

Fellowship of Reason, Inc.

June 2004 Newsletter

"Advocating Heroic Engagement With Life"

Volume 6, Number 6

International Section (Received by all local chapters)

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.

The Priest, the Warrior, and the Producer

Most ethical systems have a view of man as he is and ought to be. Eudaimonism is no exception.

Since Plato the Western Tradition (the intellectual history of the West) has recognized three parts of the human soul: reason, spirit, and desire. Plato's *Republic* talks of three types: the gold, the silver, and the bronze. "All of you in the city are certainly brothers, but the god, in fashioning those of you who are competent to rule, mixed gold in at their birth; this is why they are most honored; in auxiliaries, silver; and iron and bronze in the farmers and the other craftsmen." [415a] These three types are the philosophers (or priests), the warriors, and the producers—people interested in the mind, in warfare, and in producing food, goods, and services.

Plato constructed the city of his *Republic* as a macrocosm of the human soul. Plato believed that the individual soul and the ideal city were analogous.

The classical virtues pertaining to these types are wisdom, courage, and moderation. When these three virtues are in balance—when each is given its due—justice prevails in the city and harmony in the human soul.

The contraries of these virtues are "injustice, licentiousness, cowardice, and lack of learning, and in sum, vice entire." [444b]

There is a large body of literature in the field of comparative mythology that attempts to connect the three-part scheme described by Plato to a prehistoric culture from the steppes of central Asia. Connections are seen by these scholars to the languages (the

Indo-European languages) and the mythological heritages of the West, from India to the Scandinavia, from the ancient Romans to the Germans. One of the scholars in the field is the Frenchman Georges Dumézil.

That this division of the individual (and the city) into three functions has survived for 5,000 years and is pervasively manifest in our culture today is evidence that the categories are useful and important.

The person of the present and the future—the true Eudaimonist—must be her own priest, warrior, and producer.

Producers: We are all used to being producers. The idea that individuals ought to work for a living is a fundamental part of our American culture and need not be elaborated here.

Warriors: Few of us are accustomed to being warriors. A legacy of the Vietnam War is that the warrior function of the individual and of society at large is frowned upon. That sensibility has changed somewhat in the last 10 or 20 years, but an anti-warrior bias still is very common. (The warrior function is also anti-Christian: "turn the other cheek.")

When I suggest that each individual become a warrior, I do not propose that we all go out and get gun toters' permits. I mean that each modern individual must be prepared to defend herself in the world by use of persuasive language and prudent behavior. There are levels of defense. The first level is prudence. A prudential rule is to trade and relate only with associates who have proven to be trustworthy. A second level is rhetoric. If conflict develops with a new associate, be prepared to persuade him that your interests should prevail. A third level is appeal to mutually agreed authorities (an internal appeal process, for instance). If rhetoric is unsuccessful, turn to people or systems that the disputants regard as authoritative. A fourth level is the law. If voluntary systems do not work, turn to the law for help. The highest level of defense is violence. Violence is almost never an option for dispute resolution in America today. The only

exception is the resistance of violent assault by a criminal.

Priests: None of us (except actual priests) undertake the priestly role, yet. We must be our own priests. The priestly function has been performed for 5,000 years by a highly specialized priestly class. Since the 1700s and the Enlightenment, the priestly class has been progressively marginalized. No one outside religion recognizes the authority of a priest over himself.

Yet the role of priest is important. A reason for the philosophy of Existentialism and the relativism and nihilism of the 20th century is despair over the absence of priestly services.

The vital and valid functions of the priestly class are these: A priest takes **confession** and gives penance. A priest leads the **celebrations of life**. A priest **lectures** and advises about ethics.

Since none of us will accept the performance of these vital functions by another, we must perform them for ourselves or manage the acquisition of the services from service providers.

Self-confession: We must be aware of our guilts and know how to atone for our wrongdoings. This is basically the 5 R's: recognition of error, restitution to the victim, repentance (seeking forgiveness from the victim), reformation (changing yourself so that you do not repeat the wrongdoing), and retribution (receive appropriate punishment).

Self-lecture: We must be aware of the subject of ethics and educate ourselves about it.

Self-Celebration: We must be aware of our need to acknowledge our successes (to stop and smell the roses) and provide ourselves with opportunities for celebration.

Performing for ourselves the role of priest is already captured in FORum. Members by their personal performances create our monthly ritual. We have no priest, no spiritual leader.

Performing for ourselves the role of priest is also captured in our insistence upon defining for ourselves personal missions in life. We have no priest to tell us the meaning of life. We create our own meanings.

In order to be a complete person, we must exercise wisdom, courage, and moderation. We must be our own priest, warrior, and producer. These virtues and functions are goals for which we should strive. Our reward is a harmonious soul. This is nothing new. Plato said it 2,500 years ago. Are we ready to hear it now?

The Georgia Seal and Plato's *Republic*



The image above is the official seal of the State of Georgia. When in the city of Plato's *Republic* wisdom, courage, and moderation are given their due, the city is just. In the Georgia State Seal three columns represent these virtues. The columns together yield "justice" and support the Constitution. (Note that while the word "courage" does not appear around the center column, the idea of courage is represented by the sword-bearing soldier standing to the right of the center column and turned toward it.) When these three virtues are in balance in an individual the soul is harmonious.

