

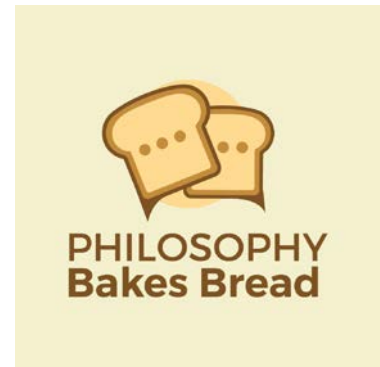
“Media Ethics”



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[Intro music]

Announcer: This podcast is brought to you by WRFL: Radio Free Lexington. Find us online at wrfl.fm. Catch us on your FM radio while you're in central Kentucky at 88.1 FM, *all the way to the left*. Thank you for listening, and please be sure to subscribe.

Dr. Weber: Hey everyone, you're listening to WRFL Lexington 88.1 FM. This is Dr. Eric Thomas Weber here live in the studio. It is my distinct pleasure to play for you episode ten of Philosophy Bakes Bread. This episode is on media ethics with Dr. Scott Stroud of the University of Texas at Austin. Without further ado, please listen, reach out to us, and enjoy.

[Theme music]

Dr. Weber: Hello and welcome to Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership, a production of the Society of Philosophers in America, AKA SOPHIA. I'm Dr. Eric Thomas Weber.

Dr. Cashio: And I'm Dr. Cashio! A famous phrase says that philosophy bakes no bread, that it's not practical. But we at SOPHIA and on this show aim to correct that misperception.

Dr. Weber: Philosophy Bakes Bread airs on WRFL Lexington 88.1 FM, and is recorded and distributed as a podcast next, so if you can't catch us live on the air, subscribe and be sure to reach out to us. You can find us online at philosophybakesbread.com. We hope you'll reach out to us on any of the topics we raise, or on topics you want us to bring up. Plus, we have a segment called “You tell me!” Listen for it, and let us know what you think.

Dr. Cashio: As always, you can reach us in a number of ways! We are on twitter as @PhilosophyBB, which of course stands for Philosophy Bakes Bread. While you're there, you can check out SOPHIA's Facebook page as well at Philosophers in America.

Dr. Weber: You can of course, also email us at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com, and you can call us and leave a short, recorded message with a question, or a comment, or maybe bountiful praise that we may be able to play on the show at 859-257-1849. That number is 859-257-1849.

Now on today's episode we're very pleased to have a guest with us, but before we get to that we make sure we let everybody know about the great feedback that we have received on, I mentioned the "You Tell Me!" segment. On this episode, we're going to start with some feedback we got from Stephanie Barker. Anthony, you want to read us a little bit about what Stephanie wrote to us?

Dr. Cashio: Stephanie has this to say, this is me speaking as Stephanie. Hopefully she is OK with that. She says "I have studied art and business. There is fundamentally flawed thinking in both disciplines, neither being very disciplined, unfortunately. I've heard for years, and surely you have too, that there is no use for philosophy or philosophy professionals, that history or the humanities are a waste of time. With the present threats to Western civilization and thought, and a large populous able to think clearly and properly, shelter, dress and feed themselves and their offspring, it's obvious what is needed."

Dr. Weber: "I've only had two introductory philosophy courses," says Stephanie, "early in my academic career, and I still reap the benefits as well as passing on the ability to reason to my child. Thank you Dr. Mangrum." says Stephanie.

Dr. Cashio: Three cheers for good teachers.

Dr. Weber: Indeed. "Humans have access to the tools of self-cultivation to leave as free individuals. Rant over." says Stephanie Barker. Well she does continue with one nice thing. "Heard the last part of your program on the radio the other day, really enjoyed it, and I look forward to more." Thank you so much Stephanie, we look forward to more comments from you as others who are listening and thank you so much for sending us some feedback for our "You Tell Me!" segment.

Dr. Cashio: Thanks Stephanie! Well on today's show, we're very fortunate to be joined by Dr. Scott Stroud. How are you doing today, Scott?

Dr. Stroud: I'm doing great Anthony. Thank you.

Dr. Cashio: Scott is a philosopher teaching in the University of Texas at Austin Communications Studies Program. Scott is also director of Media Ethics Initiative, that's a fancy title, at UT. According to their website, the media ethics initiative exists to promote and publicize research on the ethical choices involved in media use. I'm sure we're going to flesh that out as we go forward here.

Dr. Weber: As well as his work in the Media Ethics Initiative, Scott has authored two books and co-authored a third, including *A Practical Guide to Ethics: Living and Leading with Integrity*, *John Dewey and the Artful Life*, and another book called *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*. In addition to writing books, Scott has published over 70 articles and book chapters, to call him an active scholar is an understatement. Scott, we call this very first segment "Know Thyself". We invite you to tell us and our listeners about yourself, about how you got into philosophy, as well as what philosophy means to you. So tell us about yourself!

Dr. Stroud: Thank you Eric. The story goes back to high school, back when people read these things that they call books, and they have the cheap-o books outside that they are getting rid of. I came across Arthur C. Clarke's *2010: A Space Odyssey*, so not the first one, but I bought this cheap-o paperback for ten cents and I read it and became enthralled with issues of cosmology, issues of astronomy and big picture issues. These are big picture issues for a high-schooler. I got

into astronomy and telescopes and Asimov, and reading *2001: A Space Odyssey*, I went back to the beginning, and I started exploring more and more of these.

Dr. Weber: Scott, what is cosmology for our listeners?

Dr. Stroud: Cosmology is a branch of astronomy, a scientific study of the nature of the universe. So instead of studying just the planets and such, it's studying large scale structures such as galaxies, and how the universe came about, where the universe is going, the big bang is part of cosmology. In terms of science, cosmology is one of the biggest answers to the biggest questions you can get: Where did all this come from?

Dr. Weber: Pardon me. So you were reading cosmology.

