

Philosophy Bakes Bread, Episode Forty-Three, with Shane Courtland

The Stories of Our Day 1, Game of Thrones

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Weber: All right folks, like I warned you, this is spoiler alert that we've got some information about Game of Thrones we'll be talking about in this special episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread, episode number 43. I hope you enjoy the show.

Cashio: Hello, and welcome to Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership.

Weber: A production of the Society of Philosophers in America, a.k.a. SOPHIA. I'm Dr. Eric Thomas Weber.

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

Weber: Philosophy Bakes Bread airs on WRFL Lexington, 88.1 FM, and is distributed as a podcast next. Listeners can find us online at philosophybakesbread.com, and we hope you'll reach out to us on Twitter @philosophybb, and on Facebook at Philosophy Bakes Bread, or by email at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com.

Cashio: Last, but not least, you can leave us a short recorded message with a question, or a comment, or bountiful praise, lord knows we could use our egos stroked just a little, that we may be able to play on the show. You can reach us at 859-257-1849. That's 859-257-1849.

Hey Eric, I hear you've been a little ill. I'm sorry to hear that. I hope you're feeling better.

Weber: It's been awful. Eight days of ...

Cashio: Eww, that's no fun. What have you been doing? What have you been doing while you recover?

Weber: Well, as many Americans, I watched the latest episode of Game of Thrones, and to remember what the heck is going on, I went back and started back on season 1 and started listening, watching the old episodes, to try and remember the beginnings of some of these rivalries and such.

Cashio: That's fun. So you're all caught up on America's favorite pastime, Game of Thrones.

Weber: That's right. Spoiler alert, on this episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread, we're gonna do something a little bit different and it's gonna involve Game of Thrones. So if you're not caught up with the show, you may wanna listen to this later when it comes out as a podcast after you've caught up, all right?

Cashio: That's right. On today's show, we're doing something a little different. We're going to talk about the stories of our day. Again, spoiler warning, we're talking about Game of Thrones specifically, but we're also gonna talk about stories that have helped shape our culture, and how to think through them philosophically.

Weber: That's right. I love the show Game of Thrones, and it was really fun watching it and rewatching some things. When Anthony and I were talking about that, we thought it could make a fun episode to talk about the Game of Thrones show.

Cashio: So, we invited a friend of our show, and we're gonna call him returning guest master bread bakers Shane Courtland. Welcome back.

Courtland: Thanks for having me.

Cashio: He's gonna join us for this conversation.

Weber: That's right. When Anthony and I thought about having a guest on to talk about Game of Thrones given how much George RR Martin's world reminds us of Thomas Hobbes's ideas about the brutal aspects of human life and the state of nature, we knew we had to have Dr. Shane Courtland back on the show. He was our guest in episode 8 of the show on selfish ethics. Thanks again for joining us, Shane.

Courtland: Yeah, thanks for having me. I'm really happy to be back.

Cashio: If you haven't heard episode 8 yet, you go back and listen. It's one of our early episodes, and it's really fantastic. And to remind our listeners, Shane Courtland has earned his PhD at Tulane University and focuses on political philosophy and ethics. He has recently released a volume of essays on Hobbesian applied ethics and public policy, which just came out with Rutledge Press.

Weber: Congratulations, Shane.

Courtland: Thank you. Thank you.

Weber: Recall also that Shane was the director of the Center for Ethics in Public Policy when he was teaching at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and he's now the managing director for the Center for Free Enterprise at West Virginia University.

Courtland: Yeah.

Weber: So Shane, as you know, on this show we usually begin with a first segment that we call Know Thyself. Anyone who wants to learn more about Shane can easily do so by heading over to our website at philosophybakesbread.com and listening to episode 8, where we have that segment with him. What we thought we'd do in this episode is to have a bit of a round table discussion between Shane, Anthony, and myself to talk about the stories of our day, because this is our theme for today, that part of the concern comes from the fact that there are philosophers out there I have witnessed who have really sort of put down other philosophers who write about philosophy and pop culture.

Cashio: Well that's not nice.

Weber: No, it's not nice, right? But at the same time, if you try and think about why, say something like, "Well, we want people to be serious, and when you put philosophy out there, try not to make it frivolous," let's say, or they may not think that the philosophy involved is very rigorous, and maybe they're elitist snobs, frankly, which is the case that I'm remembering. I won't name a name. But I was pretty disappointed with the person who was being very elitist about putting down other people who were getting attention, by the way, who were getting their work in Barnes and Noble. But they're getting this Simpsons and Philosophy kind of stuff, and this person was really snobby.

I mean, I haven't done much of this pop culture and philosophy stuff myself, and yet I don't really appreciate people who would put that down. So when I thought about, with Anthony, we've talked about this, I thought about stories of our day and thinking about talking about Game of Thrones, it occurred to me that Plato was talking about Homer, the Iliad and the Odyssey, all these old stories back in his day, and which stories people would tell at the time to each other were really important and formative of society, Plato thought. It's not that we wanna agree with everything from Plato, but it seemed to him, and to me, that the stories of our day are very important and can help us to understand ourselves, help us make sense of the world, and so on. We'll ask questions about that, but this is sort of one of the guiding principles of our discussion for today.

What I thought we'd do is to invite ... We'll ask Shane to start. And we've talked about this already, so I'm not just surprising him with this. We thought we'd ask Shane, and then we'll have Anthony and myself also explain what we remember as stories of our days, the stories that were formative for us in our youths, let's say, that we remember. Shane, you wanna start us off with the story of our day that you can think of?

Courtland: Yeah, yeah. I'm gonna start off with something that's ... It's hard to say that it was actually popular. I know it'll be popular for sci fi buffs, but it was definitely something that in some sense kinda formulated how I thought good sci fi should be done, and also how I thought that philosophy could enhance our experience of storytelling and vice versa. It has to do with a movie that came from 1988. It's called They Live. It starred Rowdy Roddy Piper, which believe it or not was a pro wrestler. But it was directed by John Carpenter, so you know it's definitely got some pretty decent roots there.

The basic idea behind the story was aliens had long ago invaded America, and nobody could see them because they could blend in, and our eyes couldn't see the visual spectrum that these aliens were basically broadcasting on. Well, Rowdy Roddy Piper, who plays this character who's a wanderer, stumbles upon these glasses. When he puts the glasses on, he all of a sudden can see the visual spectrum that allows him to see the aliens amongst us. Not only does he see the aliens amongst us, he also sees basically their ability to use subliminal messages to control us as well.

Cashio: Manipulate us, yeah.

Courtland: Exactly. So various advertisements that he'd normally see as just a regular advertisement, he puts the glasses on, all of a sudden it would say a phrase like obey, or if he'd go to this thing, he'd pick up money, he'd put it on his glasses and all of a sudden the money would say I am your god. Right?

