



The official newsletter of
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.

Five Questions with... Kenneth Taylor and John Perry

co-hosts of radio's
Philosophy Talk

Interviewed by:
Chris Snider

Philosophers love to talk.

And talk and talk and talk.

Give a philosopher your
ear and he'll talk all night.

But what happens when
you arm two philosophers
with microphones and let

them duke it out?

Philosophy Talk, hosted by Kenneth Taylor and John Perry (both with Stanford University's Department of Philosophy) airs live every Tuesday at noon (PST) on San Francisco's KALW 91.7FM (<http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/prgrams/kalw>) - and don't worry, if you don't live in San Fran, you can listen live on the internet! Previous shows are also indefinitely archived on the *Philosophy Talk* website (<http://www.philosophytalk.org>).

Taylor and Perry tackle the "big issues" - everything from consciousness, the nature of evil, science vs. religion, animal rights, the meaning of

life - all in an easy-going and straightforward way that's devoid of the contentiousness that infects most talk radio. *Philosophy Talk* is "the program that questions everything... except your intelligence."

Q: How did you guys become involved with *Philosophy Talk*?

Ken: John had an idea, long before I joined the department, for a radio show, sort of loosely modeled on *Car Talk*. John will say he kind of let it sit there and didn't do much about it. All I know is that when he first mentioned it to me, it struck me as a really cool idea.

I expected that John would be great on radio. He has a natural, easy and often hilarious wit. Plus he's an incredibly good philosopher and just a wise man. So I thought it would be fun to work with him. I thought maybe I could be his straight man and maybe be more of a hot passionate voice to his cooler voice. But an idea is a long way from being on the air. It took us quite a while to get airtime.

We started out with a pilot produced in house here at Stanford. That eventually led to our hooking up with Ben Manilla, of Ben Manilla Productions. Lots of people were skeptical that we could make philosophy interesting to a general audience, even an

educated reflective audience of the sort that listens to public radio. Three years later we are on the air, and headed into our second season, but we're on in a pretty limited way. We'll see where we go from here. Thanks to the internet, the reach of the show seems to be exceeding the reach of the radio signals from the stations that carry us.

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John P: That's about right. I loved *Car Talk* and it made me think if public radio audiences can listen to intelligent conversation about cars, why not about philosophy. Although Click and Clack are funny, I think it is the detective work and the back and forth analysis of problems that engages a lot of the audience. So, since philosophy is intrinsically more interesting than cars, even though Ken and I are intrinsically less funny than Tom and Ray, there should be a balance there.

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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.

Kenneth Taylor and John Perry (cont. from Page 1)

Q: Is there any topic you *won't* feature on the show? Something that's just too nuclear to touch?

Ken: So far we haven't censored ourselves at all. I don't imagine we ever will. We aren't advocates for anything except clear thinking and dispassionate rationality. So why should we ever need to censor ourselves? I'm sure there are people who are made uncomfortable by clear thought and dispassionate rationality - our current president comes to mind - but I doubt they'd be listening to the program anyway.

**In philosophy,
you often take as
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profoundly
wrong**

John P: I don't think we would avoid topics because they are too nuclear too touch, but some topics that are philosophically quite intriguing may just be too hard to engage a reasonable number of listeners with; e.g., a lot of topics in metaphysics and ontology or the philosophy of mathematics.

Q: This question might be cliché, but I'll ask anyway: Who's your favorite philosopher, and why?

Ken: I'm not sure I have a single favorite philosopher. Probably some combination of Kant, Hume, and [Gottlob] Frege. Kant because he was in my estimation the first truly great student of the human mind. Hume because, unlike

Kant, he was what philosophers call a naturalist - and a clear eyed, courageous naturalist, who didn't shrink from the consequences of simply seeing human beings as part of the natural order. And Frege because he single-handedly invented modern logic and laid the foundations of the special area of philosophy in which I've done most of my scholarly work - the philosophy of language. By the way, I disagree with all three of them on very fundamental issues. In philosophy, though, you often take as heroes those you view as profoundly wrong.

