

Mission Statement

The Fellowship of Reason® is an open, benevolent, and vital rational moral community in which we celebrate our lives, our freedoms, and our philosophy of reason.

Know Thyself—Envy

We received some publicity for the Fellowship of Reason® in the "Faith and Values" section of the Atlanta Journal Constitution on Saturday, March 31, 2001. One of the callers responding to the announcement asked me if I knew about the reasoned-based school being started in Cobb County. After questioning the caller, I realized whom the caller was talking about and said that I knew the entrepreneur. Now you might think that my reaction would have been pure excitement and enthusiasm about a new reasoned-based enterprise in Atlanta. After all, are not all movements forward in our multi-front effort to change our culture for the better to be applauded? . . . I am ashamed to say that among my feelings was the **vicious emotion of envy**.

Aristotle defines envy in *The Art of Rhetoric* as "a certain pain occasioned by apparent prosperity in the good things mentioned in the case of those like us." Aristotle distinguishes envy from indignation. "Indignation is grieving over undeserved good fortune." Therefore, one does not envy another because the other does not deserve his wealth, power, or reputation, but merely because the other has it!

"Envy," says Aristotle, "is base and belongs to the base."

Why am I telling you this shameful fact about myself? Two reasons. One, therapeutic, and one, pedagogical.

Therapy—In order to live consciously a person must first be aware of his mental contents. Some of these contents are vicious. Some of these contents are virtuous. You must be aware of both your virtues and your vices.

Once identified, the contents should be evaluated. Negative emotions should always be evaluated because they warn of danger. You naturally suspect that the danger is external. But the danger is very often internal. In other words, negative emotions are often caused by character flaws within you. I discussed a similar theme in the June 2000 newsletter in my essay "When I suffer, it is always my fault."

Why, I ask myself, do I feel envy toward this entrepreneur? Well, I, too, want to create a reason-based school. I would like to see a Reason Academy (pre-K to 12th grade) under the auspices of the Fellowship of Reason®. Eventually, I would like to found a Reason University. My dreams even go so far as to identify a possible dean of the philosophy department and a president of the university. I imagine a curriculum—the classics.

Perhaps I see my rival getting there first. Perhaps I see his efforts completely eclipsing my own. Perhaps I feel resentment toward him because he has not participated in the Fellowship of Reason®.

I judge all of these reasons to be invalid. Here's why: I cannot possibly do even FOR by myself, much less FOR, Reason Academy, and Reason University. We will need the help and enthusiastic participation of many people to accomplish even one of these goals. I don't want, primarily, to have created Reason Academy and Reason University myself. I want, primarily, that they exist. And, finally, FOR is not for everyone. Tastes differ. Priorities differ. I should not begrudge anyone their choice not to participate in FOR.

I am, therefore, wrong to feel envy toward this entrepreneur. But I did feel envy. What do I do about it?

Having judged my envy to be a vice I must, first of all, make sure that I don't act on it. I should not, for example, refrain from telling others about this exciting development (avoid passive aggression). I should not, for example, refrain from helping this entrepreneur if and when the opportunity presents itself (engage in active help if appropriate). He is, after all, pursuing my values—things I want to see in

the world. I should not, for example, try to sabotage his effort by mocking him or his project to him or others (avoid active aggression).

Wow! I feel better. At least the world is safe from Martin's inappropriate revenge.

But what can I do about this pestilence—this envy—inside of me? Socrates said that to know the good is to do the good. Aristotle elaborated this by saying that (1) if you have *knowledge* as opposed to opinion that something is good, (2) if you have a *specific* understanding as opposed to a general understanding as to what is good in the particular case, and (3) if your *specific knowledge* is *actual* (before the mind's eye) as opposed to potential, then *you will do the good*.

Therefore, my moral analysis here moves my intuition that envy is vicious from opinion toward *knowledge*. This essay makes a good argument that my particular emotion is a *specific* instance of the vicious emotion of envy. And, my writing about my vicious emotion provides me with *actual specific knowledge*.

Now, I feel better. Therapy complete.

The Lesson—You, too, experience negative emotions. If you fail to identify and evaluate those emotions, you may act upon them inappropriately. You may passively aggress against, or fail to actively support, or actively aggress against your own values in the world.

