

The EUDAIMONIST

"What is the beautiful thing to do?"



FELLOWSHIP OF REASON®

December 2016, Vol. 18 No. 4

The official newsletter of
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.

Martin Cowen, Editor

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"An intellectual is a person whose mind watches itself." Albert Camus

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The Fellowship of Reason is a reason-based moral community. Our organization does not do politics. While on principle, we eschew politics at FORum—our monthly meeting celebrating human achievement—sometimes a political message might be suspected between the lines of the occasional unscreened and uncensored presentation. Such experiences are rare.

Without scientific evidence, one suspects via anecdotes that our sister organizations like Atlanta Freethought, Sunday Assembly, Unitarians, and various other Atlanta-based "church-without-God" groups are politically unified around some variant of the Christian religion. In FOR, we are Eudaimonists, which is, in essence, the philosophy of Aristotle. Our ethical philosophy is unique.

We in the Fellowship of Reason are proud to welcome people of all political factions. We are proud of the fact that we can "stay in the room," even when faced with disagreements among various factions. We can agree to disagree when necessary.

One reason that we have been able to survive for 18 years while enjoying political diversity is the fact that we focus on continuing adult education rather than upon changing the world. Recent examples of FOR educational programming include:

- Poetry Group studied the poet **Elisabeth Bishop**, who was the Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 1949 to 1950
- FOR Sunday School reviewed the work of **Johannes Vermeer** (1632 to 1675)
- FOR Tapes listened to a Yale Online lecture on **Niccolò Machiavelli** (1469-1572)

Those who would "change the world" need a plan and that plan is, by definition, political. FOR does not seek to change the world. We seek to enjoy and learn about the world. Our members hope to continue that classical education most of us were denied until now and to flourish in the process.

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Invitation to Lifetime Membership

The Fellowship of Reason extends our heartfelt thanks to our Lifetime Members:

Lifetime Members

- I. Mary Ampola
- II. Dan Barber
- III. Peter Brookner
- IV. Toni Brookner
- V. Scott Carper
- VI. Linda Cowen
- VII. Martin Cowen
- VIII. Carlos Franco
- IX. Claire Gloeckner
- X. William F. Greene
- XI. Sally Hull
- XII. Ron Menich
- XIII. Michael Norman (deceased)
- XIV. Vera Norman (deceased) (photograph here→)
- XV. Randy Sekeres
- XVI. David Van Mersbergen
- XVII. Tom Welch
- XVIII. David Ziebell

Because of these lifetime members FOR carries a cash balance over \$8,000 thus establishing our long-term financial stability. Because all of our helpers are volunteers and because our Board of Trustees is so frugal, our annual budget is usually only slightly in deficit, meaning that **our income from regular and contributing members does not pay for all of our annual expenditures.** (We suffer yearly deficit ignoring lifetime memberships.)

We rely upon our lifetime memberships to balance our budget.

Many of our members can use the charitable gift tax deduction to which donors to the Fellowship of Reason, Inc. may be entitled. FOR is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

We invite all members of the Fellowship of Reason, especially our world travelers, to Lifetime Membership. **Please send your check for \$700 (a one-time payment) to Fellowship of Reason, P.O. Box 28891, Atlanta, Georgia 30358**

About the name "The Eudaimonist"

A eudaimonist (pronounced "yoo-DIE-mon-ist") is one who believes that the highest ethical goal is individual happiness and personal well-being. The term derives from the ancient Greek word eudaimonia, which means, roughly, "well-being."



Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in the columns appearing in this newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily the views of the organization. The Fellowship of Reason, Inc speaks only through its Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws, and the actions taken by the Board of Trustees as a board and recorded in the minutes of the corporation.

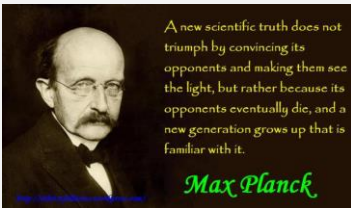
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.**Mission Statement**

The Fellowship of Reason® is dedicated to the personal flourishing of our members through reason.

Fellowship of Reason, Inc. is a Georgia nonprofit corporation and a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation

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Does Reason Work?

By Martin Cowen

Reason Does Not Work! ... ?