Dr. Stroud: Yeah, and popularized versions. Carl Sagan in *Cosmos*, or Asimov in his science writings, or Arthur C. Clarke's science fiction. This stuff captivated my mind, and then I went to college and I was really good at speech and debate, so I was a communication major. People said that I would make a good lawyer because I guess I was argumentative. It got in my mind, the answer to the question when people ask you "What are you going to do when you get older?". I said lawyer. OK. So this is kind of a track in my mind, and I started taking philosophy classes. This is at the University of the Pacific, the small liberal arts type college in the central valley of California. I started liking these philosophy teachers. I would hang out with them and talk about this weird Kant guy that I was reading in class. Eventually at one point I remember distinctly, I had enough classes for a minor but I needed more units and so I said I might as well double-major in philosophy.

It's kind of a gateway drug. I remember I was talking to my parents, I wanted to shock them, so I said something like this on one of my visits to my hometown: "So what if I went to Stanford or some place and get a masters in philosophy after this." They are very accepting folks, so they were saying as long as it's education it is going to be useful, but I don't think they understand what philosophy was about, or how it made money or bakes bread. So eventually they started getting this bug in my head that the questions that I liked asking and the questions that I thought needed to answer were in the classes a lot of, these philosophy classes. This led me onward to eventually get a PHD in philosophy, and even though now I'm in communication studies, this field that I'm currently housed in, or this side that I work in is called rhetoric as well. A lot of the questions that people are asking there I find to be philosophical questions. How does communication relate to the good life? This is the short story of my progression from big questions in science to the big questions of the meaning of life, the meaning of truth, and the meaning of morality. Philosophical questions.

Dr. Weber: Wonderful. How is it you made the transition from cosmology to philosophy exactly? I understand that they are both big questions, but what got you started in that minor in philosophy? What was it about it?

Dr. Stroud: Well at the very beginning, Eric, it was pure logistics. I needed a certain number of units, and I'm like, well I could have a minor in philosophy, or I could have another piece of paper, another bachelor's degree in philosophy. It's the randomness of life. Who knows if there is a randomness behind it all, but somehow you make it work out. Really what I got when I was taking all of these classes, is that there is a certain grandeur in answering a question "Where did we come from?" "What's the meaning of it all?" and you point towards the big bang, or dark matter, something like this. But then there is another question that always sticks with you,

whether you're on Earth or you're trapped with Matt Damon on Mars, which are about the fundamental questions of what it means to be a human, and how human life can be meaningful or virtuous or the opposites of those. That captivated me and drew me further towards philosophy, that there is something about the human predicament that you're not, for me, not going to be able to answer just by physical theories of the cosmos. That, and I didn't really enjoy math, so physics were probably precluded from my future.

Dr. Cashio: That hits a little too close to home for me. These ideas, this human life as meaningful, you would think it has a cosmological scope to it. Is that your feeling about the matter?

Dr. Stroud: In one sense. One of my favorite philosophers, Eric mentioned my last book on Immanuel Kant. His famous line inscribed on his tombstone is that two things fill him with more admiration and awe the more often and steadily he reflect upon them: the starry heavens above him, and the moral law within him. It's no coincidence that I came to Kant back in 2000 when I was just out of undergraduate before I came to Dewey and James and these wonderful pragmatists I loved reading about. Kant has this wonderful urge to do respect to science, things like astronomy and physics. Things that will make you feel like a small cog in a big machine. He had this unconquerable respect for human dignity. That was something that didn't depend on your power or size. I have always loved this kind of metaphor. You stand under the starry heavens and if you really understand what's above you, it makes you feel small. But when you start asking questions about human virtue, at least Kantian answer says that you have a respect or a value that goes beyond something like power or size. This is the tension that I've often faced and I like reveling in it.

Dr. Cashio: That's great. How does communication relate to the good life?

Dr. Stroud: This is one of those questions that I think is underneath all of our conceptions, or get underneath all of our conceptions of the good life. Just disciplinary habits, ways of talking really, make philosophers talk about certain endpoints like democracy, and not have a super big role for democracy and communication being in there. People in communication talk a different way about it. What I got thinking, when philosophers talk about the kingdom of ends, this is a Kantian goal. The idea is that everyone matters and everyone is equal to each other, and everyone has a role in determining how a community proceeds. This is oftentimes what we think about when we think about democracy flourishing. Everyone matters in it. Is that a silent mattering? Are they going to be sitting around staring at each other? No. Ways of being respectful towards other agents are going to involve certain ways of talking to those agents. There's going to be other ways of talking that destroy respect or make that respect very short-lived. This is one thing that I try to emphasize in my work that kind of bridges philosophy and the fields of communication and rhetoric, is that a lot of the things that we are talking about are the same. We just focus on different perspectives. I want to really highlight when we talk about moral progress, moral cultivation, the philosophy of democracy, we have to make room for the category of communication in that.

Dr. Weber: Scott, I really like the way that you set up the tension in terms of coming from your background interest in cosmology and then seeing in Kant the fact that he was interested in the starry heavens, and how small we seem to be. Yet he really appreciated, Immanuel Kant really appreciated how important human beings are in the universe, and how different we are as human beings from rocks and other animals and so forth. I want to ask you, you mentioned Kant, which, before we get too far ahead, in terms of particular philosophers, whether you could

tell us given your background and experience and interest, what philosophy is to you. What does this mean to someone who hasn't studied any of this before? How would you explain philosophy to anyone that might be listening to this radio show and or the podcast, when it comes out?

