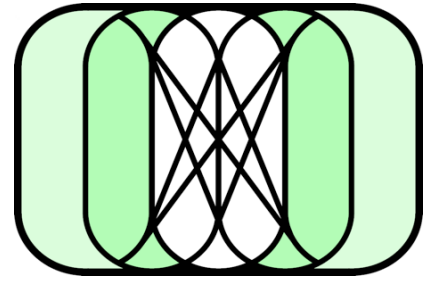


## **Church of Creation**

### **Order of Service**

Sunday, March 22, 2009 8:00 AM



#### **Welcome:**

You are always already chosen

**Hymn:** Blah-Blah

#### **Announcements and sharing**

Superstitions...

This week in Semiotics: **Subjectivity and Objectivity**

#### **Lost In Space...**

Ram, JaM and thank you, Ma'am

#### **Birthday acknowledgment:**

**E. D. Hirsch, Jr.** (b. March 22, 1928 - 81 today)

U.S. educator and academic literary critic

#### **Process:**

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

#### **Message:**

**Vernal Equinox: Equanimity & Balance**

**Dialogue on Vernal Equinox: Equanimity & Balance**

#### **Next week: March 29**

Stupid Stuff: Who are we fooling?

## 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 superstitions that do not seem to be superstitions:**

Is, am, are (present tense of the verb 'to be')

Because (illusions of cause and effect)

If (hypothetical cause and effect)

What have you noticed?...

**Studies in the 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: Subjectivity and Objectivity

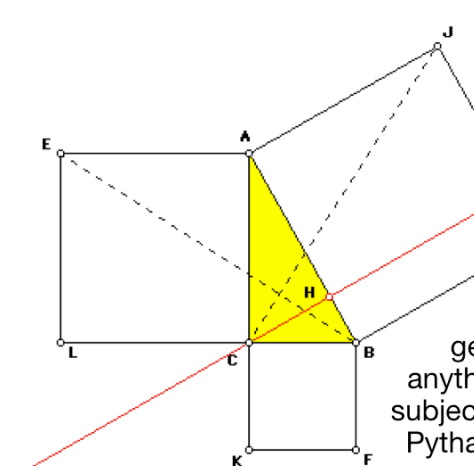
The distinction between subjectivity and objectivity is a hazy one for most people, yet inquiring into it could make a difference in life. Today, we will consider subjectivity and objectivity, as well as ourselves as **structures of interpretation**.

In grammar, the subject performs the action specified by the verb, and the object is the recipient of that action. In a simple sentence like, "I oiled the hinge," it is clear that I am the subject, the one who does the verb-action, oiling, and the hinge receives the oiling action I perform. In a sentence like, "The future of the US Economy seems dismal," what is the subject, verb and object? Grammatically, the future (in particular, the economic future) is the subject that is seeming. Dismal is an adjective that specifies or

modifies the future. There is no object. This apparently objective statement is lacking an object. How strange!

Coded into the sentence is a subject and object that are left unspoken. [I believe] the future of the US economy seems dismal. I am the subject again and I am believing a dismal future. By not speaking the subject, the subject can hide one's subjective position, and for some, a subjective opinion will sound like objective fact. When confronted about the Iran-Contra Affair in 1986, Ronald Reagan asserted, "Mistakes were made." What he meant to say was, "I violated my oath of office and several dozen Federal laws." Look into the encoded subjectivity whenever someone states something objectively, especially without an object.

Last week, Bill O'Reilly stated, "By all accounts, George Bush won the war on terrorism." 'George Bush' is the subject, the verb 'to win' provides the action and 'war' is the object. Once again, the statement is offered as objective fact. However, an objective fact is always true, under all circumstances, in all places for everyone. The disagreement of one person somewhere, places this in the realm of subjectivity. [O'Reilly declares that] Bush won the war. The addition of 'by all accounts' is just smoke intended to obscure the hidden subject sleight of hand.



