

## 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.

## Life is an Artifact

The view that "life is art" is an essential distinguishing feature of our philosophy of reason. "Life is an artifact" means that the life of the individual is a product of the individual. **We each create our own lives within limits.**

Our view is to be contrasted with the view that the individual is determined by his genes or his environment or his economic status or his race or by fate or by some external authority.

A human being is distinguished from the animals solely by his capacity to create himself. Man's awareness of the human capacity to "create" is one of the roots of the concept god—our culture has apotheosized man's creative capacity.

The fact that human beings have the capacity to create their own lives does not mean that everyone does a good job. Some are artists. Others are unaware of the issue and rise barely above the animals on a moral scale. See the Ricky Lake Show or Jerry Springer for examples.

Between "animals" and "artists" are a large number of human types.

By far the most common human type is the person who has surrendered his autonomy to an outside authority. Any religion that enforces a comprehensive view of how a person should live his life is an example of such an outside authority. The comparable artistic metaphor is "paint by numbers." The Catholic Church's template for moral living is something like this: worship God, work hard, marry, have many children, endure life's hardships, and prepare yourself for eternal life in heaven.

Another common human type is the person who is paralyzed by the enormous range of choices presented to him in the modern world. A friend recounts the image of the painter who sits in front of an enormous canvas with 100 pigments and 50 brushes at hand, unwilling to pick up a brush, and complaining that his masterwork is not progressing.

The Existentialists are another example of the paralyzed type. Always college educated and at least middle class, these wastrels, blessed (usually by parental productivity and generosity) with leisure and the money and skills to enjoy it, complain of "nausea," "angst," and "meaninglessness."

Eudaimonists (people who are persuaded of our philosophy of reason) are aware of their personal power and responsibility (to themselves) to create their own lives.

In order to be the artist of your own life you need to have a vision of yourself in all aspects: personal appearance, health, character, family, friends, community, and career or personal mission. Your guiding question is "What do I want my life to be like given my limitations (e.g. genes and culture)?" Your abstract goal is to flourish—to achieve health and happiness—within the factual limits of your existence.

Being an artist does not imply you are a genius. Nor does it imply an extraordinary skill. That would be taking the metaphor too far. Two things are required to be the creator of your own life: 1) an awareness of your power and responsibility to fashion your life; and, 2) the exercise of that power.

Carrying the artist metaphor one step further, we know that an artist must acquire his skills. Artists go to art school. Life "artists" acquire their skills by studying history, heroes, philosophy, psychology, literature, and mythology, and by participating in moral communities.

One final point about life as art. I was watching the Clint Eastwood movie *The Enforcer* the other day. Tyne Daly's character, Dirty Harry's female partner, wants to become a police inspector. She elects to go into combat with Harry, despite knowing that many

of Harry's partners die at Harry's side. Of course, she, too, dies—a hero. I was thinking about her standard of value. Was it her life or her desire to be a police inspector? I realized that she had decided that her life would be that of a police inspector. Her standard of value was her life, *her* life. Not simply life, but the life she chose--the life of a police inspector. Her meaning, her purpose, her self-chosen destiny was to be a heroic police inspector.

This idea is crucial. It resolves an enormous confusion among egoists. How can a person choose to be a hero, even if it means his life, rather than save his own skin? The answer is that the standard of value for some individuals is not life, but *my* life as I want it to be, the life *I* choose, the life *I* will, *my* purpose, *my* destiny, *my* will, *ME*.

For this reason a mother will die for her children, a fireman will run into a burning building, a soldier will die for his country, a nurse will tend to an infected patient, any egoistic hero will do his deed!

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#### What you should know:

"Life is an Artifact."

- Our philosophy of reason holds that individuals create their own lives within limits.
- We reject the view that individuals are passive victims of biology or culture or fate.
- Mankind, recognizing his own creative capacity, deified that capacity in an external god.
- Not all human beings are aware of their personal power and responsibility to fashion their own existence.
- Believers follow the "paint by numbers" theory of life.
- Existentialists are paralyzed by the number of choices presented to them by modern life.
- Eudaimonists choose to be life "artists."
- An artistic vision of yourself is necessary in the areas of physical appearance, health, character, family, friends, community, and career or personal mission.
- Two characteristics of the life "artist" are awareness of the issue and action as an artist.
- Enhance your life-"artist" skills by studying our culture and by participating in your moral community.
- Heroism is a function of life as an artifact.

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#### March 2002 Celebration:

Celebration of Freedom—David  
Induction of New Members—Martin  
Celebration of Visitors—  
Celebration of Each Other—  
Celebratory Announcements—  
Celebration of Literature—Ellen  
Celebration of Art—Chris  
Celebration of Personal Mission—David  
Oratory—"Your Sacred Present" by Martin  
Closing Quotation—

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#### FOR's Potluck

FOR's potluck is scheduled for Saturday, February 16, 2002 at 7 p.m. at Dan's house. Go to the Reason Yahoo! Group for directions.

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#### FOR's Café Conversation

FOR's café conversation takes place this month on Saturday, February 23, 2002, at 11 a.m. at Après Diem.

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#### Celebration Schedule 2002

- Sunday, January 6, 2002
  - Sunday, February 3, 2002
  - **Sunday, March 3, 2002**
  - Sunday, April 7, 2002
  - Sunday, May 5, 2002
  - Sunday, June 2, 2002
  - Sunday, July 7, 2002
  - Sunday, August 4, 2002
  - Sunday, September 1, 2002
  - Sunday, October 6, 2002
  - Sunday, November 3, 2002
  - Sunday, December 1, 2002
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## **2002 Membership Information:**

27 members as of 2-5-02 and 1 newsletter-only subscriber

- Charter membership: \$35 if paid prior to March 31, 2002
- Regular membership: \$35 per year if paid prior to October 31, 2002
- Contributing membership: \$70 per year if paid prior to October 31, 2002
- Lifetime membership: \$350 if paid prior to March 31, 2002; \$700 per year if paid prior to October 31, 2002

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## **Contact information:**

To receive e-mail notice of FOR's activities send your e-mail address to [mlcowen@mindspring.com](mailto:mlcowen@mindspring.com)

To receive this newsletter free for 3 months in the U.S. mail send your U.S. Mail address to [mlcowen@mindspring.com](mailto:mlcowen@mindspring.com)

To participate in unmoderated e-mail chat, please subscribe to our Yahoo! Group by sending an e-mail to [reason-subscribe@yahogroups.com](mailto:reason-subscribe@yahogroups.com)

A subscription for 12 monthly issues of this newsletter is \$15 per year.

Bylaws and other corporate documents may be viewed online at [www.kindreason.com](http://www.kindreason.com)

Fellowship of Reason, Inc. is a Georgia nonprofit corporation.

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