

The New Andoscians

The New Andoscians, an alternative religious group in Andosciaville, has petitioned the City Council to place a statue in the Andosciaville Central Park. The statue would be a commemorative of their religious views. It will be a five foot cube with an inscribed sphere in the middle. Each vertical edge of the cube will have a statue of the "Four Pillars of the Cosmos" represented by the Greek gods Ares and Bacchus and the Greek goddesses Athena and Aphrodite. The Gods and Goddesses will be facing into the cube with their hands stretched out to touch the inscribed sphere.

The cube and inscribed sphere is the symbol of the New Andoscian religion, being the perfect shapes. They are said to represent the structure of the cosmos. To new Andoscians it is just as symbolic as the cross/crucifix and the Ten Commandments. According to Polis (The New Andoscian name for church) spokesperson, Nell Fornica, the statue will be, "no larger or more imposing than the statue of the Ten Commandments that is already located in the park. The Ten Commandments statue was a donation made ten years ago by the First Baptist Church of Andosciaville.

The New Andoscians have inspired some controversy in the community due to their questionable beliefs, but mostly because of practices that do not conform to the norms of the community. For instance, New Andoscians have strange marriage practices and refuse to have their marriages recognized by the state. Most recently the New Andoscians performed what they called a "love in" to protest the Iraq War. The love in was reported to include outrageous sexual acts and was described by one commentator, Boris Flerk, as "just an excuse to publicize an orgy."

"The New Andoscians are nothing more than a glorified cult!" claims Professor Franklin Jones of Andosciaville Community College.

The City Council will decide upon the propriety of the statue next week. The public hearing is expected to bring great controversy.

The New Andoscian Beliefs

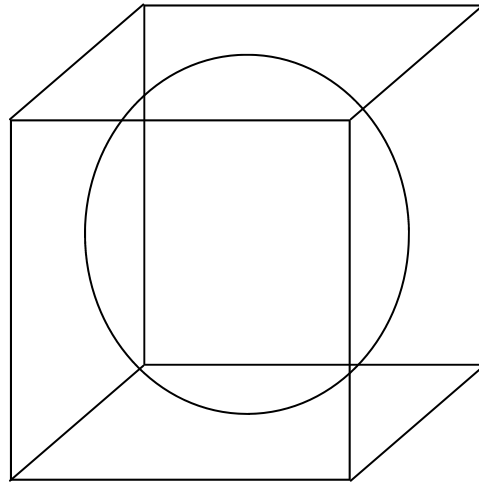
The New Andoscians are a recognized religious order founded in the late 1950's. The religion is based on the writings of the 19th century philosopher, poet and artist Porferio Andoscia. This is the same Porferio Andoscia who founded Andosciaville in 1848. For this reason, the New Andoscians claim Andosciaville as a "cosmic foci" of their religion.

The New Andoscians believe that the role of man is to perpetuate the balance of the universe. According to the New Andoscians the Universe is composed of four pillars at opposing ends of two axes or continua. The first axis is Action. At one end of the Action Axis is Diligence represented by the Greek Goddess Athena. On the other end of this axis is Abandon or Revelry, represented by the Greek God, Bacchus. The second axis is Passion. On opposing ends of the Passion axis is Ares, representing conflict and Aphrodite, representing love.

Action and Passion represent two dimensions of the cosmos. A third dimension, represented vertically, is not considered a pillar because it imbues the entire cube. This dimension is called Nature and is punctuated by The Physical at the bottom of the cube and The Spiritual at the top.

From the center of these axes emerges a sphere composed of pure energy. This energy is what New Andoscians know as God. God is a part of everything in the universe and is the driving force of everything that exists. According to Porferio Andoscia the only explanation of God as being all powerful and ubiquitous and omniscient is if God is energy rather than an anthropomorphic entity composed of matter. Since everything in the universe is a manifestation of God energy, everything in the universe should be revered as such.

So the symbol of the New Andoscians is the cube with the inscribed sphere.



Beliefs

New Andoscians see the universe as being in a perpetual striving for balance, or the maintenance of a perfect cube and sphere. These are the perfect shapes of the cosmos because of their consistency of dimension. Unfortunately, the forces within the universe (believed to be Free Will) are in perpetual motion. Hence, balance is difficult to maintain. It is the purpose of man and woman to keep the universe in balance. But mankind lost sight of these goals when spiritual pursuits were tied in with political goals.

The New Andoscians believe that most religions, especially Christianity, Islam and Judaism, are the result of distorting the cosmic reality in the interests of power. Religions distracted humanity from serving the cosmic balance in order to trick them into serving the interests of power. Humanity, however, naturally strives to seek balance, so religious institutions must create strategies to keep people from seeing past the false reality maintained by these churches.

To accomplish this, many religions create false realities such as Heaven and Hell, Nirvana, immortality or some other fictitious greater reward. New Andoscians reject all of these ideas. Life and death are nothing more than locations in the cosmic reality. What we experience as life and death is our conscious desire to keep the universe in balance.

Another example of the false reality is the hierarchy of human relations. According to Andoscians there is no difference in the importance of individuals. Man and woman are equals (as well as representations of perfect cosmic complements). Theologians (as Andoscians refer to religious and even most political officials) created false categories such as nobility or kings by defining a manlike god

and placing him on a throne. This god king also defined male superiority by virtue of his manhood. Women were relegated to second class individuals.

