

The official newsletter of  
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.



## Human Flourishing and Natural Rights

By Edward W. Younkins

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An **ontological foundation** is a foundation in reality and is to be distinguished from a theological foundation. (All margin comments come from the Editor of The Eudaimonist.)

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**Natural law** is an older concept than the idea of **natural rights**. John Locke and his predecessor, Hugo Grotius, are frequently credited with ushering in the modern concept of natural rights. Historically, the doctrine of natural rights appears to have developed either within, or at least consonant with, the framework of the natural law tradition. There is some debate among philosophers as to whether the idea of natural rights is based on the idea of natural law or whether they are separately developed, but related, concepts. Either way, natural law and natural rights are compatible ideas each of which is rooted in human nature itself—both require an **ontological foundation**. Both natural law and natural rights are based on epistemological realism.

People are all of one species with a definite nature and are also each uniquely configured because of their individuating attributes—individuality is essential to one's nature. Having reason and free will, each person has the capacity and responsibility to attempt to actualize his potential for being a flourishing individual human being—it is a person's moral responsibility to be as good as possible at living his own life. Morality is the good of man in his individual instantiation—it does not aim at the common good. There is only flourishing of individual human beings. The human *telos* is the standard for morality and the individual human person is the center of the moral world. This classical teleological *eudaimonistic* approach to ethics states that the proper moral task of each person is to seek his personal flourishing and happiness in his life—one's needs and purposes in life are determined by his humanity and individuality. It follows that the morally good is subject to the determination by each individual person who is responsible for his own life—the human moral good is connected with individual initiative. There is a connection between respecting each person's right to liberty and one's attempt to flourish by answering questions of morality and by acting accordingly.

Each unique individual human person is morally autonomous and should be held responsible for his actions. It is essential to respect human autonomy and uniqueness so that individuals can attain self-actualization. There is an inviolable moral space around each person that protects him from intrusion by others. Rights involve a delineation of jurisdiction within which an individual may decide what to do. A person's own discerned potentialities tell him what to do and the standard of flourishing provides a criterion for one's wants and desires. Each person is responsible for living the type of life that realizes his distinctiveness. The notion of responsibility is a key concept for understanding rights, morality, and human flourishing. Agential direction involves autonomous acting on decisions made via a process of examination, reflection, deliberation, and choice.

Individual uniquenesses are the sources from which value pluralism flows—from value differences emanate the need to engage in peaceful exchanges and for voluntary associations. Individuality entails varieties of value and diversity with respect to human flourishing—in a society of varied individuals the outcomes of human flourishing will reflect that variety. It follows that what is required is freedom of action to allow for a plurality of ends and for a diversity of approaches to the attainment of human flourishing. Responsible agents require a moral space for living their lives in accordance with their nature as individual human persons. A protected moral space is needed for the possibility of self-direction. The doctrine of natural rights attributes to human beings moral rights which others are obligated to respect. Natural rights justify the context in which human actions take place and determine the moral principles that establish what is permissible within that context. Mutual non-interference provides the context and proper setting for social interactions.

Natural rights are derived by reason from human nature and supply a comprehensive principle that applies universally to all persons and to all acts. Natural rights are based on the common aspects of human beings whereas each life to be lived is the life of some individual person—the human *telos* is individualized and agent relative. The cognition of the universal idea of natural rights

## Human Flourishing and Natural Rights (continued from page 1)

involves abstraction without precision and is based on the consideration of human nature. Natural rights provide a context of self-directedness that is common to every act of human flourishing. Common features give rise to universal standards—some principles are irrefutable and indispensable. Natural rights provide a sphere of rightful defensible authority for individuals to live their own lives according to their nature as individual human beings. The designation "natural" refers to the justification of these rights.

