

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.

Order and Chaos

Human beings need order. We need roots. We need to be connected. From the minute she is born (actually *in utero*) the baby strives to integrate—to make sense of—the bewildering flood of data received from her senses. This process of the integration of sensations, perceptions, and conceptions continues throughout her life.

Order is necessary for life. Chaos means death.

As human beings grow and their cognitive functioning approaches maturity, we become aware of the wide world and we desire to understand it and to understand our place in it. We need to integrate the whole thing.

Before the modern period most people found their roots where they were born. Their roles in society were determined. They were destined to live out their lives in one place with limited horizons. Their religions were set by their cultures.

Before the modern period the following matters were determined for most people by nature or culture:

1. Place of abode
2. Educational opportunities
3. Spouse
4. Number of children
5. Employment
6. Associates
7. Government
8. Religion
9. Worldview

In modern times people of the first world can live wherever they wish. They can perform a variety of tasks in society. They can choose their friends and

associates. They can choose their form of government by moving from state to state or from country to country. They can choose their religion or none.

Because we are free we have a problem never before experienced by large numbers of people. Nihilism, skepticism, cynicism, relativism, existentialism, and depression are all symptoms of this problem. The problem is rootlessness.

We live in spiritual and political freedom and there is no economic, societal or governmental requirement to have roots, to be connected, to understand the wide world and our place in it.

We can be rootless searchers for our entire lives.

Let me be clear about this: In order to flourish a person must make final choices that connect her ultimately and finally to the cosmos. By this I mean that one must finally choose a place to live, the education one will have, a spouse or life mate, children or not, a life mission (employment), friends, and a religion or philosophy. In the case of the choice of philosophy, it is not sufficient to be a student of philosophy. One must, in order to flourish optimally, chose a *particular* philosophy and practice it as a way of life.

Chaos is death.

Order is life.

Order is all around us. Consider driving. In America we all drive safely on the right side of the road. Our daily lives are governed by scores, perhaps hundreds, of routines (e.g. I get up at 7:30 a.m., brush my teeth, get my paper, make my coffee, get Lindsey ready for school, *ad infinitum*). Introduce chaos into these systems and you will be killed in a car crash, your son will be late to school, and you will be dysfunctional for lack of caffeine. In short, in the absence of order, you will not flourish.

Think about most people's relationship to their religion. I'll bet that 95% of people who are religious practice the religion of their parents. Why is that? Order. Routine. Habit.

Because the need for order is so very urgent, people are slow to abandon *well-worn and well-ordered* paths. More importantly, the majority of people are absolutely incapable of evaluating their religions and voluntarily embracing or rejecting them. So the choice for most religious people is the faith of their fathers, or chaos, and chaos means death. Because order and chaos are matters of life and death, people would kill to preserve their belief in their personal religion. Thank goodness we don't allow killing for religion in America anymore, though religious killing is still practiced in some third world countries.

You, dear reader, are a very rare person. You have chosen to abandon the faith of your fathers. You have been willing to suffer a modicum of chaos in your life as the price of seeking new roots, a new truth. For some the task is only half done. In order to flourish optimally those who choose their own way must *choose their own way*. *We must choose a philosophy to live as a way of life*.

With spiritual freedom comes the responsibility of choice. In order to flourish, human beings need order and that order is not given to the readers of this essay by the faith of their fathers.

Since nature and culture have not determined our roots, we must, in order to flourish optimally, determine our roots for ourselves in freedom.

Before talking about our universal anchors, I observe that life is more serious for us non-theists. We don't imagine that we get out of this earthly life alive. Christians, on the other hand, take the view that this earthly life is a short and unpleasant episode in an otherwise very pleasant eternal life with God. For us non-theists everything on earth counts! There are no second chances. There are only consequences—success and failure.

Life on earth for us non-theists is not a passing phase. This is it. My individual life is unique to my consciousness and it is precious, as is yours.

So how do we non-theists avoid nihilism, skepticism, cynicism, relativism, existentialism, and depression? How do we anchor ourselves to the cosmos? How do we understand ourselves within it?

As with any intellectual problem we must do some research. Our sources are science, philosophy, religion, and history, all of human knowledge in fact. Here is a chart showing my view.

Order and Chaos as I see Them			
	Presbyterians and Order	Eudaimonism and Order	Nihilists/Relativists/etc. and Chaos
Convictions about existence	Transcendent realm is/Existence is	Existence is and only existence is	Existence is not/Existence is and is not
Convictions about self and consciousness	I have an eternal soul	I exist and possess consciousness	I do not exist/I am not conscious/Consciousness is an illusion/I am an illusion
Convictions about life	I choose eternal life	I choose earthly life	I don't recognize the question as valid/I choose death/I choose life and death as it pleases me
Convictions about what I ought to do	I will do what God demands to achieve eternal life	I will do what nature requires to live and flourish on earth	I will do as I damn well please
Free will and determinism	I have free will	While substantially influenced and determined by nature and nurture, I have free will	I am a helpless leaf in the winds of nature and nurture
Goal of life	Eternal life with God	Earthly flourishing	The pleasure of the moment/Life has no goal
Society	Love your enemies	Friends are required by man's nature in order to flourish optimally	Friends? Take them or leave them
Moral group	Church	Moral Community	I am an island unto myself/Solipsism
Persistence	Loyal and persistent	Loyal and persistent	Fickle and unreliable

These choices are not arbitrary. In my opinion each of the choices in the column labeled *Eudaimonism and Order* is necessary, logical, and obvious. If one makes those choices and lives them, then one is connected by the power of your own mighty will to the cosmos.

Life is serious. There is no way out. Choose. Choose order or chaos, but choose knowingly.

April Birthdays

Theresa—April 3

Christopher—April 5

Toni—April 24

Louis—April 28

May Birthdays

Frank—May 2

Stephen—May 9

Dan—May 21

Carla—May 29

Celebration, May 4, 2003

Welcome—
Celebration of Freedom—**Nick**
Celebration of Visitors—
Celebration of Each Other—
Celebratory Announcements—
Celebration of Art—**Tom**
Celebration of Heroes—**Ellen**
Celebration of Personal Mission—Randy
Celebration of Talent—**Fritz**
Oratory—**Martin**
Announcements—
Closing Quotation—

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, April 1, 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. Call Vera at 404-577-7968 for more information.

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, April 26, 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, April 23, 2003, at 8 p.m.

FOR's Potluck dinner

Our next monthly potluck is Saturday, May 17, 2003, at 7 p.m. at Steve's house. Please remember to bring something good to eat or drink.

Celebration Schedule

- **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
 - Sunday, March 7, 2004
 - Sunday, April 4, 2004
 - Sunday, May 2, 2004
-

Membership Information:

FOR, Inc. has 44 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.

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.

Sponsors

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

Thanks, Dan, from FOR, Inc.!
