

“Half a Bubble off Level”

A Students’ Guide to the Errors of History

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“Whenever you hear of the *stupidest* thing a human being can do, just wait a week. Someone is sure to do something dumber.”

. . . Mario Levi, father of the author

Foreword

History is not the story of the past, it is the study of the future. But if you ask any high school student to give you a brief overview of the lessons of history you will get a blank stare. This is not because students are uneducated. It's because history is presented as a lock-step progression of people, events and inventions that supposedly move humankind toward a better horizon. The great men and women of history are presented as stepping stones across an historical swamp that stretches from the Roman Republic to the last Presidential election. This is largely true. But what is also true is that many of these great historical figures created difficulties that still plague us today.

What they got *wrong* will continue to plague us until we “make it right.”

Because this is a book of the “real world,” the title of this book comes from a “real world” situation. Anytime you think you are perfect, put up a book shelf on your kitchen wall. More than likely you will end up with a shelf that is “a half bubble off level” because that's as close as you are going to get it. It won't be perfectly level but as long as the potted plant and cookbooks don't slide off, it's as good as level. If the books do slide off, you call a carpenter.



Level is perfect, and no one is perfect. We are all flawed. At best we are “half a bubble off level.” Our best ideas have weaknesses and our greatest achievements have tragic flaws.

Most of us will not live long enough to see our blunders become problems but our children surely will. Mistakes transcend lifetimes.

Why do a book like this?

Because in the “real world” there is no such a beast as the *present*. The *present* is simply the razor’s edge where the *past* meets the *future*. Every difficulty we are facing now came from the past. We have the headache *now* because someone in the *past* didn’t empty the can of worms *then*. Now it’s today’s mess. If you want to do your children and grandchildren a favor, solve the problems of *today* today. Let them solve the problems of tomorrow without getting stuck cleaning up the mare’s nests your generation should have solved in your lifetime.

“Half a Bubble off Level”

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Chapter 1

“Seth never takes a day off.”

Imagine yourself in a scene from the television series LAW AND ORDER. You are standing behind the one-way glass looking at the suspects as they line up in front of a wall with height lines.

But there’s a problem.

The suspects all look the same. They are all old white guys in togas, bald heads with beards to their waists. All of them are pot-bellied and squinty-eyed with skinny legs and wearing sandals.

“Now take your time,” says the DA. “Take all the time you need.”

“I don’t know,” you reply. “They all look so, so, Greek and old.”

“Well they all are,” she says. “When you said a couple of philosophers killed Seth we dug up all the philosophers we could find.”

Dug up. How quaint.

While you may not have been able to distinguish between Plato or Aristotle in the flesh, their fingerprints were all over the crime scene. Seth went into Greece alive and well with the other Egyptian gods, but he never came out. Like the Roach motel. The other gods got a remake. They got new names, different hair styles and learned to speak Greek. But other than that, they were the same old gods. Retreads, so to speak.

Except for Seth. He checked in but never checked out.

Why?

A better question is who the blazes is Seth anyway?

Oddly, Seth is the most identifiable of all Egyptian gods but, at the same time, is the most obscure. He is a man with straight black hair that hangs to the middle of his chest, but he has the face of an anteater with ears like a rabbit that are squared on top. He is singular because he is the Egyptian god of organized chaos, a concept we cannot fathom. “Organized chaos” is a *non-sequitur*, an oxymoron. If something is organized there is no chaos. If there is chaos, by the very definition of the word, it is not organized.



Seth

We have a hard time understanding organized chaos.

So did the Greeks.

So let's take a trip back in time. About six thousand years in time. Making a long story short, when the Egyptians created their family of deities, their gods mirrored the “real world.” That is, since there was a sun there had to be a sun god. Since there was a moon there had to be a moon god. There were also gods for all human emotions and motives. *Petbe* was the god of revenge, *Min* was the god of fertility, *Saa* was the deification of perception and *Maahes* was the god of both war and weather. Unfortunately, this is a very crude way of portraying the Egyptian

gods because it makes them appear one dimensional and static. But it will have to do for us to move along with our story.

