

Philosophy Bakes Bread, Episode Forty-Six, with Amy Leask

Philosophy at Home

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Weber: Hey everybody, thanks for listening to WRFL Lexington, 88.1 FM all the way to the left on your radio dial. This is Eric Weber here, for another episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread. In today's episode, you're going to hear about Amy Leask, who is a small business owner, who came from the academy and moved with her husband into the private sector and created a company called Engaged Education. They also created a series of products, and processes, and tools, and apps, and stuff, for a company they called Red T Media, which is something which introduces philosophy to children in the home and so on. It's for parents and kids and stuff, and I hope you enjoy it. Amy is all right, she's a lot of fun to talk to, and I hope you enjoy this 46th episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread, and reach out to us and let us know what you think and we'll give you information about how to do that on 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 is really 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, on Facebook @PhilosophyBakesBread, or by email at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com.

Cashio: Last but not least, you can leave us a short, recorded message with a question or comment, we always love our bountiful praise here that we may be able to play on the show at 859-257-1849, that's 859-257-1849. Please give us a call.

<https://www.philosophersinamerica.com/2017/10/21/050-ep46-philosophy-at-home/>

Weber: Yeah, that's right. Speaking of bountiful praise, I want to give a shout out to a couple of people. One is Melanie or Melanios, and thank you so much for the feedback we got on iTunes, and also to Leila, thank you. We got two really awesome five star reviews, people who have been entered into our giveaway by the way for our celebration.

Cashio: Remind us again Eric, what can we win for that giveaway?

Weber: Yeah, people can win T-shirts, mouse pads, you can get a pretty cool coffee mug, any of that that has the Philosophy Bakes Bread logo on it. We want to encourage people to give us iTunes reviews, if you don't use iTunes, that's okay, you can enter also just by answering one of the "You Tell Me" questions and sending us that via email or all those other ways you can get a hold of us. So you don't have to use iTunes, but we do really want some iTunes reviews from folks who can do that. Thank you for the folks who are entering and others have submitted and entered, so we're pretty excited to be getting feedback, but we want to encourage more people to do that by October, right?

Cashio: Sure, that sounds right.

Weber: All right.

Cashio: All right. Well, our guest has been waiting very patiently, and we want to get right to her and find out everything she has to tell us. So on today's show we're really excited to be talking with Amy Leask. Hello Amy, how are you doing today?

Leask: Good morning. I'm great, thanks.

Weber: So glad you could join us.

Cashio: Yes, thank you for joining us.

Leask: Me too, thank you.

Cashio: Amy is going to talk to us about doing philosophy at home, re-envisioning philosophy's reach beyond the academy. Amy is an educator, writer, and children's digital media producer from Milton Ontario, which is in Canada, I'm told. She is the founder of Red T Media, and co-founder of Enable Education. Enable Education is a provider of online educational content, mobile apps, as well as print and audio visual educational material, in areas including science, technology, engineering and math, or as we in the business, we call it STEM, the STEM fields, from preschool to post-secondary education. Just covers the whole game you guys, that's impressive.

Leask: Yes, we do.

Cashio: That's impressive.

Leask: The grown ups too.

Cashio: Industry leaders, keynote speakers, Ted x talkers, and Edutech award winners, so that's an impressive company you have there.

Weber: That's right.

Leask: Oh thank you very much. It's the best gig I've ever had by far.

Weber: That's awesome to hear. Amy studied English and philosophy as an undergraduate and got her master's degree in philosophy. In addition to having taught philosophy, she spearheaded the founding of Red T Media. Red T media is a publisher and web and mobile app provider for parents who want to introduce their kids to philosophy, among other things. Among Red T Media most successful books for instance, is Amy's "Think About It" series, including their most popular edition called, "How Do You Know What You Know?" The series is subtitled Philosophy For Kids. I think we know a lot of people in the Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization, PLATO, who would be interested in your books and apps Amy, and we're so glad you could join us.

Leask: Thank you.

