

The official newsletter of
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.



What are the sources of values? What is the domain of reason?

By
Martin L. Cowen III

**New at FORum:
Children's
program from
noon to 3 p.m.**

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"The Gods Must Be Crazy", a film released in the U.S. in 1984, is one of my favorites. You may recall that a bushman from the Kalahari Desert discovers a Coke® bottle dropped from an airplane. Because of the trouble the bottle causes in his tribal group, the leader of the tribe undertakes a trek to return the bottle to the gods. In the course of his travels, he meets Western man who is depicted as silly and/or vicious. The film is one of the most powerful arguments I have ever seen for the value of a non-Western culture over Western culture. I do not mean to say that I want to become a bushman. Rather, I say that the bushman is right to want to remain a bushman. I say that his desire to remain a bushman is rational.

MOST VALUES ARE "GIVEN" TO US

A conclusion I draw from the film's argument is the value that is our culture is given to us rather than arrived at by a process of reasoning. The bushman was born a bushman and he is rational to remain a bushman.

"GIVEN" AT BIRTH

Other values are given to us rather than arrived at by a process of reasoning. Fear of violent death is an inborn value. The desire for comfortable self-preservation is an inborn value. Sexual preference is an inborn value. Whether a person is sexually attracted to men or women or both is not arrived at by a process of reasoning. Attraction to a particular man or woman is an inborn value and not arrived at by a process of reasoning. Parents' love of

their children is an inborn value and not arrived at by a process of reasoning.

"GIVEN" BY LEARNING

Other values, while not the immutable products of genetics, are given by our upbringing and learning. A preference for order rather than clutter is a learned value. A preference for savings rather than spending is a learned value. A preference for fitness rather than sloth is a learned value. A preference for continuing adult education rather than mental stagnation is a learned value. A preference for nobility rather than baseness is a learned value. A preference for intellectual honesty rather than death obscuring mythologies is a learned value.

One might argue whether a *given* value is given by genetics *or* by learning, but the point is that primary values are *given* to us *either* by genetics or by learning. The domain of reason is thus delimited. Naturally, members of the Fellowship of Reason will be interested in the limits of reason.

REASONING TO ACHIEVE "GIVEN" VALUES

The first level of the domain of reason is reasoning about *how to achieve given* values, not whether the *given* values are good or bad.

On the first level of the domain of reason is reasoning about *how to achieve* comfortable self-preservation. We do not reason about whether comfortable self-preservation is good on this first level. The goodness of

Sources of Values/Domain of Reason (continued from page 1)

comfortable self-preservation is a given. We reason about *how to achieve* comfortable self-preservation. So, for example, we might have learned that an important means of comfortable self-preservation is a job. Therefore, we apply that learning and act to get a job, thus moving in the direction of comfortable self-preservation. Reason is likewise applied toward doing the job well and managing the human relationships within the work environment in order to keep the job.

Also on the first level of the domain of reason is reasoning about procreation or sex. We do not reason about whether procreation or sex is good. We reason about *how to achieve* sex and procreation in the context of comfortable self-preservation.

REASONING TO DETERMINE WHETHER "GIVEN" VALUES ARE GOOD OR BAD

The second level of the domain of reason is reasoning about *whether* the *given* value is good or bad. We can reason about inborn values and learned values. Among the learned values previously mentioned are order/clutter, saving/spending, fitness/sloth, continuing adult education/mental stagnation, and nobility/baseness. There are people who value clutter, spending, sloth, mental stagnation, and baseness. People have the capacity to apply reason to the question of whether these things *ought* to be among their values. Most of us, I suppose, have tendencies toward these values, judge these values bad, and strive to overcome the tendencies. Some people do not question these values and fully live lives of clutter, spending, sloth, mental stagnation, and baseness.

IDENTIFYING PECULIAR HIDDEN VALUES

All of us have *given* values that are peculiar to us. We may or may not be aware of these peculiar *given* values. For example, it is a common imperative that no criticism of self by others be permitted. This *given* value is related to the first inborn value of comfortable self-preservation. The name of this inborn value is self-esteem. People who are not

self-critical or who seek to avoid self-criticism rarely tolerate criticism by others. Reason is employed to achieve this value in a variety of ways. Criticism of self is never invited. Criticism, when offered, is summarily dismissed, ignored, or met with anger. The tragedy here is that an important function of highest type of friendship (friendships based upon character) is to offer valid and relevant criticism to one another. The purpose of criticism (self and other-sourced) is a higher level of comfortable self-preservation through a truly perfected self and an authentic, not pseudo, self-esteem.

Another common imperative is that no rejection of self by potential sexual partners be permitted. I am thinking of single people who avoid dating or control the conditions of dating in order that rejection by the prospective partner cannot be construed by the self as a personal rejection. The single person establishes impossible "rational" (he tells himself or herself) barriers to dating for the purpose of avoiding personal rejection. Again, this imperative is inborn and a subset of comfortable self-preservation through a pseudo self-esteem.