The point being made is that the entire Egyptian universe of real things, human attributes and emotions were all embodied in some god. Since humans are multifaceted, so too were the Egyptian gods. Because Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, German, Chinese, Siberian and Americans all have the same human attributes, then the personification of those attributes showed up in the different cultures. Christians may not have a god for jealousy, but they do recognize that jealousy exists, for instance. So do Jews, Moslems, Hindus and Buddhists.

Keeping this explanation as simple as possible, as Americans our religious and cultural roots come from the Old World, usually called Europe. We are Judeo-Christians which means our roots are from the Jews in the form of the Old Testament and Jesus, the New Testament. Our intellectual roots come from the Greeks, and specifically Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. From Socrates we get the Socratic Method, a means of arriving at truth through questioning. The most visible example of the Socratic Method in action is in our court rooms. A jury listens to lawyers asking witnesses and experts questions and the answers reveal the truth. Plato is associated with the concept of spirit and what is best for the soul while Aristotle is the standard for reason and rational thought. It is from the philosophy of these three men that we get the pillars of our culture. Crudely stated, the general consensus is that our world is divided into two realms: reason and faith. *Reason* is based on logic and *faith* is based on an internal belief system.

But there is a very large problem when you divvy up any culture between faith and reason. To fully understand why we will have to leap back in time and then forward again which can be done easily because we are doing it on paper. Leaping into the past, let us return to the gods of

Ancient Egypt. Quite surprisingly, not all of the gods of the Egyptian pantheon made it into the modern world.

“What!” you say. “How can that be?” If the Egyptian gods, all of them, collectively and individually, reflected the human condition and the humans have not changed since the days of the *Australopithecus africanus* then one of two things must have happened. One, there was a human characteristic of the Egyptians that was **not** passed along to other civilizations. Or two, the god that did not make the cut was a deity who represented a cultural idiosyncrasy of the Egyptian civilization that was never again duplicated. Common sense tells us that both of these explanations are in error. But if they are in error then what god didn’t make the leap into Greek philosophy and, even more important, why not?

The god that did not make the cut was Seth.

Seth is singular because he is the god of organized chaos, a concept neither the ancient Greeks nor we today could/ can fathom. “Organized chaos” is a self-contradicting term, like “jumbo shrimp,” the “living dead,” “cruel kindness,” or, being funny, “airline schedules.” Logic tells us that “organized chaos” is not possible. If something is organized there is no chaos. If there is chaos, by the very definition of the word, it is not organized.

So what is organized chaos?

OK, how about an example? To do so let’s leap forward to our time. Have you ever worked for a large organization? It doesn’t make any difference what the organization does. It could be a television station, government office, large business or a small office. It probably didn’t take you long to realized that the office was a mess! Incompetence was rampant! The boss wasn’t really in charge of anything because he got his orders from someone in some other city who had no idea what was happening in your office. Some people never seemed to do a lick of

work and still got paid. Other people might as well have stayed home for all the good they brought to the job site. Some employees were paid incredible salaries for doing nothing and others were working their fingers to the bone for less than you were making. Time was wasted, office supplies pilfered, there was no organization to speak of and nothing got done unless there was a looming deadline. If you are like most quality people, you left that job saying that you would **never** work in a place like that again. The problem is, and your parents probably told you, **everywhere** is just like that office.

Welcome to the “real world.”

Once upon a time I worked as legislative aide for a state legislature. It was a great job because politics is as “real life” as it gets. The bills that pass become laws that directly affect peoples’ real lives. State legislators decide how many dollars are spent on roads and schools, reproductive rights, legalization of recreational drugs, drinking age as well as minor issues like the size of hunting lodges and the legal disposal of horse manure. Many new legislators go to their state capitols idealistic and come out seasoned wheeler-dealers. Or they come home sick the process because, as Otto von Bismarck will state in a latter chapter, “Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made.”