The ultimate justification of an ethic of human flourishing is consequentialist endorsing each person's pursuit of his individual well-being. On the other hand, the doctrine of natural rights can be viewed as **deontic** informing people what restrictions they must accept. There is a distinction between ethical principles that are teleological and those that are deontic. According to teleological principles, the moral value of an action depends upon the consequences of the action—human flourishing is a consequence-based theory of right action. According to deontic principles, the propriety of an action stems from something other than the consequences—deontic restrictions are moral prohibitions against imposing specific forms of treatment upon other people. There are deontic restrictions that are correlative to the rights of others. We could say that rights and responsibilities are relational in the nature of human persons.

There is a distinctive correspondence or correlation between the doctrines of human flourishing and natural rights. Endorsing human flourishing makes it rationally necessary to also endorse natural rights. Although human flourishing is not the mainspring or source of rights, the two doctrines are complementary systematizing principles within an ethical framework that is rational because it contains both of these coordinating and integrating components. The rationality of advocating the doctrine of human flourishing depends upon the support of the doctrine of natural rights.

The doctrine of natural rights provides a conception of freedom that establishes the context for other senses of freedom. Natural rights portray the appropriate setting for social interactions and specify the conditions for meaningful senses of moral virtue and human flourishing. Natural rights delineate conceptually the moral space within which individuals need to be free (and self-directed) to make their own choices regarding their possible pursuit of their self-actualization without interfering with the like pursuit of others with whom they interact socially.

Natural rights do not enforce themselves. Securing natural rights should be the primary and central concern of the political and legal

order. The notion of natural rights should inform the formation of law and government. Political liberty should involve a state of organized social life in which persons are not deprived of their sovereignty. Human flourishing can best occur when there exists a minimal state that takes no actions except to uphold the negative natural rights of all of its citizens. Politics and law should not have a direct role in how people ought to live their lives. Politics should be concerned only with the limited ends of peace and security—politics and law should be separated from personal morality.

The book *Norms of Liberty* embodies the most complete expression of, and best statement to date of, Douglas B. Rasmussen and Douglas J. Den Uyl's thesis that liberalism is a political philosophy of metanorms that does not guide individual conduct in moral activity. Arguing that politics is not suited to make men moral, they proclaim the need to divest substantive morality from politics. The purpose of liberalism, as a political doctrine, is to secure a peaceful and orderly society. Political philosophy should only be concerned with providing a framework within which people can make moral choices for themselves. This framework creates a moral space for value-laden activity. Politics should be concerned solely with securing and maintaining the conditions for the possibility of human flourishing that is real, individualized, agent-relative, inclusive, self-directed, and social. Liberalism requires conduct so that conditions may be obtained where moral actions can take place—liberalism is not an equinormative system. Metanormative and normative levels of ethical principles are split because of their different relationships to self-perfection. Rights are metanormative principles—they are ethical principles, but they are not normative principles.

What is required is the existence of an ethical principle that aspires not to guide human conduct in moral activity, but instead to regulate conduct so that conditions can be achieved where moral actions can occur. Rasmussen and Den Uyl explain that rights are an ethical concept that is not directly concerned with human flourishing, but rather is concerned with context-setting—establishing a political/legal order that will not require one form of human flourishing to be preferred over any other form. A two-level ethical structure consists of metanorms (also referred to as political norms) and personal ethical norms.

### 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."

### 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 dedicated to the personal flourishing of our members through reason.

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

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## FOR Merchandise

The mug you have to have.

FOR coffee. FOR tea. FOR a friend.

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

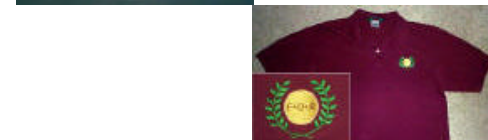


FOR Polo Shirts and T-shirts are also available. Members Price is \$25 for Polo Shirts and \$15 for T-Shirts.

Prices include domestic shipping, inquire for international shipping.

Contact us at any FOR function (see page 9)

Questions? info@fellowshipofreason.com.



## FOR's Annual Christmas Party

Please come to **Martin and Linda** Cowen's house for FOR's annual Christmas party on **Saturday, December 16, 2006** at 7:30 p.m. We will play our gift giving game. In order to participate in the game, each participant in the game must bring a wrapped gift worth \$20 or less. The party is potluck so please bring something good to **eat or drink** to share with others.