Yeah. What was cool about this, what I thought was really need, and this is what I think philosophy has always sort of done for me at least, my entertainment experience, is that it allows me to see aspects of the world and how they relate with each other that I don't think I'd normally would have been able to see had I not had this training. It's almost like every time I then get to watch something like say either Game of Thrones or whatever, because of the training I've had in philosophy, I'll often see connections that people who don't have such experience may fail or miss in a very real way, philosophy enhances my entertainment experience.

Weber: Nice.

Courtland: And They Live I think really captures that really nicely. It's like I get to put on those glasses because of my training with philosophy. Not to mention it gives a good little metaphor for Plato and the cave too as well, right?

Weber: Yeah, I was picking up on that. That's right.

Cashio: That's exactly what I was thinking.

Weber: Yeah. We've talked at Plato's cave a number of times before, but what's a 30 second refresher. Anthony, what was-

Courtland: To connect Plato's cave-

Cashio: Thirty-second refresher with Plato's cave. [inaudible 00:09:44] You're in a cave and you don't really know when you're in a cave, and someone escapes, and they get out, and they were able to see the truth about their world. To connect this back to was it They Live, Rowdy Roddy Piper's glasses are like coming out of the cave and seeing the truth about the world in which they live, the manipulations about it. That good? 30 seconds?

Weber: Very good. And so when he comes back into the cave, he sees how all the people watching the shadows on the wall are being manipulated, right?

Courtland: Yep. There you go. That was very nice, Anthony. Thank you.

Weber: Yeah, I kinda threw that one at you all of a sudden. Surprise.

Cashio: Have you ever seen the Rejects documentary? The Pervert's Guide to Ideology?

Weber: No.

Courtland: Hm mm.

Cashio: He opens with a long, he makes his long philosophical argument based around They Live, and he used that to talk about ideology. It's really, it's pretty fun. He goes from there to A Clockwork Orange, I believe.

Courtland: How about you, Anthony, the stories of our day?

Cashio: Oh boy. You asked me this, and I was thinking about it, and I was thinking sometimes there's movies that you only see once or twice that have such tremendous effect on us. You don't realize it until later. There's a classic children's fantasy movie, and I was just showing it to my kids recently, which maybe I was thinking about it. The Never Ending Story.

Courtland: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Weber: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Cashio: Do you remember this? The story about how nothingness, that's literally the bad guy in this movie. Nothingness is just consuming the world. It's this story about a young man's fight against nihilism, and then his horse dies of sadness.

Weber: I don't remember this. I need to watch it again.

Courtland: The horse comes back. The horse comes back, though, doesn't he?

Cashio: The horse comes back. Because he learns the power of naming things. You know, I realized, I was watching it with my children recently, and I was like I think maybe this was why I got into philosophy. This movie, about the need to search for meaning and put meaning in the world, because if you don't, it's gonna get consumed by this great nothingness that is always on the edge of our stories, eating everything up, and our stories are so important because they help us give meaning and focus and purpose to our world, and we might get a luck dragon that can fly it around. It's really ... Stories are good.

Courtland: Wow.

Weber: You guys have just picked my movie night movies for the next couple of ... You know.

Cashio: The Never Ending Story is great. I might show it to my kids again tonight. We'll see.

Weber: That sounds awesome.

Cashio: That's one of my favorites. What about you Eric? You've been quiet. You've been asking all the questions. What's something about you that jumps out?

Weber: I actually have two examples. I'll try and be quick about them. One is about how actually ... Both these stories you're telling seem like really good and important stories that reveal things, and help us to muddle through problems. But one of the stories I remember from being a kid was watching the Dukes of Hazzard. That's an interesting show because when I was a kid, I had a little car that had a General Lee flag on the top of it, and I didn't know anything but that it was fun to drive around and leap over bumps. The important thing I've learned in time is how much that storytelling was trying to whitewash history and to reinvent southern pride, and never talk about the white supremacy involved, the history of pride in fighting against the north, and in terms of, in so many states being explicit about fighting for the defense of slavery. It was just one of these stories which made all these kinds of people proud and happy to think about that rebel flag that I know so much more about now than when I was a kid.

There's a story about danger from the stories that we tell that can paper over the harshness of our history.

The other story I wanted to mention is the Star Trek story, which is very different. It's a fantasy world, thinking about future perfection where there's no more economic or material need anymore. So what do people occupy themselves with in the future? The idea that they explain is this either selflessness or this self cultivation of your own virtues and character that you do, not because you wanna acquire wealth as a motive, but because you wanna get better and know more and be a better person. That's sort of beautiful in a way, and it's kinda naïve in many ways, but it's also was one of the stories of my youth that made me love thinking about science and the value of tolerance, as well as the challenge of non interference, which is a recurring theme in that story.

Those are a couple of the important stories. One of them worrisome, that makes us ignore important aspects of our history all in the name of pride for our history, and the other one is this escapism, thinking about a future that may never really come, but that's kinda fun to think about.

Cashio: You don't think it might be worth struggling toward the utopian future like the one we see in Star Trek, even if it's something that we can't necessarily achieve?

Weber: Well, there's certainly aspects of it that I wanna embody, the love of science and striving for tolerance and being careful about non interference where we shouldn't interfere. I think those are things we should in fact keep working on. The notion of somehow eliminating economic want is a pretty idea and it'd be lovely in a sense maybe if we achieve that. It sounds pretty foreign in a way.

But I don't know. Yeah, aspiring towards good is a good thing. As the saying goes, be careful what you wish for, right?

Courtland: Yeah.

Weber: Well, in any event, thanks everybody for listening to this first segment, a playful one, as you may be able to tell, of Philosophy Bakes Bread. We've been talking with Shane Courtland and Anthony Cashio and myself, Eric Weber, on Philosophy Bakes Bread. We'll be back after a short break.

Cashio: Welcome back everyone to Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Anthony Cashio and Eric Weber, and we're chatting today with our guest, Shane Courtland, about stories of our day, and about specifically Game of Thrones, and various philosophical ideas and things that we can find in that TV show. I think we should obviously stick to the TV show, not the book.

Weber: Yeah.

Cashio: So there's a spoiler warning reminder.

Weber: Yes, yes. Spoiler alert. If you're not caught up on the show, we're gonna mention this in each segment, spoiler alert.

Cashio: Not gonna be do a whole lot, but on the ethics of spoiler warnings.

Weber: That's right. That's right. You can catch up on this episode when it comes out in the podcast if you want, but for anyone listening on the radio, spoiler alert, we're talking about Game of Thrones.

Cashio: All right. Shane. Last time we had you on, you were here talking about Hobbesian ethics and philosophy, and one of the reasons we were like, "Hey, Shane would be great for this episode," is because there's heavy, at least Eric and I saw, Hobbesian elements and themes in Game of Thrones, and I wonder if you could give us a quick refresher course on the Hobbesian view of human nature and maybe how you see it playing out in Game of Thrones, or maybe we're wrong, which is always more interesting anyway.