RATIONALIZATION

Reason is thus perversely employed in support of a value of which the actor is unaware. The value in question is related to comfortable self-preservation, the subcategory of self-esteem or the pretense of self-esteem.

PERVERSE INBORN VALUES

Sometimes a person will have a perverse inborn value, such as masochism. In such a case, a rare and rational person will deploy his reason to identify his perversity and use his reason to avoid enacting the perversity. Sometimes a person will perversely lack a common inborn value, such as love for his or her own children. Again, a rare and rational person will deploy his reason to identify his perverse lack and use his reason to enact the absent value. More often than not, individuals with perverse inborn values enact them and thus become criminals.

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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Subscription Information

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

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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.



Sources of Value/Domain of Reason (continued)

BACK TO THE KALAHARI

To return for a moment to the Kalahari Desert and the argument of the film "The Gods Must Be Crazy" that the culture of the bushman is good. Every inborn and learned value of the bushman works to support the bushman's desire to remain a bushman. The people he is sexually attracted to are the people in his tribe. The food he loves is the food his tribe knows how to procure. His language is the language of the tribe. His self-esteem is supported by exercising the skills he has acquired as a member of the tribe. There is *no* value outside the tribe for the bushman. The bushman's peculiar circumstances demand that he remain a bushman. The bushman is rational.

EMPLOYING REASON TO ACHIEVE A "GIVEN" VALUE—NOMINAL RATIONALITY

So as members of the Fellowship of Reason, we are aware that reason can be employed to *achieve* certain *given* values, values that are inborn or learned, values like comfortable self-preservation (get a job) or fitness (go to the gym). Any minimally functioning adult uses reason on this level.

EMPLOYING REASON TO EVALUATE A "GIVEN" VALUE—HIGH RATIONALITY

People of the Fellowship of Reason understand that reason can also be employed to determine whether our *given* values are good or bad. This process is rarely employed by the many. The first thing a highly rational person must do is to identify his *given* values. Some are obvious, like our desires for comfortable self-preservation and sex. Others are hidden deeply within ourselves, like the desire to avoid self or other-sourced criticism. Once the hidden *given* values are identified, then we must apply our reason to determine whether in a fuller context our hidden value is good or bad. If it is bad, we must apply our reason to avoid enacting it, or, perhaps, to change it. More often than not, when a fuller context of a *given* value reveals that value to be bad, the *given* value simply dissolves. (Dissolution is possible only for learned values. Values genetically given cannot be changed. One can only refrain from enacting bad genetically given values.)

EMPLOYING REASON TO QUESTION THE HIGHEST VALUES—PHILOSOPHICAL USE OF REASON

On the highest levels of reason, even the desire for comfortable self-preservation can be questioned as a value.

Sources of Value/Domain of Reason (continued)

Comfortable self-preservation sounds a lot like personal flourishing. Recall that the mission of the Fellowship of Reason is to encourage and facilitate the personal flourishing of our members through reason. Can personal flourishing itself be questioned?

THREE LEVELS OF RATIONALITY

We have identified three levels of rationality now—the nominally rational (people who use reason to enact their unquestioned *given* values), the highly rational (people who use reason to question whether their *given* values are good or bad), and the philosophical (people who use reason to question whether comfortable self-preservation or other high values are indeed the highest values).

THREE SOURCES OF VALUE

We have identified three sources of values—values *given* by genetics, values *given* by learning, and rarely, most rarely, values arrived at by a process of reason.

NEXT TIME, THE LAST MAN

Next time we will consider the question of “Comfortable Self-Preservation and the Last Man”.

Try this exercise

List your known “given” values. Assume you have acted rationally to enact those values. Estimate whether your “given” values satisfactorily account for the content of your days.

Here is my attempt:

My “given” values, that is, values that I did not choose, but values that I was born with or learned, I identify as these:

1. Heterosexual (born with)
2. Natural love for my children (born with and learned)
3. Born into a family of lawyers (I am a sixth generation lawyer) (learned)
4. Preference for intellectual honesty rather than death obscuring mythology (born with, my learning was otherwise since my family is religious)
5. Preference for fitness (learned)
6. Preference for continuing adult education (learned)

I claim that these values, to which I was born or that I learned, largely account for my life.

There are three levels of rationality—the nominally rational, the highly rational, and the philosophical.

There are three sources of values—genetics, learning, and rarely, very rarely, a process of reasoning.

Meaning of Membership

Regular membership:
\$35 per year

Contributing membership:
\$70 per Year

Lifetime membership:
\$700

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, why not clearly say so by becoming a member today?

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-20th century popular culture. The course is full, but seats may become available to see individual films.

For more information, or to receive e-mail, contact Steve at classic.film@yahoo.com

The movies will be acknowledged classics, the majority from Hollywood's Golden

Age—the 1930s and 1940s—and the rest from other eras or other countries. The program usually will include a cartoon or 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.