In order to avoid harming your values and therefore yourself, identify all of your negative emotions, evaluate them, establish *actual specific knowledge* of their status as virtuous or vicious. Act appropriately, according to your own true judgment of your values and not upon your unexamined negative emotions.

Live consciously! Know thyself.

Dan has donated our new brochure

A special thanks to Dan for employing a professional to create our new brochure. A copy is enclosed with this newsletter. If you need more to display, let me know.

Personal Mission—Friendship

Linda performed a Celebration of Personal Mission during April's Celebration. She asked you to write the name of a specific friend the relationship with whom you want to enhance. She asked you to write down specific activities that you might perform this month to nurture that friendship—call your friend up to say hello, invite her to lunch, send her a card.

If you participated, did you follow through? If you did not participate, was it because your friendships are all in order and need no present maintenance. Do you have all the friends you want? Do you have no friends, and want none?

What you do or do not in your life has consequences. You can have friends or not. You can have few friends or many. You can have profound friendships or superficial friendships. It matters not to anyone but you. But if you hold with Aristotle that friendship "is one of the most indispensable requirements of life," you ought to have a few good friends.

Special Program in August 2001

Professor Massimo Pigliucci will visit us during Celebration on Sunday, August 5, 2001 Mark your calendars now. His talk is entitled "Sci-Phi: The Unity of Science and Philosophy."

Rafting Trip on August 11, 2001

Members and Friends of the Fellowship of Reason® will travel to the Natchala Outdoors Center in North Carolina on Saturday, August 11, 2001, to take a trip down the river on rafts. Mark your calendars now. It's safe and kids are welcome.

Special Program in June 2001

Bluegrass Storyteller & Appalachian Humorist Chuck Larkin will visit us during Celebration on Sunday, June 3, 2001. Mark you calendars now. Be sure to be there.

Celebration Schedule 2001

- Sunday, May 6, 2001—The Art of Friendship—Asserting Yourself
- Sunday, June 3, 2001—Chuck Larkin, Storyteller
- Sunday, July 1, 2001—The Art of Friendship—Character and Loyalty
- Sunday, August 5, 2001—Massimo Pigliucci: "Sci-Phi: The Unity of Science and Philosophy"
- Sunday, September 2, 2001
- Sunday, October 7, 2001
- Sunday, November 4, 2001
- Sunday, December 2, 2001

So far this is the lineup for May 2001 Celebration:

1. Welcome
2. Celebration of Freedom—"Raoul Wallenberg" by **Tom**
3. Celebration of Visitors
4. Celebration of Each Other
5. Celebratory Announcements
6. Celebration of Heroes
7. Celebration of Literature
8. Celebration of Poetry
9. Celebration of Talent
10. Oratory—"The Art of Friendship, Part I: Asserting Yourself by **Martin Cowen**
11. Celebration of Personal Mission
12. Closing Quotation

Remember to bring your Personal Mission Notebook to Celebration.

FOR's Movie Night

Second Saturday Night following Celebration: Movie and/or games night is scheduled for Easter Weekend, Saturday, April 14, 2001, at 7 p.m. We have as yet no volunteer to host the activity. Do you want to volunteer?

FOR's Discussion Group

Third Saturday Morning following Celebration: Our discussion group happens at Après Diem, 931 Monroe Dr. NE. Atlanta, the Midtown Promenade, on Saturday, April 21, 2001, at 11 a.m. Our subject is yet to be determined. Do you have a suggestion?

Upcoming Philosophy Courses

I have purchased two tape sets.

1. Great Ideas of Philosophy
2. Ancient Greek Civilization

I plan to offer both of these tapes free of charge to the students of the former Invisible College, the Atlanta Philosophical Society, the Georgia Objectivists, and the Fellowship of Reason®.

I need a convenient place inside the perimeter to play the tapes.

Contact information:

To receive e-mail from the Fellowship of Reason®, please subscribe to our Yahoo! Group by sending an e-mail to reason-subscribe@yahogroups.com

To receive this newsletter in the mail send your U.S. Mail address to mlcowen@mindspring.com

To talk to somebody about FOR call Vera at 404- or Martin at 770-471-9800.

Fellowship of Reason® is a non-profit, unincorporated, volunteer-supported association.

Our web address is <http://www.kindreason.com>