Politics is a natural, human process. You do not get what you want with fine phrases and glittering concepts. You can get *elected* with fine phrases and glittering concepts but then you have to sink into the gutter of politics to get something out of the legislative system. The best definition of the democratic process compares it to a bar room brawl “and if you can make it out with a bar stool or a pitcher of beer you are doing very well.” Winston Churchill said it even better: “Democracy is the worst form of government – except for all of the others.”

It did not take me long to understand how a legislature did and did not work. It was just like any other system. There were those who knew how to get what they wanted and those who did not have a clue. Those who knew how to work the system were about 10% of those who were there. The rest were clueless. Every other legislature in every other state capitol in America is about the same. Ten percent of the legislators run the system; the rest are just there.

Speaking with an old war horse I remember him lamenting that he spent “90% of his time stopping bad ideas.” Looking back at the bills I saw introduced, I have to agree with him. 90% of the legislation I saw proposed was stupid, self-serving, crooked, unrealistic or out-and-out illegal. But every one of those bowsers had someone pushing the bill. More than a few of them had committee hearings and some actually made it to the floor. A few passed – but not in their original form.

Have you ever worked for a large organization? It doesn't make any difference what the organization does. It doesn't make any difference what job you had either. All that does matter is what you saw happening at work. In all likelihood you came home on more than one occasion actually amazed that anything got done at all. One-third of the employees were either incompetent or asleep at the switch. There were people who came in late and employees who left early. People used sick leave as soon as they got it. Quality control went out the window as soon as the supervisor turned his back and at every meeting the sales manager talked about how no one was meeting quotas – and then he went out and played golf. The incoming raw material was substandard, the marketing staff had no idea what they were doing and the only time you ever saw the president of the corporation was on a video conference where you sat in a room with 200 other people. Of the six people with whom you worked more closely, two were idiots and one “had an agenda” you did not understand. You would probably have died rather than have a beer with 97% of the people who worked there and if it wasn't for the paycheck, frankly, you'd have been gone within a few weeks of

taking the job. So you did/do what everyone else does: put in your time and hope to get a large enough savings to retire before the organization goes under

Sound familiar?

Further, if you talked to someone five years after you've left that job, you would have discovered that nothing had changed. The organization was still a mess, even after all of the innovative management techniques, fresh blood, new equipment, "better" software and getting rid of deadwood. Whatever new job you got/get it was/will be the same old/same old. Whether you are in the military, work for the federal government, put your time in with state government, put up with the municipal bureaucracy, run the rat race in the private sector or slog it out in a nonprofit, it's all the same. Bigger is not always better and never very efficient.

That's organized chaos.

In the "real world" there is so much organized chaos it is amazing that we remain sane. No matter where you live in the world the traffic is bad. *Very* bad. It could be a lot better if everyone followed the rules of the road, but you know how that this. "Rules?" people snap. "I don't need no stinkin' rules!" These are the kind of people who get a reckless driving ticket and *swear* that this was the *first* time they had ever weaved through 50 mph traffic at 70 mph in a 45-mph zone and why wasn't everyone *else* being given a ticket for going too fast anyway? Every country in the world has a crime rate that would be a lot worse if it was not for the police. Every capitol in the world has corruption. Every city in the world has pollution. Every neighborhood has a burglar and every home a sinner. We need the government and the police and the newspapers and the churches just to keep society in check. If the forces of organization weren't in operation all the time, our world would be one of unrestrained chaos instead of organized chaos.

Well, if society is organized chaos and we recognize that chaos, what was the bad blood between Seth and the ancient Greeks?

That's an excellent question and there is an easy answer.

The Greeks viewed the world as a place where perfection and harmony could be reached in a human lifetime. That is, there was a universal law into which all things fit, and that world could be adjusted to be perfect. For example, the Greeks knew that there was universality to mathematics. 1 and 1 was always 2 wherever in the world one happened to be. They also knew that water would become ice when the weather got cold. They could predict the path of the sun, moon, planets and stars in the heavens and understood the cycle of life. This led them to the conclusion that the world was not a collection of grubby people scratching out a living on the hillsides of every empire in the known world but part of a grand scheme that had universal rules.