Courtland: Well, Hobbesian human nature is predominantly self interested. They are largely concerned about surviving, so there is this phobia associated with death. It is possible, of course, to overcome your fear of death, but it's rare, very rare. By and large, the goal is, is that realizing that other individuals around you who are also self interested, they tend to try to predict the future, they realize that at times you may try to attack them, so they attack and advance, and this leads and spirals out of control into chaos.

So we have what's often referred to as the Hobbesian state of nature, and this is largely driven because people are concerned about their own safety. It can often also come right after a destabilizing force happens within the commonwealth or the government. So we get this sort of thing that Hobbes is very concerned about, and that's namely civil war, and when civil war breaks out, then we basically are no longer living in a civil state, we are living where we constantly have to worry about our lives being taken from us. Because of this, we often act in a self interested and very dangerous manner that ends up putting pretty much everyone around us at risk, and we end up fearing everybody, and everybody ends up fearing us, and it's nasty, brutish, and short, basically, our life.

Cashio: Right. So the way out of this is to have a nice, strong leader who can save us from our fear and the danger of others.

Courtland: Preferably with three dragons, yeah.

Weber: Would he make us great again?

Courtland: Well, not necessarily that. I wouldn't necessarily think Donald Trump is a competent sovereign, for a number of different reasons, but I won't go too political.

Weber: Yeah.

Cashio: What about Cersei Lannister, right? She seems pretty good.

Courtland: She does, she does. Cersei-

Weber: Good in what sense?

Courtland: Well, good in the sense ... Put it this way. She's good in the sense that she understands that things need to get done, and she's willing to take certain measures in order to retain power in her sovereignty. Hobbes's biggest concern a lot of the times is that sovereigns would concede too much to various interest groups, and when they do so, they would undermine the powers that they needed to remain as sovereign. You can see that Cersei is not willing to do that, which is something I think Hobbes would like.

Ultimately there was a religious group, especially last season, trying to take power, and trying to undermine sovereignty within basically the iron throne. And Cersei's response was to destroy them.

Cashio: Blew them all up.

Courtland: Blew them all up, right? Where-

Cashio: Including her daughter in law.

Courtland: Yeah. No, but she did that in a way, and it preserved the sovereignty. Now Hobbes, for example, was incredibly happy with Henry VIII. The reason he was so happy with Henry VIII is his breaking away from the catholic church. He thought it was a big error to have basically two different seats of sovereignty, one being ecclesiastical and the other one being civil.

So Henry VIII makes this great move and puts them all under one house. There's only one sovereign, period. So in a certain sense, Cersei I think makes a similar good move in this regard. You have another group trying to take sovereignty in an ecclesiastical sort of way. Cersei says no, there's only one sovereign here, and I sit on its throne.

Weber: And in fact, one of her biggest problems in the whole series that we can point to is exactly when effectively the clergy, or whatever you wanna call these guys, took over King's Landing, and then she was subject to their power and had to do this awful walk of shame and whatever you call that. Even though she's someone who fights in a way for the vision you're talking about that we get from Hobbes, even she succumbed to that kind of problem temporarily before she kills them all.

Courtland: Yep.

Weber: I got a question for you, Shane, though, because we got a big distinction that we could make between say the Cersei Lannister person, who embodies this vision you're presenting us,

or explaining about Hobbes, and then we've got the Daenerys Targaryen character, who is clearly rising to power. She's certainly threatening and has killed lots of people, and on the other hand she seems to appeal to people's interests in ways that might not sound Hobbesian, wanting to free slaves, for instance. Is that Hobbesian or is that anti Hobbesian? It's certainly different from Cersei Lannister anyway, it seems. Right? So how do we interpret that difference because if I had to pick between the two and I were a slave, you're darn right I want the Targaryen.

Courtland: Well, a couple things I wanna say in this regard. First, you can easily have Hobbesian arguments saying that slavery is dangerous. And you see this within Hobbes. Hobbes's arguments often presuppose that we acknowledge each other's equality. The reason why it was important that we acknowledge each other's equality is that if we don't, those people who we view as our inferiors will want to kill us, right? And you see this right away with Daenerys, when she's breaking the wheel, as she would say, and trying to liberate these slaves. The slavers right away go to kill the masters.

It's basically like building your house on a powder keg with slavery. You may be able to temporarily live along with slavery. But down at its core, you have this thing ready to explode and tear everything down, and that's namely slavery. It's not a stable thing to do. In a certain sense, Daenerys is a better sovereign by not endorsing slavery for the long term.

Cashio: Do you think Daenerys is doing it because she realizes it won't last for the long term, or because she doesn't like slavery-

Courtland: It's hard to say.

Cashio: ... and thinks that it is an inhuman [inaudible 00:22:29]. It is hard to say.

Courtland: It's hard to say, because ... Well, especially because some of her discussions with Tyrion, her hand, basically go back and forth on this, and he reminds her that she's been trying to break the wheel and end slavery, and then again she seems like she's slipping back into the mad king, which was her father position. Part of this, I think, she's coming to realize, is that once you have power like this, and you have to do all these things to maintain power, you're gonna have what's usually referred to as dirty hands. You're gonna have to do things that you consider to be immoral in order to maintain power and bring forth the better consequences.

Cashio: Right. Daenerys has the ... She's got her dragons, which are basically the weapons of mass destruction. The question is, why can't I just go nuke everyone? They're my enemies.

Courtland: Exactly.

Cashio: So you've got that tension with how do the means inform the end. If I want a good kingdom that ends where the people love me and, what was it, break the wheel, I really like that term, then I can't use the dragons. Can't use these weapons of mass destruction in this cruel way.

Courtland: Yeah.

Cashio: ... wise about it.

Weber: Well, and yet of course, the way that would be so effective at her ends. One of the fascinating things about that character, of course, is that on the one hand she wants to free the slaves, which sort of bucks the notion of class and caste and so on, and yet she really wants to say that that chair is mine to rule by birthright, which is a total contradiction with this notion that we're all somehow equal. Does that make sense?

Courtland: But it necessarily has to be in a Hobbesian light. In a Hobbesian light, though, it has to be. In a certain sense-

Weber: What has to be what?

Courtland: There has to be a rejection of equality on behalf of the sovereign. Here's an interesting way to look at it.

Weber: Aha.

Cashio: Interesting.

Courtland: What gets us into trouble in the state of nature for Hobbes is that we're all equals, and we can equally kill each other. Ultimately, the way that we get out of that is by putting somebody up on a pedestal. When you put that person up on a pedestal, and they all of a sudden have unequal power and they can dominate, they then can put everybody else in check, and to stop things like prisoner's dilemmas and so forth.

To get out of the state of nature for Hobbes is to have somebody lose their equality, mainly the sovereign. And it says-

Weber: Shane.

Courtland: Yep, go ahead.

Weber: What's a prisoner's dilemma.

Cashio: Oh boy.

Courtland: Okay. All right. This is a can of worms, but I'll see if I can do it really quick.

Cashio: Good luck.

Courtland: Yeah. A prisoner's-

Weber: One minute.