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Local Section: Atlanta Chapter Calendar and Contact Information

June Birthdays

June 22 Chris Snider

July Birthdays

July 1 Jack Hill
July 25 David van Mersbergen
July 26 Steve Whiteman
July 31 Linda Cowen

FORum Schedule

- **Sunday, July 4, 2004**
- Sunday, August 1, 2004
- Sunday, September 6, 2004
- Sunday, October 3, 2004
- Sunday, November 5, 2004
- Sunday, December 5, 2004
- Sunday, January 2, 2005
- Sunday, February 6, 2005
- Sunday, March 6, 2005
- Sunday, April 3, 2005
- Sunday, May 1, 2005
- Sunday, June 5, 2005

Adult Education

1st Sunday

No adult education on July 4, 2004

FORUM, July 4, 2004: 1st Sunday

Begins at 1 p.m. SHARP!

Remember: Time limits will be vigorously enforced!

Welcome—**Martin Cowen**
Celebration of Freedom—
Celebration of Visitors—
Celebration of Each Other—
Celebratory Announcements—
Celebration of Art—**Vera Norman**
Celebration of Literature
Celebration of Heroes—
Celebration of Personal Mission—
Celebration of Talent—**Jerry Pease**
Oratory—**Martin Cowen**
FORum—
Announcements—
Closing Quotation—

Invisible College: Every Thursday

The Invisible College meets every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at Vera's Intellectual Salon. Price: \$60 per 4 weeks payable to Professor Kipton Jensen. Call Vera at 404-577-7968 for more information.

Philosophy Tapes: 1st/3rd Tuesdays

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. Free.

Fiction Book Club: 2nd Tuesday

Members and friends of FOR, Inc. meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at John and Beth's house to discuss a marvelous book. Beth Holley is the coordinator of the book club. 404-754-7519.

Non-Fiction Book Club: 2nd Saturday

Members and friends of FOR, Inc. meet on the 2nd Saturday of every month at Chris and Allison's house to discuss a marvelous non-fiction. Allison is the coordinator of the non-fiction book club.

Potluck: 3rd Saturday

Members and friends of FOR, Inc. meet on the 3rd Saturday of every month for a potluck supper. Bring something good to eat or drink to share. Our next potluck is on Saturday, July 17, 2004, at 7:30 p.m. at Martin and Linda's house.

Film Night: 4th Saturday

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, June 26, 2004. Arrive at 6:30 p.m. Doors will be locked for safety! Movie starts at 7:15 p.m. Free.

Pub Night: 4th Wednesday

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, June 23, 2004, at 8 p.m.

Steve Stokes' Philosophy Café: 2nd/3rd Wednesdays

Attend Steve Stokes'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.

Dan Barber's Self-Esteem Course

"Self-esteem is easily lost, and it does not return on its own accord. We must first understand what it is and how it works in order to build it back up. The Pillars of Self-Esteem course is a very important opportunity to facilitate changes in the basic patterns of the behavior that whittles the important self-esteem down to nothing. If you understand the importance, or are just curious, you will find this interesting and relevant information. This is a free interactive course that only requires your participation and commitment."

1st and 3rd Mondays at 7:30 in Borders bookstore cafe Buford. Across from the Mall of Georgia.

For more info contact Dan at 770-831-3010

Membership Information:

- Regular membership: \$35 per year if paid prior to October 31, 2004
 - Contributing membership: \$70 per year if paid prior to October 31, 2004
 - Lifetime membership: \$700 if paid prior to October 31, 2004
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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 and a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation.

Important Principles of Eudaimonism

1. **Personal mission.** Everyone has a personal mission. Some people have deliberately defined and chosen their personal missions. This is the eudaimonistic approach. Some people live their lives according to an unidentified and a not-consciously-chosen personal mission. This can be a mistake, but not always. Many good missions are defined and imposed by nature, such as survival (in subsistence cultures), pursuit of a spouse, or parenthood.
 2. **Source of Values.** Human beings are the source of all values.
 3. **Center of Value.** The individual is the fountainhead of all values and the reference point for good and evil.
 4. **Harmony of Interests.** Even though each individual is a self-contained valuing system, there is a harmony of interests among rational people.
 5. **Friendship.** Friendship is, philosophically, important. The art of friendship ought to be learned and practiced.
 6. **Knowledge.** "I want to understand" is a guiding principle for human life. Self-education is a lifetime project.
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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 Forum
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 (FOR, Inc. is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation and donations are tax deductible.)
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.

Visit www.paypal.com and make a payment to "pay@fellowshipofreson.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.

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The Meaning of Membership in FOR, Inc.

In order to enjoy the benefits of the Fellowship of Reason, Inc. you need not be a member. All of our activities are free and open to the public. (The only exception is Invisible College where each student pays an honorarium to the professor.) A number of non-members regularly participate with us and are most heartily welcome.

Why then become a member of the Fellowship of Reason, Inc.?

The Fellowship of Reason, Inc. exists by virtue of the generosity of its members and friends. People you know contribute money, property, services, and time in order that the value we all enjoy continues to exist. The services by performers at FORum, by executive committee members, by hosts and hostesses, and by planners of events are vital to the existence of FOR. Those volunteer services are, in fact, FOR.

Membership is, simply, a clear statement that you wish the Fellowship of Reason, Inc. to continue to exist. Membership is not the only way to make this statement. Some non-members are generous contributors of money, property, and services. In fact, we all benefit by the mere attendance of non-members at FOR events.

If you want FOR to continue to exist, won't you clearly say so by becoming a member today?