

## 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.

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## Know Thyself—How do I know what I know?

How do you come by your opinions? Your senses, feelings, intuition, conscience, custom, tradition, authority, reason, revelation, mystic insight, parents, information absorbed in school, your peers at work, society, the government, the news media, television, commercial advertising, your next door neighbor, etc.

Most people have NEVER asked this question of themselves. Most people never will ask it. It's not (immediately) a question of morality. They *don't* know they should ask it and *repress* the knowledge (which would be an immoral action). It just never occurs to them to ask it (which is a question of education).

Here is a fictional example. Imagine a lady who needs a new riding lawnmower. The lawnmower costs \$2,000. She can buy it using a credit card at 23% interest. Or, she can use her existing home equity loan, write a check for it, pay 10% interest, and deduct the interest payments on her tax return. Assuming she takes 3 years to payoff the loan, the home equity loan saves her \$500 over the life of the loan.

Economically, her choice is clear—use the home equity loan. However, she has an abhorrence of debt secured by a lien on her home. If she were to default on the home equity loan, her home would be at risk.

The lady goes with her feelings and not economics.

The lady who has a fulltime job has to take a weekend job at a clothing store to pay her bills.

Apparently, this lady has two competing methods of knowledge—reason and feeling, where feeling trumps reason. If she were a member of the Fellowship of Reason® it might occur to her to question whether her feeling is in this case a valid source of knowledge. Of course, some people would accept without question that feelings are a valid source of knowledge. Some people would say, "What's wrong with the lady paying \$500 to honor her feeling that home equity debt is risky?"

Well, my point here is not ethical. My point here is merely that each of us does have a method of knowledge (an epistemology), whether we know it or not. This lady's method of knowledge is to regard feelings as more important than economics, at least in the \$500 range.

Now, it might occur to this lady to question her feeling, "Why do I abhor home equity debt? Is honoring this feeling really worth \$500?" If she did that she might find that her feeling was learned from her father who lived through the Great Depression and lost his home after defaulting on the debt to a mortgage company. She might realize that even were she to default on the credit card debt the bank could still sue her and get a lien on her house. Understanding these things she might eliminate this particular feeling as a basis for overruling the economically correct choice.

You and I will find that many of our opinions are based upon unexamined methods of knowledge—feelings, custom, parental authority, the newspaper, personal myth, great cultural myths. In order to act rightly, all of our opinions should be examined to determine whether their sources are valid.

Live consciously! Know thyself.

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## 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.

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## 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."

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## Rafting Trip on August 11, 2001

Members and friends of the Fellowship of Reason® will travel to the Nantahala 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.

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## Celebration Schedule 2001

- Sunday, June 3, 2001—Chuck Larkin, Storyteller
  - Sunday, July 1, 2001—The Art of Friendship, Part III—Character
  - Sunday, August 5, 2001—Massimo Pigliucci: "Sci-Phi: The Unity of Science and Philosophy"
  - Sunday, September 2, 2001—Personal Moral Progress, Part I
  - Sunday, October 7, 2001—Personal Moral Progress, Part II
  - Sunday, November 4, 2001—Personal Moral Progress, Part III
  - Sunday, December 2, 2001—FOR is NOT a church!
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## FOR's Movie Night

**Second Saturday Night following Celebration:** Movie and/or games night is scheduled for Saturday, May 19, 2001, at 7 p.m. Chris is our host.

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## 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, May 26, 2001, at 11 a.m. Our subject is yet to be determined. Do you have a suggestion?

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## 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@yahoogroups.com](mailto:reason-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

To receive this newsletter in the mail send your U.S. Mail address to [mlcowen@mindspring.com](mailto: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>