

The official newsletter of  
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.



## FOR's 2006 Survey

In January, the Officers of the Fellowship of Reason distributed a survey, through which we hoped to identify our existing strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of our constituency, drive change in areas needing improvement, garner the creative insights and recommendations of our constituency, and offer a means of meaningful engagement with our members and friends. About one-fourth of 152 surveys were returned. We wish to extend sincere thanks to all of you who participated in the survey. Your responses will help shape FOR into the future.

### The Results

#### Strengths

Our areas of strength indicate an overall satisfaction with FOR. Our strengths were itemized as:

I. FOR's values and principles, offering the non-theist a positive, ethical framework for living.

II. A warm and encouraging community with a diversity of backgrounds, ages, domestic arrangements and means, meeting the real need for fellowship and social support among non-theists.

III. A wide range of social, intellectual and recreational activities satisfying various interests, and supporting participants in personal enrichment.

IV. The monthly newsletter was characterized as interesting, informative, and inspirational.

#### Areas for Improvement

The Officers divided areas for improvement into three broad categories:

I. Marketing. The survey respondents offered a number of suggestions on how better to publicize FOR, including making better use of our web presence and technology. We will incorporate these suggestions into our ongoing marketing plan.

II. Quality of Operations. The items below have been incorporated into our action planning.

- FORum will be better planned, ideally resolving the variance between those who oppose a ritualistic presentation and those who request an inspirational quality.

- Leadership will strive to achieve a consistent representation of corporate message.

- Facilitative tools, such as moderating guidelines, will be offered as aids to discussion groups.

**FOR's mission is  
to promote  
personal flourishing  
through reason**

- More time will be allotted to Adult Education.

- Public relations and interface with other organizations will be strengthened, with an emphasis on structured and constructive communication.

- More opportunities for the inclusion and participation of non-local members and supporters will be created.

#### III. Clarity of Mission

Finally, a theme emerging from the surveys was the need for "clarity of mission;" that is, a clear statement of FOR's purpose that is easy to communicate and that establishes our niche among related groups. In response, the Officers and Trustees developed talking points, which we hope will be useful in communicating about FOR. (The talking points are included on the next page).

FOR's founder, Martin Cowen, coined the phrase "rational moral community" in describing the Fellowship of Reason. This

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#### Individual Highlights

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## FOR's 2006 Survey (cont. from Page 1)

concept is unconventional, yet a vital one in today's world, in which millions of people claim no affinity with a religious tradition.

- FOR exists to accommodate the social and psychological (spiritual, if you will) needs of non-theists.

- FOR is concerned with the supreme questions traditionally addressed by religion: ethical living and man's place in the universe.

- FOR explores these concerns not through faith, but through reason.

- FOR emphasizes that at the center of any valid ethical system is the well-being of the individual.

Therefore, FOR's clear mission is to promote personal flourishing through reason.

## Talking Points

FOR Offers:

### 1) Social Opportunities, Fellowship, Friendship, Community (pick your term)

FOR provides a variety of social events and a social support system for our members and nonmember friends, who identify themselves as 'non-theist' - those who do not carry a religious belief or belong to a religious community. In two words, FOR provides "secular fellowship." Aristotle viewed mankind as social by nature and friendship as essential to happiness or flourishing. FOR offers a benevolent environment in which the individual can experience meaningful relationships with others, who share a common perspective, as well as common values such as personal fulfillment, a reason-based approach to life, and a desire to learn and share ideas.

### 2) A Reason-Based Approach to Life

FOR regards reason as the best method for understanding the universe, human nature (including emotional needs), and our individual lives. FOR asserts that mankind can sufficiently know the world to advance our own flourishing in it, that humans have the capacity to choose what is good for themselves. FOR does not rely on the claims of faith or mysticism as a guide to individual action or well-being, but rather relies on a reason-based approach to life (study, analytical thinking, logic, evidence, one's own good judgment). FOR focuses on the flourishing of our members and friends in this life. FOR offers learning activities that promote the use and development of reason. FOR combines our philosophy of reason with a program of social and educational opportunities to give the experience of living by reason.

## The Final Analysis

In the end, the Officers were pleased with the level of participation in the 2006 survey and are greatly appreciative of the many comments, insights, and suggestions. The strengths and areas for improvement identified by our constituency tie in well with the Officer's perceptions overall, and lend specificity and confidence to our developing plans.

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."