John P: Hume is the philosopher I most enjoy reading, and I agree with the spirit of much of his philosophy, as I more or less understand it. Among 20th century philosophers, [Bertrand] Russell, I'd give him the edge, as a philosopher, over Frege, although he wasn't as clear a writer and probably too overwhelmed with ideas to develop a few ideas very clearly as Frege did. Among living philosophers, I find I agree with almost everything I say.

Q: How do you respond to folks who think that philosophy never really solves anything? That all the Big Issues have either been answered thousands of years ago, or are just inherently unsolvable?

Ken: I think that's much too simple. But there is a point to it also, though not the one that people who say that sort of thing think.

Part of philosophy's job is to take problems that are so conceptually confusing and challenging that we can't even say what even a possible solution could be when we first approach them and to make them conceptually tractable enough that we can turn them into something that, say, science can deal with.

Philosophy does this by asking a lot of "how possibly" questions. How possibly could matter give rise to consciousness, rationality, intentionality? If you think back to the time of Descartes, say, there were very powerful arguments, made by very

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smart people, that matter couldn't possibly give rise to consciousness or thought or rationality. Nothing in the science of those days, by the way, was enough to convince very smart people otherwise.

Lots of things have contributed to our now believing that it is possible that mind arises out of matter somehow. But one thing that play an indispensable role is philosophy. We tend to ask "how possibly" when our concepts are greatly in need of sorting out. Once we think very, very hard about these questions and we get clear about how such things are even possible, we tend to turn the remaining questions - the "how actually" questions - over to the scientist or engineer or politician. Because at least one stage of philosophy is "finished" with an issue when it's no longer a matter of conceptually clarifying such how possibly questions, it can feel as though philosophy doesn't tell us much about what we really want to know - which is

(Continued on Page 3)

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FOR a friend.

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

Questions?

info@fellowshipofreason.com.



FORUM:

1st Sunday at 1 p.m.

April 3, 2005
"Growth"

Adult Education

1st Sunday at Noon

David Ziebell
facilitator

Kenneth Taylor and John Perry (cont. from Page 2)

how, for example, a mind actually works.

To answer the how actually question about mind arising out of brain we need someone to tell us the detailed story about how neurons and neurotransmitters and synaptic junctions and the like are organized to give rise to thought and consciousness. It's not the philosopher's job to tell such a detailed story.

My point is that the how actually questions arise and can be fruitfully addressed only after philosophy has already done a great deal of clarifying of the possibilities. Plus, it should be said that once we do start to focus on the how actually questions, that itself gives rise to brand new how possibly questions. So philosophy is off and running again.

Philosophy is never done and it isn't just about great imponderable questions bequeathed to us from the past. Our own best current science, our current political and social arrangements, the arts and literature all keep giving rise to fresh philosophical questions. That's one of the things we're

trying to demonstrate with *Philosophy Talk*.

John P: In a way philosophy's job isn't to solve problems but to find new ones. Intellectual problems are what makes the whole intellectual enterprise run. The philosopher is like the two-year-old, constantly

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rationality**

asking why questions, and every so often coming up with something that really is puzzling and takes some interesting theory of resolve. Now, consider the Enlightenment. Was it a philosophical solution? Probably not, but it was quite

an accomplishment. Or consider the questions that Hume taught Adam Smith to think about. So, there may not be solutions, certainly agreed upon solutions even to the extent that those are found in science. But there are plenty of very solid accomplishments that have intellectual and social consequences - sometimes for good, sometimes not.

Ken said the other day in talking about [the late sex researcher Alfred] Kinsey that science was much better at undermining systems of cultural norms, like those pertaining to sexuality in the first half of the century, than replacing them with something else. I think that is often true of philosophy as well.

Q: Any recommendations on good resources for adults who are interested in studying philosophy on their own?

Ken: The best resource I can think of is the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>). It's a great online resource, filled with accessible articles on a rapidly growing array of topics, written by some of the

(Continued on Page 4)

"Five Questions with..." is an occasional series featuring interviews with notable personalities in the worlds of philosophy, science, history, business, art and literature.

Philosophy [asks] a lot of "how possibly" questions.
-Kenneth Taylor

Kenneth Taylor and John Perry (cont. from Page 3)

best philosophers in the world. Plus it's completely free. Combine that with *Philosophy Talk* and you couldn't ask for more.

