

The official newsletter of
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.



Leadership is Flourishing, Evolved

By David Ziebell (for the Trustees)

Here's a Fact: Individuals flourishing is what our Fellowship of Reason is all about.

Here's two more facts:

The biggest driver for your success, and for the success of the Fellowship of Reason, is your own steps on your path of developing and achieving your own purpose or purposes.

An important founding principle of the Fellowship of Reason is that individuals flourish best when they are part of a vibrant community of others with mutually agreeable purposes, perspectives, principles, methods, and expectations.

Our point in noting these facts is to discuss one likely outcome for each of us in a life well lived. We propose that it is inevitable that as we gain traction in achieving our current personal purposes, we each will find that supporting the vibrancy of our community in some way becomes quite obviously the next stage in our own flourishing.

Let us say thank you to all of you who have supported our community by developing an activity that supports your purposes, and that engages others in our community.

Hikes, book clubs, Bozart Festival, philosophy club and the like are powerful demonstrations that one person's purpose is likely to be shared to some extent by others, and thus the benefits of the activity are shared more widely, and the overall intensity of the achievement (and it's spin-offs) is better for each of us. A personal example: David Ziebell has never yet attended the non-fiction book club, however, he says "I've benefited from the book club's activity because I trust the club's process of selection so much that I've now read a couple of books I never would have attended to. These include *Freedom Evolves* and *The End of Faith*, and will soon include *Fashionable Nonsense*."

There is another way for any of us to support the vibrancy of our community. And we mean quite literally "any" of us. Each of us can start to influence their environment in beneficial ways at any time. Our community itself is the first

aspect of the environment that we can influence. And we'll propose that since a community of individuals such as Fellowship of Reason is such a new thing that most of us are a bit suspicious of the very idea. But a community of individuals is not an oxymoron. The challenge is that a community of individuals simply new: we need to try things out and see what works. Crucially, for you, and each one of our membership, we need to guide our community to embrace all our diverse purposes, not just a few of them.



FOR's First Board of Trustees (August 24, 2002)
(L to R) Martin Cowen, Vera Norman, David Ziebell, Chris Snider, Dan Barber

This is the stretch goal for each of us as individual members. How can we get more of the benefits of living in a vibrant community by addressing our own goals within the community, but not imposing our sense of fitness of other purposes which could limit the vibrancy of the community?

This is the call to leadership in the Fellowship of Reason. This call, this balance between our individual focus and our seeking the exciting vibrancy of unexpected community support, is something we all have, at any stage in our development. It arises from within, as soon as we realize we have some power to influence our own environment. It is OK for you to answer that call. We'd like to see some of you be trustees of the Fellowship of Reason. We'd like to see some of you participate in, and practice with, the process of influencing the organization

(Continued on Page 2)

Individual Highlights

Special Event	3
Essay: Inward vs. Outward	4
Birthdays	5
Become a Member	5
Errata!	5
Letters to the Editor	6
July-August Calendar	7
Events	9

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."

Leadership is Flourishing... (cont. from Page 1)

to strengthen the organization, which is distinctly different from influencing our selves to foster our own purposes.

In October, we'll be nominating people for 4 trustee positions. We'd like to see 6 or 7 candidates, and we'd like to see the November election resulting in some turnover, and some continuity among the trustees. After the election of trustees, there are opportunities to be an officer (elected by the trustees) and there are opportunities to be a director (appointed by the next President). The way we have operated, any person in any capacity has real influence on how we are governing the Fellowship of Reason - in my opinion there is no need for consolation prizes if some candidate is not elected - there is plenty of work to go

around, and the more we spread it around the easier it is for any of us to get involved.

So, Participate! Be Nominated. Be elected, get appointed.

On Moral Character

By Martin L. Cowen III

The world has three types of people: (1) those who believe that everyone has a moral character, (2) those who believe that no one has a moral character, and (3) those who believe that only some have a moral character. I am the type who believes that everyone has a moral character.

Type I: Those who believe in Moral Character

Moral character is the manifestation in an individual of one or more of the following virtues to a greater or lesser extent: rationality, productivity, pride, independence, honesty, integrity, justice, courage, benevolence, generosity, civility, sensitivity, magnanimity, loyalty, nobility, dignity, straightforwardness,

foresightedness, wisdom, and moderation.

"Moral character" has two purposes: (1) for evaluating myself; and (2) for evaluating others. I, personally, want to flourish. I believe that manifesting the virtues listed above is the best means to do so. Therefore, I measure myself for good moral character in connection with monitoring my progress toward flourishing. I need and want to relate with others in order to flourish. I measure the moral character of others for the purpose of deciding with whom it is safe and desirable to associate.