Mug shots of the three co-conspirators in the Murder of Seth: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle

The apex of this intellectual enlightenment came just before Alexander the Great swallowed the Greek city-states into his empire. At that time the leading philosopher scholars were Plato and Aristotle, the latter being Alexander the Great's tutor and scientific mentor. Between the two

philosophers the human realm was divided into two parts which, crudely, today are called science and religion. Plato emphasized the power of the spirit while Aristotle was partial to man being a rational animal.

However, both men understood that their different choices of reality were not static. Plato understood that individuals had a lot to do with the quality of their own soul. Today we call this “free will.” Not everyone chooses to be good. Not everyone is good all of the time. We all do things we later regret.

But Plato had a remedy for these transgressions. Today it is called the conscience. He felt that while humans were imperfect they, individually, would recognize their individual imperfections and over time would come back to the straight and narrow. In the end, wander as we will, humans would be drawn to the power of good and right. He also believed, as Christians, Muslims and Jews do today, that being righteous was unaffected by the rest of human reality. What was moral one thousand years ago is still right today. Killing another human being, even if that human being is wearing the uniform of the enemy, is an error and will bring a lifetime of regret. In the end your conscience will make you pay for your mistakes. Simplistically stated, crime does not pay.

Even more important from Plato’s point of view, the spiritual world affected the “real world” to the extent that it would overcome the predictably unpredictable nature of being human. His most well-known work is “*The Republic*” which celebrates the emergence of the philosopher-king, the intellectually pure, righteous ruler of a city who could not be bought. This concept was advanced further by Jesus, and later the Puritan John Winthrop, both of whom referred to their beliefs as a “city upon a hill” that was so visible it could not be missed and was so righteous it would be a beacon of what could be. Christians, Jews and Muslims have inherited this concept and believe that

individual righteousness is recognizable in their community and the righteous stand as role models for what is correct and good in God's eyes.

Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that while humans had a spiritual side, there was a flesh-and-blood world in which humans had to live. Being spiritual was fine and dandy when all someone had to do was sell the grapes or figs to pay the rent. But there was a lot more to the world than grapes and figs. You might have a wife who drinks too much, a brother-in-law who gambles, a daughter who can't keep her pants up, an unemployed son-in-law with three of your grandchildren or a school board that wants to close every library in the district and put a Bible in the hands of every student because, "that's all the learnin' anyone needs."

So Aristotle looked upon the world as being ruled by reason. Outside of the human mind, all of reality was predictable. It was a rational world which could be understood scientifically. There were natural laws which one could prove. Every cause had an effect. Every sunrise was followed by a sunset. Water consistently froze in winter and disappeared into vapor when boiled. There was harmony in the world and to find that harmony all one had to do was search for the hidden reason. Whenever life got out of whack, or out of harmony, the rational human had to labor to restore the harmony. Then all would be well in the world.

As a wood-and-string example, everyone knows that if you have a guitar it can get 'out of tune.' Played that way the music is not melodious to the human ear. So we "tune" the strings by stretching or loosening them individually until a uniform standard of harmony is reached. Once all of the strings have the proper tension, the instrument produces a mellifluous sound, one that has "perfect pitch."

So too, believed Aristotle, were all aspects of the world. Yes, there were aberrations, but they could be brought into harmony with adjustment. That adjustment might take a long time, but it

would happen and in the end, all would be well and perfect. Even human nature would eventually become rational, a concept that is embodied in our religious, intellectual and cultural life to this day. Religious people believe that by living the righteous life they will be rewarded in the hereafter even though there is not a scrap of evidence to prove that there is a “hereafter.” Many a young girl is waiting for her prince to come and every romance novel ends with the old “. . . and they lived happily ever after.” We all continue to believe that our best days lie ahead and, to paraphrase President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, each has an inevitable “*rendezvous* with destiny.”