John P: Yes, the *SEP* is great. For a little more gentle introduction I'd suggest the first philosophy book I read, Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*; I suppose it's getting dated, but the way he combines biographies of people like Spinoza and Schopenhauer with their philosophies is very readable and thought provoking. Bertrand Russell's *History of*

Western Philosophy is fun reading; not always a good source of the best scholarly thinking, but lively, readable and packed full of insight. Both of these books are widely available at used bookstores and library book sales.

About the Interviewer:

Chris Snider (a.k.a. John C. Snider) is the President of the Fellowship of Reason. He's also the editor of the online science fiction magazine *scifidimensions* (<http://www.scifidimensions.com>), published monthly since February 2000.

Toastmasters: \$148 Member Benefit

Special Offer to FOR Members Only

The Fellowship of Reason, Inc. will refund your Toastmaster® membership dues up to \$148 on the following conditions:

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(2) you must join a Toastmaster® club after this offer and achieve Competent Toastmaster status;

(3) you must then give an Oratory at Forum; and,

(4) you must keep and deliver to FOR, Inc. your receipts for dues.

If you comply with these conditions, FOR, Inc. will reimburse you for your actual Toastmaster® dues up to \$148.

Question?
Martin: 770-471-9800

THE FELLOWSHIP OF REASON'S BOZART FESTIVAL

The Fourth Annual Bozart Festival will take place

Saturday, September 17, 2005.

Mark your calendar and...

Plan to shine!

At right, some past entries.

For more info, see
fellowshipofreason.com.



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 translated, "well-being."

Letters to the Editor

Reason and Rhetoric

"Reason vs. Rhetoric" (Feb 2005) showed some useful rhetorical tricks, and I appreciate that. It was interesting to see the separation and opposition of "reason vs. rhetoric" proposed as an explanation for political talk shows being what they are.

However, the assertion that rhetoric is concerned with appearance and reason is concerned with reality is a risky over-simplification. The three-way relationship between people, what they know, and reality is more complex.

A suggested first step in applying the more complete picture is to consider that at all times, in all communications, and in our inner thoughts, both reason and rhetoric are present and inextricable from each other. Philosophers such as Gadamer and Polanyi have begun to articulate a view that accepts and requires a person's emotional (even

physical) commitment to wanting to know; and needing to start somewhere without a logical basis. People proceed therefore with a partially emotional, physically based, therefore unarticulated, but practically

**...three-way
relationship
between people,
what they know,
and reality...**

warranted basis for knowledge that can be tested logically (within precision limited by the unarticulated or "tacit" starting point).

This view is difficult or impossible to resolve with classical views of knowledge and truth. It is also impossible to resolve with Objectivism's epistemology of concepts.

However, this view is plainly consistent with neurobiology, evolution, evolutionary psychology (such as it is), the psychology of self esteem, the philosophy of mind expressed by philosophers Dennet and/or Searle, and a systems view of reality. The ramifications of this view to ethics, man's relationship with society, and man's autonomy have yet to be described.

These are exciting times.

Respectfully,
David Ziebell

Letters to the Editor should be sent to:

info@fellowshipofreason.com.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters for publication. Letters must be signed to be considered for publication.

Regular membership:
\$35 per year

Contributing membership:
\$70 per Year

Lifetime membership:
\$700

Fellowshipofreason.com

Meaning of Membership

In order to enjoy the benefits of the Fellowship of Reason, Inc. 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, Inc.?

The Fellowship of Reason, Inc. 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, Inc. 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?

Contribute to "The Eudaimonist"

Got something to say?

The editors are always looking for contributions to this newsletter.

Articles, letters to the editor, commentary on FOR activities?

Ads for your business? Announcements?

Information from other sources? Photographs? Art?