3) **Support of Personal Mission or Goals, Purposeful Living, Individual Flourishing** (pick your term) FOR supports our members and friends in purposeful living, encouraging individuals to select their own purpose(s) and/or goals and to systematically pursue them, keeping in mind that the means of 'getting there' is as important as the goal. In educational parlance, finding fulfillment in the process is as important as the product. Members and friends are encouraged in their pursuits of activities about which they are passionate, career paths, and various other personal endeavors.

### 4) An Ethical Community (Eudaimonism)

FOR subscribes to a philosophy called Eudaimonism (from the ancient Greek "eudaimonia", meaning roughly "well-being") that emphasizes the use of reason and virtue. Eudaimonism asserts that an action is right (good) if it leads to individual well-being, and that individual well-being is at the core of any valid ethical system. Eudaimonism should not be confused with the view that pleasure is the highest good; that view is called hedonism. Well-being or flourishing is an individual matter and multidimensional, but in each case requires ethical behavior. FOR studies ethical questions and seeks to sponsor a moral community based on reason.

### 5) Lifelong Learning

FOR provides a variety of learning activities such as FORum presentations, adult education, taped lectures, and fiction and nonfiction book clubs. FOR regards knowledge and understanding as necessary for flourishing.

### 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.

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**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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**Subscription Information**

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

## FOR Merchandise

The mug you have to have.

FOR coffee. FOR tea. FOR a friend.

Mugs are \$6 each or 2 for \$10.

FOR Polo Shirts and T-shirts are also available. Members Price is \$25 for Polo Shirts and \$15 for T-Shirts.

Prices include domestic shipping, inquire for international shipping.

Contact us at any FOR function (see page 9)

Questions? info@fellowshipofreason.com.



## Talking Points (cont. from Page 2)

Learning is further promoted through opportunities for voluntary speaking and writing and the exchange and discussion of ideas. FOR includes the enjoyment and study of the arts in our regular activities.

### 6) Living Reflectively or Consciously

FOR encourages our members and friends to be reflective about their lives and personal progress. FOR encourages each individual to take him/herself seriously, exercising self awareness, and considering how individual actions/choices promote or hinder one's own flourishing or that of others. FOR provides opportunities to reflect on the good things in life and on the people most important to us.

### 7) Recognition of Life Events and Human Excellence

FOR celebrates or marks the significant life events of our members and friends, such as births, marriages, or deaths. FOR also engages in an active admiration of human creativity, excellence, and/or achievement, recognizing the accomplishments of our members and friends, and honoring those of the great men and women of the ages. In examining the achievements of others, we gain inspiration and learn better how to flourish. "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." --Isaac Newton

## Abducted: A Review

*Abducted: How People Come to Believe They Were Kidnapped by Aliens*

By Susan A. Clancy

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press • 2005  
• 179 pages • \$22.95

Reviewed by Tom Welch

First of all, *Abducted*, by Harvard University postdoctoral fellow in psychology Susan A. Clancy, is not just another alien abduction book. In fact, Clancy never set out to study alien abduction claims at all. Rather, her research was initially into the phenomenon of “recovered memories”. Allegedly, some events are so traumatic that they are repressed—but can be brought back to consciousness through techniques such as hypnosis.

However, as Clancy discovered in her research, a major confound into the investigation of whether recovered memories are real is that it is difficult to prove whether the alleged underlying event—usually childhood sexual abuse—actually occurred or not. She then hit upon the idea of choosing a subset of people whose recovered memories she was sure were false: those who claimed to have been abducted by aliens.

I should point out here that the complete improbability of such memories has little to do with the possibility of intelligent life existing elsewhere in the universe, something about which we simply know too little. I actually find Clancy a bit too dismissive of the possibility, but she hits the nail on the head when she points out that it is a large leap from acknowledging that intelligent extraterrestrials could exist to accepting the claims of the so-called abductees: aliens resemble us; their civilization exists at the same time as ours; they have found their way here; they have somehow found it necessary, useful or amusing to repeatedly

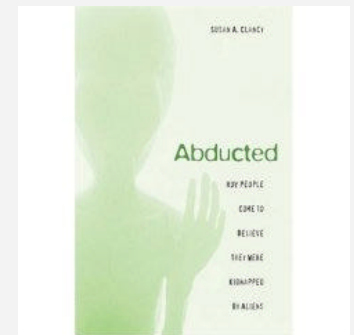
kidnap humans, perform the same procedures on them multiple times, then imperfectly erase their memories of the event; etc.