Dr. Stroud: I would say the answer to that question is that philosophy, at its base, beyond all that terminology and fancy words, really it is just a way of reflecting on particular ways we view the world. There is no one way that we have to view the world. Philosophers have all of these arguments, and a lot of ink is spilled, and books are printed, but at the end of the day it comes down to an intensely personal decision, which is: What sense do we make in the world, or what choices do we have to make when we view this world? Indian philosophy, from South Asia, Indian philosophy has an interesting term for the different philosophies. Darshan, literally means "the way of seeing". Every once and a while when I visit India, I see tour buses that are Darshan Tours on the side of the tour bus. This is really a visual term for the philosophies in India. These are different ways of literally seeing the world and observing it and interacting with it. Sometimes this gets lost when we think about philosophy as a search for wisdom and knowledge when wisdom and knowledge are timeless and certain. At the end of the day this comes down to what sense we make of the world and what choices we make in making that sense.

Dr. Weber: That's very interesting, Scott. I must say, at the same time, the way you are understanding and explaining philosophy sounds a little bit like what we might say the everyday sense of philosophy is to just anyone. People say "I've got my philosophy, my philosophy is...". What people mean is that their inclination to view things, their opinion on something is this. Is that fair? Do you want to say something more specific or particular about philosophy?

Dr. Stroud: As a card-carrying pragmatist, I love bringing things down to everyday life, so yeah, I can't say that's out of bounds. Every once and a while, some of my teachers at grad school when someone asked their dry-cleaner what their philosophy of dry-cleaning is. This seems to demean the enterprise. But really you could have a philosophy of how you run your dry-cleaning business. You could have a philosophy on the meaning of life. These are both the same kind of thing. I would just argue that the second one is a lot more important over a lot more parts of your life than just how you run a business nine-to-five.

Dr. Weber: Would you say there is a continuity between these two things? Like, how you run your dry-cleaning business is related in some way your inclination to think about life and meaning in it.

Dr. Stroud: Yes. You see this continuity because you can imagine that there are people out there that run businesses but don't reflect on what their philosophy of how they run that business is. There are people out there who live a life and never reflect on whether they are making the choices that add up to meaningfulness.

Dr. Cashio: So studying philosophy is partly the act of reflecting upon those different philosophies.

Dr. Stroud: Yes, which one you think is the most preferable, and why the other ones don't win out. This is the abstraction that is involved. It's ultimately practical, but it's a moment of abstraction, I think.

Dr. Weber: Well thank you so much for talking with us, Scott. This is our first of four segments that we're going to have in today's episode, and we're going to be right back after a short break to talk with Scott about media and media ethics. So thanks for listening to Philosophy Bakes Bread.

Dr. Cashio: Welcome back to Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Dr. Anthony Cashio, and Dr. Eric Weber. Today, we are talking with Dr. Scott Stroud of the University of Texas at Austin and director of the Center for Media Ethics. Today we are going to talk about media and ethics, and media ethics. That's kind of what we're doing. I think Eric was chomping at the bit here to ask a question so I'm going to let him go for it.

Dr. Weber: In this segment we're going to focus on questions about the media, and then we'll move to focus on media ethics in particular, Scott. In this first question, basically the issue is that it seems to me we are witnessing today at least what appears to be unprecedented levels of distrust in the media. First of all, my question for you is: Is that a fair assessment? If it is, why do you suspect that this is the case? Then, if we can't trust the media, how can the people lead itself? How can we make rational judgments on the basis of good information if we can't trust the media through which we're supposed to get that information to make judgments.

Dr. Stroud: Yes, I'm torn. Everyone think their time is 'sui generis' and unique.

Dr. Weber: Wait, what is sui generis?

Dr. Stroud: Absolutely one of a kind. It's Latin. I admit, I agree with your question's premise, which is that this is an unprecedented time for distrust in the media. Social scientists can point out the Pew studies and such. One thing that I think is important as a writer on that observation has got to be: sure, you can ask people if they distrust the media, singular. But really what's happening, I think, is that people are distrusting swaths of the media that they label and shorthand as the media. I think that this is something very new in the history of human media and mass media. This is done through communication technology. We can say, "Well I don't trust these people," and you point at ABC, CBS, or CNN, "but I do love Breitbart and Fox.", or vice-versa. So I think this might be what I think is going on behind this distrust, when you analyze it down. It's a distrust of people I label as distrust-worthy. There's some folks that my new choice in all these media outlets gives me an ability to say "These guys are the ones I really like."

Dr. Weber: Part of the thing that is really difficult for me to fathom is how folks can be intensely distrusting with such a broad brush, painting people as distrustful, and then they can just totally buy something that someone else says. Because I guess that person says the things that they like? I don't know. But this seems to be a pretty common phenomenon right now.

Dr. Stroud: Yeah, I like the broad-brush metaphor you used because I really think this is a key aspect to humankind. Philosophies through thousands of years have always had different ways of trying to combat against this, but in doing so they inevitably paint their opponents or other faiths or other religious traditions and other philosophical traditions in the west, in simplistic terms. I think that's one of the fundamental things about the human mind. We are storytelling creatures. Stories are inherently selective. If I feel that the media is problematic, the story that bubbles up is always going to be more simplified than the actual phenomena. There's going to be some truth to it, but the truth is going to be rarefied into a simple narrative: the media lies,

conservative media is evil. These simplified narratives that when we really look at it, there's probably another side to the story.

Dr. Cashio: Scott, do you think the media is at least somewhat culpable for having cultivated this attitude, the media that is done for profit, for instance. You get the more 24-hour news cycles, sensationalized news where people are like they just want to make money, so they stop trusting. I'm playing the devil's advocate here. The general story, one would think, "Well why would I believe that, they have money to make off of it, they're getting paid off by liberals or the conservatives or whatever branch." Is the media at all culpable for this distrust of the media? They may have played some role in this story.

Dr. Stroud: Yes, probably there's two factors that are behind that. You mentioned one Anthony, the 24-hour news cycle. This is going to put pressures on people like folks at CNN to produce content. What do they do when it's getting slow or an event has no emerging facts? They get talking heads to argue it out, or differing qualities to argue it out, or give commentary. But speculation fills this. This probably fuels some people's skepticism of the media, this 24-hour news cycle. The other thing that you have got to note is not just the amount of time that media now focuses on news, but the amount of choices. No longer do you have to just go to one of the evening news channels at a set time, you go to a bunch of different websites.