We will enjoy a live performance of Celtic music by guitar, harp and voice from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. After the music, we will play our gift-giving game.

R.S.V.P. Martin Cowen at 770-471-9800 or [mlcowen@yahoo.com](mailto:mlcowen@yahoo.com)



## Human Flourishing and Natural Rights (continued from page 2)

Ethics are not all of one category. Whereas some regulate the conditions under which moral conduct may exist, others are more directly prescriptive of moral conduct. Of course, the conditions for making any type of human flourishing possible are less potent than conditions that serve to advance forms of human flourishing directly. Natural rights do not aim at directly promoting human flourishing—the context of natural rights is as universal as possible. Self-direction is the common crucial element in all concrete distinct forms of human flourishing and the negative natural right to freedom is a metanormative principle because it protects the possibility of self-direction in a social context. According to Rasmussen and Den Uyl, the purpose of rights is to protect self-directedness. Although they acknowledge that human flourishing is man's *telos*, their argument for rights does not justify rights for their being conducive to achieving human flourishing. The natural right to liberty permits each individual a sphere of freedom in which self-directed activities can be undertaken without the interference of other people.

A neo-Aristotelian ethical perfectionism is consistent with, and supportive of, a non-perfectionist view of politics. A person's human nature calls for his personal flourishing which, in turn, requires practical wisdom and self-directedness. The purpose of rights is to protect self-directedness. It follows that self-directedness can be viewed as an intermediate factor between metanormative natural rights and normative human flourishing. Self-perfection requires self-direction and pluralism—diverse forms of flourishing are ethically compossible under the rubric of universal metanorms.

Rasmussen and Den Uyl have extended and refined ideas from political philosophy that began in ancient times. These are the ideas that the state should not use or permit coercion against peaceful people and that the state should have nothing to do with fostering individual personal morality and virtue—people participate in political life so that they are not harmed rather than to be made to flourish. Elements of these notions can be found in the writings of a number of philosophers such as Lao Tzu, Epicurus, and especially of Spinoza who strongly warned people about the dangers of the moralization of politics.

**“Having reason and free will, each person has the capacity and responsibility to attempt to actualize his potential for being a flourishing individual human being—it is a person's moral responsibility to be as good as possible at living his own life.”**

**Regular membership:**  
\$35 per year  
**Contributing membership:**  
\$70 per Year  
**Lifetime membership:**  
\$700

## 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?

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## Classic Film Appreciation Course

Classic Film Appreciation Course  
By Steve Whiteman

Throughout 2007 FOR member **Steve Whiteman** will teach a free course in the appreciation of classic film and associated early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century popular culture. The course is full, but seats may become available to see individual films. For more information, or to be put on the mailing list, e-mail Steve at [classic.film@yahoo.com](mailto:classic.film@yahoo.com).

The movies will be acknowledged classics, the majority from Hollywood's Gold Age—the 1930s and 1940s—and the rest from other eras of other countries. The program usually will include a cartoon, a short subject, coming attractions, the feature film, and commentary on the careers of key personnel, filmmaking techniques, and relevant history and popular culture. Discussion will follow the commentary.

First and Second Saturdays in 2007  
Doors open 6:45 p.m. program starts at  
7:30 p.m.

### 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

## Revisiting FOR's Very First Fundraiser!

Back on March 13, 2003, the Fellowship of Reason held our very first fundraising event at Manuel's Tavern (the famous Atlanta watering hole that's also host to our monthly "FOR Pub"). The event featured a performance by the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company, a troupe of voice actors who, for over 20 years, have preserved the nearly lost art of live audio drama. Call it "New Old-Time Radio". ARTC's program for the fundraiser consisted of several short comic satires, all written and performed by the ARTC players under the umbrella title "Guerilla Radio Theatre". The event was great fun and a great success, with FOR and ARTC splitting the proceeds 50-50.

