



# **Philosophical Lighthouse**

**Reality vs *Fantasy***

by Michael Badnarik

Dedicated to the late, great Carl Sagan  
who made science “cool” again, and to  
the very late Johannes Kepler, who demonstrated  
the honor in admitting that you were wrong.

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## Foreword

by Todd McGreevy

By reading *Philosophical Lighthouse*, one is likely to increase one's life-span and potentially live a happier and more peaceful life. These can be the payoffs of making good decisions. And, good decisions are a result of having a good, or effective, philosophy.

No two philosophies are the same as Michael explains herein. But how we think and learn and make decisions is equally as important as what we think about any topic.

The lighthouse is an apt metaphor for guiding one's philosophy. Knowing and identifying what to avoid can be more important in the process of understanding, than simply accepting what is initially presented. Remember the aircraft carrier and the lighthouse story in Chapter 1, not only as you read this book, but when you read any so called “news” or internet postings

Michael is a powerful and entertaining teacher. His success is due in part to his

immense patience. And it's also because of his innate ability to paint mental pictures that guide us students to further understand what previously evaded us. He's part technician and part bard, and Philosophical Lighthouse is no exception.

When Michael Badnarik ran for and won the Presidential nomination in the Libertarian Party it was 2004 and he debated fellow nomination candidates Aaron Russo and Gary Nolan. Michael's opening statement is an excellent showcase for the lighthouse philosophy, over 14 years ago.

He begins by quoting George Washington (who was really the 11th President, but that's another class Michael teaches):

*“Government is not reason. Government is not eloquence. It is force. And like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.”* If you live in a log cabin, you'd require fire for your survival. You use the fire to heat your home and to cook your food. Fire is such a necessary part of your survival, that you create a special place for fire. It is called a fireplace. Government is necessary for our survival. We need government in order to survive. The Founding Fathers created a

special place for government. It is called the Constitution. Any time the fire is in the fireplace, it is a good fire. Any time a fire gets outside of the fireplace, it is a bad fire. Conversely, any time the government stays within the limitations of the Constitution, it is a good government. Any time the government is outside of the Constitution, it is a bad government and it is time to for us to stomp it out.”

Your personal philosophy will grow and be stronger from reading this book. Enjoy.

*- Todd McGreevy has been an independent newspaper publisher since 1993 and worked closely with Michael at We the People Foundation's Continental Congress 2009 and again at the Constitutional Sheriff and Peace Officer Association's County Sheriff Project in 2012.*

## Chapter 01

### Prologue

It's my mother's fault.

I am obsessed with learning. Much like the criminal at the beginning of *Dirty Harry*, "I gots ta know!" And that passion for discovery is my mother's fault. Thanks, Mom!

She taught me to read by the time I was two. I was given a chemistry set for Christmas when I was six, and a microscope for Christmas the following year. I would set them up, side by side, on a large table downstairs, and I would spend hours each day doing "experiments". Mom said I wanted to be a "mad scientist" when I grew up. Before she died, she joked that I had actually achieved that goal.

Beyond just learning, I'm obsessed with *understanding* what I've learned. As a boy, I would ask my father a question. He was an adult and he certainly knew the answer; however, his frequent response was, "Think, dammit! Figure it out for yourself!" At the time I was sure he was being unnecessarily cruel. He could have just given me the answer and made my life at that moment so much easier. Now, after a lifetime of figuring it out for myself, I am able to understand nearly everything in the universe. Thanks so much, Dad. There's no way you could have known how much that has helped me all my life

Growing up just a few miles from Chicago, my parents took my brothers and me to all of the museums left behind from the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition. The Adler Planetarium. The John G. Shedd Aquarium. The Field Museum of Natural History. And my absolute favorite, the Museum of Science and Industry.

According to my parents, Michael had a tendency to get lost in the museum. The family would check their coats and begin walking through the exhibits together. Mom, Dad, and my brothers would move to the second, third, and possibly fourth exhibits before Mom realized... “Michael is lost, again”. Yes, if you mean lost in thought. As it turned out, I was still engrossed in the first exhibit. The museum curators had taken the time to print numerous plaques containing detailed information about the dioramas built behind the glass. I was merely processing that information as thoroughly as I could... which takes a little longer than strolling casually by and saying, “That’s nice” or “Isn’t that interesting?” My father bought me a watch for my birthday when I was ten. From that point on, we would go to the museum and Dad would look at his watch and say, “OK. We’ll meet Michael here at the front door at four o’clock”. Then my family would visit the museum *their* way, and I would be given Carte Blanche to explore the wonders of science *my* way.

Details, details! I am often accused of being overly analytical – which seems like a non-sequitur to me. If you ask me a question, my answer will generally be much more than you expected. My best friend complains, “Don’t tell me how to build a watch, just tell



me what time it is.” I am merely giving the kind of answer I would like had I asked the same question. People are frequently irritated, or possibly intimidated by my knowledge, but I am often the first person they ask when they don’t know something. I’ve been accused of being a walking encyclopedia on more than one occasion.