By

Martin Cowen

One of the Fellowship of Reason's short-lived programs was a meetup experiment entitled "Does reason work?" After two well attended meetings at Thinking Man Tavern, the project was abandoned, concluding that "reason does not work." This outcome might be expected to have negative organizational consequences for a fellowship of "reason." One conclusion might have been that FOR ought never to attempt to "convert" a person to "reason." Actually, FOR has never tried to "convert" anyone. We have merely attracted, via one method or another, for example Meetup.com, other fellow travelers on the road of reason. A better conclusion might be that of Philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952), who said "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

The historical past of which some (including the author) might be unaware is the saying of German theoretical physicist Max Planck (1858-1947) (five years younger and the same age at death as Santayana): "A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it." The distressing detail in Planck's observation is that Planck is talking about scientists. The general context of the membership of the Fellowship of Reason is that our members, with a few exceptions, are not scientists, but rather laypeople. If scientists do not accept reason, what hope can there be for us laypeople?

A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it. Max Planck

There are a few remarkable historical examples of this truth that we will share hereafter: (1) NASA Challenger engineer Bob Ebeling, (2) Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis (1818-1865), (3) the Jacobins of the French Terror, and (4) the warring 20th century Germans.

Bob Ebeling

Just over 30 years ago, on January 28, 1986, the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded. Many of us remember that event. Some of us may have seen it happen in person or on television as it happened. Few will remember that Challenger exploded because of a known flaw (related to an O-ring) that was brought to the attention of management by various engineers prior to the launch.

Bob Ebeling was one of the Challenger engineers who alerted NASA management that Challenger would not survive a cold January 28, 1986, launch. Mr. Ebeling was an employee of Morton Thiokol, the NASA subcontractor ultimately blamed for the destruction of Challenger and the deaths of its astronauts. Mr. Ebeling said: "[W]e're only qualified to 40 degrees...what business does anyone even have thinking about 18 degrees, we're in no man's land."

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Does Reason Work?

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Initially, Thiokol management supported the recommendations of its engineers to scrub the launch. NASA, however, pushed back. George Hardy, deputy director of engineering at the Marshall Spaceflight Center, which supervised Thiokol, said to Thiokol: "I am appalled. I am appalled by your recommendation." Lawrence Mulloy, a shuttle program manager, said: My God, when do you want me to launch—next April." Thiokol yielded to this bureaucratic abuse and allowed the launch to proceed.

Seven crew members died, either upon the breakup of the shuttle, during its long fall back to earth, upon its violent impact upon the ocean's surface, or by drowning in the cold darkness of the crushed space shuttle sealed unto death in their flight suits. There was no emergency evacuation system. Among the dead was Sharon Christa McAuliffe (September 2, 1948 to January 28, 1986), a high school teacher, participant in the NASA Teacher in Space Project.

Poor Bob Ebeling suffered depression following the destruction of Challenger. He retired and never lost his burden of guilt. Only this year (2016) was his named revealed by NPR and his tragic story retold. Bob's words to NPR:

I think that was one of the mistakes that God made. He shouldn't have picked me for the job. But next time I talk to him, I'm gonna ask him, 'Why me. You picked a loser.'"

After the NPR piece upon the 30th anniversary of Challenger disaster, Bob Ebeling received consoling correspondence from NPR listeners, including George Hardy, speaker of the "I'm appalled" quote above, who wrote: "You and your colleagues did everything that was expected of you. The decision was a collective decision made by several NASA and Thiokol individuals. You should not torture yourself with any assumed blame."

Bob died on March 21, 2016.

Bob Ebeling was not a whistleblower. He was a company man. Because Bob followed the rules he lived the last 30 years of his life suffering guilt.

What difference, if any, is there between whistleblower Edward Snowden (born June 21, 1983), presently in exile in Russia, and Bob Ebeling? What difference, if any, is there between journalist of whistleblowers Julian Assange (born July 3, 1971), presently in exile in the Embassy of Ecuador in London, and Bob Ebeling? What difference, if any, is there between whistleblower Chelsea Manning (born December 17, 1987), presently serving a 35-year prison sentence at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Bob Ebeling?

What if Bob Ebeling had called a press conference and expressed his scientific opinion publicly prior to the launch of the Challenger? Would Bob Ebeling have been believed? Would Bob Ebeling have kept his job? Would Bob Ebeling have been employable at all? Would Bob Ebeling have been prosecuted and imprisoned for violation of some secrecy agreement he signed?