Talk radio is big for some parts of the spectrum, and American politics. You can choose what you want. It's that choice, there's a good part to that and there's a bad part to that. Eric, just a second ago made me think of the term that scholars is called motivated reasoning. A lot of research has been done on this but it's kind of scary when you look into it. The idea that humans think in certain ways and these ways are often adjusted to their own self-interest and self-preservation and their own desire structure. Oftentimes when we think we are being clear-minded, we are really just buttressing what we already believe. This is what some psychologists and social scientists who study communication say this is why conservatives love Fox news and liberals love MSNBC, because it bolsters their view of the world. These are the two key things are choice and the amount of stuff that they need to produce in the 24-hour news cycle. Maybe we'll find a way around it. Who knows?

Dr. Weber: In terms of the extremes of this, there are people who really seem to refer to the media as this kind of boogey-man, where the president has actually called certain news outlets "fake news", and "the enemy of the people", which is a terrifying thing to say when you are talking about major news outlets. Senator McCain, of the president's own party, warned that that kind of thinking is the first step towards tyranny, when leaders try to control the media. This is Senator McCain. My questions are the big-picture question. As a scholar of these things, what is the media in your view? Secondly, should we fear the media? Or should we fear a president who calls members of the media enemies of the state? Or both?

Dr. Stroud: To the first question, "What is the media?", this is a challenging question. When I was going to school, the big debate was over: What is mass media? Do things like fax machines, which seem everyday and non-important, but they were the main way a lot of the news about the massacre at Tiananmen Square got out. Are things like fax machines mass communication? They are one-to-one but you can send out faxes to a bunch of different people at once. Now those questions and those debates seem passé, because who uses fax machines anymore?

Dr. Cashio: Do we need to explain fax machine is for our younger listeners?

Dr. Weber: I think that's actually not a bad idea.

Dr. Stroud: It's basically a way of sending a piece of paper to someone else over a phone line.

Dr. Weber: It's sort of like a tweet but on paper, and it can be a whole lot more than 140 characters. It's like sending a copy through the phone lines. Like an email attachment except not nearly as convenient.

Dr. Stroud: So nowadays when you ask what the media is, clearly the internet is a medium of communication. If I just send you an email, that's probably not the same thing that we're getting at when you point to CNN.com. That's a website that is a part of the media. Blogs, they are in between an email I send you and CNN's very professional website. Blogs can be very professionally done, or very amateur and just have a reader of someone's mom or grandma or something. The media landscape has gotten a lot more egalitarian in some ways, a lot more people participate and so it's tough to say "Here's the five things that comprise the category of the media." I think you can definitely have a rough-and-ready definition and say when we point at media we point at some kind of source of information as trusted by a group of people. That could be the readership of a blog, that could be all of the people that on their phones go to CNN.com. That would be where I would define this.

Dr. Weber: My second question is: Should we fear the media? Should we fear a president who calls the media enemies of the state? This is not a simple, little thing to say.

Dr. Stroud: I definitely don't think we should fear the media. Can the media be improved and fixed or can certain habits be made better? Of course. I'm part of the Moody College of Communication here at University of Texas at Austin, and we have a whole department devoted to journalism, the study of journalism and the training of journalists. A lot of people put a lot of thought into how to make journalism better. I would be really skeptical of saying journalists are an enemy of the people. Dangerous might be a strong term, but I think it's a not useful way of characterizing how the press is behaving. For instance, "unnamed sources". There is a legitimate debate to be had about use of anonymous sources by news people, but also by presidents going to war, pointing towards intelligence sources. There is a debate you can have about whether those things are very prone to abuse. I don't think you should say news is evil because they use unnamed sources. That kind of carte blanche approach is not helpful.

Dr. Cashio: Do you think that there is any hope of returning to a more civil time and manner of public discourse? What might that path look like towards more civil discourse and trusting the media again, at least to some level?

Dr. Stroud: You're hinting at two questions, Anthony. One is: How can we get a good relationship between the media, our governmental structures, and the source of all of those governmental structures, the people. How can we get this back into the right balance? Then your other question is something that goes beyond just media. How do we handle disagreement? How do we handle disagreement constructively? This is what I call the problem of partisan reasoning. Partisan meaning democrats and republicans, but it could also mean sports teams, Yankees fans vs. Boston fans. This is a larger question than just the media, which is how do we remain open to the views of the other person yet still assert our own views? We can come back to this later and talk more about it, I think this is a fundamental challenge of democracy. How do you exist asserting your view of the world or how the world should be run, whether it's this policy of housing or this military invention or whatnot, or even more mundane things, but how

do you assert these views and deal with other people asserting their views that oftentimes don't agree with their view.

Dr. Cashio: How to deal with the jerks who don't believe like I do?

Dr. Stroud: Every once and a while you see those signs on people's wall that say there's one way: mine. Life isn't a one-way street. How do we negotiate this back and forth? Other people pushing at us with their views and we push back. How do we keep this in the realm of reason and the realm of civility and a constructive realm, in other words?

Dr. Cashio: So, you would draw a pretty strong connection between a free and trustworthy press and media and the successful operations of a democracy.

Dr. Stroud: Yes, I think the press is integral to a democracy, because if you don't have the press serving some of its classic roles, such as a source of information that matters to the everyday life of citizens, but also a source of information that checks the abuses of government. The democratic system is probably not going to be sustainable without the press playing those roles. Eventually, the public is going to be harmed by not having information that matters, or the public is going to be harmed in terms of losing control of the government. That being said, oftentimes I worry. There's two questions here. There's the question of is the press doing the right thing? Then there's How do we get back to a situation where both sides in this case, we're talking about President Trump and the press gets back to a constructive relationship. The more challenging question: If someone thinks of the press as an enemy of the state, how do we respond to that person that thinks that in such a way that we don't bolster the impression that underlies it? That I am this person's enemy, or this institution is this person's enemy?