Unfortunately, what Plato and Aristotle both missed was the incredible power of human behavior. While it is certainly true that faith and reason have an influential role in human society, there are intellectual aspects of the soul. Understanding that there is someone or something above and beyond the realm of our understanding is as human as the need for music or wish for human companionship. But there are many people who could go through their entire life without ever going to a concert. I am sure the reader has friends whose home life is so frenetic that they prefer to drive to work or school with the radio turned off because that is the only quiet time they will have all day. When it comes to human companionship, *who* that companion is makes all the difference in the world. In America the divorce rate for first marriages is about 50% and many of the other 50% of married couples wish they were not. Second marriages have a better chance of survival, but you can't have a second marriage without a first one and a lot of people got so much *joy* out of their first marriage they don't try it again.

Why is the understanding of Seth important?

Because many students believe that life is ordered and then they get their first job. What they find is absolute chaos. They work at the job for a year, quit and try to find a better company. But at the next job they find chaos as well. They might go through five or six jobs in as many

years only to find all companies, good and bad, big and small, are the same: chaotic. Eventually they have to sink into the swamp to make a living.

The key to a productive life is to know what is important and, using a sports expression, “keep your eye on the ball.” 90% of your life will be wasted; it’s the other 10% that counts.

Continuing the sport metaphor, consider a football game. Though the game only has 60 official minutes, a game usually lasts about two hours, 120 minutes. During those 120 minutes there will only about 11 minutes when the ball is actually in play. 11 minutes, about 10% of the time. If you play Defense you can cut that time by half. With Special Teams you can drop it by half again. During the rest of the game all the teams are doing is killing grass.

But you have to play the whole game, from starting kickoff until the gun goes off 120 minutes later.

Now, mixing in Aristotle and Plato, the two philosophers might say that the embodiment of their principles can be seen in those 11 minutes. It will be a mixture of faith and reason and one’s best chance of leaving the game a complete person – win or lose – would be to keep the faith and read the other team’s plays. Everything else is just muscle, sweat and luck.

On the other hand, were Seth to watch a football game he would have been elated. He would see himself personified on the field. At the beginning of every play both sides know what they are supposed to do. They have planned it. They line up in precise order and then, when the ball is snapped, anything can happen. It is organized chaos. Scholars rumble with the street folk and even the biggest of players can be brought low by the smallest of physiques. There are so many factors involved in a football game that on any Sunday any football team in the NFL can beat any other team regardless of how the bookies in Los Vegas call the spread.

Plato and Aristotle would have loved football as well. Plato would have seen players having faith in the spirit of fair play. This was not so much a game of man against man, or more appropriate, man against men. It was faith that you can do the impossible, take the ball and find a seam. Aristotle would have loved the game because it had logic mixed with luck. Every play started with a plan by the offense. Every play is a plan and every plan ends with a touchdown. That's how it starts but life has, excuse the pun, other plans. When one offensive play does not work the team goes back into a huddle to try something different. Logic and reason will try again and who knows what will happen in those 11 magic minutes?

Life is exactly like football. 90% of the time you are just doing scut work. You cannot *not* do it but there is not an ounce of joy or satisfaction in it. There is not a lot of "faith" or "reason" in the scut work. You just have to do it.

Juuussssstttttt a second, you say. If life is like a football game and Plato and Aristotle would be thrilled with the 11 minutes of action and Seth was pleased with the 90% of the game that was left, why would Plato and Aristotle want to kill Seth? That, my patient reader, will be explained. Let's finish with the killing of Seth here.

At this point there does not seem to be much sense in killing Seth. After all, if the pie has been divided up and everyone is happy with their share, what's the problem? Well, the problem is that neither Plato nor Aristotle were willing to live within their means. They did not look at their 10% as one-tenth of a pie of life. They looked at the 10% as the visual manifestation of their philosophy.