Courtland: Okay. A prisoner's dilemma is, say you have two people coming in, both accused of a crime, they're offered a deal. The deal essentially is if you defect and cheat on the person who came in with you, you basically tattle on them and confess on them and they go away, you then will stay out of prison immediately, you'll go free, that other person will go to prison for say, I don't know, 10 years. If, on the other hand, you stay silent and the other person confesses against you, you then will go to prison for 10 years and they'll go free. If you both confess on

each other, you both go to prison for five years. If you both stay silent, you both basically stay in for about a year, because they don't really have much to hold you, so you eventually go.

The trick with this is, is that you both have incentive to defect. You both have incentive to cheat on the other. This stops cooperation. You find that it's in your self interest to defect and cheat on somebody else. That's the nugget behind the prisoner's dilemma really quickly.

To get it in a Hobbesian context, I could just assume that everyone around me wants peace, and wants to live with me in perfect harmony. But every once in a while, there might be this one person that is just a flat out psychopath and wants to kill me.

The question is-

Cashio: [crosstalk 00:26:22]

Courtland: Exactly. The question is, when I bump into a stranger, what should I presuppose? Should I presuppose they're gonna hurt me or they're gonna kill me, like a psychopath? Now here's the thing. If they kill me, I'm dead. Right? So what I should do, according to this sort of logic, is that I should presuppose that they probably wanna hurt me, because I can't take my death back. I'm pretty much done otherwise. So I might wanna then attack them first, just to ensure that they don't sneak up behind me. So I preemptively strike. I kill them.

Now, notice this other person also is in the same sort of dilemma. I could be a psychopath, they don't know, they're just bumping into me in the woods. What they may wanna do then is they may either pretend that I'm peace loving in harmony, but then of course that puts them at risk that I could hurt them. Or they could worry that I'm also the psychopath, and they may try to kill me and do a preemptive strike.

But then notice, we both may not be psychopaths. We both maybe actually generally caring, nice people. But we may both be attacking in advance in order to avoid this nasty outcome of getting killed.

A good thing for me to point to, I think the best way, would be pointing to another popular culture thing, and that would be The Walking Dead. In The Walking Dead, you often see people stuck in a situation where they don't know the intentions of people that they meet in a post apocalyptic world. They don't know. They may be trying to kill them, they may be doing whatever. If they presuppose they're nice, odds are you're gonna be made a victim. There's a good chance.

If on the other hand you presuppose they're not nice, at the very least you'll be able to defend yourself, but you may end up killing innocent individuals in the process too.

Cashio: All right. Well, you kind of showed, Shane, why he people playing the Game of Thrones are so quick to attack each other, murder each other. They're kinda playing their own version of this dilemma. But also, I think it leads to, sort of shows the fragility of the balance between authority and the rule of law. At least in Westeros, we have this political system that, you can plunge a kingdom into chaos with just one poorly planned wedding party. Are there any important lessons we can take from this show when we're thinking about authority and law? I mean, personally, I think well, isn't it great that we have representational government with term limits? Every time I watch, I'm like ... We think we solved our game. We just got rid of it.

Courtland: Yeah. One of the things that I think is a reoccurring theme, at least within Game of Thrones, is that one of the things that breeds revolution is more revolutions. What you will find is people wanting to cast off tyranny, say with the mad king. Jaime Lannister then kills the king. It starts off a sort of movement. All of a sudden people are like, oh well great, I guess it's okay to kill kings now when you disagree with their rule.

Then we start getting people disagreeing with kings and it sets off a civil war. This is exactly what Hobbes was worried about, was that people reject civil society because they hope to have something better. And it's this sort of ... And this is one of the reasons he's a conservative figure, is that people are so preoccupied with utopia, and get so miffed with any sort of claim to tyranny that they're willing to cast into doubt the whole system of civil society and bring forth civil wars like this, which they're not necessarily better off for.

Don't get me wrong, this isn't a justification for tyranny. Hobbes is against that as well. I'm not saying it's great to have people like the mad king. But it's usually people when they cast off people like the mad king and not thinking about the future that leads to constant revolutions and constant civil wars.

Weber: Ah, hence the crucial importance of the question of what happens next if Daenerys becomes the queen, right?

Courtland: Yeah. Yeah. Next people are gonna cast off her yoke, just like the cast off everyone else's yoke.

Cashio: Yep.

Weber: That's right. Very interesting. Well, we're gonna come back after a short break. Talking with Shane Courtland and Anthony Cashio and myself, Eric Weber, on Philosophy Bakes Bread in a special, weird episode in which we're thinking about Game of Thrones. I hope you enjoy talking with us about the stories of our day after a short break.

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Cashio: Welcome back, everyone, to Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Anthony Cashio and Eric Weber. On today we're having a very special episode with a very special guest. Shane Courtland is joining Eric and I to chat about Game of Thrones and the stories of our day and philosophical themes in there. In the last segment we talked about Game of Thrones and fragility of authority and Thomas Hobbesian visions of human nature. In this segment we're gonna talk a little bit more about the role of escapism when we come to think about stories that we tell and enjoy every day.

Weber: That's right. Shane, one thing that's interesting about shows like Game of Thrones that feature dragons, crazy ideas like totally fake and fantasy-

Courtland: What?

Weber: ... Is that we can ... Is that we can sort of-

Courtland: They're fake.

Cashio: Undead ice dragons? I don't know.

Courtland: Yeah. I'm from the north. We see those all the time.

Weber: Oh, I see, I see, I see. But my point is that there's something of an escape that's interesting. On the one hand, it's nice to have a little relief from reading the terrible news of our day, and then watch some obviously bad guys get defeated. That sounds nice, and since it's fun anyway. On the other hand, there's sort of a burying your head in the sand when we engage in too much escapism. We kind of ignore the real world. There's a number of themes that I want us to talk about in this segment, and I'm gonna open with a question. But let me lay out a few of the themes.

One is that an enemy that's obviously evil, in things like orcs, let's say, of the Lord of the Rings series. Or in this case the obviously evil dead things from the north that are coming to kill us.

Cashio: The night king.

Weber: Right, exactly. And yet there's also good guys, as they say, in a show like this or a story like this, like Frodo Baggins and so forth. And yet the good guys really don't seem so good is part of the problem, and an interesting matter. And in a sense, people are so awful, you wonder a little bit whether people are worth saving in this story.

Last but not least, there's this threat from the north that's this obvious evil, and yet people doubt and disbelieve it, but maybe we need it to bring everybody together. Like the way people doubt climate change, and to address it we need to address it together anyway. I'm throwing together a number of themes at you that involve escapism. And yet there's sort of a reality, there's a realism to this show, where the good guy gets slaughtered in the first season, this really good person.

My big opening question for all of us, as a round table discussion, is the question is Game of Thrones an escape? And a follow up on that is why is it so compelling?

Courtland: Well, I think if anything it does mimic real life in the sense that you can't predict which characters will die. In the stereotypical entertainment fashion that you'll have, especially with any sort of serialized story, you can usually expect certain characters are gonna be there throughout. What's particular about Game of Thrones, and sometimes you also see this with The Walking Dead as well, is that they will throw main characters under the bus. They will die. And these will be characters that are virtuous, characters that you think good things should happen.

