayer tells the Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March." Join us next week for **Beware the Ides of March: Superstition**, in which we explore the phenomena of superstition, correlation, causation and how these affect us.