To completely get inside the code, the subject is again, I. I heard Bill O'Reilly state... you know. One's subjectivity is almost inescapable. Objective statements refer only to ordinary, process oriented matters. Two plus two equal four. The subject is 'two plus two' and the object of the equaling is 'four.' This is a tautology:  $A = A$ . Anything that is not tautological is likely to be subjective. The area of the square built upon the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the areas of the squares upon the remaining sides. This is tricky, as it is only true in Euclidean geometry. In non-Euclidean geometry, it falls apart. "Well, I never do anything with non-Euclidean geometry anyway." There you are as the subject again. This is why the Pythagorean theorem is not called the Pythagorean 'fact.'

We are all structures of interpretation, built up through the years, opinion by opinion, rule by rule, preference by preference. In the examples, so far, I have been the subject, for the most part. When my voice touches your eardrum, you become the subject. What you heard may not be what I said, and I get to be responsible for what you, as your subject, heard. You get to be responsible for your subjective-position, your structure of interpretation, your listening toward the people who speak toward you.

To get out of the murky depths of subjectivity and emerge into alignment of meaning, ask questions. Keep asking open questions (distinguished as questions that can be answered yes or no) until you get the communication and the context clearly.

What question would you ask me to clarify your understanding of subjectivity?

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 22<sup>nd</sup> through March 28<sup>th</sup>**, we are in the first full week of Spring, and the first full week of the astrological sign of Aries the Ram (sheep, lamb). Aries was the magical flying ram that belonged to Phrixus. In Greek mythology, Phrixus (also Phryxus) was the son of Athamus, king of Boiotia, and Nephele (a goddess of Clouds). His twin sister Helle and he were hated by their stepmother, Ino. Queen Ino hatched a devious plot to get rid of the twins, cooking all of Boiotia's crop seeds so they would not grow.

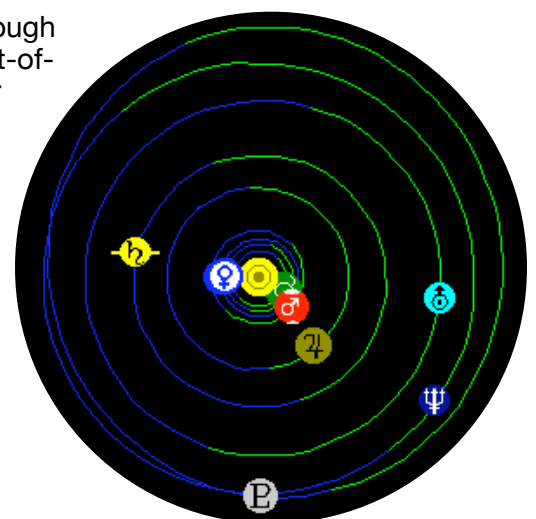
The local farmers, afraid of famine, asked a nearby oracle for assistance. Ino bribed the men sent to the

oracle to lie and tell the others that the oracle required the sacrifice of Phrixus and Helle. Before they were killed, though, Phrixus and Helle were rescued by a flying (or, in some accounts of the story, swimming) ram with golden wool sent by Nephele, their natural mother. Their starting point is variously recorded as Halos in Thessaly and Orchomenus in Boeotia. During their flight Helle fainted, fell off the ram and drowned in the Dardanelles, renamed the Hellespont (sea of Helle), but Phrixus survived all the way to Colchis, where King Aeëtes, the son of the sun god Helios, took him in and treated him kindly, giving Phrixus his daughter, Chalcioppe, in marriage. In gratitude, Phrixus sacrificed the ram to Zeus and gave the king the golden fleece of the ram, which Aeëtes hung in a tree in the holy grove of Ares in his kingdom, guarded by a dragon that never slept. This sets the stage for a later myth, in which Jason and the Argonauts steal the golden fleece and bring it back to Greece.

Tomorrow morning, 30 minutes or so before sunrise, in the East, we can see Jupiter, the waning crescent Moon and Mars in a line, from right to left. Tuesday morning, the even slimmer crescent Moon will be right next to Mars, and if you continue that line farther to the left, you'll see crescent Venus, as the morning star. Then, up to an hour after sunset, you could see Venus as the evening star in the West. We can see Venus both morning and evening from Tuesday through Thursday, and not again until 2017. Venus is just about exactly between the Earth and the Sun in retrograde motion, and this happens only every eight years or so.