When it came to education, my parents were the absolute best, bar none. They paid taxes which helped fund the local public schools, however they also paid a premium to send my brothers and me to a Catholic school, where not doing your homework was never an option. After school they would take us to the museums, and every summer we would travel the country on vacation. Over the course of several years my parents took us to all forty-eight of the continental United States. We saw most of the national parks and probably half of the state capitols. They wanted to widen our horizons to the greatest extent possible. Mom told us often that she wanted us to think of the United States as our home. Since then I’ve been to Alaska once. Only Hawaii still remains on my “to do list”.

It may surprise you to learn that it is not my goal to be the smartest person in the room. I would love to spend time with the best Jeopardy winners. My very best friends are all better educated than I am. “Science Dave” has a Ph.D. in math. We were coworkers at a nuclear plant, and we became instant friends when I realized he had a paper ribbon with the value of pi (3.141592653...) out to ten thousand decimal places. I was thrilled to find someone who could calculate, or at least had access to, that type of information. Dave was thrilled to discover

someone who appreciated the scientific value that the number represents. We would have breakfast every other week just so we could discuss a topic that none of our other acquaintances would understand or care about. Cryogenics. Astronomical distances. Theoretical particle physics. Cray supercomputers. It was the only way to scratch an itch I couldn't reach. Dave and I still keep in touch every few months.

While traveling the country at the beginning of my presidential campaign, a young man named Rob volunteered to drive me from convention to convention. To keep ourselves occupied during the long hours on the road, we played a modified version of Trivial Pursuit. Each of us would pick a card and then ask the other six questions – one from each category. The person who answered the most questions would win that round. More often than not Rob would answer all six questions. More than once I would look at him with astonishment because I didn't even understand the question! I am not intimidated by other people's knowledge. Quite the opposite. I'm slightly jealous, and I do everything I can to learn and absorb as much as they are willing to teach me.

I am a teacher. That is what I do best. I am hoping this book will instill in you the same passion for learning that my mother "cursed" me with at a very young age. If I were the newly crowned Miss America (just hypothetically, of course) I would wish, not for world peace, but for a universal quest for knowledge. That quest would inevitably lead to world peace.

I am writing this book in an effort to reverse the intellectual and moral decay increasing in the world around us. Corruption and evil are found everywhere. Please note that every human action must be preceded by a thought process, and if evil is everywhere around us, then we must change the thought process that has led society to this point.

So, why call your book *Philosophical Lighthouse*?  
What's that all about?

Philosophy is your comprehensive view of the universe. Your understanding of the world around you, that you use subconsciously, every moment of the day, to make all the decisions in your life.

Because you are alive, you will eventually die. Making bad decisions, like smoking or stepping in front of a bus, could bring about a premature end to the life that you cling to.

If you could, wouldn't you choose to make correct decisions 100% of the time? Or at least as close to 100% as a rational person could expect?

Our philosophy guides, not *what* we think, but *how* we think. If you find yourself struggling to solve problems and wondering if you are jinxed, you are probably operating with an inconsistent philosophy. That is to say, there are good philosophies and bad philosophies. I'm hoping this book will help you find a better one than the one you currently have.

Yeah? So, Lighthouse?

I will paraphrase a genuine radio conversation involving a US aircraft carrier and Spanish authorities. (I recommend that you visit [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for a video labeled “Radio conversation between US and Spain”. It is *much* funnier than my short synopsis.)

[Spain] We are on a collision course. Please adjust your heading 15 degrees north.

[Navy] Negative. You adjust your course 15 degrees north.

[Spain] Negative. We must insist that you change your course 15 degrees north to avoid collision.

[Navy] Negative. We are a United States aircraft carrier with the most advanced weapons systems aboard. We insist that you change your course 15 degrees north, or we will be required to take offensive action.

[Spain] We’re a lighthouse, and we’re not moving. Your call.

[long radio silence]

[Navy] Adjusting our course 15 degrees north.

As I see it, most people are living their life on a collision course with trauma, heartbreak, and perhaps even disaster. I am offering my services as your lighthouse.

Metaphorically, I will do my best to mark the dangerous reefs in your thought process. What you choose to do with that information after that is up to you. Most people, like the Navy, insist they are correct and steam full speed ahead. Getting people to change their minds is

often more difficult than changing the course of an aircraft carrier.

Ships have lots of inertia, but people often suffer from denial. Ignoring information after you've learned it is called cognitive dissonance. The good news is that everyone can learn to be right most of the time. The only bad news is that you'll have to admit to yourself that you were wrong in the past.

It took Johannes Kepler nearly twenty years to convince himself that his theory about planetary orbits was just plain wrong, but I'm sure he felt better once he stopped trying to fit the solar system into his preconceived assumption about how it worked.

I'm going to make a prediction. Almost everybody is going to like the beginning of this book. Then, somewhere in the middle of the book, many people are going to insist that I'm wrong. Much like the Navy, they plan to steam "full speed ahead", rather than alter their course to avoid a collision with reality. At that moment in the book, I hope you'll take a deep breath and consider the information I'm presenting.

I never claim to be omniscient, but I am rarely ever wrong about science.