

# Fellowship of Reason, Inc.

July 2004 Newsletter

"Advocating Heroic Engagement With Life"

Volume 6, Number 7

**International Section (Received by all local chapters)**

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## 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.

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## Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in the essays appearing in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the organization. The Fellowship of Reason, Inc. speaks only through its Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws, and the actions taken by the Board of Trustees as a board and recorded in the minutes of the corporation.

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## The Sacred Ritual: Communication

By Martin L. Cowen III, Editor

Last month I argued that a human being from the Western Cultural Tradition performs three essential functions: the priest, the warrior, and the producer. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century these functions become the philosopher, the negotiator, and the entrepreneur. The role of philosopher involves the management of the contents of consciousness. The role of negotiator involves prudent behavior, self-defense, and negotiation in civil society. The role of entrepreneur involves the creation of wealth to sustain the individual.

I argued that each of these three functions is represented in societal institutions (e.g. the Church, the military and police, big business), but that in our modern individualistic Western culture each of us must assume greater personal responsibility for each of these functions.

Most Westerners are entrepreneurs or other producers. Some Westerners are good negotiators. A very few Westerners are good philosophers.<sup>1</sup>

Today, I argue that each of these three functions is dependent upon one skill: communication. I call this skill a "sacred ritual" to emphasize the fundamental importance of the art of communication to human health and happiness.

Three questions are apparent: (1) Do these three functions—the priest, the warrior, and the producer—depend upon communication? (2) Is communication a sacred activity? And (3) what are the implications of the sacredness of communication?

(1) Do these three functions—the priest, the warrior, and the producer—depend upon communication?

**Communication and Philosophy.** Philosophizing means, in part, managing the contents of consciousness. Consciousness can be meaningfully divided into memories, present sense impressions including introspection, and imagination, pertaining respectively to the past, the present, and the future.

A crucial present need of consciousness is psychological visibility. Psychological visibility means, in part, bringing the contents of your consciousness out into the world and displaying those contents to others for approbation. Awareness of our personal successes is a content of consciousness that should be brought out and displayed. Having friends (which requires communication skills) and sharing our successes with them provides psychological visibility. We have ritualized this important activity in the Celebratory Announcements element of FORum. Participation in this ritual requires the ability and willingness to speak in public.

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<sup>1</sup> Most Westerners, for management of the contents of consciousness, rely upon actual priests or other religious leaders, psychiatrists, psychologists, or other health care professionals, self-medications in the form of alcohol or other substance, or television (constant input to mask psychological problems).

**Communication and Negotiation.** Government has a monopoly on the use of force in modern America. Thank goodness! Only in the rarest of circumstances are we called upon to use physical force to defend ourselves. The main tool of self-defense in modern America is communication, the ability to present the case that our interests ought to prevail.

**Communication and the Entrepreneur.** To sell ourselves and our product to others depends upon our ability to communicate our own value and the value of our product to others.

(2) Is communication a sacred<sup>2</sup> activity?

Sacred means supremely important.

Anthropologically, the purposes of language are to make friends (a priestly function), to coordinate action (a producer function), and to resolve disputes (a warrior function). The goal of communication is to harmonize the interests of the people involved in the communication. Any skill that facilitates the three essential functions of being human is extremely important.

(3) What are the implications of the sacredness of communication?

If communication is a sacred ritual, then the participants are holy men and women<sup>3</sup>. We should take communication seriously. We should take our interlocutors seriously. When we sit down with another to communicate, we must *listen*. We must let her know that we are listening by looking her in the eyes. If our visual attention wanders about the room or if our face and eyes appear to be bored or disinterested, communication will fail. If a person is not worth talking to, do not talk to him. Do not pretend.

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<sup>2</sup> Some may find my use of words like sacred, ritual, reverence, holy, worship, etc. discomfoting. A possible reason is fear and hatred of religion. While I am not religious, I neither fear nor hate religion. These words label valid concepts and are extremely useful in conversations and writing about morals, provided we can move beyond hate and fear.

<sup>3</sup> Greetings within civil society include: the bow (for philosophers and priests), the salute (for negotiators and warriors), and the handshake (for entrepreneurs and other producers). Within the family and among dear friends we enjoy hugs and kisses.