"Eh? What was that?" you say.

OK, let's stick with the football game. What Plato and Aristotle would tell you – if they weren't serving a life sentence for the murder of Seth – was that you are making a big mistake to

look at life as a football *game*. Note the emphasis on the word *game*. Life is like football but all of football, not just the games on the weekends. The average professional ball player is going to start working out in earnest in mid-summer, say July 1st. If he is lucky, his last day of the season will be the Super Bowl which is in mid-February. This guy is going to be putting in six, ten-hour days every week for 7 ½ months. That's 1,800 hours of sweat and pain and muscle aches and grass burns.

These aren't just show up and be counted hours either. It is practice and lift weights and scrimmage and watch game videos and then it's back out on the field to practice what you have learned and make it better. Plato and Aristotle would then point to these 1,800 hours – almost a full year of regular work – and say “You can't just *play* football. You have to play *heads-up* football. It's more of a game of brains than brawn. If you're not thinking, if your mind is not clicking all the time you are not being the best player that you can be. Sure, there are only 11 minutes of actual play in any football game, but you are training for 1,800 hours a year for those 11 minutes. Anything can happen at any time during those 11 minutes. You have to expect the unexpected. That's the difference between a football player and a star.”

Seth, on the other hand, would say that football is nothing but organized chaos and that on any Sunday any one team can beat any other team because there are so many variables at play.

Now comes the death blow to Seth. Both Plato and Aristotle would say that chaos, organized or otherwise, is the enemy. For a team or a neighborhood or a club or a nation to be successful it has to have superb organization. Everyone has to be part of the team and that team building takes 100% of the time – even if only 10% of it is actually on the clock. To be the enlightened soul – be it faith-based or reason-based – takes a 100% effort 100 % of the time. To be a superior athlete, scholar, ecclesiastic leader or the best chicken cooker in the world takes

100% of your time. More, actually. You have to dream of it. You have to see it when you are sitting on the toilet. While you are making love. On the way to work. In the shower. You are on game the whole time. When the game is not at the so-called *front* of your mind, it is always on the back burner. Your mind is always, consciously or unconsciously, churning.

This is what killed Seth. Seth was not a dynamic. He just *was*, **was** in the sense that he just existed. Like risk. There is always risk but you don't think about it. You just go about your day and never worry that an elephant might fall out of an airplane and crush you in your car while you are sitting at a stoplight. The chances of that happening are so small that you don't worry about it. You don't worry about getting hit by another car either. As long as you play it safe the statistical chances of being injured in car crash are small. Right? Like getting hit by lightning. Sure, sure, some people do get killed by lightning – about 75 a year – but there are 317 million people in the United States. More people get killed driving home from New Year's Eve parties than killed by lightning!

[Not to minimize drunk driving, about 800 people a week are killed by drunk drivers in the United States. Statistically someone is killed every 40 minutes and that does not include the injured. The injured are one a minute! The cost to American consumers for drunk driving is about \$73 billion a year – and that does not include the cost to the taxpayer of the police, ambulance, fire department, courts, jails, rehabilitation clinics and other services. To keep that \$73 billion in perspective, figure that the average teacher in the United States makes about \$60,000. Every *day* drunk drivers cost Americans 3,333 teachers. A DAY! So next time you see a drunk driver, don't think of him as a fool. Think of that person as keeping America from getting ten more teachers in local schools PER DAY!]

Whether we are talking about an elephant falling out of an airplane or a drunk smashing into your car, the point is the same. You are not in charge of the world. The instant you start to drive you are a hostage of the behavior of everyone else on the road. You could be the best driver in the world but there are a lot of bad drivers out there. Sooner or later you and one of those bad drivers is going to meet. Scientists call this a statistical reality. If you drive long enough you will have an accident. Those of us who are not scientist call it “the numbers.” If you drive a million miles over the next 50 years, the numbers add up. Sooner or later, under the right conditions – or, rather, under the wrong conditions – your “number will come up” and you will be involved in an accident.