The planets Mercury and Uranus are also in conjunction, although we cannot see them. They are behind the Sun, from our point-of-view, here on Earth. The astrological significance of this is for powerful conversation and new possibilities today and for the coming week.

Join us after church at **Buca di Beppo** in **Wheeling** located at **604 North Milwaukee Avenue** at **11:30 AM** for a great lunch and powerful conversations for new possibilities.



## **Birthday Acknowledgement: March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Eric Donald Hirsch, Jr.** (March 22, 1928 - 81 today) is a U.S. educator and academic literary critic. Now retired, he was until recently the University Professor of Education and Humanities and the Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English Emeritus at the University of Virginia. He is best known for his writings about cultural literacy.



In 1977 Hirsch published *The Philosophy of Composition*, the title of which was copied (somewhat ironically) from an essay by Edgar Allen Poe (1846). In it, Hirsch explores the question of what makes prose more or less readable. His work on composition led to a shift in the emphasis of his career. While giving tests of relative readability at two colleges in Virginia, he discovered that while the relative readability of a text was an important factor in determining comprehension, an even more important factor was the one's background knowledge. Students at the University of Virginia were able to understand a passage on Grant and Lee, while students at a community college struggled with the passage, apparently because they lacked basic understanding of the American Civil War. This and related discoveries led Hirsch to formulate the concept of **cultural literacy** -- the idea that reading comprehension requires not just formal decoding skills but also wide-ranging background knowledge. He concluded that schools should not be agnostic about what is taught but should teach a highly specific curriculum that give children familiarity with concepts and events writers take for granted.

*"We have ignored cultural literacy in thinking about education We ignore the air we breathe until it is thin or foul. Cultural literacy is the oxygen of social intercourse."*

Hirsch founded the Core Knowledge Foundation in 1986, and wrote *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs To Know* in 1987. He also co-wrote *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* in 1988. *Cultural Literacy* became a bestseller. Hirsch's ideas were extremely controversial. Although himself a liberal, he was attacked as a neo-conservative and advocate for a conservative, lily-white curriculum, a promoter of "drill and kill" pedagogy and a reactionary force. His theories were criticized for not addressing differences in learning styles and lacking information about minorities.

Beginning in 1997, Hirsch began publishing books in the Core Knowledge Series. Each book focuses on the content knowledge that should be taught to each particular elementary grade level. There are different books covering kindergarten through sixth grades, plus at least one book outlining an overview of what should be covered in the whole elementary curriculum.

In 1996, Hirsch published *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*. In it, Hirsch proposed that Romanticized, anti-knowledge theories of education prevalent in America are not only the cause of America's lackluster educational performance, but also a cause of widening inequalities in class and race. Hirsch portrays the focus of American educational theory as one which attempts to give students intellectual tools such as "critical thinking skills," but which denigrates teaching any actual content, labeling it "mere rote learning." Hirsch states that it is this attitude which has failed to develop knowledgeable students.

*Cultural Literacy*: P 112 ¶ 3

We have two copies of *Cultural Literacy* in our church library.

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

As you may recall from a couple of weeks ago, the Proto-Indo-European (which is similar to Sanskrit) word *ko-moi-n*: stands for 'with unity and sharing.' As we come together and celebrate our unity of Being and sharing of experience, we may participate in this process with an intention to create something powerful for ourselves.

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 'Ooooooh.' 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. This is the sound of Aum. Aum. Aum.

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

## Message: Vernal Equinox: Equanimity & Balance

Sunday, March 22, 2009

### Equinox

There are two days each year when the daytime and nighttime hours are approximately equal -- each being 12 hours long. One occurs between March 19 and 21 and is called the Spring or Vernal Equinox. The other happens in September. These dates have strong ties to religious celebrations, both ancient and modern. Last Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:44 AM Central Daylight Time the Sun was precisely above the Earth's equator, the definition of celestial equinox.

