

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.

Mystery

The frontiers of mystery are far removed from modern man. As an adult in the 21st century it is possible to spend one's entire life in the domain of the known and the safe. Some people choose to stay there.

Imagine a Medieval village in northern Europe on the edge of an impenetrable forest, literally hundreds of miles deep. A foolish child crosses the verge of the forest and finds within enormous trees towering over 130 feet to a canopy completely blocking the sun. Most of the trees in this primeval domain have a trunk diameter at the base of 20 feet or more. The gigantic trees are widely separated and the ground cover is low ferns and mosses because smaller trees, bushes and grass cannot survive in the dim twilight of the forest.

Off a short distance where half-light becomes darkness, the child sees the glow of evil eyes looking upon her and, wisely, runs out of the forest, across the fields of the village, back home.

Upon returning home, our little wanderer finds her parents in tears. A pack of wolves from the forest has carried off her little brother.

All of our primeval forests, literal and figurative, have been cut back. Our villages and fields dominate the earth. Modern man can roam for a lifetime among friendly people and man-made things and never approach the limits of the known.

Man is by nature a striving being. If he does not strive, he is no longer man. Because our science and technology have been so successful, we are no longer required to strive. If we are to remain human, we must choose to approach and cross the verge.

The quintessential example of non-striving man is the inner city, welfare-receiving, childbearing drug addict. A generous, well-intentioned, but grossly mistaken-in-their-understanding-of-the-nature-of-human-life, democracy has decided to solve the problem of survival for some people. The victims of this generosity need not strive. They have not been taught that as human beings they must strive. They have lost their meaning and their human natures.

A less extreme example of non-striving man is the person who has an easy and guaranteed job, like a postal employee. Living completely within the known and the safe and never venturing to the verge, some lose their humanity. Little wonder then that a few go crazy, take up arms, and blow co-workers away.

For most of us there is no literal forest to explore. The physical space of the earth has been mostly conquered. The most important realms of mystery are psychological (within the mind) and social (in relationships).

Modern man must *manage* mystery.

Let us consider the postal employee. There is nothing wrong with working for the post office. There is nothing wrong with having an easy, guaranteed job. [In fact I think having a government job in face of the looming Great Depression of the 21st century maybe a matter of survival.]

What type of mysteries might the postal employee take up?

1. Personal Psychological Transparency

Know thyself. Some people live in fear, not of an actual impenetrable forest, but of the contents of their own unexamined mental contents. Memories of terrible or tragic events, guilt for misdeeds, disowning of present facts about oneself, and fear of an uncertain, unplanned future cripple the minds of many. As discussed in a previous essay "The House of the Mind" (October 2002), most people benefit from an examination of their mental contents. I suggested examining the contents of the

Past (memories), Present (actualities) and Future (imaginings) in turn.

This is unquestionably the most crucial and most feared adventure in anyone's sphere of possible adventures: the mystery of one's own mental contents—desires, feelings, urges, biases, and opinions.

2. Continuing Adult Education—Philosophy

All men by nature desire to understand. People who have achieved a measure of personal psychological transparency can move on and tackle the mysteries of man. Human beings have written more books, created more works of art and music, built more great architecture, than a single person can consume in a lifetime. Every one of these artifacts is a glorious mystery waiting to be unwrapped by the amateur.

Members of the Fellowship of Reason® who are engaged in Philosophy Discussion or the Invisible College are embarked on a life-long process of unwrapping the mysteries of man. We are seeking wisdom for the love of wisdom. We are, by definition, philosophers. Philosophers seek out mystery and replace mystery, incrementally, with wisdom. The task of acquiring wisdom is never complete.

3. Friends

Human beings are the source of all values. Living with and making new friends is a constant source of mystery unfolding—new pleasures to be enjoyed, new challenges to overcome, new insights into self and the other to be achieved.

4. Personal Mission

Become who you are. Perhaps the ultimate mystery is the discovery of one's highest destiny—that one task which one is uniquely and best suited to perform. How one's destiny is discovered is a mystery. What that destiny will be is a mystery. Whether one will achieve it is a mystery. How one will achieve it is a mystery.

5. Marriage

Maximum psychological visibility. The ultimate interpersonal mystery is a permanent lifetime spouse or partner. We have a ritual to initiate one into

marriage: “for better or worse, in sickness and in health, for richer for poorer, until death do us part.” What is marriage? It's not like living together. It's much more. It's a mystery. How do you find a life mate? Will you ever find a life mate? Once found what will living with him/her be like? Can you take it? Will it be worth it? All these mysteries will unfold in time.

6. Children

Bad parenting is the root of all evil. A great and common personal mission is conceiving, bearing, birthing, and raising children. Each stage of this process is a mystery requiring total and absolute commitment.

So our postal employee has solved the problem of survival with his safe and guaranteed job. He alone can solve the problem of meaning by embracing one or more of the great mysteries of life that lie for him at hand. But he need not. The choice is his.

A modern man can avoid mystery by leaving his tormented mind undiscovered, by not embracing continuing adult education, and by avoiding friends, personal mission, marriage, and children. A few lonely people holed up in the apartment buildings of modern cities do just that. But passing each day in loneliness and boredom, moving like a somnambulist from bed to job to television to bed is not human life.

Human beings must embrace mystery. If there are no mysteries in your life, you might as well be dead.

January Birthdays

Vera—January 18

Mark—January 30

Sally—January 31

February Birthdays

Michael—February 5

Tom Hall—February 6

Ellen—February 23

Celebration, February 2, 2003

Welcome—**Randy**

Celebration of Freedom—

Celebration of Visitors—

Celebration of Each Other—

Celebratory Announcements—

Celebration of Personal Mission—

Celebration of Performance Art (skit)—

Celebration of Heroes—**Vera**

Celebration of Literature—

Celebration of Art—**Frank**

Celebration of Talent—**Ellen**

Oratory—**Randy**

Announcements—

Closing Quotation—**Randy**

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, February 4, 2003, at 7:30 p.m. Free.

Invisible College

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

New FOR Internet Broadcast

www.fellowshipofreason.com

"The Entrepreneurial Spirit"

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.

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, February 22, 2003. Arrive at 6:30 p.m. Doors will be locked for safety! Movie starts at 7:15 p.m. Free.

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, February 27, 2003, at 8 p.m.

FOR's Potluck dinner

Our next monthly potluck is Saturday, February 15, 2003, at 7 p.m. at Dan and Theresa's house. Please remember to bring something good to eat or drink.

Celebration Schedule

- **Sunday, February 2, 2003**
- Sunday, March 2, 2003
- Sunday, April 6, 2003
- Sunday, May 4, 2003
- Sunday, June 1, 2003
- Sunday, July 6, 2003
- Sunday, August 3, 2003
- Sunday, September 7, 2003
- Sunday, October 5, 2003
- Sunday, November 2, 2003
- Sunday, December 7, 2003
- Sunday, January 4, 2004
- Sunday, February 1, 2004

Membership Information:

FOR, Inc. has 40 members.

- Regular membership: \$35 per year if paid prior to October 31, 2003
- Contributing membership: \$70 per year if paid prior to October 31, 2003
- Lifetime membership: \$700 if paid prior to October 31, 2003

Contact information:

Visit us on the web at www.fellowshipofreason.com

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. Use PayPal on the web at www.fellowshipofreason.com

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 any time without notice. Mr. Cowen, a licensed Georgia attorney, and not FOR, Inc., is solely responsible for any legal services rendered by him with or without charge.

Advertising support from President, Dan Barber:

Members of FOR, Inc. are entitled to a 10% labor discount at AutoStop.

Thanks, Dan, from FOR, Inc.!
