

The official newsletter of
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.



Ethics 102

By
Martin L. Cowen III

In "Ethics 101" we learned that moral systems have a source, an ultimate goal, an enforcement mechanism, and a set of rules. Three moral systems were illustrated: Christianity, Radical Environmentalism, and Eudaimonism. The details of those three systems are summarized in the following table:

Christianity

Source	God
Ultimate Goal	Heaven
Enforcement	Threat of Hell
Rules	In the Bible

Radical Environmentalism

Source	An aesthetic judgment that nature minus man is sacred
Ultimate Goal	Nature without human beings
Enforcement	Eco-terrorism or legislative action
Rules	Destroy the things of man and, ultimately, man

Eudaimonism

Source	The choice to live
Ultimate Goal	Flourishing life on earth
Enforcement	Reality—flourishing or decline and death
Rules	Science—what works

In this essay, I would like to talk about the rules for the ethics of Eudaimonism, that is, "what works" and leads an individual to a flourishing life on earth.

The most important fact about human beings was stated by Aristotle in The Nicomachean Ethics. "Man is a social being." The full context of Aristotle's observation is found at Book IX, Chapter 9, paragraph 3:

Also perhaps it would be strange to represent the supremely happy man as a recluse. Nobody would choose to have all possible good things on the condition that he must enjoy them alone; for *man is a social being*, and designed by nature to live with others; accordingly the happy man must have society, for he has everything that is naturally good. And it is obviously preferable to associate with friends and with good men than with strangers and chance companions. Therefore, the happy man requires friends.

Aristotle introduces a new term, "happy". "Happy" relates to flourishing in that happiness is the emotional state of a flourishing person.

I want to focus, though, on man's social nature.

In order for a society to cohere, the members must have common points of reference. The common point of reference is reality, in particular, the reality of the tables and chairs and the people and events that appear around the members of society. If the individual members of society are mostly affected by their own internal pathologies, rather than objective reality, then effective interaction among the members is difficult or impossible. Imagine a psychiatric ward in which one person believes himself to be Napoleon, another believes that everyone is out to get him, and on and on. People absorbed into their own subjective (and therefore unshared) visions cannot form a coherent society. They can only be contained, fed, and cared for in the psychiatric ward.

Thus, a common view of reality is necessary for a coherent society.

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And reality goes beyond tables, chairs, people, and events. Reality includes a common view of history, of the meaning of literature, of philosophy, of causality, of science, and, generally, of culture.

Just as it is impossible to relate effectively with a person in psychiatric ward who literally believes that he is Napoleon, so it is difficult or impossible to relate with a person who has a different view of, say, causality. Take, for instance, the issue of free will versus determinism. Let us consider the issue as one of practice rather than of theory. People can argue without end that they are determinists and yet still act as if they believe in free will. Here I am only interested in action, not in argument. I will count as a free willist even those who argue that they are determinists if they act like free willists in the world.

A favorite illustration of the determinist finds Steve, the avowed determinist, present in a restaurant. The waitress appears and says: "What would you like for dinner, Sir?" Steve responds: "I am a determinist, let's wait and see."

All self-identified determinists engage what free willists call their "will" in the real world. When a customer in a restaurant, upon being asked for his order, engages his mind, looks at the menu, imagines what might taste good, thinks about what he had for lunch today or for dinner last night, and *decides* what will give him the most pleasure on this occasion in the restaurant, he is exercising his "will". Even the determinist knows that this method of active mental engagement with his environment will result in more pleasure than just flipping a coin onto the menu and ordering what the physics of the toss dictates.

In the real world, a determinist who fails to engage his will in practice would be a person with whom it would be most difficult to relate, as the waitress waiting for determinist Steve to order his dinner discovers.

Another example of sharing a common view of reality pertains to the idea of freedom. Members of coherent society must share a common view of the meaning of freedom. One view of freedom is that freedom is identical with the right to vote. In fact, freedom has nothing substantively to do with the right to vote. Most people in the world do not have the philosophical capacity to exercise sovereign power, which is what the right to vote, however diluted, is. Even in America, a majority is incompetent to exercise sovereign power. Our deteriorating government education system is the cause of

this outcome. Modern elections are about power and the aggregation of interest groups who will give, in exchange for cash or other government benefits, power to the powerful. Modern elections are not about freedom.

