

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. We study ethics.

Basic, Political, and Noble Values

Acquiring Consumer Goods: The **basic** values are air, water, food, clothing, and shelter. Ideally, the individual acquires these values by productive action. The study of human action to produce these values is the intellectual domain of economics. The institution within which human beings act to produce and trade is the free market.

Finding Safety: The **political** values are safety and security. Ideally, a limited constitutional government secures these values. The study of human action to create these values is the intellectual domain of politics. The institution that provides safety and security is the government.

Achieving Nobility: The **noble** values are knowing oneself, becoming who you are, character including civility, health and fitness, family, friends, one's communities, one's calling (vocation, career), continuing adult education, honor, respect, hierarchy and the recognition of rank especially between the young and the old, the student and the teacher, the pursuit of happiness, and appreciation of human achievement through art, literature, music, dance, and theatre, and through heroes and heroic deeds. The individual can achieve these values only by **personal**, philosophically motivated action. [Interestingly, the individual cannot be given the **noble** values, unlike **basic** and **political** values that can be and sometimes are gifted.] The study of human action to achieve these values is the intellectual domain of philosophy. The institution that is a focal point for philosophy is the moral community.

A map of the modern problem: For an American in the 21st century **basic** and **political** needs are easily satisfied. Even people who lose their jobs remain out of work by choice in search of the best possible job. [Hopefully, this condition will not

change, as for example in the case of another Great Depression.] As one would-be immigrant observed, he wants to come to America because America is a country where even the poor people are fat! The traditional **noble** values of faith-based moral communities have been discredited by the progress of science and technology. Why? Because the context of religion, at its origins, was to provide a spiritual escape from a temporal hell. We no longer live in a temporal hell and therefore escape is not necessary. So the modern problem is that the pursuit of **basic** and **political** values is not a fulltime job and the **noble** values of religion are no longer viable. People are therefore at a loss as to what to do.

An American historian opining in the Wall Street Journal prior to the tragedy of 9-11 waxed nostalgic about W.W.I, The Great Depression, W.W.II, the Korean War, and the Cold War. We modern Americans, he frets, have no great challenges to overcome so we are not called [compelled] to greatness [public service in his phrase].

Existentialists in the early and mid-20th century suffered from anxiety, dread, nothingness, depression, and angst. As I have said before: with the problem of survival solved (**basic** and **political** needs met), the problem of meaning (**noble** needs) looms large (now that "God is dead").

Artists ponder the problem of meaning (**noble** needs) in movies like *Fight Club*. In the film a modern product of consumerism acquires a split personality and destroys all credit card records so that we can "start from scratch" in chaos. The protagonist finds meaning in the manly virtues of physical courage, loyalty to cult, fearlessness in the face of disfigurement, pain, and death, and a hierarchy of physical strength.

We moderns need not lament that **basic** and **political** needs are met for most 21st century Americans. (These needs will be met in the rest of the world as soon as the rest of the world gets with the program of science, free enterprise, and constitutional government.) We need not secretly wish for a new war, a new disease, or a new economic crisis to galvanize human beings to heroic action. We have our distinctively modern problem now, big time. The Existentialists feel it. The

historian recognizes it. The artists sense it. Our problem is: "how shall we live in a world in which **basic** and **political** needs are met? What do we do now?"

This problem is addressed in that source of all moral knowledge ☺, the sci-fi television series *Star Trek*. In the future world of *Star Trek* the **basic** and **political** needs are met. So what do they do? They go out into space to discover strange new worlds. In other words, they go in search of other wars to fight and new diseases to suffer—new **basic** and **political** problems to solve.

The *Star Trek* solution to the problem of meaning is *a* solution, but it is not our solution or *the* solution. It is the same solution as those who feel nostalgia for W.W.I but without the implicit viciousness of a desire to return human beings to the brutality of war.

The solution arises from our human nature. Human beings are born mostly *tabula rasa*. Certainly, we have inherited characteristics that are crucially important. Over a period of 21 years more or less we are formed. At the end of that period we have a certain identity consisting of genetic inheritance, education and experiences, stage of life, family, friends, and communities, and the requirements of reality. These five factors all considered together have an optimal use. That use is a person's destiny. That optimal use of oneself is a thing only that individual can do. The project of the adult human being is to discover who he is in terms of these five factors and to bring that potentiality into existence as an act of will.

This task is enormous and there is no physical pain (such as that caused by lack of any of the **basic** values) or fear (such as that caused by lack of the **political** values of safety and security) to motivate the individual to action. There is only his philosophy and his moral community to help him find and achieve his sacred destiny, whatever it is.

What is the motivation to "know thyself" and "become who you are?" Our motivation is philosophy—our knowledge of this modern problem, this problem that makes a compassionate historian nostalgic for war and economic depression, this problem that makes an artist dream of fight clubs and mass urban destruction, this problem that causes emotional fits for Existentialists.