I believe that every human being has the capacity for all of the virtues listed to a greater or lesser extent.

(Continued on Page 3)

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.

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

Fellowship of Reason

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Subscription Information

12 monthly issues of this newsletter is \$15 per year.

You Want this. Trust us.

The mug you have to have.

FOR coffee. FOR tea.

FOR a friend.

\$6 each or 2 for \$10, Contact us at any FOR function (see page 9)

Questions? info@fellowshipofreason.com.



On Moral Character (Continued from page 2)

Type II: Those who do not believe in Moral Character

Many people fall into the second category and do not believe that anyone has the capacity for moral character. Human beings, like ants and pigs, are solely a function of their genetics or enculturation, nature and/or nurture. Nobody on this theory can rise above his nature and nurture. Everyone is completely determined by their genes and their environment. This idea is an inference from our successes in the scientific fields. The unpacking of causes in nature has yielded grand technological advances in the last 400 years. The assumption is that, eventually, all causes will be unpacked by scientists and that all of existence will be reduced to mathematically lawful relationships between matter and energy, or, in the old mechanistic model, to bouncing billiard balls.

Some scientists and lay people of this type might ask: "Well, what else is there beside matter and energy?" (Human beings find "unknowns" and mysteries extremely discomfoting and desperately try to "box" them with concepts such as "God" or "the merely as yet undiscovered, but like everything else"). I answer: "I do not know. It's a mystery." The answer is true for me, for all scientists, and all lay people. That which is unknown is, as yet, unknown. It is a mystery. It is pure hubris to claim to know the particular form and characteristics of as yet unknown existents and relationships. The workings of human consciousness are largely unknown and are a mystery.

To reiterate the important fact just stated: human beings have not been scientifically reduced to mere mechanistic machines. Such a reduction is the hope and faith of this type.

What is the value of the non-belief in moral

character? First, even people who do not believe in moral character perform the actions of people who do believe in moral character. They avoid people without virtue. They probably are a little less finicky about it and have some dissolute friends. But they avoid, for safety, the truly vicious people in the world. They hold themselves to some standards of virtue. They experience themselves exercising their wills and acting to achieve goals. So these people act as though moral character were true, on the whole and for the most part, except in speech.



The main use of the non-belief in moral character is to allow the person to forgive himself more easily for lacking various virtues, to hold himself to a lesser standard of virtue. This use is the only practical value of the non-belief in moral character. Such a person necessarily has a less flourishing life than a person who has high personal standards of virtue and who relates only with others of the highest moral character.

(Continued on Page 4)

On Moral Character (Continued from page 3)

Type III: Those who believe only some people are capable of having Moral Character

This type of person is a blend of types I and II. For this person, some people, including himself, are members of an elite—"the elite" that has the capacity for moral character. There exist other people who do not have the capacity for moral character, "the little people." The ground for this belief is the false opinion that people are divided into morally meaningful groups by their genes or by their enculturation.

The meaning of these genetic and/or enculturation differences for "the elites" is that the minds of "the little people" function differently in some fundamental way than the minds of "the elites."

These differences are used by the elitist to justify treating "the little people" differently. The different treatment can be benevolent or malevolent. The history of the 20th Century has many brutal examples of malevolent treatment of various groups. A benevolent example is the assumption that "the little people" cannot care for themselves and therefore need a government program, supported by "the elite," to help them.

This type, speaking now only of the benevolent category, uses moral character in the same way as type I's. He holds himself up to a moral standard. He holds his associates, other members of "the elite" up to a moral standard. While he pities "the little people," he generally avoids having contact with them, relying instead upon the government and the government programs to manage "the little people" well out of his sight.

Conclusion

Every human being who can make simple causal connections can choose to have a good moral character. A simple example is that of civility. An uncivil person, if treated justly, will find himself excluded, time after time, from various human relationships. He will observe that others, who are not uncivil, are not excluded. After a time, he may come to realize that civilized behavior is required to have relationships and he will become more civilized. This model applies to all of the virtues listed earlier.

A main reason for a failure to achieve or maintain a good moral character is a disruption of natural processes by parents, the government, or other supposedly "benevolent" agencies. Parents today, for example, allow their adult children to return to the family home, sometimes bringing with them one or more infants and toddlers from failed marriages. (I speak from personal experience. A relative of mine has just taken in her divorcing 25-year-old child and her three children, including a newborn.) Because many adult children know that their parents will always provide the ultimate safety net for them (parents should

not!), some children today lack important virtues. They lack a work ethic, because they need not work in a world where their childhood home remains open to them. They lack judgment and integrity and so they make bad marriages and end them easily and early. They lack responsibility and foresight and so they give birth to children they cannot afford.

