

# The EUDAIMONIST

May 2005 Vol. 7 No. 5

The official newsletter of  
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.



## Utopia

By Martin L. Cowen III

Plato's Atlantis (described in his dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias*), Plato's *Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia*, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, James Hilton's Shangri-La (described in *Lost Horizon*), Ayn Rand's Galt's Gulch (described in *Atlas Shrugged*), and M. Night Shyamalan's 2004 film *The Village* starring William Hurt and Sigourney Weaver, all describe perfect worlds. *The Village* is a thriller and you may skip the next paragraph if you do not want me to spoil it for you.

A rural village of an uncertain time, home to people of an uncertain religion, is stalked by "Those We do not Speak Of." Cut off from the outside world by nameless monsters, the villagers have no access to modern medicine. Forced by circumstances to challenge the monsters, a young, blind girl goes to the outside world to obtain life saving medicines. We learn that the village is located within an enormous nature preserve in modern America. The elders of the village are all former clients of a center that counseled victims of crime. Each elder has lost a loved one to violent crime. The elders have retreated from the world because of the pain of their losses. The William Hurt character has an enormously wealthy relative whose wealth has funded the nature preserve in which the village and the villagers hide from the outside world. The outside world is our world of war and violent crime. The village is protected from the outside by the wealth of the founder's ancestor. The unknowing villagers (other than the informed elders) are kept in ignorance and from leaving by fictional monsters animated by the elders dressing up in costumes. The audience is called upon to consider which world—the civilized (save the imaginary monsters) world of the village or our truly violent world—is better. Are the elders wrong to hide the truth from their children? The cost of Utopia in *The Village* is a big lie and not a little fear.

From time to time, I dare say, we all dream of Utopia. I propose that our perfect world is within us and easily accessible to us.

These utopian stories conceive of the perfect world as free from war, crime, and poverty. The

inhabitants lead useful, happy lives, attending to their own interests.

Hey, that's easy!

Because we live in 21st century America, we are free from attack by foreigners in our Atlanta homes. (I understand that New Yorkers may have more to worry about.) We are free from crime if we stay away from bad areas. And the people who are reading this newsletter are



relatively well employed or have sufficient savings or circumstances to avoid homelessness and starvation.

Our sole problem is *our awareness* of war, crime, and poverty—not the personal fact of war, crime, and poverty. None of us is likely to be a victim of war, crime, or poverty. (I am aware that some of us have been victims of war and crime, but none of us is likely to be a victim again.)

Do we doubt this?

As a matter of what we actually do, none of us manifests (in action as opposed to in thought) an interest in war, crime, or poverty. Concern with these matters is purely a mental self-stimulation. The truth is that we are all victims of sellers of soap, The Media. The news we watch on television or read in the newspapers—our only current contact with war, crime and poverty — exists for one reason and one reason only, to sell soap or other consumer goods.

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# Toastmasters: \$148 Member Benefit

## Special Offer to FOR Members Only

The Fellowship of Reason, Inc. will refund your Toastmaster® membership dues up to \$148 on the following conditions:

- (1) you must be a member of the Fellowship of Reason, Inc. and remain a member until all conditions are completed;
- (2) you must join a Toastmaster® club after this offer and achieve Competent Toastmaster status;
- (3) you must give an Oratory at Forum; and,
- (4) you must keep and deliver to FOR, Inc. your receipts for dues.

If you comply with these conditions, FOR, Inc. will reimburse you for your actual Toastmaster® dues up to \$148.

Questions? Call Martin: 770-471-9800

### About the name "The Eudaimonist"

A eudaimonist (pronounced "yoo-DIE-mon-ist") is one who believes that the highest ethical goal is individual happiness and personal well-being. The term is derived from the ancient Greek word eudaimonia, which means, roughly, "well-being."

## Utopia (cont. from Page 1)

News is not a source of enlightenment, noble entertainment, or useful knowledge. News is simply a freak show.

These, then, are my suggestions for finding Utopia in the here and now.