Cashio: We're excited to have you. All right, Amy. So, as you know, we like to start our first segment with a little thing we call "Know thyself", follow out the dictum and we'd like to see how well you know yourself. So we're going to invite you to tell us about yourself, and maybe how you got into philosophy, what philosophy means to you and your businesses, but first, do you know thyself? Tell us about yourself.

Weber: We want to know about you.

Leask: I'm a work in progress like everybody else, I think. I try. I think maybe a lot of people find as they get older, they realize they know less and less about themselves, but that's all part of the fun. Let's see, how I got into philosophy, I think I was one of those kids who ... I think most kids do it, and I think people who do P4C, the Philosophy for Kids Movement, I think they know this. That most kids have the inclination, I wrote a lot as soon as I learned to print. I was one of those kids who narrated everything. And it's cool because I'm finding that with my daughter too, there is no inner monologue, everything just comes out. And they didn't do philosophy per se with us until university. I went to school before it became a high school subject in Ontario here. So I didn't know what it was, I didn't know how it was done, I didn't know how fun it was until my first day of university or my first week of university.

Leask: So that's where I fell in love with it, and I've always liked mushy gray areas, I was okay at math, and I was okay at science, but I didn't need the mathematical certainty of it all. I've always loved when there was room for argument, when there was room for debate, and room for exploration. So, that's how I fell in love with philosophy, and it didn't take long. I had an amazing professor in first year and he had a great sense of humor, and he didn't just put things up and have us copy them down and then regurgitate them on the exam. He somehow managed to engage a lecture hall of 300 sleepy teenagers, so my hats off to him.

Cashio: Right. That's quite a feat.

Leask: It was, yeah. And I could go on, and on, and on about this guy. He was later my master's thesis supervisor too. He was fantastic and Sammy Nagem, if you're out there, hats off to you.

Weber: It's funny most people have that inclination that you do. When they see the gray area and room for debate, they hate it though, like what's the answer?

Leask: Yes, and when I taught later on, even when I was teaching philosophy courses specifically, was what am I going to put on my test? What do I put in this essay so that you give me a good mark? That kind of thing. And it takes a lot to get into the mindset where you don't have to give one definite answer, where the road you take to get to it is more important than your destination.

Weber: What do you suppose it is about yourself that made you enjoy the gray areas and debatable matters when other people don't or didn't?

Leask: I like hearing different opinions, maybe I'm noncommittal, maybe that's the problem, maybe I'm fickle, maybe that's it. But I don't feel like I need to have, this is the answer. It's so much more fun when you get to juggle different answers, and when you get to come back to it later, you talk about something, and a week later you wake up in the middle of the night and think, okay, well, I can add that to it. I love that, and maybe it's the fact that I write too, that I'm used to the notion that stuff gets edited, stuff gets proofread, stuff gets changed, and rewritten. So maybe that helps too to come at it from that perspective that thinking is a work in progress too, it's not done.

Weber: That's interesting, it's like the activity of thinking, is something you really enjoy, because one of the things you don't need to do when the answer is just this, and you just need to remember it and spit it out again, is you don't need to think about it-

Cashio: -or it's a different type of thinking.

Leask: Exactly.

Weber: Yeah, it's like some people really love to run, and I absolutely don't understand that, you know what I mean? But I love to think-

Cashio: I try to teach myself to love to run-

Weber: Good for you, I mean I wish I could succeed in teaching myself that-

Cashio: -I'm failing, getting an F in that class.

Leask: Only if something is chasing me.

Cashio: Right. So, Amy, you like to mess around in these gray areas, you're in noncommittal with your ideas, I get tied down by one idea, which is great. I'm very sympathetic to that, but if someone was to ask you, what is philosophy then? It doesn't seem to be, if it's just messing around with these ideas or do you have kind of, this is what philosophy is. We like to ask everyone this; what is philosophy to you?