You always think about fairy tale endings, and usually in fairy tale endings, the good guy wins, bad guy loses, full stop.

Weber: Right.

Courtland: If you're virtuous you're gonna come through fine, if you're a dastardly villain you're gonna get ... It's gonna be horrible for you at the end, you're gonna get what's coming to you.

The cool thing about this is that it mimics life where it's not necessarily the case at all, where you can have heroes meet tragic ends, and you can have villains end up not getting what's coming to them and actually make out pretty good.

Cashio: Sometimes the bad guy wins.

Courtland: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah. And I think it's an important thing about life. Because if you all of a sudden are thinking that life is like entertainment where it's traditionally done, which being good always means that you will receive good ultimately, or believe in the weird notion of karma, prepare to fill your Zoloft prescription. It's gonna be depressing. Because that's not necessarily how life works.

Cashio: Unless you're Jon Snow, and then you're good to go.

Courtland: Yeah, well. If you can be risen from the dead, a lot of things go better.

Weber: It's not so much of an escape. The question is, why is this compelling, if it's gonna make us go refill our-

Cashio: I think it's compelling for the same reason that Shane was pointing out, the complexity of the characters. I'm actually a be kinda disappointed if - oh, what's the bad guy - the night king, who we don't find out, there actually are some pretty compelling reasons that he might not actually be as evil as we think. It would not surprise me at all in the end if we're like oh, the night king is Westeros's retribution and he sort of ... I don't know. I honestly have no idea where the story's going, but it wouldn't seem to be consistent with the rest of the show if it was just one clear evil person.

Weber: Yeah, right.

Courtland: No comic book villains.

Weber: Yeah, no comic book villains.

Cashio: No comic book villains. I'm curious to see, and I think that's what's compelling, at least part of it. And plus, the writing's good.

Weber: This leads actually to a second question I wanna ask, which is what does the show say about morality, other than that the good guys finish last, or are beheaded first?

Courtland: Well, it says that living is a complicated thing, and that if you wanna go out into the world and have a small subset of rules that you follow, invariably, you will die and die quickly. If you notice, a lot of these ...

Well, but that's the thing. The world is a complicated, gray place. You find a lot of these characters within Game of Thrones, where they'll go out there and they'll have this naïve understanding about what good people are supposed to do.

Weber: Right.

Courtland: And they just get slaughtered. Where the people who end up staying around have a slightly more Machiavellian mindset, where they're much more nuanced. Yeah, go ahead.

Cashio: I was gonna say, what's the mercenary's name? Is it Bronn?

Courtland: Yeah, Bronn.

Cashio: He works with Jaime. He's one of my favorite characters for just this reason. He's just like, "I'm just in it for the money." It's like, he's the one who's gonna make it through the whole thing, because doesn't really pick sides.

Weber: Sorry Shane, you brought up the word Machiavellian. For listeners who aren't familiar with Machiavellian, between 30 seconds and a minute, what's Machiavellian?

Courtland: Sort of a country cousin to my Hobbesian views, yeah. Machiavellian, when it's used in this context - and it's not exactly accurate, the way that it's used, because Machiavelli was a complicated figure within political history. But it's usually used in this notion of referring to Machiavelli's *The Prince*. It was basically this political treatise about how to keep and maintain power. It was largely about using self interest and checking morality and putting it to the side.

Again, like I say, this is sort of a caricature of Machiavelli as a person, because he's a much more complicated individual, and Machiavelli, you know, it's rumored that he wrote this specifically in order to win favor with a particular ruler at the time. But regardless, when you hear somebody saying Machiavellian, it's usually in the context of his work, *The Prince*, and it means to use this sort of ruthless self interest to maintain power.

Cashio: I always imagined Little Finger as the main Machiavellian character.

Courtland: Petyr Baelish. Yeah, Petyr Baelish is a good example of a Machiavellian figure. Tyrion's a good example too. You hear Tyrion, especially when he gives advice as the hand of the king, it's very Machiavellian, it's all about what do you do to maintain your power, and what's the best thing to ...

Weber: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Cashio: I'd like to remind people that Machiavelli, even in *The Prince*, noted that while it's hardest to gain power as a virtuous person, it's easiest to maintain once you've got it as a virtuous person. Because people want you to be in power because you're doing good for everybody.

Weber: Yeah.

Courtland: Yep. But when it comes to being feared or loved, be feared. That's one of the scarier things to a lot of these sort of people, because most people are always, they give this sort of, again, slightly naïve view, be loved, be loved, be loved, and no, it's fear that Machiavelli goes with. That's more reliable to him.

Weber: Right. Kinda like if you wanna win an election, talk about foreigners and threats and rapists and so on, rather than about what kinda good you're gonna do for people.

Cashio: No, well.

Courtland: A lot of it's about power, so that's why Daenerys has those dragons. In one sense, if you look on the love side she's breaking the wheel. And how much of that's gonna actually get her power? It turns out, it's the dragons that are gonna do it, as far as we can tell. So if we're doing the Machiavellian line here, what Daenerys gets most help with are in fact the dragons because people are afraid of the dragons. Now, they'll love her for a little bit because she's breaking the wheel, but it's not clear at all if that's gonna gain her victory, at least on the Machiavellian side. It's this power, and people should be afraid of you because of this power, that according to Machiavellian insight, is the thing that's gonna keep you in power, maybe even end up getting you power.

This is the other thing though. You don't wanna go too far for Machiavellian. You don't wanna be hated. It's just to be feared, but not hated, because if you're hated, people will be irrational, and they'd be fine with themselves dying in order to get you out of power. But it's just to be feared. And that's why you get some of the council to her to ignore sometimes what Tyrion is saying and just be the dragon.

Weber: No, that's right. That was a good line. Be the dragon.

Cashio: So what do you guys think? Game of Thrones, you know, we're recording this, and what is it, the last episode of the sixth season is about to be on, then they're gonna wrap it up next season. How are they gonna end this? Is there a way that you guys can see it resolving all the major problems while still staying true to this brutal, complicated world that the story presents? How could they possibly end it all?

Courtland: The thing that I think would be awesome if they could do it, but I don't know if the author has the courage to do it this way. I wanna have a nobody character take the iron throne, and have all the major characters die or lose out.

Cashio: Gendry.

Courtland: Yeah, no, not even that. I mean something, seriously, like even a bit person, somebody really, really small. And the reason being is, it would give this whole drama that's been taking place never led to anybody being on the iron throne of importance. I think that would be this huge shocker. Because everybody's thinking this is gonna end in a storybook fashion, Daenerys is gonna take it, maybe Jon will be king, this would be huge, or maybe Cersei is able to stop it, but the struggle will be worth it. But this to be the sort of weird, existentialist take on it is if really nothing happened, just some guy took it, or some gal, or whatever, and it was a nobody, and all these major characters just died. Lots of death for no reason.