WHAT’S THE TAKE-AWAY “REAL WORLD” LESSON HERE?

You avoid accidents by following the advice of Plato and Aristotle. You are constantly working to make yourself a better driver. You don’t just drive on the road, you look ahead, see the pothole before you drop into it. You read the newspaper, so you know what roads will be under construction. You don’t drive after drinking and you don’t let your friends drive drunk. You don’t text while you are driving.

But Seth is still out there.

Allow me to give you a high school example you will understand. Why do the students with the richest parents always get good summer jobs? Is it because they are smart enough to get those jobs or do they get the jobs through connections? The richest students hang out together, right? Why? Are they smartest students? How about movie stars. Ever notice that sons and daughters of movie stars have an easy time getting film contracts? Are they any more talented than a lot of the unemployed actors on Hollywood Avenue? Then there are sons and daughters of politicians who get television broadcasting contracts. Are they any more knowledgeable about

politics than someone who has covered current affairs in Washington D. C. for years? The answer, of course, is that all these people have connections. It's not *what you know*, it's *who you know*, right? Life is not fair or, as the Egyptians might have said, Seth never takes a day off.

The death grip that Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have on American education and culture is so profound that we cannot shake them loose. We have high school classes based on reason: mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics. We have left the faith part of the equation to the religious orders. But there is not a single class or extra-curricular opportunity for students that teaches them of Seth. As a result, we have students who go to school and expect to learn something in school every day. In every class. That's what an education is supposed to be about. You put in your time and you get an education. (Actually, you earn it because nothing is free.) But what students are *not told* is that 90% of their time in school will be wasted. They are not going to be able to learn something every day and they could go through weeks where nothing of personal value is taught.

The "real world" fact of the matter – which is missed by most high school students – is that most young people believe that high school is a prison and they can "start living" after they graduate. They are in error. They are already living. The lessons they are learning in high school about other human beings are going to last a life time. They have yet to learn that 90% of their lives will be wasted. 90% of the books they will read in life will be boring. 90% of every movie is just a lead-up to a conclusion. High school is no different than the "real world" when it comes to "living."

The worst comes later. We have bright young men and women who get good grades in school and have superb morals who cannot understand why the "real world" does not value their knowledge base, brightness or moral character. When they leave school for the "real world," they

are completely unprepared the duplicity, moral depravity, back stabbing, incompetence and mediocrity of the people they have to work with. They are flabbergasted that a company, any company, any bureaucracy can have this many incompetent people and still be operational. It does not matter if they work for a city, country, borough, state or the Federal government, a nonprofit or a private sector company. It's all the same because there are people in all of these professions, real people, people who have not dedicated their lives to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. It's the "real world" and Seth rules here even though Socrates, Plato and Aristotle did everything in their power to kill him in an act of cold blooded murder in 325 B.C. E.

When the three co-conspirators killed Seth, they doomed two millennia of students to believing that the world has some divine order that the human race is headed for a great and glorious future. Actually, we are not. We have not gotten any smarter or any better. All that has changed is the technology at our fingertips. The human character has not changed since the days of the cave.

Just in case you now realize that 90% of your life is wasted and you feel that 10% isn't enough to try hard, keep in mind that 10% are pretty good odds. The NFL makes billions on that 10%. So does the NBA, NHL and American League. The Indy 500 lasts about 2 ½ hours for the winner, 10% of the day, and a heavy weight boxing fight lasts 36 minutes, 2.5% of the day.

Now look at the long shots. If you want to make it big in Hollywood, your chances are a lot less than 1% and 95% of all writers never earn enough to say they have a fulltime job as an author. Fine artists have about the same odds. So when you 'give up' working fulltime trying to become America's greatest writer to become a teacher or government employee, you are substantially increasing your odds for a happy life. You can always keep writing in your spare

time. You are only a failure when you quit trying and you will have plenty of spare time between high school and old age to write the Great American Novel and still raise a family.

[The entire text is available in the full version of the site]