Freedom is the condition of society in which an individual's rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness are protected by the rule of law. The right to vote was one of many mechanisms hoped by our founding fathers to secure freedom. The separation of powers into three branches of government, the system of checks and balances, the separation of church and state, the Bill of Rights, the concept of a limited Constitutional government, and the establishment of a republic (a mixed regime containing elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and polity) are among the other mechanisms that were hoped by our founding fathers to secure freedom.

A coherent society cannot be formed among members who have disparate views of the meaning of freedom. A voter, who believes that his exercise of sovereignty includes the power to expropriate the property of another, and the property owner, whose property is expropriated, cannot cohere or work together. The relationship is identical with that of armed robber and victim. The example and the consequences of the expropriation of farm land in Zimbabwe by Mugabe in 2000 comes to mind, again. The reader will recall that Zimbabwe has gone from African "bread basket" to economic "basket case" dependent upon United Nations' food donation programs. Like most people in the world, the Zimbabweans are incompetent to exercise sovereignty.

The first lesson of this essay, "Ethics 102", is that while man is a social animal, that society must be one in which the members have a shared view of "the tables and chairs and people and events" of the world. In other words, the members of the good and useful society, of a coherent society, must have an objective view of the world. When two different members of the society see a "red table" in the real world, they must both agree that they see a "red table". Likewise, the members of a coherent society must see that to confiscate all farm land from the farmers and to give that property to friends of the sovereign will not result in a flourishing society or happy individuals, but, instead, will result in injustice and wide-spread famine.

The Fellowship of Reason talks a lot about reason. Our mission is to encourage the individual flourishing of our members through

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.



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reason. A significant part of the meaning of reason is this objective view of the world written about above. A shared view of "the tables and chairs and people and events" of the world is part of what is meant by "reason". Reason is the capacity to see, to communicate, and to agree upon what is. "Yes, I agree with you that there—right there!—are some 'tables and chairs and people and events' in our world."

So, man is a social being and a coherent society consists of members having an objective view of the world in which they live.

Almost nothing about man is unrelated to society. It seems likely therefore that many rules of flourishing are to be found by examining a human being's relationship to his community.

An important value of society is the division of labor. Every individual has unique talents, skills and interests, by nature. Some people are good hunters. Some people are good gatherers. Some people do well at building huts. Some people are great warriors. Some people are good caregivers for children, the sick, and the aged. Everybody has their niche. A modern list of human specialties would contain tens of thousands of entries.

Labor is necessary for human beings because food and shelter are not given to us. All of our needs must be produced. The production of the many goods that human beings need and want is a primary function of society. The division of labor necessitates trade. An individual has many needs. He is best at creating only a small part of those needs. He

must exchange his product with others in his society for his many other needs. For example, consider the professional photographer. She creates nice pictures. Yet she needs food, shelter, clothing, a digital camera, and a Blackberry®, plus a thousand and one other urgent and not so urgent needs. The photographer trades her nice pictures for her thousand and one other needs.

Implicit in this description of the human condition (the division of labor and trade) are a number of moral rules and/or virtues. The first virtue is productivity. A member of society must produce something to be of value to that society. Other virtues can be deduced from man's need to work and trade: honesty, justice, benevolence, civility, respect, loyalty, persistence, integrity, moderation, punctuality, and cleanliness.

All other common virtues can be deduced from a consideration of man's nature. Let this list of virtues suffice for now.

In conclusion, man is a social being. Members of a coherent society must have an objective view of reality, that is, their common points of reference are real things, events, and true causal sequences in the world as opposed to subjective delusions, like that belief that one is Napoleon or that human beings are merely complex wrist watches (determinists). A primary function of society is division of labor. The division of labor implies the necessity for trade among the members of society of their individual products and services. The division of labor and trade necessitates many of the common virtues, such as honesty and the

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others listed above.