Leask: I kind of think there's two parts to it. There's the questions, and philosophers do ask questions that aren't asked in other subject areas, other fields, the meaning of life and what it means to be human, and how we relate to each other, all these big 'why' questions. I think that's a big part of it and that's where you see children having a natural inclination, it's where I started to. But it's also this process, there's these rules, a set of rules for thinking, where you're not allowed to say just because, or I don't know is fine, as long as it's followed up by, well, let's talk

about it. So I think it's the questions and then it's the exercise of it, the process of it, the rules for it too. And I like the question, I have to admit I like the questions better; being non-committal, someone telling me you have to be logical all the time. And it's possible that part of what attracted me to it is that I'm an all over there ... My husband calls it 'monkey brain' thinker.

Leask: Having someone or something bring me down to earth, it was a really, ... maybe the second part of philosophy, the actual process of it, the rules for thinking. That grounded me in a way that I hadn't been grounded before in high school or before that. So that might have been the useful part of it for me. So I think philosophy is both; I think it's the product and the process.

Cashio: Product and the process-

Weber: That's nice.

Cashio: -right. So, you have these questions, but not any answer will do as you answer them and as you think through-

Leask: Yeah.

Cashio: I like that.

Leask: And as long as you're following these rules, and there are a broad set of rules, there's lists, and lists of fallacies to avoid and things to do, but as long as you're following those rules, that's philosophical thinking.

Weber: That's interesting. The philosopher Daniel Dennett, said that people who won't think critically or follow the rules as you're saying of the game, are like people who want to play tennis without a net. But if you don't have a net, it's not tennis. So my question for you is, what are the rules of thinking? Why can't I think what I want to think? You have some rules for me?

Leask: Yes. I actually did a book with Susan Gardner, who's a professor at Capilano University in British Columbia, on logic, on how to build an argument. She is just great, she's been teaching logic and reasoning for probably upwards of 30 years. She always tells her students, and she says it's an epiphany moment for them when she reminds them that logic is not up to you. You don't get to decide what's true; if an argument doesn't work, it doesn't work. It doesn't matter how much you want it to work. So, I always go back to that, I really love the way she puts that, that it's not up to you. You can wishful thinking all you like, but it's not going to change what's logical, what's rational.

Weber: But it's how I feel.

Leask: I know, I know. Very good for you but-

Cashio: Is that objective quality to an argument, right? Even if you think you're making a good argument, you might just not be, and subjectively, we can study it.

Leask: Yeah. And from an educational perspective, that's how you discuss with other people. I remember doing a lecture on art at the college level and people said over and over again, "Well, art is whatever you want it to be and good art and bad art is purely a subjective." And what I said

was, "Well, that's where the conversation ends. You can't talk about it unless you put some sort of objective spin on it, unless there is something that you can point to or reason out." So I think it's really sad when people say, well, that's just how I feel, and that's the end of the conversation, because you're cutting everyone else out. You can't talk to other human beings unless you've got some common ground.

Cashio: Right. You just stopped the whole philosophical process right there.

Leask: Yeah. And the other bonding process with other humans too. You put up a wall, "You're not going to question me on this."

Cashio: My feelings are precious, don't question them.

Leask: Yeah. Exactly.

Weber: But you don't get to choose to say that I feel Kentucky's in Canada, right? The things you're allowed to feel, we cannot speak as though you can feel whatever you want to feel, but honestly, as you said, there are rules to the game. I suppose you're allowed, but we'll just not agree with you.

Leask: Yeah. Exactly.

Weber: Well, thank you so much for talking with us Amy. We're going to come back after a short break everybody. This is Eric Weber, my cohost is Anthony Cashio, and we've been talking about philosophy at home with Amy Leask, and we're going to come back after a short break. Thanks everybody for listening.

Cashio: Welcome back to philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Anthony Cashio and Eric Weber, here today talking with Amy Leask. In our second segment, we're going to ask Amy about Enable Education, an educational consulting and content production company she co-founded with your husband, is that correct?

Leask: That's right, yes.

Cashio: Then in the next segment we'll talk more about Red T Media and Philosophy for Kids or we'll see how it all comes together.