The adult children have learned that their parents will always be there to bail the adult children out of trouble. This is a failure of parenting. This is a failure to understand the job of a parent (to create a self-sufficient adult human being) and the changing nature of that job (total care is necessary at first, and, ultimately, no care is the best care).

This same "bad parenting" occurs on the governmental and "benevolent" agency level. This "bad parenting" and bad government policy are two roots of the lack of good moral character.

People do make causal connections. The ability to think and to act rationally is not the exclusive domain of an "elite." There are no "little people." Everyone is capable of acquiring and maintaining good moral character.

Meaning of Membership

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

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?



John and Elizabeth at Hilton Head over Labor Day Weekend

Birthdays

September Birthdays

September 15	James
September 18	Bill
September 19	Jim

October Birthdays

October 6	Michael
October 12	Dylan
October 21	Jerry
October 21	David Z.
October 31	Martin

THE FELLOWSHIP OF REASON'S BOZART FESTIVAL

The Fourth Annual Bozart Festival will take place Saturday, September 17, 2005, at Scott's clubhouse.

Mark your calendar and...

Plan to shine!

At right, some past entries.

For more info, see fellowshipofreason.com.



Non-FOR activities of possible interest

- Invisible College, tuition (\$100 for 6 lectures) based philosophy lectures by Dr. Gregory R. Johnson, meets Wednesday's at Vera's house 7:30 p.m. Contact Dr. Johnson at invisiblecollege@mindspring.com
- Atlanta Freethought Society, <http://www.atlantafreethought.org/>, meets on the second Sunday at 1 p.m. in Roswell
- The Humanists of Georgia, <http://www.geocities.com/gahumanists/>, meets on the fourth Sunday at 12:30 p.m. in Roswell
- C.G. Jung Society of Atlanta, <http://www.jungatlanta.com/>, meets at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Atlanta
- Southern Order of Storytellers, <http://www.southernorderofstorytellers.com>

Letters to the Editor

(Your missive here)

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

Or, E-mail us at info@fellowshipofreason.com.

All letters must be signed to be considered for publication.

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!
 Coordinator is Martin: 770-471-9800.

Philosophy Club: 1st/3rd Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.

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.
 Coordinator is Sally: 404-257-0454

Fiction Book Club: 2nd 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.
 Coordinator is Beth: 404-754-7519.

Non-Fiction Book Club: 2nd Saturday 11 a.m.

Members and friends of FOR meet 11 a.m. on the 2nd Saturday of every month at Chris and Allison's house to discuss a marvelous non-fiction.
 Coordinator is Allison: 678-585-0406 or Allibyrd@charter.net

Potluck: Saturday, September 17, 2005.

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, September 17, 2005 at Scott's clubhouse: The 4th Annual Bozart Festival!

Movie Night: Saturday, August 27, 2005

Members and friends of FOR enjoy a monthly movie night at John's studio using his extraordinary equipment. FOR's next movie night is Saturday, September 24, 2005. Arrive at 6:30 p.m. Doors will be locked for safety! Movie starts at 7:15 p.m. Free.
 Coordinator is John: 404-754-7519

Pub Night: 4th Wednesday 8 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR meet on the 4th Wednesday of every month at Manuel's Tavern at 8 p.m. for adult beverages and adult conversation.
 Coordinator is Scott: 404-964-6697

FOR Symphony:

Six Thursday nights in the 2005-2006

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Concert Season

Next concert is Thursday, September 15, 2005. We meet at 7 p.m. to hear the pre-concert lecture.

Coordinator is Martin: 770-471-9800.

Call for Submissions

FOR members are encouraged to contribute items for our monthly newsletter, The Eudaimonist. Suggested topics include: the use of reason in daily life; personal improvement; ethics and happiness; friendship; and celebrations of heroes, freedom, science, culture and the arts. Essays/articles 750-1,000 words; book/movie/TV reviews 250-500 words; letters 100-250 words. Submissions are subject to acceptance based on quality and relevance, and may be edited for spelling and grammar, or trimmed for space. Poetry, photographs and artwork are also welcome.

Direct all inquires to Martin Cowen, Newsletter Editor, mlcowen@yahoo.com or call 770-471-9800.

Join us at FORum:

1st Sunday at 1 p.m.

October 2, 2005

Join us at Adult Education

1st Sunday at Noon

Both events are held on the campus of the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation*

1025 Mt. Vernon Highway,
NW, Atlanta, GA 30327.

*The Fellowship of Reason

is a non-theistic organization which is not affiliated with the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation

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

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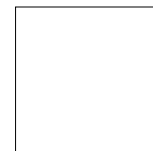
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info@fellowshipofreason.com

A Rational Community for the
New Millennium.

FELLOWSHIP OF REASON, INC.

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
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