Ethics is not arbitrary. Ethics is a science. The goal of the science of ethics is to define moral rules that lead to the flourishing of individuals on earth



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inquiries@fellowshipofreason.com

A Rational Community for the New Millennium

Request to Join Fellowship of Reason, Inc. (“FOR”)

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Country: _____

eMail: _____

Telephone Number: _____ **Alternate number:** _____

Date of Birth (optional): _____

Check here if you do **NOT** want to be listed in the Membership Directory.

Choose the type of membership for which you are applying (select one):

Regular Member, \$35 per year.

Contributing Member, \$70 per year.

Lifetime Member, \$700.

I am at least eighteen years of age, and agree with the Statement of Belief and Intent set forth below. The By-Laws of the Fellowship of Reason have been made available to me online, at www.fellowshipofreason.com.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Please make checks payable to “Fellowship of Reason”. Sign and date your application, and mail it with payment to the FOR address listed above

STATEMENT OF BELIEF AND INTENT

- I believe that Reason, not faith or superstition, is the best means of understanding reality.
- I believe that personal happiness and individual well-being are the cornerstones of any valid ethical system.
- I will set ambitious goals for myself, based on my own good judgment, and will strive diligently to achieve them.
- I will treat my fellow human beings with benevolence, fairness and respect.
- I will seek the fellowship of like-minded people.

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March 2008

March 2008						
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April 2008						
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27	28	29	30			

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						March 1 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve Whiteman's house)
2 12:00pm FORum (NWUUC)	3	4 Scott C. bd 7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	5 Lois bd 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	6	7	8 11:00am Nonfiction Book Club (Allison's house) 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve)
9 9:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)	10	11 8:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	12 8:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	13	14	15 1:30pm FOR live HD opera (Peter Grimes) 7:30pm Potluck (Steve Butterbaugh)
16 9:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)	17	18 8:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	19 8:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	20	21	22 Toni bd 12:30pm FOR live HD opera (Tristan und Isolde) 6:30pm Movie Night (John's studio)
23 9:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)	24 John B. bd	25	26 8:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	27 9:00pm FOR pub	28	29 8:00pm Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus
30	31					

April 2008

April 2008							May 2008						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		April 1	2	3	4	5
		8:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	8:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	Theresa bd		Christopher bd 1:30pm FOR live HD opera (La Bohème Puccini) 8:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve)
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
12:00pm FORum (NWUUC)		7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	Kate M. bd Kathleen A. bd 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	Inca Trail Peru	Inca Trail Peru	Inca Trail Peru 11:00am Nonfiction Book Club (Allison's house) 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve)
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Inca Trail Peru	Inca Trail Peru	Inca Trail Peru	Inca Trail Peru	Inca Trail Peru	Inca Trail Peru	Inca Trail Peru
8:00am Cancelled: FOR Runners		7:30pm Cancelled: Philosophy Tapes	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			7:30pm Potluck (Volunteer)
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Inca Trail Peru			7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	Peter bd Susan M. bd 8:00pm FOR pub		1:30pm FOR live HD opera (La Fille du Régiment Juan Diego Florez) 6:30pm Movie Night (John's studio)
8:00am Cancelled: FOR Runners						
27	28	29	30			
8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)	Larry bd		7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			

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, March 15, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. Remember it is potluck, so bring something good to eat and drink to share.

Steve Butterbaugh host: 404-522-2255

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, March 27, 2008 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, March 22, 2008, at 6:30 p.m.

John Grover coordinator: 404-872-4555

*Join us for our
 next monthly
 FORum:*

**April 6, 2008
 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

FOR FAMILY FRIENDLY
 Children's program
 from noon to 3 p.m.

Birthdays

April 3	Theresa B.
April 5	Christopher S.
April 9	Kate M.
April 9	Kathleen A.
April 24	Peter B.
April 24	Susan M.
April 28	Larry C.

May 2	Frank V.
May 10	Gerald R.
May 21	Dan B.
May 29	Carla B.

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

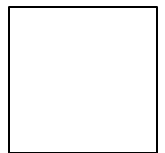
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Community for the 21st
Century

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