Cashio: Yeah.

Weber: That's one interesting possible turn. There's all kinds of theories on the internet. I'm not gonna claim this idea's original. But one way of thinking about this could suggest that someone like Jon Snow is this person who's been chosen by people, who didn't just seize anything. Wasn't he effectively elected to be a leader on the wall?

Courtland: By the lords. Yeah, by the lords.

Weber: Well, but then I didn't say popular election. I just said he was elected by people as their representative.

Cashio: The show ends with the birth of democracy. That'd be a fun twist.

Weber: Well, but this is ... Yeah, this is one theory out there says. And Daenerys, as a push these two together, she's freeing people, and then he's getting chosen by whichever body is doing the choosing, sure, but other people are choosing him. So there is a possible thread of democracy coming, especially because of a unifying threat.

The notion of the truth to the story to date, if anything, I think it's something about the world being so weary of all these people trying to get power, just for the same reason why Shane would love it if it turned out that a nobody ended up in the throne. All these selfish idiots came to naught in their efforts. There'd be something to that if someone like Jon Snow maybe weren't put on the iron throne, but actually decided to melt it down.

Courtland: Hmm. What I do find also interesting too, is this weird - and this is actually from people from watch Game of Thrones - this weird treatment of incest. Jaime and Cersei. Everybody views this, and everybody even within the realm, look at this, and this is an aberration. This is normal. There's an incest taboo that's cross cultural, most people have this, and so forth. But something weird happens, and I've even noticed in the classes that I've taught well when we discussed this, when I talk about Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen getting together ...

Cashio: She's his aunt.

Courtland: Yeah. Yeah, and then all of a sudden the incest taboo disappears for people. It's the weirdest sort of thing, where all of a sudden they don't feel it here with the good guys, supposedly, but the bad guys, yeah, incest is clearly bad. But with the good guys, they're like well, it'd be great if they got together.

Weber: That's funny. That's funny.

Courtland: It's the oddest sort of asymmetry.

Weber: Well, I think part of it, when you think about siblings, is you have this relationship with someone, and in a sense it's more than biological, it's also a familial relation. These two people may actually be blood related, but they didn't have anything like a knowledge of each other kind of thing, and so on.

Cashio: In fairness to the show, the two characters don't know that they're related. So maybe that helps a little bit.

Courtland: No, true. Absolutely true.

[crosstalk 00:45:44]

Weber: I'm not saying it's not weird. It is still gross. I'm just trying to suggest ways in which I can see how people would think a little differently about it, not to say that one is good and the other one's not good. But I wanna ask Anthony what you think about the potential resolution question that you asked. Do you think there's a way to hold true to the brutality of the world we're presented, and yet resolve some of these major problems? What do you think?

Cashio: No. No, I think it's gotta go kinda the way you guys are pointing. Well, if we're gonna keep with the themes, you know, the commoners are tired, and they get stepped on all the time. There was an episode, I think it was this season, where there are some soldiers sitting around talking, and one of them is having, a child's being born, and someone says, "Do you want a boy or girl?" And he says, "I really hope it's a girl, a daughter who can stay home and help take care of me. If it's a son, he's just gonna have to go off and die in someone else's war." And so-

Weber: Ooh, yeah.

Cashio: I see it going maybe the way Shane and you were pointing. Oh, I like the idea of a dragon coming down, they melt the iron throne.

Weber: The throne.

Cashio: And then maybe [crosstalk 00:46:49]

Weber: Or just put some idiot on it.

Well, everybody, we've enjoyed another - I don't know if you have - but we've enjoyed another segment of Philosophy Bakes Bread, talking about the stories of our day on the Game of Thrones with Shane Courtland, Anthony Cashio, and myself, Eric Weber. We'll be back after a short break.

Cashio: Welcome back to Philosophy Bakes Bread. I'm Anthony Cashio, and I'm here today with Eric Weber and Shane Courtland, and we're recording a very special episode talking about Game of Thrones and philosophy and the stories of our day and how we think about the philosophical themes of life and living through the stories we tell each other.

We're gonna end this last segment with some final big picture questions, as well as some light hearted thoughts, and anyway, the pressing philosophical question, maybe, might think I probably have a few for our listeners this time, as well as info about how to get ahold of us with your comments, questions, and criticisms, and praise. We'll go with that too. How about that?

Weber: And bountiful praise. We like it ...

... exactly right. So Shane, one of the big picture questions worth thinking about, it seemed, to all of us as we were discussing this earlier, is the question of whether or not sometimes stories might be more capable of conveying truths than arguments and just prose. Is that right, or ... I mean, people who love literature like to say nice things about literature in this way, but it is true? Are stories somehow more powerful than arguments?

Courtland: I think they are to an extent. Obviously and I would argue, and this is probably because of my philosophical training, that arguments are much more strict and rigorous than a

story would ever be. But there's a reason why stories can actually be quite good, at least in conveying philosophical ideas. Part of the reason is I think that when an argument comes to you, you already are there, kind of like a sentry at the gate. You're ready to defend your cherished view against this argument. Right away, your defenses are up, and you're ready to go, and it's harder for you to receive, or at least put yourself in the perspective of the other when that argument's coming at you.

What's cool with a story, especially if it's an entertaining story, is that it's so good at disarming you and allowing you to put yourself into the perspective of others. But it gives you a different perspective really quick.

That being said, like I said, it's not as rigorous as an argument, so I wouldn't necessarily say you should just forsake arguments and go straight to stories, but stories are this way that it's almost like mainlining ideas that you normally can't get, or at least it's harder for you to receive via argument, because it circumvents your defenses so nicely. So I-

Weber: I definitely think there's something to that. I will say that there can be a danger sometimes that I've witnessed, where the thing about a story is you can make what you want of it. You know what I mean? You can have your interpretation, I can have my interpretation, and basically none of us can agree at all.

A great example of this is frankly how you can have radically different points of view, let's say politically or otherwise, on the basis of even the same passages of scripture, you know? Or people will take from a story what they wanna take from the story, and other people will see other things in a sense, so in one way at least, you can kind of ... Part of the problem I think Plato had when he was worried about the poets in *The Republic* and didn't want them in there, because they may mislead everyone, is this sort of thing, where people will get, I don't know, maybe not the right message. You know? And ... Go ahead.

Cashio: Can you say a little bit more about the poets are not in where? We didn't mention that. Let me ask you-

Weber: Yes, thank you for that. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates is talking about the ideal city, and he's thinking about how to raise virtuous citizens for the next generation who will then lead this ideal society. One of the things he was really worried about was the poets and the artists out there who might sort of inflame your emotions and lead you to act in ways that are maybe contrary to what wisdom and justice and so forth may suggest. A great example of that today that makes it very practical is when you hear, let's say, politicians complaining about rappers and rock musicians, who are making drugs seem cool, or prostitution seem cool. These kinds of themes aren't just way back in Plato. They're still going on today. But yeah, so-

Cashio: They recognize as a kind of double bond. We tell our kids we want you to grow up to be virtuous and good and honest and be peaceful, and go off and watch this TV show where there's tons of violence, or go off and listen to this music that's misogynistic. We are giving double messages, and then we're surprise when our children grow up acting one way, and it's the opposite of the way we told them to act with our mouths, but showed them how to act with the media they interacted with.