There are those who are not motivated by philosophy. For those others not motivated by philosophy and as a result of the absence of the motivators of pain and fear for **noble** achievement, the world will see a proliferation of "last men"—ignoble types interested *only* in survival, ironically at a time when survival is no longer a problem. [Please note that **basic** and **political** values are not **ignoble**. We all share the **basic** and **political** values. **Basic** and **political** values can even be **noble** values when pursued as the calling of a particular individual as in the case of a statesman (tragically an extinct species as far as I can tell). A person who cares *only* for air, water, food, shelter, clothing, safety, and security when those things are granted is ignoble, though.]

Because of the proliferation of "last men," **noble** people will have to seek one another out for friendship, recognition, and support in their **noble** pursuits. Naturally, these small communities of people motivated by **noble** ideas will be formed within the broader, very loose social groups of the cities. The philosophical types will drive on the same streets, as do the last men. They will eat at the same restaurants, but not at the same table. They will not read the same books. They will not watch the same television shows (like Jerry Springer). They will not spend their leisure time enjoying the company of last men. How could they? Instead, the philosophical types will spend their leisure time with others interested in **noble** values.

Read again the list of **noble** values in the 3rd paragraph of this essay.

Achievement of **noble** values is the solution of the modern problem. Nobility is a fulltime job. Are we up for it?

What you should know:

- Basic and political values are met, in general and for the most part, in 21st century America.
- Traditional noble values of faith-based moralities are discredited by the progress of science and technology and ethics and politics.
- With no values to seek, some people are at a loss and experience a moral malaise.
- The solution is to seek Eudaimonistic noble values.

September 1, 2002 Celebration:

Welcome—
Celebration of Freedom—Chris Snider
Celebration of Visitors—
Celebration of Each Other—
Celebratory Announcements—
Celebration of Art—
Celebration of Heroes—
Celebration of Literature—
Celebration of Personal Mission—
Celebration of Talent—
Oratory—**Dan Barber**
Non-celebratory announcements—
Closing Quotation—

Invisible College

Dr. Glenn Magee is lecturing on Modernity every Thursday night at 7:30 p.m. at Vera's Intellectual Salon. Price: \$60 per month. Call Vera at 404-577-7968 for more information..

Potluck

Members and friends of FOR, Inc. enjoy a monthly potluck supper and games night on the 3rd Saturday of every month at the home of a volunteer. FOR's next Potluck is Saturday, August 17, 2002, at 7:00 p.m. at Sally's house. Bring something good to eat or drink.

FOR's Pub Night

Members and friends of FOR, Inc. meet on the 4th Wednesday of every month at Manuel's Tavern at 8 p.m. for adult beverages and adult conversation. FOR's next pub night is Wednesday, August 28, 2002, at 8 p.m.

Philosophy Tapes

Philosophy tapes are played to a small private audience in the living room of a volunteer on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month. The next playing is at Sally's house on Tuesday, August 20, 2002, at 7:30 p.m. Free.

New Monthly Event: FOR's Film Night

Members and friends of FOR, Inc. enjoy a monthly movie night at John's studio using his extraordinary equipment. FOR's next movie night is Saturday, August 24, 2002. Arrive at 6:30 p.m. Doors will be locked for safety! Movie starts at 7:15 p.m. Free.

Philosophy Café

Attend Steve Stoke's Philosophy Café at Border's in Buckhead on the second Wednesday of every month at 8 p.m. and at the Barnes and **Noble** Bookstore in Duluth on the third Wednesday of every month at 8 p.m.

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
-

2002 Membership Information:

FOR, Inc. has 35 members.

- 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: \$700 if paid prior to October 31, 2002

Contact information:

To talk to somebody about FOR call Vera at 404-577-7968 or Martin at 770-471-9800 or Dan at 770-831-3010.

To receive e-mail notice of FOR's activities send your e-mail address to 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

To participate in unmoderated e-mail chat, please subscribe to our Yahoo! Group by sending an e-mail to reason-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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

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

How can you help support the Fellowship of Reason, Inc., the world's first and only reason-based moral community?

If you would like to support our activities, including our building fund, please consider these opportunities:

1. Attend our activities
2. Bring donuts
3. Subscribe to our monthly newsletter
4. Perform at Celebration
5. Recruit a person of like-mind and values
6. Volunteer your home for a potluck or other activity
7. Become a regular member
8. Become a contributing member
9. Become a lifetime member
10. Donate cash, property, time, or expertise
11. Locate and help us apply for a public or private grant
12. Make a testamentary gift

Make checks payable to Fellowship of Reason, Inc. and mail them to 8188 Pembroke Terrace, Jonesboro, GA 30236-4179.

To make a Last Will and Testament with a gift to FOR, Inc. contact your attorney. If you live in Georgia, Martin L. Cowen III, Attorney at Law, without charge, will prepare and supervise the execution (inside the perimeter or within 10 miles outside of I-285) of a simple will with a minimum unrestricted testamentary gift to FOR, Inc. of \$1,000. Call 770-471-9800 for more information. This offer may be withdrawn at anytime without notice. Mr. Cowen, a license Georgia attorney, and not FOR, Inc., is solely responsible for any legal services rendered by him with or without charge.