**The first rule of Utopia:** Turn off the television. Do not be at the disposal of The Media.

**The second rule of Utopia:** Have something to do in Utopia. A liberal education and a personal mission or missions are our tools. A liberal education literally means an education for free people. The purpose of a liberal education is to enable people with free time to use it well. If we did not get a liberal education in school, we can spend the rest of our lives acquiring one. Personal mission means a vocation or calling about which we are passionate.

**The third rule of Utopia:** Be sufficiently aware of our environment to avoid criminals. Stay out of bad areas of town. Walk with friends. Lock your car. Hide your stuff from view.

**The fourth rule of Utopia:** Identify our Utopian community. (Hint: Our FOR friends.) Nurture our friendships. Keep in touch. Visit our friends regularly and in person (forget e-mail as uncivilized). Do things with friends like eat, drink, hike, enjoy culture. Talk about things of interest to us truly—not war, crime, and poverty—, but art, music, history, philosophy, mythology, literature, our liberal educational interests, and our personal missions.

Apply these simple rules and we need not escape into fiction to find Shangri-La or Galt's Gulch, we can live it here and now. Utopia is simply a choice, an act of will.

### Disclaimer

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.

## Please, Write us a Letter!

Write us at:  
Fellowship of Reason  
P.O. Box 5564  
Atlanta, Georgia 31107

Or, E-mail us at [info@fellowshipofreason.com](mailto:info@fellowshipofreason.com).

(Your letter to the editor could be here)

All letters must be signed to be considered for publication.

**Fellowship of Reason, Inc.****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.

**Fellowship of Reason, Inc.** is a Georgia nonprofit corporation and a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation

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FOR a friend.

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Questions? info@fellowshipofreason.com.



## Letters to the Editor

**Regarding "Eudaimonist Ethics" April 2005**

Martin, I enjoyed your essay "Eudaimonist Ethics" in the recent newsletter, which I just received in the mail. I appreciate that you made specific mention of certain rules from the Affirmations of Humanism to support the idea that Secular Humanists do not have a philosophical system. It helps me to see what you are basing your opinions on, instead of letting them float in midair. (Not that I think you actually do this; this is just from my perspective.)

I had to cringe when I read "I am all in favor of altruism", but I know what you meant! And you do make clear what you mean later on in the essay. I have to admit, however, that's rather gutsy for someone so influenced by Ayn Rand!

It's nice to see Eudaimonist philosophy discussed in detail. I personally do not think that "freethought" organizations (groups that take no stands on anything except to support critical thinking habits) are optimal forms of moral communities, or indeed moral communities at all, though I don't have anything against Freethought groups as such. Your essay brings the "moral" into "rational moral community".

A small nitpick: at the end of your essay, you write that "A reason-based morality is a system of rules of human behavior designed to achieve the goal of individual human flourishing." I agree that Eudaimonism is precisely that, but I wouldn't discount moralities that had some other goal, such as "the greatest good for the greatest number", from being reason-based moralities. It seems that you are narrowing the range too much. I would have written "a reason-based morality is a system of rules of human behavior that aim at some goal and are justified by a philosophical system."

Mark Sulkowski, Sweden

**Reply**

It now occurs to me that tradition is another source of moralities. So there are at least four sources of morality— faith, feeling, philosophy, and tradition. The song "Tradition" from *Fiddler on the Roof* illustrates the role of tradition in founding and sustaining a morality. I am inclined to classify a morality based upon tradition as a "reason-based" morality, while denying that honor to faith-based and feeling-based moralities. A thoughtful Traditionalist might reason as follows: "Knowing how to act is quite difficult. Therefore, I will learn from history what moral rules work well and found my morality based upon that." Naturally, I believe tradition is inferior to philosophy as a basis for a morality, but very few people are philosophers or have an explicit and coherent philosophy. *Fiddler on the Roof* illustrates the inferiority of tradition as a basis of morality by showing Tevye's morality changing during the story to accommodate new information and circumstances.

Finally, I omitted discussing moral relativists, cynics, skeptics, and nihilists because these folks tend to deny morality entirely. They themselves would reject categorization as moral communities of any kind, if even communities. Note, though, that even nihilists cannot be totally without values and hence some set of moral rules (rules that guide his actions). A living nihilist at least values food and acts to gain and keep it consistently enough to avoid starvation. Most nihilists have large sets of rules that guide their actions, though they would be loath to call their rules "moral." Some self-proclaimed nihilists even urge their rule sets on others, while denying the label "moral" to their actions or their rule sets.