Recently, ARTC has begun podcasting some of their archives, including an episode featuring selections from Guerilla Radio Theatre! Included are the pieces "SWATting the Books", in which the local library turns over enforcement of late fees to a special ops squad; "NOSINET", featuring a nosy banker who has surprisingly thorough access to personal financial information; "Inhuman Rights", spoofing the excesses of environmentalism and animal rights; and "The Shape of Things to Come", in which an inventor's latest contraption promises to add new meaning to the phrase "going it alone".

For those who missed the show way-back-when, or those who were there and would love to hear it again, just plug <http://tinyurl.com/tdfad> into your web browser and it'll play the audio file (in mp3 format) directly on your computer. Alternatively, you can visit ARTC at <http://www.artcpodcast.org> and subscribe to their continuing pod cast—again, it's free! Of course, if you listen to Guerilla Radio Theatre and like what you hear, feel free to toss some money in the cyber-tip-jar by going to [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com) and sending a payment to [pay@fellowshipofreason.com](mailto:pay@fellowshipofreason.com) with the note "Podcast"—we'll be sure to send ARTC their fair share.



Members of the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company perform live at FOR's first fundraiser, March 13, 2003.

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

# December 2006

December 2006							January 2007						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30	31			
31													

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat/Sun
				December 1	2
					3
					12:30pm FORum (NWUUC)
4	5	6	7	8	9
	7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			Bruce bd
					11:00am Nonfiction Book Club (Allison's house)
					10
					8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
11	12	13	14	15	16
	7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			7:30pm Christmas Party (Martin/Linda's house)
					17
					8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
18	19	20	21	22	23
Deryck bd	7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)		Frank J. bd	
					24
					8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
25	26	27	28	29	30
Marianna bd		Leanna bd	8:00pm FOR pub	Andrew bd	Mike bd
		7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			
					31
					8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)

# January 2007

January 2007							February 2007						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
7	1	2	3	4	5	6	4	5	6	7	1	2	3
14	8	9	10	11	12	13	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
21	15	16	17	18	19	20	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
28	22	23	24	25	26	27	25	26	27	28			
	29	30	31										

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat/Sun
January 1, 2007	2	3	4	5	6
	7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house) 7:30pm Induction Course (Steve Butterbaugh's house)			7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve Whiteman's h 12:30pm FORum (NWUUC)
8	9	10	11	12	13
	7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			11:00am Nonfiction Book Club (Allison's house) 7:00pm Classic Film 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
15	16	17	18	19	20
	7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house) 7:30pm Induction Course (Steve Butterbaugh's house)	Vera bd		7:30pm Potluck (Volunteer) 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
22	23	24	25	26	27
		7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	8:00pm FOR pub		6:30pm Movie Night (John's studio) 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
29	30	31			
	Mark bd	Sally bd 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house) 7:30pm Induction Course (Steve Butterbaugh's house)			

## Events

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

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

We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, at the Flying Biscuit on McClendon Avenue. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit follows at 9 a.m. Walkers and joggers welcome!

Martin Cowen coordinator: 770-471-9800.

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### Philosophy Club: 1<sup>st</sup>/ 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.

Philosophy tapes are played to a small private group of friends in a private home on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month. Free.

Sally Hull coordinator: 404-257-0454

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### 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

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### 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:** Thursday, January 18, 2007, in Symphony Hall. This is the fourth of six concerts (Stage 1) in the 2006-2007 ASO Concert Season.

Martin Cowen coordinator: 770-471-9800

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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. FOR's next pub night is Thursday, December 28, 2006 at 8 p.m.

Scott Carper coordinator: 404-964-6697

*Join us at  
FORum:*

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

January 7, 2007

## Birthdays

December 9	Bruce H.
December 18	Deryck M.
December 21	Bill G.
December 22	Frank J.
December 27	Leanna A.
December 29	Andrew S.
December 30	Mike B.

January 18	Vera Norman
January 30	Mark Sulkowski
January 31	Sally Hull

## 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**

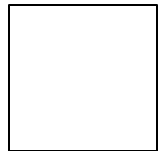
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Atlanta, Georgia 31107

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A Reason-Based Moral  
Community for the 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century

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

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