All Andoscians are ordained in their polis (church) upon birth. All Andoscians are officials of the polis and pursue their own studies. The works of Porferio Andoscia, know as The Idylls of a Lonely Bard, are the closest things Andoscians have to a canon. All books are considered sacred and each individual is encouraged to pursue their own desires for knowledge and livelihood. Only a free individual can work toward cosmic balance, and restricting knowledge by defining only a single text as absolute truth consequently restricts human freedom. Every individual has their own library of “sacred” texts.

Though all Andoscians are ordained, there are high official positions, called Tyrannies. These positions are always temporary and situational. As situations arise the polis turns to those among their group who have pertinent expertise for advice and council. Once the situation is decided upon by the polis as a whole (including children) the tyrants are recalled to everyday work.

Andoscians do not believe in good or evil, only balance and imbalance. The Andoscians take it upon themselves to set the balance right. For instance, war is seen as an imbalance toward the Conflict end of the Passion Axis. According to Andoscians, a proper balance of conflict should lead to innovation, not destruction. Since the counterbalance for Conflict on the Passion Axis is Love the Andoscians have sponsored “love ins” among their marital units and encouraged other citizens to participate in their own love ins in accordance to their beliefs.

According to many commentators in the Andosciaville Gazette as well as high ranking law enforcement officials, the love ins were nothing more than massive orgies. Spokesperson Nell Fornica states that this was not the case. Since war is defined by New Andoscians as largely physical, the “love,” though in many ways sexual, had to include spiritual elements such as purification, connection and intimacy rituals. Ms. Fornica did admit that the counterbalance for spiritual conflict may involve “pure, carnal pleasure,” but to counterbalance war such practices would not do.

The unique beliefs of the Andoscians often lead to interesting takes on contemporary issues. During a local Gay Marriage demonstrate Andoscians claimed that state and religious sanction of marriage is just another false reality perpetrated by the theoloticians to accrue and maintain power. Marriage for Andoscians is a personal matter for which the state has no say. This is why Andoscians refer to family units rather than husbands and wives. Though Andoscians more or less conform to state age restrictions with regard to marriage they reject all other norms. There are many marriage patterns among Andoscians. Marriages within the polis are conducted through personal marriage rituals among all involved, including rituals for cleansing, intimacy and change. The marriage is then ceremoniously announced to the polis and accepted by the body as a whole without question.

Relative to the gay marriage issue, Andoscians believe that homosexuality is just the natural counterbalance for man’s hatred for other men, or woman’s hatred for other women, hence the existence of love between people of the same gender is a cosmically balanced state. Ironically, according to this perspective, those who try to use hatred to deter homosexuality are actually perpetuating its existence.

Andoscians have a singular conception of crime. Crime, according to the tenets of Porferio Andoscia is any willful and wanton act of destruction. Destruction itself may not be criminal if there is a balance with creation. From the Idylls of a Lonely Bard (ILB), the complete collected works of Porferio Andoscia, “The tree must be destroyed to build the house; the apple must be picked to provide

nourishment.” Such necessary destruction is countered by creativity and is, therefore, not condemned. Regardless, Andoscians believe that man must, “heal the scars consequent to his creative impulses.” (ILB) Taking a tree to build a house requires planting a tree in return.

Wanton destruction, however, is the result of imbalance. Even something like murder, for instance, can only happen when the individual is experiencing some imbalance, be it personal or environmental. Andoscians believe that though this kind of behavior must be condemned, it must also be balanced. Not only does using punishment, especially capital punishment, to deter such crimes often fail, but it also exacerbates the imbalance. Instead, the Andoscians believe that such criminals should be directed to re-establish the balance that they have disturbed through their criminal action. If the criminal is unwilling to do so, others must step in to re-establish balance, not only for the actions of the criminal, but also the actions, albeit necessary, of the state in the use of imprisonment. Andoscians do not believe in the death penalty.

Andoscians believe that human life begins upon the Quickening, or the first kicks of the unborn. It's at this time that the fetus becomes human because it can interact with its environment and become an actor on the cosmic balance. Abortion before the Quickening is not considered a problem for Andoscians. Abortion after the quickening is viewed as morally problematic, but in some cases necessary, such as a threat to the mother's health. The death of the mother would more seriously impact the cosmic balance than the death of an unborn. Regardless, abortion is seen as an act of destruction that must be balanced against the cosmic order. Andoscians also believe that the aborted fetus will eventually develop again under more balanced conditions.

These are some of the more contentious views of the Andoscians. New Andoscians are often very outspoken about their beliefs and tend to be very skeptical of the motives of other religions. They are outspoken advocates for the right to worship according to one's conscience, but they do not believe that religious views are above criticism. Indeed, they believe that the false realities created by religious institutions should be made clear. This often puts them at odds with the rest of the religious community in Andosciaville.

Overall, New Andoscians appear to be relatively stable despite their odd beliefs. Education levels are relatively high compared to the local and national averages, though many are schooled in Andoscian Academies or home-schooled, Andoscians are well represented among mainstream professionals. Despite their well reported and highly criticized sexual practices, abortion and teen pregnancy are significantly lower than the mean. Crime in Andoscian communities is virtually unheard of. What few crimes exist are usually dealt with within the community. Overall health levels appear to be relatively high with almost no mental disorders in this cohort.