The mythic and religious significance of this time of year include, in many cultures:

- Victory of a god of light (or life, rebirth, resurrection) over the powers of darkness (or death).
- The descent of the goddess or god into the underworld for a period of three days. This is such a popular theme among religions that mythologists refer to it as "the harrowing of Hell."

A fundamental theme of this time is the balancing of powers: light/dark; life/death; heaven/hell and so on. Some say that the balancing of gravitational fields makes it possible to balance an egg on its end during the equinox. I have not yet been able to do this.

**Equanimity** |,ēkwə'nimitē; ,ekwə-| noun

mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, esp. in a difficult situation

DERIVATIVES **equanimous** |i'kwänəməs| adjective

ORIGIN early 17th cent. (also in the sense 'fairness, impartiality'): from Latin *aequanimitas*, from *aequus* 'equal' + *animus* 'mind.'

Equality of mind or Being gives one stability. One is not swayed or thrown to one side or another by circumstance, keeping the peace and stillness of the center. One even occupies the metaphysical middle between the extreme positions that reality ultimately exists or does not exist. From this central space, authentic inquiry can be made without having to settle on an answer.

In Buddhism, a similar teaching of equanimity is called The Middle Way or Middle Path (Sanskrit: *madhyamā-pratipad*) — the practice of non-extremism.

Eggs notwithstanding, we can also consider balance.

**Balance** |'baləns| noun

1 an even distribution of weight enabling someone or something to remain upright and steady

- stability of one's mind or feelings
- *Sailing* the ability of a boat to stay on course without adjustment of the rudder.

2 a condition in which different elements are equal or in the correct proportions

- *Art* harmony of design and proportion.
- [*in sing.*] the relative volume of various sources of sound

3 an apparatus for weighing, esp. one with a central pivot, beam, and a pair of scales.

- ( **the Balance** ) the zodiacal sign or constellation *Libra*.

4 a counteracting weight or force.

- (also **balance wheel**) the regulating device in a mechanical clock or watch.

5 a predominating weight or amount; the majority

6 a figure representing the difference between credits and debits in an account; the amount of money held in an account

- the difference between an amount due and an amount paid
- [*in sing.*] an amount left

ORIGIN Middle English (sense 3) : from Old French *balance* (noun), *balancer* (verb), based on late Latin (*libra*) *bilanx* '(balance) having two scale pans,' from *bi-* 'twice, having two' + *lanx* 'scalepan.'

JERUSALEM, March 19 (Reuters) - Israel's military was rocked on Thursday by Gaza war veterans' accounts of soldiers' killings of civilians and allegations that deep contempt for Palestinians pervaded its ranks.

[A] squad leader said most of the men under his command felt "the lives of Palestinians ... are something very, very less important than the lives of our soldiers, so as far as they are concerned, they can justify it that way".

This sort of comparison between relative values tilts the scale based on preference, desire and past decisions. It is inherently inauthentic. As Heidegger stated, "Thirst for knowledge and greed for explanations never lead to a thinking inquiry. Curiosity is always the concealed arrogance of a self-consciousness that banks on a self-invented ratio and its rationality."

We sometimes think that we can tip the scales in the favor of our self-invented ratios. This seldom if ever works out well. Most often, disastrous results ensue, and we still persist in our attempts to gain advantage. Keeping the balance centered produces results that exceed our limited scales.

We like to think that we are good, and in tipping the scale to what we call 'good' others are invalidated in a dualistic ratio. Whether we consider the good/bad scale, or silly/serious, sober/drunk, smart/stupid, these rational ratios diminish us all. As Nietzsche wrote, "Become what you are." Consider the possibility that You are Everything and Nothing in particular, and Everything is always already balanced and equanimous.

## Dialogue on Equanimity & Balance

### Completion

### Next week: March 29

Next Sunday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, is the Sunday before April Fools' Day, perhaps the goofiest of all holidays. It seems to have been designed especially for ten-year-old boys, who enjoy it immensely. Join us next week for **Stoopid Stuff: Who are we fooling?**, in which we explore the ways we attempt to fool ourselves.