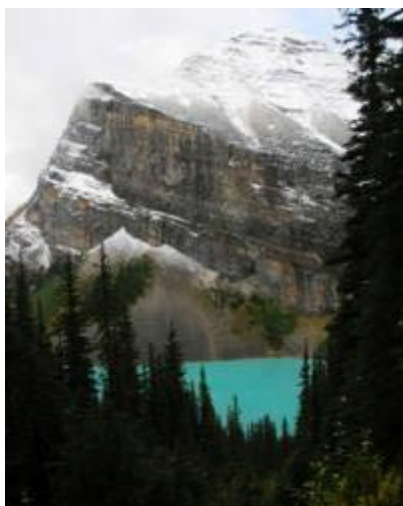
Contact Information

To talk to somebody about Fellowship of Reason call:

Martin at 770-471-9800

Dan at 770-831-3010

FOR President Beth and Trustee Sally travel this September to Banff and Lake Louise in Canada



FOR's mission is to promote the personal flourishing of our members through reason.

October 2007

October 2007							November 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	

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	October 1	2	3	4	5	6
		7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	7:00pm Atlanta Symphony	7:30pm Atlanta Opera	7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve Whiteman's house)
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12:00pm FORum (NWUUC)		7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	7:00pm Atlanta Symphony		11:00am Nonfiction Book Club (Allison's house) 3:00pm FOR Family Friendly Ca 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
12:00am FOR Family Friendly Campout (Ron's house) 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)		7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			7:30pm Potluck (Kate Miller)
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
David Z. bd Jerry bd 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)			7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	7:00pm Atlanta Symphony 8:00pm FOR pub	Ron bd	6:30pm Movie Night (John's studio)
28	29	30	31			
8:00am Marine Corps Marathon 9:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)			Martin Cowen bd 8:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			

November 2007

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				November 1	2	3
				7:00pm Atlanta Symphony	Mary A. bd	John G. bd 1:30pm La Traviata (Renee Fleming) 8:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve Whiteman's h
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12:00pm FORum (NWUUC)		7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house) 8:00pm La Traviata The Met (Renee Fleming)	7:00pm Atlanta Symphony		11:00am Nonfiction Book Club (Allison's house) 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation 8:00pm La Traviata The Met (Renee Fle
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)	Randy bd	Sky bd 7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	7:00pm Atlanta Symphony (Leila Josefowicz)	7:30pm Atlanta Opera	5:00pm Potluck (kids friendly) (Bethann Grella)
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)		7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	Pat G. bd Thanksgiving 8:00pm FOR pub		6:30pm Movie Night (John's studio)
25	26	27	28	29	30	
8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)			Pat bd 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	7:00pm Atlanta Symphony		

Events

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

FORum A Celebration of Human Achievement: First Sunday noon

FOR's premier event. Starting at noon with an InFORmation Hour conducted by Dan Barber for visitors and new members. Meet and greet at 12:30 p.m. The program starts at 1 p.m. and lasts one hour. We enjoy post-program conversation until 3 p.m. when those interested adjourn to The Loop restaurant for further fellowship. Children's Program from noon to 3 p.m.

Martin Cowen director: 770-471-9800.

FOR Runners: Sunday 8 a.m.

We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, at the southwest corner of Piedmont Park on 10th Street. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit (corner of Piedmont and 10th Street) follows at 9 a.m. Breakfast lovers, 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 group of friends in a private home 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

Beth Holley coordinator: 404-372-7378

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

Allison Byrd coordinator: 404-372-4089

Potluck: 3rd Saturday 7:30 p.m.

Our next Potluck is Saturday, October 20, 2007, at Kate Miller's at 7:30 p.m. Remember it is potluck, so bring something good to eat and drink to share.

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, Thursday, October 25, 2007 at 8 p.m.

Scott Carper coordinator: 404-964-6697

Movie Night: 4th Saturday, 6:30 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR meet on the 4th Saturday of every month at John Grover's photography studio to enjoy potluck and a movie. FOR's next movie night is Saturday, October 27, 2007, at 6:30 p.m.

John Grover coordinator: 404-872-4555

*Join us for our
next monthly
FORum:*

**October 7,
2007**

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

Come early for the
**InFORmation
Hour**

At noon
Moderated by Dan Barber for
visitors and new members

And NEW THIS MONTH
FOR FAMILY FRIENDLY
Children's program
from noon to 3 p.m.

Birthdays

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| • October 21 | Jerry P. |
| • October 21 | David Z. |
| • October 26 | Ron M. |
| • October 31 | Martin Cowen |

- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| • November 2 | Mary A. |
| • November 3 | John G. |
| • November 12 | Randy S. |
| • November 22 | Pat G. |

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

P.O. Box 5564
Atlanta, Georgia 31107

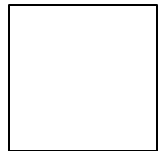
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Community for the 21st
Century



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fellowshipofreason.com