

Fellowship of Reason, Inc.

August 2004 Newsletter

"Advocating Heroic Engagement With Life"

Volume 6, Number 8

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.

Ladies and Gentlemen, a Tiny Elite

By Martin L. Cowen III, Editor

An elite does exist in society. The group is extraordinarily small. I know of no public person who belongs to this group. Perhaps by definition members of the elite cannot be public persons.

The existence of this elite was brought home to me this week for the first time because I have been engaged with various businesses as a customer and because I have resumed the practice of law. In both domains—business and law—I have encountered people who are not members of the elite.

I realized, suddenly, that my job as a customer and a lawyer is to engage with these non-elites and raise them up, using rhetorical devices including flattery, to behave well.

I realize, now too, that my reason for abandoning the practice of law 8 years ago and seeking the future members of the Fellowship of Reason® was precisely my desire to rub elbows with the elite and to be done with, for a while, the non-elites.

What are the characteristics of this elite group?

Cultural Heirs of a Warrior Elite

We have many conventions in our society, the hand shake, the salute, the bow. We say “please” and “thank you.” We give deference to certain, perhaps most others in person by greeting them with a “Sir” or “Madame.”

These conventions are not arbitrary. The offering of the right hand for shaking derives from warriors

offering proof to one another that their weapons carrying right hands are, in fact, empty. The salute derives from the custom of knights in amour raising the face protectors of their helmets to make friendly eye contact with a fellow knight. The bow derives from the practice of subjects exposing their necks (for possible beheading) to the sovereign as a symbol of the sovereign’s power of life and death over the subject.

These customs arise because human beings are dangerous and powerful. The elite are not courteous because they are nice. The elite are courteous because they are wise and prudent.

Even though most people no longer carry arms, people are still dangerous and these “social niceties” are fundamentally matters of self-preservation.

The elite have a fundamental respect, based upon self-preservation, for their fellow human beings.

Myths and Conventions

Every society has its myths and conventions. During FORum last month our presenter on Freedom alluded to the modern American ideal of **freedom**. She contrasted our ideal of freedom with the ideal of Allah, the God of Islam, who is the ideal of most countries in the Middle East. The presenter noted that the ideal of freedom is *absent* from most Middle Eastern countries. Freedom is a cultural convention of the West.

The mythology of America is that we are the first country based upon the ideals of freedom. I declare that I believe this myth and that I worship the ideal of freedom. Myths and conventions are not necessarily false.

The elite about whom I write, though, is capable of and willing to examine even their own myths and conventions. The elite are willing to take all myths and conventions off of their belief windows¹ and

¹ I derive the term “belief window” from the writings of Hyrum W. Smith. Everyone has many, mostly unexamined, beliefs that influence his or her behavior.

consider whether even their own myths and conventions are true².

Excellence (Aretê)

The elite are concerned with personal excellence. Whatever they are, they desire to be that perfectly. The elite have several areas of interest in all of which they wish to excel. An elite wants to be a good partner, a good parent, a good friend, a good member of a community, a good student, a good worker, and a good money maker. For the non-elite, these goals conflict. For example, children require the physical presence of parents. Jobs require the physical presence of workers. Being a good parent and a good worker, therefore, sometimes compete for the non-elite.

The elite, because they are wise and just, are good at all things they voluntarily undertake. The elite utter no excuses. They do.

This self-expectation of excellence in each thing is represented in the ethos of the professions of medicine and law. For so long as the doctor and patient relation exists, the true doctor treats his patient with excellence. For so long as the lawyer and client relation exists, the true lawyer represents his client with excellence. The true doctor and the true lawyer keep separate their roles as professionals and their roles as money makers.

Conclusion

We call these elites ladies and gentlemen. They are wise, courageous, prudent, and just. They are rare.

I aspire to be a gentleman.

I aspire to be among only ladies and gentlemen, and so it is in the Fellowship of Reason.

² Religion happens to be a myth that we question and find false.

Disclaimer

<p>The opinions expressed in the columns appearing in this newsletter are those of the author 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.</p>
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Local Section: Atlanta Chapter Calendar and Contact Information

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

September Birthdays

September 15	James Hill
September 18	Bill Murphy

FORum Schedule

- **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
- Sunday, August 7, 2005

Adult Education

1st Sunday at High Noon

Begins at noon before FORum. David Ziebell facilitator.

FORUM, September 6, 2004: 1st Sunday

Begins at 1 p.m. SHARP!

Remember: Time limits will be vigorously enforced!

Hospitality—
Historian/Timekeeper
Welcome—
Celebration of Freedom—
Celebration of Visitors—
Celebration of Each Other—
Celebratory Announcements—
Celebration of Art—
Celebration of Mythology—**Vera Norman**
Celebration of Storytelling
Celebration of Literature—**Chris Snider**
Celebration of Heroes—
Celebration of Personal Mission—
Celebration of Talent—**Jerry Pease**
Oratory—**Ed Buckner**
FORum—
Announcements—
Closing Quotation—

Invisible College

Invisible College will be on hiatus until the Fall.

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 Byrd is the coordinator of the non-fiction book club. 678-585-0406 or Allibyrd@charter.net

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, August 21, 2004. Steve Stoke's is hosting, but not at his 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, August 28, 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, August 25, 2004, at 8 p.m.

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.

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

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

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, 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. (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?

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.