Dr. Cashio: Do you have any ideas on how to answer that? Because I think that's a great question.

Dr. Weber: I think actually that this is pushing us into the subject matter of the next segment, which is about not just media and the nature of it, but media ethics, about how we ought to do things. Therefore, that makes this a perfect moment to say that after a short break we're going to be back with Philosophy Bakes Bread to talk further with Dr. Scott Stroud. This is me, Dr. Eric Thomas Weber, talking with my co-host also Dr. Anthony Cashio. Thanks so much, everybody, for listening. We'll be back just in a moment with one more segment on the subject with Dr. Scott Stroud.

Dr. Cashio: Welcome back everybody! You're listening to Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Dr. Anthony Cashio with my co-host Dr. Eric Weber, and today we are speaking with Dr. Scott Stroud about media ethics. In our previous segment, we focused on the nature and challenges of the media, and we were ending with a pretty exciting discussion about how to have more, and I maybe don't like the word, civil discourse between partisan issues with regard to the media. How does one side address the other without further demonizing themselves in the eyes of the other side? Scott, I asked you if you could help address this, so I'm going to throw this back to you and see if you can't lead us out of the darkness hopefully.

Dr. Stroud: In just a minute or two I could solve all of these problem.

Dr. Cashio: Perfect. We've got 15 minutes. Go.

Dr. Stroud: Lots of despair. No, but I think this is one of the most important questions of our time, and it might be a question that all philosophies have wrestled with, when they take

seriously societies they are pluralistic to some extent. Societies that have differing viewpoints, different cultures, different ways of looking at the world. There's always disagreement, so how do you deal with that disagreement? Do you just ignore people? Do you beat them into shape and make them be of your mind? Do you use words and reason to beat them into shape so that they take on your view even though they don't want to? This is a fundamental question of philosophy: How do you deal with disagreement in societies that are filled with present or future disagreement? The current issues we have with media are just another version of this. What underlies my view of this is that we want to solve problems that relate to our society and create a certain kind of society. This is all that we mean when we mean democracy. A certain kind of democracy, a society where everyone flourishes, everyone matters and everyone has equal rights and such.

There are differences in all of the details you give, but I think this is what we get at when we talk about democracy. The challenge always is: How do I solve problems in today's democratic society without creating future problems. I think this is the heart of the challenge of the media versus the presidency, or two years ago when Texas or other states had similar strife between academics and certain political parties and state houses. It really comes down to: How do you get out of a dysfunctional cycle of saying the other person is wrong and evil, and then you solve your problem through force, and then tomorrow that other person just comes back with renewed vigor to cause you new problems. I think this is what the media has to avoid doing now, is upping the ante, being harsh in very disrespectful ways, that justify Trump's view of them as being Trump's enemy. How can they be constructive and still critical of the president? This is the balance that needs to be struck. It's a challenging balance. One way that they try to do this is to point out inaccuracies in Trump's discourse, but they don't go as far as saying it's a lie, usually. Although some people want to say that some press secretary or this person or that person tweeted something that is a lie. Lie involves intent, and intent to deceive and harm, perhaps. Some of the media has been pretty good about fact-checking false statements, not revealing lies or deception.

Dr. Weber: But at the same time, Scott, we're talking about how does the media repair relations? The media didn't say that President Trump is the enemy of the people, President Trump said that fake news, when he was referring to major news networks, are the enemy, not of Trump, he said of the people. I want to give credit where credit is due. A number of people at Fox news said "Woah, this is not OK!" including, for instance Shep Smith, but I believe others stepped back and said "What's going on? This criticism of the media is unacceptable." I want to make sure that everybody knows that there were some Fox news reporters who did write, speaking out against this kind of talk. They were the ones he was calling not fake news. They were saying, "Woah, hold your horses, this is getting sort of extreme." It's one thing to say that I believe the news media has obligations to try and make sure to have as reasonable and civil exchanges as possible, but as you say it is a two-way street. What can we do? The news media can try and be as responsible as it can be, but when someone says that people are the enemy of the people, and that person controls the national guard and the button for nuclear weapons and so forth, there's a pretty strong imbalance and criticism is essential! If criticism is thought to be disrespectful, we have a problem. This isn't just about "Hey, let's be nice." If someone is lying, we need to be able to say that someone is lying.

Dr. Stroud: The challenge is that this is all occurring in a media environment that is fragmented by what the scholars call "partisan selective exposure". That is a fancy way of saying that conservatives attend to certain news sources, certain channels, certain talk radio, Rush

Limbaugh, and liberals listen to other talk radio shows, or MSNBC. This is the media environment we have inherited, and this underlies the problem. When president Trump says something like that, I'm sure he's not doing this to try to convince a liberal in New York who watches a lot of MSNBC. He's doing this for his base. There's going to be always some overlapping intrigue when you get some figures on Fox news saying "Wait a minute, even though he's saying we're not fake news, this is an awful statement." This is one thing that we always have to remember. In some ways, the news media operates in echo chambers, is Cass Sunstein's famous term for this. CNN can do all it wants, but who knows if the people that really love President Trump are really listening or attending to CNN. This is why I'm always skeptical when people ask me "How can media solve this?" and I say "Media needs to be respectful of it's critiques and such", in the back of my mind I'm saying that media tends to preach to its own choir. You're going to get media being respectful in front of people who don't want that respect. The other side that could benefit from it, they are not listening to that media place in the first place.

Dr. Cashio: It seems like maybe the problem is then, as you indicated in the last segment, bigger than the media.