Martin Cowen, Georgia

## Please Contribute to FOR's Yard Sale -

You can help yourself and help your Fellowship of Reason.

Help yourself to live better by reducing clutter – donate your useful items to the Annual Yard sale.

You can help your Fellowship of Reason financially – our past yard sales have brought in hundreds of dollars to make our community stronger.

The Annual FOR Yard sale Fundraiser is Saturday, June 18th, hosted by David and Janet Ziebell. In East Cobb county.

Books, Records (remember them?), CDs, videos. Clothing, furniture, sporting goods. Electronics, software. Kitchenware, garden tools. Use your imagination!

**Donated items will be accepted on Saturday June 4th and Saturday June 11th between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM** (or otherwise by appointment only).

Donors are responsible for delivery. Contact David at 770-509-5379.

Items not sold at the yard sale will be donated to local charity.

Volunteers for the day of the sale are also welcome. – Come by and help a little or a lot. There will be fun conversation and lawn chairs to sit in. Afterwards, we will have our June potluck nearby.

Donations to Fellowship of Reason are tax deductible!

## Special FORum Event in August, 2005

On August 6, 2005 **John Enright** will talk about his novel *Unholy Quest*. He will read a few passages, including some of the poetry. John will share the real-life events that inspired him to write the story, how the book, in defiance of his original intentions, took on a life of its own, how he published the book at minimal expense but a lot of work, and finally, he will answer any and all questions!

The plot: Thor Johnson makes a profession of fighting in other people's wars. So his new assignment, training guard dogs on a Caribbean island, sounds downright relaxing. But it's not relaxing for long.

The island is in the grip of a religious cult that aims to sweep the world. The cult's prophet upholds a very old-fashioned family ideal: one

husband, many wives. But instead of being one big happy family, the cult is a web of jealous intrigue which soon entangles Thor. Even more entangling is a mysterious dancer. She follows Thor to the island, and soon men are fighting over who will possess her. Thor must go to war once again, battling for his life, and struggling to understand what is happening to his own soul.

John Enright is the author of a novel *Unholy Quest*, and a book of poetry *Starbound And Other Poems*. He frequently speaks at the Objectivist Center summer seminar on aspects of poetry. He has contributed articles to Objectivist-oriented journals, including the *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* and *The Navigator*. He has performed with an improv troupe, is the proud father of two, and makes his living as a computer consultant.

## Meaning of Membership

In order to enjoy the benefits of the Fellowship of Reason, 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?

The Fellowship of Reason 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 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?

**Regular membership:**  
\$35 per year

**Contributing membership:**  
\$70 per Year

**Lifetime membership:**  
\$700

### Contact Information

To talk to somebody about Fellowship of Reason call:

Chris at 678-585-0406  
Vera at 404-577-7968  
Martin at 770-471-9800  
Dan at 770-831-3010

# May 2005

May 2005						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June 2005						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
May 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12:00pm Adult Education 1:00pm FORum (NWUUC)	Frank Vickers bd 12:00pm Deadline for FOR newsletter submissions	7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)				
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
8:00am Reason Runners		7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)		7:00pm FOR Symphony 7:30pm No Invisible College this week		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
8:00am Reason Runners 11:00am Nonfiction book club (Chris and Allison's house)		7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)				Dan Barber bd 7:30pm Potluck (Beth & John)
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
8:00am Reason Runners	8:00pm Business Meeting		8:00pm Pub Night (Manuel's Tavern)	7:30pm Invisible College (Vera/Michael's house)		6:30pm No movie night this month
29	30	31				
Carla Bauer bd 8:00am Reason Runners	Memorial Day					