Would Bob Ebeling have been happier spending his last thirty years in prison, the 7-person crew of the Challenger having survived? Would the Challenger crew have appreciated his sacrifice or would they have been angry to have had their mission scrubbed? After all, who



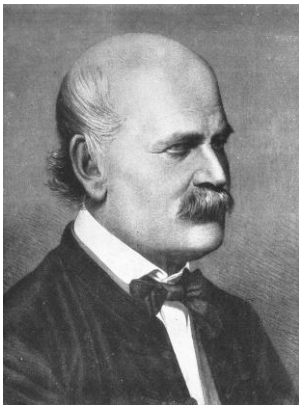
Does Reason Work?

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Regular membership:
\$35 per year

Contributing membership:
\$70 per Year

Lifetime membership:
\$700



knows what might have happened had the Challenger mission been scrubbed because of an imaginary whistleblower Bob Ebeling?

Did money and ego (at NASA) outweigh science (Bob Ebeling) in the Challenger disaster?

Ignaz Semmelweis

Ignaz Phillip Semmelweis (July 1, 1818 to August 13, 1865) was a Hungarian doctor who delivered babies. Dr. Semmelweis came to work at the Vienna General Hospital on July 1, 1846, his 28th birthday. He worked in the First Obstetrical Clinic, a teaching facility for medical students. The Second Obstetrical Clinic was a teaching facility for midwives. As was known both inside and outside the hospital, the death rate in clinic #2 was significantly less than the death rate in clinic #1. Expecting mothers would beg not to be admitted into clinic #1, even sometimes going to the extreme of giving birth in the street “on the way to the hospital.” As an example, maternal death rates from postpartum infections in 1846 were 2.8% in clinic #2, and 11.4% in clinic #1, a 400% greater chance of death in clinic #1.

Dr. Semmelweis was scientist and he was disturbed by the difference in outcomes. In a series of experiments he eliminated overcrowding and climate as causes. Semmelweis was so disturbed by the deaths in his clinic that he took a vacation to Venice from March 2 to March 20, 1847. Upon his return, his colleague had died from a disease with symptoms identical with those that had been killing his birthing patients. The colleague had been accidentally stuck with a knife during the post mortem examination of a patient who had died from a postpartum infection. Dr. Semmelweis hypothesized a connection between the medical students’ performance of post mortem examinations upon cadavers and subsequent contact with birthing mothers. Semmelweis instituted a chlorine hand wash for the doctors and medical students between autopsies and deliveries. In April 1847, the death rate in clinic #1 was 18.3%. After the institution of hand washing, the death rate in clinic #1 in June 1847 was 2.2%, July 1.2%, and August 1.9%. A *zero* death rate occurred in two months in the year following the mandate of chlorine hand washing.

Unfortunately for Dr. Semmelweis and thousands of soon-to-be-dead birthing mothers, the medical profession suffered from “belief perseverance.” Belief perseverance is the maintenance of a belief despite compelling new evidence. Among the problems for Dr. Semmelweis were his intemperate communication methods (you doctors are “murdering” your patients!), the doctors’ belief that as “gentlemen” their hands could not be “dirty”, and the lack of a scientific explanation of the apparent facts (Louis Pasteur did not articulate his “germ theory” until 20 years later with experiments between 1860 and 1864 when he finally discovered the pathology of postpartum infections). Dr. Semmelweis’ hand washing techniques were not widely adopted and were largely abandoned by those who had used them under the mandate of Dr. Semmelweis.

While this essay is not the place to explore the connection, it is worth noting that the Revolutions of 1848 in Europe immediately followed Semmelweis’ discovery. Semmelweis left his post in clinic #1 on March 20, 1849. Hypothesis: “revolution disrupted science.”

Because of Semmelweis’ declining mental condition, he was forcibly confined to an insane asylum where he died 14 days after his admission August 13, 1865 at the age of 47,

Contact Information

To talk to somebody about
Fellowship of Reason call:

Martin at 770-471-9800
Susan at 678-358-8415

Does Reason Work?

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probably from wounds inflicted by his guards.

Can we think of any modern medical issues in which *belief perseverance* might be an issue? Are there any “disagreements” in which some of the arguers have not only issues of pride implicated, but also billions of dollars of profits? Do money and ego outweigh science even today? Does reason work (without a 20-year delay as in the case of Semmelweis) in the medical/scientific professions today?

Jacobins

The Jacobin Club met at Rue Saint-Jacques in Paris. The Jacobins were one of the political factions of the French Revolution, which began with the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. The Jacobins were friends of the working-class Parisians. As opponents of the King, they sat on the left side of the National Assembly and subsequent assemblies. The Jacobins and their revolutionary allies became known as *Leftists*. The supporters of the King and religion sat on the right side of the National Assembly.