Dr. Stroud: In many ways, it comes down to the habits of viewership and listening to the media. There's this concept in political science called selective exposure. My wife, who is a social scientist here in the department of communication, Natalie Stroud, she runs the engaging news project. They are trying to find ways to get people to overcome these habits. But it's very difficult. Who goes out there looking for a website that challenges everything that they believe? You don't. A lot of that stuff you believe is political in nature. Die-hard republicans are not going to love a lefty website, and die-hard liberals are not going to love Rush Limbaugh. These are the challenge, these are deeply-ingrained habits of how we speak, whether you're on Fox news as a commentator, or MSNBC. But its also in all of those people out there listening. What do they even choose to listen to in the first place?

Dr. Cashio: When it comes to media ethics, most people hear media ethics and they think that the media has certain ethical responsibilities. I imagine that's a big part of it. It seems like you're also indicating that the consumer, in terms of media ethics, also has a massive ethical responsibility. Is that where you're going with this?

Dr. Stroud: Yes, I think it's built, maybe it's a bad way to think about it, but this comes out of my training as a philosopher. Especially my engagement with the American philosophical tradition, like John Dewey, the great philosopher of democracy. John Dewey really struck me early on as saying that democracy is not a governmental procedure, it's a way of life. I've written a lot of things trying to unpack that. What does that mean? Is it how you walk or is it your posture? I think what he's really getting at is that it's your habits of how to speak to other people, or how we listen or judge what they're saying. Media is just a new way of doing this. I listen to Bill O'Reilly, I'm not there present, but I'm still analyzing what he says, I'm attending to it, I might be thinking ahead about what's wrong with it, or I might be truly open to some of it being right. All of these same habits are there. I really love what Dewey said. It's a way of life. In terms of media ethics, it's a substantial part of what we're talking about when we talk about the ethics of news media, comes down to these habits of how we handle political disagreement and agreement.

Dr. Weber: Interesting. I think that's important, this notion that you bring up from John Dewey, that democracy isn't just some sort of governmental procedure but it's a way of life.

At the same time, it seems to me that he can't just have meant, "As long as you, yourself as an individual, try to be democratically respectful all is good." Clearly, he is talking about the larger culture. There are people out there who do not want to be democratically respectful. They want to shut people out, they want to shut people up. I remember the conflict in thinking about enemies of the people, I think it was Bannon, but I'm not sure, but one of the people from the Trump administration said to the media, "you're going to regret this". There was a threat, it was unspecific, but it seems that you can have, let's say, a culturally democratic fish swimming in the fish tank, but if the water and everything else is too acidic, it's not going to do very well. There's a widespread obligation. I guess one question is, How do we think about making sure and pushing for the democratic culture that we need everybody to be embodying and cultivating? How do we push for the wider culture to be democratically respectful in the way that you're talking about?

Dr. Stroud: You're getting at a very pragmatic point, the idea that our habits are intensely personal, but that they are formed in relation to a public environment. Some of the environment are the institutions out there, like the news media. Definitely a lot of the things that we think about what counts as information, what counts as a good argument, or what counts as a good story in a newspaper, this comes from our ambient or purposeful experience in a news environment. If you had a bunch of different newspapers out there and you're aware of them to some extent, this is going to inform your habits of what you think the news media does. If you grew up just thinking that one paper represents the news media and all of the other ones are fake news, this is going to be a more dysfunctional way of forming habits of news and media and information consumership. you can't do everything when it comes to habits. You start in a peaceful fashion, and you go from there. One thing that's key is a flourishing, diverse press. I'm not going to be the first one to say we need to narrow it down to the L.A. Times, the New York Times, and get rid of every other paper. I think there is a benefit to having a range of papers and sources, some of which are explicitly partisan. This is an important point. Do we want everyone to give balance to every story, or do we want some people to scream louder for their issue. I'm not ready to say that we need to get rid of the partisan sources. I would love for people to have the right sets of habits where they can place partisan sources next to other sources and weigh these things out and make a more complex decision or judgment than any of those sources just gave them individually.

Dr. Cashio: Do you see hope for a more ethical media in the United States, maybe with this balance? If so, what would it take to get us closer to the ideals that you just gave us? What should we be aspiring, how do we work that way?

Dr. Stroud: Part of me is sad because I can't do much to solve the U.S.'s problems. Then again, in the Cold War none of us could have done anything to solve those problems. In many ways, the most agency we have is in how we model ourselves as public figures. As professors we are in front of students, they see us, they see us dealing with different positions, they see us dealing with that liberal comment in the back, or that conservative comment in the front. In my own case, I strive to be consciously non-partisan, or at least fair to both sides as possible. I believe in a really strong sense of respect and the principle of charity. Whenever anyone says "Well that opinion is stupid," my first instinct that I have cultivated over the last decade has been "Well how can we see that opinion as not stupid?" This is one thing that I try to conceptualize when it comes to what change I can make. How do I model the ways of argumentation that I seek for, and it doesn't make me always as popular, because partisans on this side don't think I go that way enough, partisans on the other side don't think I go... So maybe this is my role in life.

Dr. Weber: Right on. Thanks so much, Scott. We're going to come back, we have one final segment to solicit your concluding thoughts and talk with you big-picture about philosophy. Thanks everybody for listening to Philosophy Bakes Bread. We'll be back after a short break.

[Theme music]

Announcer: Who listens to the radio anymore? We do. WRFL Lexington.

Dr. Cashio: Welcome back everyone! This is Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber on Philosophy Bakes Bread. Today we have been talking with Dr. Scott Stroud about media ethics and in this final segment we're going to have some final big-picture questions, maybe some light-hearted thoughts, and we'll end with a pressing philosophical question for you our listeners, as well as how to get a hole of us with your comments, questions, criticism, and bountiful, bountiful praise.