An important principle of Eudaimonism is that *there are no conflicts of interest among rational people*. This principle is demonstrable only if the rational interlocutors are able to reconcile their interests by communicating. In the Fellowship of Reason, we make this process easier by associating with people with whom we have almost everything in common. Outside the family or our dear friends, the process of reconciliation or understanding is much more complex.

Communication should only be used to bring people together [think of the parts of the word “atonement”: at-one-ment, to become as one, to be of one mind, to be reconciled]. Communication should not be used to widen the gulf between people. People with whom we cannot agree ought to be gracefully avoided rather than wounded with language. [The creation of new enemies does not encourage human flourishing!]

Communication should never be used to achieve goals contrary to the anthropological purposes of its evolution: to make friends, to coordinate action, and to resolve disputes. Therefore, if we have made enemies, destroyed the possibility of coordinated action, or enflamed disputes, then we have failed at the goal of communication.

In conclusion, I have two favorite sayings. “I want to understand.” And “People are the source of all values.” Understanding is only achieved via communication. To achieve all values requires voluntary interaction with people which is only possible when communication is successful.

Communication is serious business. Let us do it well.

P.S. Coming soon: FOR Toastmasters.

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Please notice that I have changed the color scheme of this newsletter to white, red, and blue to symbolize the three modern functions of the individual: philosopher, negotiator, and entrepreneur.
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# Fellowship of Reason, Inc.

June 2004 Newsletter

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## Local Section: Atlanta Chapter Calendar and Contact Information

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### July Birthdays

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

### August Birthdays

August 1	Beth Holley
August 18	Carlos Franco
August 18	Dunham McAllister
August 24	Edward Culver
August 28	Tom Welch
August 31	Nicholas Wittgen

### FORum Schedule

- **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
- Sunday, July 3, 2005

### Adult Education

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday at High Noon

Begins at noon before FORum. David Ziebell facilitator.

### FORUM, August 1, 2004: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday

**Begins at 1 p.m. SHARP!**

**Remember: Time limits will be vigorously enforced!**

Hospitality—**Vera Norman**  
Welcome—  
Celebration of Freedom—  
Celebration of Visitors—  
Celebration of Each Other—  
Celebratory Announcements—  
Celebration of Art—  
Celebration of Mythology  
Celebration of Storytelling  
Celebration of Literature—**Michael Norman**  
Celebration of Heroes—  
Celebration of Personal Mission—  
Celebration of Talent—**Sean Kagalis**  
Oratory—**Martin Cowen**  
FORum—  
Announcements—  
Closing Quotation—

### Invisible College

Sufism discussion by Professor Jonaid Sharif. Vera's house on Thursday, July 22, 2004, 7:30 p.m. Free lecture. Invisible College will be on hiatus until the Fall.

### Philosophy Tapes: 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays

Philosophy tapes are played to a small private audience in the living room of a volunteer on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month. Free.

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### **Fiction Book Club: 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

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### **Non-Fiction Book Club: 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Byrd is the coordinator of the non-fiction book club. 678-585-0406 or Allibyrd@charter.net

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### **Potluck: 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday**

Members and friends of FOR, Inc. meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month for a potluck supper. Bring something good to eat or drink to share. Our next potluck is on Saturday, August 21, 2004, at 7:30 p.m. at the home of a volunteer.

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### **Film Night: 4<sup>th</sup> 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, July 24, 2004. Arrive at 6:30 p.m. Doors will be locked for safety! Movie starts at 7:15 p.m. Free.

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### **Pub Night: 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday**

Members and friends of FOR, Inc. meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> 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, July 28, 2004, at 8 p.m.

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### **FOR Symphony: Six Thursday nights in the 2004-5 ASO Concert Season**

Our first concert is at 7 p.m. in Symphony Hall on Thursday, September 23, 2004. Tickets will be mailed to the coordinator by the Symphony box office in August. Martin Cowen is the coordinator of FOR Symphony. 770-471-9800.

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### **Steve Stokes' Philosophy Café: 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays**

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.

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### **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](http://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.

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### 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, and 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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### 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. 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?

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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](http://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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