The Reign of Terror (September 5, 1793 to July 28, 1794) was the name given to the violent struggle between the radical Jacobins and the more moderate Jacobins (called the Girondins). The factional struggle ended with the arrest, conviction, and execution of the leaders of the Girondins. From trial to execution took seven days and on October 31, 1793, 22 heads of the Girondin leaders were severed from their bodies in 36 minutes.

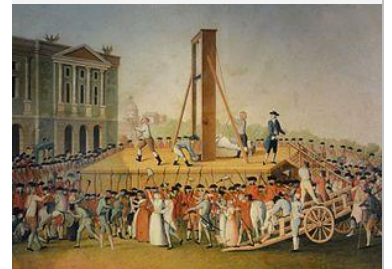
Among the people killed during the Terror were King Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, the father of modern chemistry Antoine Lavoisier, and French philosopher Marquis de Condorcet. Those guillotined are numbered at 16,594. Those summarily executed across France are estimated at 25,000.

The end of the Terror is marked by the guillotining of a leader of the Terror Jacobin Maximilien Robespierre, a French lawyer, on July 28, 1794.

The Jacobin Club was closed down on November 12, 1794. The Terror was over.

The violence of the French Revolution, especially the Terror, is shocking. The violence followed the Age of Enlightenment, sometimes dated from 1715, the death of Louis XIV, to 1789, the beginning of the French Revolution. The Enlightenment was also called *Le Siècle des Lumières*, or the Century of Lights. Great names of the Enlightenment included Voltaire (1684-1778), Diderot (1713-1784), Rousseau (1712-1778), David Hume (1711-1776), Adam Smith (1723-1790), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Thomas Paine’s book *The Age of Reason* was published in three parts in 1794, 1795, and 1807. Thomas Paine lived in France and was involved in the French Revolution on the side of the Girondists. U.S. President James Monroe succeeded in getting Paine released from Luxembourg Prison in Paris in November 1794. We mentioned Thomas Paine’s book because of the presence of the word “reason” in the title.

Our point is to juxtapose the utter unreason of the French Terror with the use of reason by the Enlightenment thinkers existing contemporaneously or just prior to the French



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Revolution. We ask: “how can terror and reason coexist in France simultaneously?” Reason is notably absent during the French Terror.

One wonders whether the *Leftist* Jacobins and their murderous tactics have spiritual heirs in our 21st century world.

Germans

Having mentioned cases of unreason in which seven (astronauts), thousands (birthing mothers), tens or hundreds of thousands (French) of people were annihilated by unreason, we come to the case of one hundred millions.

Why did a European people steeped in the height and heart of human culture plunge the world into two world-shattering wars?

When we say culture, we might recall these great 19th century Germans:

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)
- Thomas Mann (1875-1955)
- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)
- Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
- Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)
- Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)
- Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
- Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
- Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902)

Or these great 19th century Russians:

- Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881)
- Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)
- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
- Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky (1839-1881)
- Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

Or these great 19th century Austrians:

- Richard Georg Strauss (1864-1949)
- Johann Strauss (1804-1849)



Goethe



Bierstadt

Does Reason Work? (continued from page 7)

Or these great 19th century French artists:

- Paul Cézanne (1839-1906)
- Edgar Degas (1834-1917)
- Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)
- Claude Monet (1840-1926)
- Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919)
- Georges Seurat (1859-1891)
- Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)

Nineteenth century Europe produced some of the greatest art, music, literature, and philosophy of all time. (These subjects are studied intensively by the members of the Fellowship of Reason.)

The many states of Germany were unified into a single nation on January 18, 1871, in a ceremony in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles at the height of European high culture. Forty-three years later the world would be plunged into the great European war which was to last from July 28, 1914 to November 11, 1918. Over 17 million people were killed in the Great War. Over 20 million were wounded.

World War II began on September 1, 1939, when the Germans invaded Poland. The war ended in Europe on May 8, 1945. Atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945. The war ended in the Pacific with the surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945, on the American battleship USS Missouri. (The author's father was aboard on that day.) Over 60 million people were killed in World War II. Total German deaths, military and civilian, exceeded seven million people.

How did the world descend from the cultural high point of the 19th century to the slaughterhouse that was the 20th century?