Dr. Weber: In this last segment, Scott, I want to challenge you on something that we ended with in the prior segment, which is that while I agree with you that it's very important to cultivate in ourselves and others the ability to appreciate the value in people's different points of view and so forth, it does seem to me that there have to be limits to this, in important circumstances. There was a nice essay by a pragmatist philosopher named David Hildebrand, and he asked this question in this essay, "Does every theory deserve a hearing?" He's not asking should you have a right to speak, with freedom of speech. He doesn't deny that. But the question is, Do we all deserve to give a hearing to every which theory, and he makes a strong and compelling argument to say No, not every theory deserves a hearing. For instance, when Anthony and I aired an episode talking with a great philosopher Dr. Tommy Curry about issues of race and a black male studies. Do we have to have an episode interviewing a klansman? I think the answer is no to that question, and I think it's pretty straightforward why. Or do we have to have someone representing the flat earth theory? Or just about what every doctor denies the claim that vaccinations do harm, which is not substantiated. Do we really need to be respectful to any which theory? How do you think about the limitations on what's deserving of respect, in terms of what deserves a hearing?

Dr. Stroud: I agree with you, we don't need to spill a lot of University Press ink writing philosophies of the KKK books. I don't think these things are worth considering, and I don't spend much time considering them. But there is an interesting presupposition to the question that you just asked, the way you framed it. I haven't read David's editorial yet, but the question is almost like, these things are false, or pernicious, and deserve to not be heard, maybe even deserve to be smacked down. Maybe if not in terms of legal sanctions in terms of moral approbation. Clearly I like criticism. Here's another question. Let's not talk about the klansman's theory. Let's talk about if our neighbor is a klansman and I share a fence with him. This is a different sort of question. You're asking not about issues of truths and maximizing truths and theoretical value, but you're looking at a question that is closer to the heart of democracy, which is: How do we get along with people that espouse views we believe are untrue or not useful? There are ways you could say that this person is wholly evil, irredeemable, and awful, and I will never interact with them. These are going to be ways of not making a good community with this person, and definitely not ways of moving towards reforming their views on things that matter in practice. This is kind of, we'll get away from the extreme examples of

racism and get back to political partisanship, I think there are ways we can castigate this party is the party of extremists, or use the Hitler bomb, or whatever on them. But those aren't constructive ways to form community on t-plus-one, the next moment. This is what is undergirding my way of talking about this, Eric. Sure, some things I wish weren't out there in the intellectual sphere, but if they are, and those people are people that I have to form a community with, what's the most useful orientation towards those people?

Dr. Weber: Well it seems as though castigation and not being friends with somebody can be one of the consequences people will suffer from being utterly unreasonable. Buddying up with the klansman next door might be an avenue for changing that person, or it might lead them to not suffer any consequences from being horrible about other people.

Dr. Stroud: If the whole neighborhood shames this person, that could be a way for them to say this is a moment I have come to a realization. Most of the time we point at theories being irredeemable, they are the worst of the worst. What scares me is the creepage of that. Right now we are in a nation of 48%-48% and then there is a weird remainder. But I don't think that is a useful way of thinking of your neighbor, let's just ignore this, there are a lot of neighbors you are ignoring.

That's why I say trying to respect people that you find is inherently un-respectful in their dialogue might be the most useful way to try to preserve hope in that community. What's the alternative? Writing them off morally, rationally. That's never going to make them meet you halfway. William James had that wonderful line. You're a stranger, are you going to be my friend? Me assuming that you might be a good friend is the first necessary step of the reality being created of you trusting me because I trusted you. This is very much a democratic way of thinking, in the deep sense. How do we deal with people that we find intolerant or hateful? That's a challenge.

Dr. Cashio: That's quite the challenge, the existential question of any democracy.

Dr. Stroud: Or any situation, Anthony, of disagreement. When you are in a community with people that don't think the same way as you, you can either get rid of them, or you can find some way to ameliorate that situation.

Dr. Cashio: Alright Scott, one of our final questions comes from the show's inspiration. Would you say that philosophy bakes no bread, as the famous saying goes? Or that it does and why and how?

Dr. Stroud: I definitely think that philosophy bakes bread. By that I mean that it's practically useful in everyday life, maybe not in the same way a business degree is. For instance, when I'm running this media ethics initiative, I had to use Excel to keep budget spreadsheets and I don't know what I'm doing, so I'm sure if someone comes up from the business program, they would say "Oh my gosh," and they would pull their hair out. So in some cases philosophy teaches you extremely practical skills of argumentation. But in other cases it teaches you more indirect skills. Reflection on larger choices of value. One thing I try to harp on when I'm preaching the gospel of media ethics, which really is just a domain like business ethics. It's philosophy applied to an area of life, in this case communication and media. I try to say that the key thing is not finding answers. The key thing is bringing some amount of philosophical reflection to bear on these issues that we notice are important, but oftentimes someone says, "Oh of course it's awful for news to use unnamed sources," or the other side to say "Of course it's fine for them to use

unnamed sources." The philosophical contribution is bringing that debate, what underlies that debate, to the surface and maybe trying to make some progress or clarifying it or figuring out a more defensible or more constructive answer than other answers. That's my view of philosophy baking bread, when it meets these everyday issues and helps us go somewhere in resolving these issues.

Dr. Weber: Right on. Thanks so much, Scott. We have two last mini-segments, if you will. This next one is called 'philosophunnies'. I have a little recording of my son saying the word 'philosophunnies' that I'll play here.

Dr. Weber: Say 'philosophunnies'

Sam: Philosophunnies!

(laughter)

Dr. Weber: Say 'philosophunnies'

Sam: Philosophunnies!

(child's laughter)

Dr. Weber: So in the segment we call philosophunnies, we want the people that are listening to appreciate that philosophers, while we are pretty serious about some big-picture things and tough questions, we also like to have fun. There are some funny things sometimes in philosophy or in what we are talking about that are worth taking note of.

Dr. Cashio: Philosophers explaining jokes...that's the joke!

Dr. Weber: It can be sad, but also it can be funny. If people laugh at us, we think that's productive, or if people laugh with us, that's also productive. So either way is fine. We want to ask you, Scott, if you have any funny story about the media, or about philosophy, or a joke you want to tell about either of those things for us for our segment called philosophunnies.