Weber: That's right. I do wanna come back to what Shane said, though. Because I think there's something profoundly right about it, nonetheless, even though we can have this problem if we're

not guiding or being careful about our literature. There's a wonderful essay by Richard Rorty, American philosopher, who wrote about human rights, rationality, and sentimentality. He was talking about how people come to dehumanize others when they commit violations of human rights. He thinks that a huge part of the problem is people lack a good sentimental education that lets you see what life is like from someone else's perspective. That's what Shane was getting at in the story where you're disarmed because you're hearing the story from someone's perspective and it ain't yours. But it's sorta like you're going through that experience in that person's shoes in a way.

So literature can be this incredibly powerful force for morality, but at the same time it can do these other things, like have every which person have their own damn interpretation, and nobody gets along, and then we kill each other over our different religious scripture passages that we like differently.

So how do we reconcile these challenges, Shane and Anthony?

Courtland: One thing is to realize that none of these genres is the full picture, and that they all participate, to a certain extent, to the human's experience. I say that as a philosopher who generally participates in one of these mediums more so than the other. I generally spend professionally much more of my time with argument than I do necessarily with entertainment, although entertainment, like stories, I do find enjoyable, hence entertainment.

But the thing about it is is that I realized that what makes me a person is not just the argumentative side, the rigorous stuff and so forth, but it's also me trying to put myself in other people's perspectives, me trying to be empathetic with them as well. All of this comes together. You become ... I think you start making mistakes once you view this through one lens and one lens only.

If I were to say there's only one true genre to get to the truth of the human condition, and that's philosophical argument, I'm gonna run into problems, I'm gonna have a very myopic view of the world and of other humans. If I do the same thing with stories, the only way that you can find out what it is like to be human is strictly this, again, I'm cutting off some pretty important parts.

Weber: Right. Agreed.

Cashio: Very good. To bring it back to Game of Thrones for just half a second, we've been talking about the TV show, but if you've ever read the book it's written from different people's points of view, so you have all these different historical things happening and all the different characters relating to it, and it's actually even more complicated than the TV show, because you understand that this person's not evil at all, they're just doing what they've always been taught and acting as they always have.

Weber: One thing, I think, if we didn't talk about would be a mistake, is the fact that something that Game of Thrones is not very helpful for at least, or at least I don't see it yet, maybe listeners or you guys will correct me, is that it seems as though the show is not very good at all at thinking about and helping us deal with racial tensions in places like America. I bring this up because there are so few characters who are African American, for instance. The one black man we first meet is living in [Carth 00:55:22], and he calls himself the wealthiest man and has nothing in his vault, and he's just this liar, and is shown to be kind of sad in a way.

The next black male character we get, if I'm not mistaken ... Well, I mean, the big long term character, not the pirate guy, but the head of the unsullied forces, is literally castrated. The two black men we get are not exactly presented as terribly strong characters of any great ... Well, I mean, I guess the latter has a lot of worth as the leader of the military. But still, it's really a damaged human being.

And then there's an African American woman character, and she's this former slave and so on, and has this really ... She's interesting, but I just, we're three white males, and we need to acknowledge it, and pay attention to the fact that this show may not be doing much for us on the level. What do you guys think?

Courtland: First of all, I'm a little concerned when people try to force this issue on shows that seem to be disconnected, like a fantasy show like this. We have no understanding of what these races are in regards to Westeros, and you may be asking too much of a fantasy show to do this. I mean, imagine if we did the same thing with Tolkien, and we went back to Lord of the Rings, and we have orcs, we have dwarves, we have and whatnot. It's hard to try to read into a fantasy world directly onto the condition that we're going through in the current United States with specifically our take on race.

That being said, I don't think Game of Thrones is doing so bad, but again it's hard for me to pick out racial lines, like the Dothraki, although they can be kind of brutish, to a certain sense, are great warriors that are ultimately doing quite good and have their own virtues. And I wanna say their own virtues, I say virtues of their particular society that seemed actually pretty good, of honor, of respecting specifically women and specifically [inaudible 00:57:18]. I mean, not all women, but that's their particular society. So I don't-

Weber: And not necessarily in western ways, but.

Courtland: Yes, exactly. Exactly, but-

Cashio: That's the point, I think. That's the point.

Courtland: I don't think it's ... Yeah. I mean, they try to prevent some sort of diversity there, but I think it's an unfair burden to task a fantasy based show with trying to check all these boxes, in particular about a box that may not fit with this alternate world, namely a box having to do with race in our current world.

Weber: Well, there is at least a moment in which, what's her name, Missandei, isn't it, or something like that?

Courtland: Yep.

Weber: Brings up the issue of enslavement and so forth and calls Daenerys's attention to this. Of course, the leader of all these darker people's is this almost albino woman, granted, who's magical in some sort of way. But anyway, look, I just wanted to bring it up as something that may not be something we should say is a problem, and yet I have to admit every now and then made me feel pretty uncomfortable about the people we do get on the show, you know? Anthony? Any thoughts?

Cashio: Well, I mean, and the show's supposed to be, I mean, it's in Westeros, which is supposed to be medieval England and Europe, based around the War of the Roses. The fact that there is as much diversity as there is might be a good sign. They're trying something. But I think Shane ... I don't really have much to add except to reiterate what Shane said.

Weber: Interesting, interesting. All right.

Cashio: That we might be asking too much of a fantasy show.

Weber: Maybe. Maybe.

Cashio: Yeah, I think, we always ask the Philosophy Bakes Bread question right here, on whether or not Philosophy Bakes Bread, and I'm not gonna ask it of Shane, I'm gonna ask it of us and what we've been up to and about Game of Thrones. My question, for all of us I guess, is thinking about this relationship between pop philosophy, you talked about this at the beginning of the show, Eric, and public philosophy. How pop philosophy can be public philosophy. In other words, do you guys think that I guess Game of Thrones bakes philosophical bread? Are we just being frivolous?

Weber: What do you think Shane?

Courtland: Two things I often think that the best education is often provided when the person being educated doesn't know it's happening. The reason is, there's this sort of almost natural resistance, I think, to education, and it's much better for the person to be consumed with ideas and entertained in this state of wonder. One of the reasons why I think pop culture is sometimes a good place to even encounter philosophy is because if it's good, like it's good entertainment and you're really getting into it, you don't know you're learning, you don't know these ideas are being introduced to you, and you're in this state of awe, which is the exact kind of state you'd want. I mean, think of your best possible philosophical lecture. You are in this feeling of awe. The nice thing about a lot of this sort of entertainment is you're already there if it's good. If it's good entertainment.