Conclusion

The author might be a little ashamed for having lamented the failure of our little meetup group "Does Reason Work?" in light of this sampling of unreason from 1789 (French Revolution) to 1986 (Challenger disaster). Our little review of unreason stimulates this conclusion: Reason is a rare and precious thing. *Reason is a rare and precious thing.*

We in the Fellowship of Reason are proud of our reverence for human reason. We are proud of our name, the Fellowship of **Reason**! We are in awe of the beauty and bounty created by individual human reason. We will continue our worship of human achievement. We will continue to reach out to likeminded people who share our love for rational and creative humanity. All are welcome to our lifetime adventure of human flourishing and reason.



**Reason is a rare
and precious
thing.**

Events

For detailed info on all upcoming events, visit
<http://www.meetup.com/fellowshipofreason>

Adult Sunday School at FORum: 1st Sunday 10 a.m.

Members and friends of FOR are invited to attend Adult Sunday School before FORum on the first Sunday of every month at 10 a.m. at the Atlanta Freethought Hall, located at 4775 N. Church Lane, Smyrna, GA 30080.

Martin Cowen coordinator: 678-641-9321

FORum: A Celebration of Human Achievement: First Sunday 11 a.m.

FOR's premier event. Meet and greet at 10:30 a.m. The program starts at 11 a.m. Presided over by FOR's President, members give presentations such as Celebration of Freedom and Celebration of Talent. A 15 to 20 minute Oratory on an ethical subject highlights the program. A short conversation called FORum during which audience members share their thoughts concludes the program at 12 noon sharp. We enjoy post-program conversation at local restaurant for further fellowship.

Martin Cowen director: 678-641-9321.

FOR Runners: Sunday 8 a.m.

We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, near Candler Park at the Flying Biscuit, 1655 McLendon Avenue Northeast, Atlanta. Breakfast at the Flying Biscuit follows at 9:15 a.m. Breakfast lovers, walkers, and joggers welcome! Martin Cowen: 678-641-9321

Taped Lectures/Discussion Group: 1st / 3rd Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.

A small group of friends listens to taped lectures in a private home on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month. Free. Potluck supper precedes the lecture.

Sally Hull coordinator: 404-257-0454

Fiction Book Club: 2nd Tuesday 7:30 p.m.

Fifteen members and friends of FOR meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at an undisclosed location. Potluck supper precedes the event.

Sally Hull coordinator: 404-257-0454

Poetry Club: 4th Saturday, 3:00 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR like to meet on the 4th Saturday of every month at San Francisco Coffee, 676 N. Highland Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307, to share their love of poetry.

Frank Vickers, coordinator

FOR Rocks Stone Mountain: Saturday before FORum at 3 p.m.

Strong members of the Fellowship of Reason hike up Stone Mountain starting at the Confederate Hall Historical Center on the West side of the mountain near the outdoor restrooms.

Claire Glockner, coordinator

FOR Pub: last Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR like to meet at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA 30307, on the last Wednesday, at 7 p.m. for adult beverages and fun.

Martin Cowen coordinator: 678-641-9321

FOR Epicures: TBA Monday, 7:00 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR like to meet at fine restaurant on a Monday evening at 7 p.m. about every 90 days.

Claire Glockner, coordinator

**Join us for our
next monthly
FORum:**

**4775 N. Church
Lane, S.E., Smyrna,
GA 30080**

**December 4,
2016**

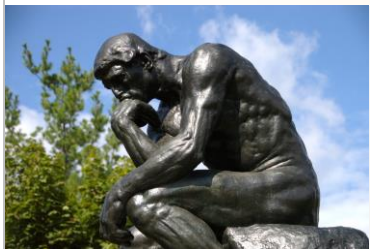
Sunday 11 a.m.
(Meet, Greet at 10:30 a.m.)

Adult Sunday school
10 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Birthdays

December 15	Kelly Galloway
December 21	Bill Greene
December 27	Leanna Ampola
December 30	Mike Brady

January 30	Mark Sulkowski
January 31	Sally Hull



Celebratory Announcements

Do yourself a favor and remember a good thing that happened to you this month:

Please, write it down: _____

Now do the membership of FOR, Inc. a favor by relating this fact during FORum next month!

Fellowship of Reason

P.O. Box 28891
Atlanta, Georgia 30358

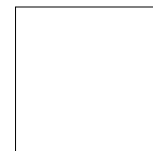
E-mail

info@fellowshipofreason.com

A Reason-Based Moral
Community



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Atlanta, Georgia 30358



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