Birthdays

March Birthdays

March 3	Larry Curry
March 4	Scott Carper
March 8	Luther Setzer
March 22	Peter Brookner
March 27	Coty Anniston

April Birthdays

April 3	Theresa Barber
April 5	Christopher Sulentic
April 20	Don Schiff
April 24	Toni Brookner
April 28	Lois Curry

March 2005

March 2005						
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27	28	29	30	31		

April 2005						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		March 1	2	3	4	5
		7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)		Larry Curry bd	Scott Carper bd	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
12:00pm Adult Education (Special Program) 1:00pm FORum (NWUUC)	12:00pm Deadline for FOR newsletter submissions	7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)		7:30pm Invisible College (Vera/Michael's house)		10:00am Nonfiction book club (Chris and Allison's house)
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
8:00am Reason Runners		7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)				7:30pm Potluck (Marianna and James)
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
8:00am Reason Runners		Peter Brookner bd	8:00pm Pub Night (Manuel's Tavern)	7:30pm Invisible College (Vera and Michael's house)		6:30pm Movie night (John's studio)
27	28	29	30	31		
8:00am Reason Runners	7:30pm BoT meeting					

April 2005

April 2005						
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May 2005						
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29	30	31				

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					April 1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Theresa Barber bd 8:00am Reason Runners 12:00pm Adult Education 1:00pm FORum (NWUUC)	12:00pm Deadline for FOR newsletter submissions	Christopher Sulentic bd 7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)		6:00pm FOR Symphony		10:00am Nonfiction book club (Chris and Allison's house)
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
8:00am Reason Runners		7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)		7:30pm Invisible College (Vera/Michael's house)		7:30pm Potluck (Theresa and Dan Barber's Lake House)
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
8:00am Reason Runners		7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)	Don Schiff bd			6:30pm Movie night (John's studio)
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Toni Brookner bd 8:00am Reason Runners	7:30pm BoT meeting		8:00pm Pub Night (Manuel's Tavern)	Lois Curry bd 7:30pm Invisible College (Vera and Michael's house)		

Events

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

Reason Runners:

Sunday 8 a.m.
We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m. rain or shine, except FORum Sundays, at the south-western entrance to Piedmont Park on 10th Street. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit follows at 9 a.m. Walkers and joggers welcome! Questions? Martin 770-471-9800

Invisible College:

2nd/ 4th Thursday 7:30 p.m.
History tapes are played to a small private audience in the living room of a volunteer on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month Starts March 10, 2005 at 7:30 p.m. Free. Vera's house
R.S.V.P. 404-577-7968

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's house.
R.S.V.P. 404-257-0454

Fiction Book Club:

2nd Tuesday 7:30 p.m.
Members and friends of FOR, Inc meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month to discuss a marvelous book. Free. John and Beth's house.
R.S.V.P. 404-754-7519

Non-Fiction Book Club:

2nd Saturday 11 a.m.
Members and friends of FOR, Inc meet 11 a.m. on the 2nd Saturday of every month to discuss a marvelous non-fiction book. Chris and Allison's house.
R.S.V.P. 678-585-0406/ or Allibryd@charter.net

Potluck:

3rd Saturday 7:30 p.m.
Members and friends of FOR, Inc. meet on the 3rd Saturday of every month for a potluck supper. Bring something good to eat or drink to share. Our next potluck is Saturday, March 19, 2005. Marianna Long and James Hill's house
R.S.V.P. 770-992-4088

Movie Night:

4th or 5th Saturday 6:30 p.m.
Members and friends of FOR, Inc 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. R.S.V.P. John 404-754-7519

Pub Night:

4th or 5th Wednesday 8 p.m.
Members and friends of FOR, Inc meet on the 4th Wednesday of every month at Manuel's Tavern at 8 p.m. for adult beverages and adult conversation.
Scott 404-964-6697

FOR Symphony:

Six Thursday nights in the 2004-2005 ASO Concert Season
Our fifth concert is at 7 p.m. in Symphony Hall on Thursday, April 7, 2005. Questions?
Martin 770-471-9800

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!

Contact Information

To talk to somebody about Fellowship of Reason (FOR) call:
 Chris at 678-585-0406
 Vera at 404-577-7968
 Martin at 770-471-9800
 Dan at 770-831-3010

Fellowship of Reason

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Jonesboro, GA 30236-4179

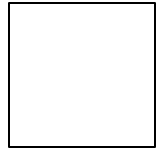
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