Pop culture I think can teach us a lot about philosophical ideas, because we're not in this sort of psychological state of resistance that we're in whenever we know we're going to class, or we know we're reading this philosophical work that is very tedious, but it's important and has good ideas, and I have to struggle through it and get to it. No, you're there to have a good time, and it turns out that when you're there to have a good time, you are in the right state to take on new and interesting ideas and usually if it's good work, you're gonna find them. You're gonna find, as we can talk for days and days about Game of Thrones, the cool ideas that are there, we're taking these ideas without even having to work for them. They just pop in naturally.

Weber: That's interesting. It's like a really delicious meal that's healthy and full of vegetables, but we didn't even realize it. We were tricked into eating our vegetables.

Cashio: How dare they. how dare they trick us. [crosstalk 01:01:11]

Weber: I don't have anything to add to that. I think it's great.

Cashio: Yeah. No, that's great. Shall we go on? Can we tell some jokes? What do you think?

Weber: Yeah, let's do it.

Cashio: Well as you guys know, we want everyone to know, there's a serious side to philosophy, even though we didn't get too serious today, maybe a little, and a lighter side. So our next segment we call philoso-funnies.

Weber: Say philoso-funnies.

Child: Philoso-funnies.

Weber: Say philoso-funnies.

Child: Philoso-funnies.

Cashio: Well, Eric and I have dug up some painfully bad jokes, Game of Throne themed jokes, but Shane, we're gonna give you first stab. Do you have any jokes or stories, I guess, around Game of Thrones?

Weber: I don't, but I do like to point out that the wit that I usually wanna associate I think with good philosophy teachers usually is something I'd find within Tyrion Lannister. The little imp. Some of his claims where it's just this sort of witty banter that you like to expect where he's quick on the draw, so he'll say these great lines where somebody ... And again, I'm just paraphrasing. Where somebody'll be saying, "Hey, are you challenging my honor," and he's like, "Not challenging it, I'm just denying its existence." These sort of moves, being quick, is something that I think are both funny, and it's constant and present throughout the show.

There's also important philosophy, because you know how much he has to be paying attention and how quick he has to be in order to do it. So yeah, I just wanna give a shout out to Tyrion.

Cashio: To Tyrion.

Weber: I like it, that's great.

Cashio: What is his line? I drink and I know things? There's always two powers.

Weber: Yep.

Courtland: That's what I do.

Weber: That's what I do. That's what I do. That's nice. Well, that's a lot better than what Anthony and I found, because we found some pretty crummy jokes on the internet, but here's what we got.

Cashio: Should we lay it on them? Should we make them suffer?

Weber: Let's do it.

Cashio: Hey, why can't George RR Martin use Twitter

Weber: I don't know, why?

Courtland: Why?

Cashio: He killed off all 140 characters.

Weber: And then, avoid social networks on Sundays, for the net is dark and full of spoilers.

Cashio: Also this episode. It's a really [inaudible 01:03:19]

Weber: Ouch.

Cashio: Why were the white walkers avoiding Bronn?

Weber: I don't know, why is that?

Cashio: They couldn't stand the Hodor. It's about their only reaction.

Weber: That's pretty bad. Let's see, okay, when someone swears allegiance to Daenerys, they are jumping on the band dragon.

Cashio: Oh god, I hate you for that joke.

Weber: We need crickets.

Cashio: So bad. Oh my goodness.

I don't know if we earned the rim shot this time.

Weber: We need the cricket sound.

Courtland: Yeah, that's probably better. It's better. Yeah.

Cashio: All right. Well, let's wrap it up. We got ...

Questions for the you tell me segment, Eric. Last but not least, as always, we like to take advantage of the fact that we have powerful social media that allow for two way communications, even for programs like radio shows, so we want to invite our listeners to send us their thoughts about big questions we raise on the show, and I think we're gonna have a few questions for you today.

Weber: That's right. Given that Shane, we wanna know if you have a question for our listeners for the segment we call you tell me. Have you got a question you propose for our listeners?

Courtland: Yeah. I wanna know why Syrio Forei, I think it's how you pronounce the name, Syrio Forei. He was the teacher of Arya, sword teacher I believe, for Arya Stark. And he says, "There is only one god and his name is death, and there is only one thing we say to death: Not today."

The question I have is, is death a major theme within Game of Thrones, meaning that it's the core version. And if so, why? Because keep in mind, what the white walkers are bringing is that, death.

Weber: Ah.

Cashio: Yeah. What is that Jon Snow said? We're all on the side of the living, so we're all on the same team. That's pretty good.

Weber: Very interesting. Very good question.

Cashio: Eric, what do you think? Do you have any questions?

Weber: Yeah, yeah. Earlier we were talking about it on one of our breaks. We thought it might make sense to ask our listeners whether or not you think talking philosophically about things like Game of Thrones and the stories of our day is frivolous only, or is it worthwhile? Do you think this is an activity that we should continue? What do you think?

Cashio: Yeah, let us know. If you guys are enjoying this episode, let us know. We can do some more of them. We enjoy doing it, so we might just keep doing it anyway.

Weber: Whether or not you like it.

Cashio: You know what I wanna know? I wanna know about their stories. I want the listeners to tell us about their stories. All right? So call in, Tweeter at us. Email us.

Weber: Tweeter at us.

Cashio: [crosstalk 01:05:59] the stories that helped shape your life, those stories, especially in your youth, that helped, really were formative to who you are today, and that maybe you didn't even realize at the time they were forming your personality.

Weber: I'd love to hear about that. Good thought, good thought.

Cashio: Well thanks everyone for listening to this very special episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership. Your host, Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber are so grateful to have been joined today by Dr. Shane Courtland. Thank you again, Shane, for joining us.

Weber: Thank you.

Courtland: Thanks for having me.

Cashio: Yeah.

Weber: Awesome.

Cashio: We hope all our listeners will consider sending us your thoughts about anything you've heard today that you'd like to hear about in the future or about these specific questions we

raised for you. We got I think three very fun questions. Man, we can continue this like crazy, I think.

Weber: I think so. Remember everyone that you can catch us on Twitter, Facebook, or on our website at philosophybakesbread.com, and there you'll find transcripts for our many episodes. Thanks to Drake Bolling, an undergraduate philosophy student at the University of Kentucky. Thank you, Drake.

Cashio: Yes, thank you Drake. Drake is killing it. He just keeps popping up these awesome transcripts, and I know people are using them.

Weber: That's right.

Cashio: So we really appreciate it, Drake.

Weber: That's correct. That's right. One more thing, folks. If you wanna support the show and to be more involved in the work of the Society of Philosophers in America, SOPHIA, the easiest thing to do is to go join, or at least learn about it, anyway, at philosophersinamerica.com.

Cashio: If you're enjoying the show, please take a few seconds to rate and review us on iTunes or Google Play or your favorite podcast service. It really helps us out quite a bit. It really, really does. And you can of course always email us at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com. And you can also call us and leave a short, record a message with a question or comment, that we may be able to play on the show, at 859-257-1849. That's 859-257-1849.

Join us again next time on Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership.

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