# June 2005

June 2005						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

July 2005						
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			June 1	2	3	4
				David Dreading bd		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12:00pm Adult Education 1:00pm FORum (NWUUC)	12:00pm Deadline for FOR newsletter submissions	John P. Giles bd 7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)		7:30pm Alex Hall, Ph.D. (Vera/Michael's house)		11:00am Nonfiction book club (Chris and Allison's house)
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
8:00am Reason Runners		7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)				8:00am FOR garage sale 7:30pm Potluck (Carolyn Hadaway)
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
8:00am Reason Runners		Chris Snider bd 7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)	8:00pm Pub Night (Manuel's Tavern)	7:30pm Invisible College (Vera/Michael's house)		6:30pm Movie night (John's studio)
26	27	28	29	30		
8:00am Reason Runners	8:00pm Business Meeting		Allison Byrd bd			

## Events

For detailed info on all upcoming events, visit  
<http://www.fellowshipofreason.com/calendar.htm>

### Reason Runners: Sunday 8 a.m.

We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, at the southwestern entrance to Piedmont Park on 10th Street. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit follows at 9 a.m. Walkers and joggers welcome!  
 Martin Cowen coordinator: 770-471-9800.

**Invisible College:** 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
**Special edition on Thursday, June 9, 2005**, will feature **Alex Hall, PhD – LIVE!**  
 Vera Norman coordinator: 404-577-7968

**Philosophy Club:** 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.  
 Philosophy tapes are played to a small private audience in the living room of a volunteer. Free.  
 Sally Hull coordinator: 404-257-0454

**Fiction Book Club:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday 7:30 p.m.  
 Members and friends of FOR meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at John and Beth's house to discuss a marvelous book.  
 Beth Holley coordinator: 404-754-7519.

**Non-Fiction Book Club:** Sunday May 15, 11 a.m.  
**Note: change from usual date, this month only.**  
 Members and friends of FOR meet 11 a.m. on the 2nd Saturday of every month at Chris and Allison's house for brunch and stimulating discussion.  
 Allison Byrd coordinator: 678-585-0406 or Allibyrd@charter.net

**FOR Symphony:** Thursday, May 12, 2005. at 7 p.m. in Symphony Hall. This is our final concert of six in the 2004-5 ASO Concert Season.  
 Martin Cowen coordinator: 770-471-9800

### Potluck: 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, 7:30 PM.

Members and friends of FOR meet monthly for a potluck supper. Bring something good to eat or drink to share. Our next potluck is Saturday, May 21, 2005 at Beth Holley and John Grover's house.  
 John Grover or Beth Holley: 404-754-7519

**Movie Night:** 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday, 6:30 PM  
**(There will be no Movie Night in May)**  
 Members and friends of FOR enjoy a monthly movie night at John's studio using his extraordinary equipment. Arrive at 6:30 p.m. Doors will be locked for safety! Movie starts at 7:15 p.m. Free.  
 John Grover coordinator: 404-754-7519

**Pub Night:** 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 8 p.m.  
 Members and friends of FOR meet every month at Manuel's Tavern for adult beverages and adult conversation.  
 Scott Carper coordinator: 404-964-6697

**FOR Garage Sale:** June 18, 2005, All Day  
 Help FOR by donating your unused stuff to FOR's annual garage sale. Start collecting your donations now. Your donations to FOR, a 501(c)(3) corporation, are tax deductible.  
 Chris Snider coordinator: 770-509-5379

## Join us at FORum:

1st Sunday at 1 p.m.

June 5, 2005  
**"Francis Bacon and  
 Science"**

## Join us at Adult Education

1st Sunday at Noon  
 June 5: Special  
 Program

Martin Cowen will  
 facilitate a discussion of  
 Robinson Jeffer's  
 "Roan Stallion"

## Birthdays

### May Birthdays

May 2	Frank Vickers
May 21	Dan Barber
May 29	Carla Bauer

### June Birthdays

June 2	David Dreading
June 7	John P. Giles
June 17	Matthew Arnold
June 22	Chris Snider
June 29	Allison Byrd

# Celebratory Announcements

Do yourself a favor and remember a good thing that happened to you this month:

Please, write it down: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now do the membership of FOR, Inc. a favor by relating this fact during FORum next month!



FELLOWSHIP OF REASON

FELLOWSHIP OF REASON, INC.  
P.O. Box 5564  
Atlanta, Georgia 31107



**Fellowship of Reason**

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