Yet many people sincerely claim to have memories of alien abduction. Why? First, Clancy explains how relatively common biological phenomena, such as sleep paralysis (“nonpathological desynchrony in sleep cycles”) or even epilepsy can produce intensely emotional experiences similar to the ones “abductees” describe. Next, she explains how human memory is an extremely fallible capacity. It is significant that memories of abductions are “recovered” after the fact, usually through hypnosis. Consciously or not, a therapist can influence a subject to create false memories. Even very vivid memories might turn out to have been something seen in television or movies, rather than personal experience.

“A memory is not an exact photograph of an event. It is created out of the cues that elicited the memory and the fragments of the original experience that were stored in the first place,” Clancy tells us. The susceptibility of memory to alteration, either by our own selves, or through unscrupulous or misguided therapists, is a disturbing but very real phenomenon. As to the more sinister implications of this fact, I am reminded of the quote from the evil O’Brien in George Orwell’s *1984*: “We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not?”

The conviction with which “abductees” insist on the veracity of their memories does not make them true. In what is arguably the book’s theme, Clancy reminds us that “anecdotes don’t count as evidence”. Proof requires more than heartfelt emotion, it requires the elimination of all other logical possibilities.

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## Birthdays

### June Birthdays

June 2	David D
June 22	Chris S
June 26	Jan M
June 29	Allison B
June 29	Johann G

### July Birthdays

July 1	Eddie F
July 1	Jack H
July 25	David v M
July 26	Steve W
July 31	Linda C

## 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?

## Abducted (cont. from Page 5)

To the question often posed by believers in alien abduction, "why are abduction stories so consistent?" Clancy's answer is twofold. First, in the details, the stories told by various "abductees" really *aren't* consistent. Secondly, although the tales follow the same basic pattern, they mimic a template that is widely available in our culture. It is significant that claims of abductions by aliens in the United States did not come about until stories featuring the basic script began to appear in movies and television, circa 1953. Lest anyone be tempted to assert a chicken-and-egg argument, Clancy provides a convincing chronology.

Clancy's profiles of her research subjects are engaging, but ultimately irrelevant (anecdotes don't count as evidence, remember?). Significant, however, are her original findings: "abductees" are not necessarily insane, but they do tend to score high on a trait called "schizotypy", which may indicate a "genetic latent liability" for schizophrenia. Although it does not mean they are schizophrenic, Clancy explains, "they tend to look and think eccentrically and are prone to 'magical' thinking and odd beliefs." She also found them more likely than a control group to create false memories in a laboratory setting.

The question remains, why would anyone *want* to create a memory of alien abduction if it didn't happen? On the surface, the experiences "abductees" describe are terrifying. Scratch a little deeper, however, as Clancy did, and you find something else: not one of her subjects regretted having had the "experience". What do they gain from being

an "abductee"? They gain a sense of belonging—the community of "abductees" is tight-knit, and upon joining it, some people feel they "fit in" for the first time in their lives. They gain a sense of being special, even famous. Most likely, these people *have* experienced trauma in their lives; attributing it to alien abduction suffuses it with meaning.

In fact, Clancy concludes, alien abduction is akin to religious belief. Echoing Carl Sagan in *The Demon-Haunted World*, she notes that in our culture, talk of encounters with angels and demons may be unfashionable, but aliens, who are supposedly biological beings with superior technology, hold some credibility. "Being abducted by aliens," she says, "may be a baptism into the new religion of our technological age."

At this point, Clancy's narrative founders on some epistemological rocks. Regarding the scientific method, she says, "The most we can hope for are successive improvements in our understanding...[nothing] is ever known for sure." If nothing is certain, then how exactly do we improve our understanding? I don't mean to imply that we can't or shouldn't make practical decisions based on probability or incomplete evidence. I do call into question Clancy's assertion of the impossibility of knowledge, starting with the basic axioms of existence, identity and consciousness.

Despite this misstep, however, *Abducted* is a worthy defense of reason and the scientific method, as well as an enjoyable read.

## Letters to the Editor

Regarding "Fences and Neighbors" – May, 2006

Last month's essay "Fences and Neighbors" was enjoyable as well a well-moderated discussion. I left it with a smile, having learned something too. Thanks to Steve (a trained moderator, by the way) for contributing these guidelines at my request.