Dr. Stroud: Sure, how about three brief ones here. One is a one-liner. One time I had a history of philosophy class and me and my buddy thought up small jokes, puns basically. What would Immanuel Kant call a cul-de-sac?

Dr. Weber: What would Immanuel Kant call a cul-de-sac?

Dr. Stroud: A dead end in itself! (laughter) This is of course a joke off of his "humans are ends in themselves, not means towards other ends".

Dr. Weber: It's not your fault I didn't preface the fact that this time around we want to explain a joke before we tell it. Immanuel Kant said that human beings should be treated as ends in themselves. Let's go ahead and explain it. For philosophy nerd that's a pretty funny one though. I like it. What's another one?

Dr. Stroud: Another one, I know Eric, you know of this.

Dr. weber: Does this one need to be explained first?

Dr. Stroud: No, no. It's just a funny story. One of the philosophers that you have studied and I have studied, and I'm sure Anthony has studied and taught on him, John Dewey, was a very pluralistic thinker, and when he moved to Columbia University in New York, he wanted to help the women's suffrage movement. The right for women to vote. So he goes down to a parade, and he's kind of the absent-minded philosopher, so someone at the parade shoves a sign in his hands and he ends up marching the parade, and it turns out, probably a block or two later, the sign said that John Dewey was carrying, "If men can vote, Why can't I?" I like to regale my students here, in rhetoric and communication studies, this is a nice student that tells us to always use intelligence coupled with passion in your elements of activism.

Dr. Weber: Always read the sign that you're holding in a crowd.

Dr. Stroud: The third humorous story I came across, I'm writing a book right now on an Indian statesman, he's an untouchable, an out-cast named Bhimrao Ambedkar. He dies in 1956, shortly after he writes the Indian constitution. It turns out he was a student of John Dewey's in 1913 at Columbia University. A fascinating story of pragmatism in India, to be told. Anyway. Ambedkar, in the 1910's and 1920's, he went back and forth from Europe to India and the U.S. to India, because he would run out of money and return. So on his way back from London after he went to Columbia University, and then the London School of Economics. On the way back, he sends his luggage, all his books, and a copy of his dissertation in one boat, and then he took the other boat. This is before United Airlines had all their...

Dr. Cashio: That is brave.

Dr. Stroud: It turns out that the first boat was torpedoed by a German U-Boat in the Mediterranean. The bad news was he lost all his books, but he also lost the only copy of his dissertation. In my research, I came across one of the most funny graduate student letters that I've ever seen. He was a graduate student at the time. He writes it "Dear Professor Seligman at Columbia. I am unable to meet the deadline for my dissertation's turn-in because it was sunk when a U-boat torpedoed the steamboat carrying it". This is a very high complexity version of the "cat ate my dissertation".

Dr. Weber: Dog ate my homework. The Germans blew up my dissertation.

Dr. Cashio: That's giving me a panic attack.

Dr. Stroud: God bless him, he sat back down and wrote a whole new dissertation out. So that's stick-to-it-ness.

Dr. Weber: Anthony we've got two here that are short. Let's add two more to this great set of jokes and stories from Scott.

Dr. Cashio: I hear that smoking is one of the leading causes of statistics.

Dr. Weber: U.S.A. Today has come out with a new survey. Apparently, three out of every four people make up 75% of the population.

Dr. Cashio: The T.V. business, as we all know, is a cruel and shallow money trench, a long, plastic highway where thieves and pimps run free and good men die like dogs. There's also a negative side. That's from Hunter S. Thompson.

(rimshot, laughter)

Dr. Cashio: Last but not least, we want to take advantage of the fact that today we have powerful social media, hopefully we are using it ethically, that allow two-way communications even for programs like radio shows. We want to invite our listeners to send us their thoughts about big questions that we raise on the show.

Dr. Weber: Given that, Scott, we'd love to hear your thoughts about what question we should ask everyone for our "You Tell Me!" segment. Have you got a question that you would propose we ask out listeners?

Dr. Stroud: One of the question that is always in my mind, and I could propose to the listeners: How do we truly strike the balance between being open to someone else's view of the world, which is often radically different to us, and holding and pushing forward our view of the world to those folks. In terms of politics, how can you truly be open to the other side? It's easy to be falsely open: "Oh yeah, I listened to them, then I found out they were evil, and I just shut the TV off." How do you truly be open and still maintain your sense of what you think is right about the world.

Dr. Weber: There is the question. I hope everybody will consider it and some of you will send us your thoughts. Thanks so much for the question, Scott.

Dr. Cashio: Thanks for listening to this episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread: food for thought about life and leadership. Your host, me, Dr. Anthony Cashio and my co-host Dr. Eric Weber, are so grateful to have been joined today by Dr. Scott Stroud. Really, thanks, Scott.

Dr. Stroud: You're welcome! It was wonderful. Thank you and SOPHIA for having me on this wonderful program.

Dr. Cashio: Great, you're welcome. Hopefully we can have you back again. We hope you listeners join us again as well. Consider sending your thought about anything that you've heard today that you would like to hear about in the future, or the specific question and questions that we have raised for you. How do you strike that balance between being open to the other side while also remaining faithful to your ideals. It's quite an issue. We would love to hear what people say about it.

Dr. Weber: I would too. Once again, you can reach us in a number of ways. We're on twitter @PhilosophyBB, which stands for Philosophy Bakes Bread. We're also on Facebook at Philosophy Bakes Bread, and check out our SOPHIA's Facebook page while you're there, Philosophers in America.

Dr. Cashio: You can of course, email us at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com, and you can also call us and leave a short, recorded message with a question or a comment that we may be able to play on the show at 859-257-1849. That's 859-257-1849. Join us next time on Philosophy Bakes Bread: food for thought about life and leadership.

[Outro music]