One of the favorite pastimes in FOR is a lively discussion, whether about a movie, book, lecture- or how to have a good discussion! As a discussion group host, I've been told both "I'll be back" and "Fuhgedaboutit." Some prefer a laissez faire approach to discussions, while others are more comfortable with--shall we say?—a more moderate approach.

Discussions of a raucous or argumentative nature are ultimately dismaying to some, while

decorum alone can be void of content. How to fly the middle course between an excess of display, emotion, and digression and a deficiency of spontaneity, fun, and interest?

Perhaps by application in some measure of sound moderating principles, such as these offered by Steve.

Beth Holley, President

## We Study Ethics: After the End of Faith

FOR's continuing education program will be on hiatus for June and July because outside commitments will take the coordinator out of town.

In August, we will resume our current program: "After the End of Faith." Our purpose is to simply state what is our common ethical ground in the Fellowship of Reason, to describe systematically the modern eudaimonist ethics.

Please plan to participate, as we map out our common ground.

Any input to this program should be directed to David Ziebell at [dziebell@bellsouth.net](mailto:dziebell@bellsouth.net).

Special Note: Stay tuned for a new time and place when we resume in August! We will no longer meet at the Crowne Plaza.

# June 2006

June 2006						
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	

July 2006						
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					

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				June 1	2	3
					David Dreading bd	6:30pm Movie night (John's studio)
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1:00pm FORum (NWUUC)		7:30pm Philosophy Club (Suzanne's house)	7:30pm NO--Invisible College			All Rivers Run to the Sea 11:00am Nonfiction book club (Chris and Allison's house)
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
8:00am FOR-Runners		The Mayor of Casterbridge 7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	7:30pm Invisible College			7:30pm Potluck (Chris & Allison's house)
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
8:00am FOR-Runners		7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)	Chris Snider bd 7:30pm Invisible College	8:00pm Pub night	8:00am Deadline for newsletter submissions	6:30pm Movie night (John's studio)
25	26	27	28	29	30	
8:00am FOR-Runners 9:30am Executive Committee Meeting	Jan M. bd			Allison Byrd bd		

# July 2006

July 2006							August 2006						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
2	3	4	5	6	7	1	6	7	1	2	3	4	5
9	10	11	12	13	14	8	13	14	8	9	10	11	12
16	17	18	19	20	21	15	20	21	15	16	17	18	19
23	24	25	26	27	28	22	27	28	22	23	24	25	26
30	31					29			29	30	31		

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
July 2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1:00pm FORum (NWUUC)		Independence Day 7:30pm NO--Philosophy Club				Still Looking: Essays on Am 11:00am Nonfiction book club (Chris and Allison's house)
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
8:00am FOR-Runners		7:30pm NO--Fiction Book Club				7:30pm Potluck
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
8:00am FOR-Runners		7:30pm NO--Philosophy Club				6:30pm Movie night (John's studio)
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
8:00am FOR-Runners 8:00am Deadline for newsletters 9:30am Executive Committee		David v M bd	Steve W. bd	8:00pm Pub night		
30	31					
8:00am FOR-Runners	Linda C. bd					

## Events

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

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

We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, at the Flying Biscuity at 1655 McClendon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307 <http://www.flyingbiscuit.com/> for a run through Candler Park and along Freedom Parkway. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit follows at 9 a.m. Walkers and joggers welcome! Martin Cowen coordinator: 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. Sally Hull coordinator: 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. For book selections and more information, go to: [www.fellowshipofreason.com/fiction.htm](http://www.fellowshipofreason.com/fiction.htm). Beth Holley coordinator: 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.. For book selections and more information, go to: [www.fellowshipofreason.com/nonfiction.htm](http://www.fellowshipofreason.com/nonfiction.htm). Allison Byrd coordinator: 404-372-4089

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**FOR Symphony:** Our participation in the ASO Concert Season for 2006-2007 will begin in September.

Martin Cowen coordinator: 770-471-9800.

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

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, June 17, 2006 at Chris and Allison's residence. David Ziebell coordinator: 678-591-1510

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### Movie Night: 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday, 6:30 p.m.

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

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### Pub Night: 4th Thursday, 8 p.m.

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

*Join us at  
FORum:*

**1st Sunday at 1 p.m.**  
(Meet, Greet at 12:30)

June 4, 2006

## 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**

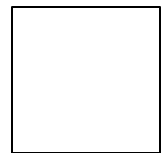
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A Rational Community for the  
New Millennium.

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



**We're on the Web!**  
*See us at:*

[fellowshipofreason.com](http://fellowshipofreason.com)