Leask: Beautiful.

Weber: Amy, we've said a little bit about Enable Education just briefly in the prior segment, why don't we just invite you to tell us about it? What is Enable Education, and how did it get started and what do you do?

Leask: All right. We got started, my husband and I were both teaching at the college level, and three weeks into the semester, all the college teachers in Ontario went on strike.

Weber: I remember that.

Leask: Yeah, that was fun. Anyway, and we had just moved, and we were doing a little bit of business on the side, some consulting with software, because my husband's a programmer by trade, and we looked at each other and said, "All right, there's going to be at least a few weeks of unpaid vacation here, what do we do with ourselves?" And we've got further into these little side projects that we were doing, we launched ourselves a little further into that, and it's grown from there. So what started out with a computer, and some recording equipment, and piling materials in our spare bedroom, we're now 25 people, we've got our own office and we do stuff for pretty much anyone who needs to teach or train. So we've done the materials for preschoolers, right on up into industry and corporate materials for training.

Leask: We've got this great team, we've got programmers obviously, web and app developers, graphic artists, technical writers, but the cherry on top of all of this, is that a lot of us have been teachers. We call it 'speaking teacher ease', we know what it's like to be in front of a classroom and have all these eyes on you, and we know what it's like to have limited resources and to be on a timer, and to have a whole bunch of curriculum that you have to squash into a few months. So we don't do work directly with teachers per se, we do it more with other businesses who create materials and products for teachers, but we do whatever we can to make it easier for them, and that includes using new technology in education. So, that's how we function, and it's fun, it's really, really fun. Every project is a little bit different, and we meet the most amazing people.

Leask: We've been involved in FIRST robotics, someone we've worked with as a partner and we go to their competitions, we've done work with LEGO Education, so it's pretty fun.

Weber: So the company comes to you and they say we need help with X Y or Z, and then you just come up with a product? How does that work out?

Leask: The products are almost always pre-developed, it's just the materials to go with it and the way to deliver it. So we have our own learning management system that's decidedly hands on. If someone says we've got this product and we need to reach X, Y, Z, we need ... There's my Z, I mean Canada.

Weber: X, Y, Z, I love it.

Leask: But if someone needs [crosstalk 00:18:59], so basically, we figure out who their learners are, and who their teachers are, and we make learning resources that go with it. Sometimes it's just print materials, and sometimes it's augmented reality, and sometimes it's an app, so a little bit different every time.

Weber: I've got to go ask you about this augmented reality, what do you mean? What's that that's on store?

Leask: Basically, it's not quite the same as virtual reality, and everyone's probably seen, you put on the goggles, and you are immersed in a world, so you're plugged in that way, and there can be audio and video. Augmented reality is what's already there, gets augmented. So for example, if you have a book that you're using, if the book has augmented reality built into it, one of our books actually does; the Tinker Thinkers, and it's got little QR codes throughout it, so someone can hold their mobile device over the book, over these QR codes and while they're reading, a video will pop up and you can put just about anything you want in there. You can have a video pop up, you can have a 3D model pop up, you can have an audio clip, but it basically just enhances through a mobile device what's already there.

Cashio: That's awesome, so it shows on the camera, on the screen of the phone?

Leask: Yeah, usually you have an app that you're using that will provide the platform for whatever you're viewing.

Cashio: What will I gain? Pokemon Go.

Leask: Yes, that is-

Cashio: I use it in reality.

Leask: When that came out, we actually gave a ... because they're like, okay, finally this is what it is, now everybody's going to know what it is. I should have just said Pokémon Go, but yes, that's a very good example of it. As you can imagine, there's educational aspects to that all over the place, all day long.

Cashio: They announced that new iPhone yesterday, and they had a commercial that was talking about the augmented reality on the new iPhone, so it's the up and coming-

Leask: You can put on it pretty much any device, there's ways.

Weber: Very cool.

Cashio: So your company seems to have a pretty heavy STEM focus, the science, technology, engineering, mathematics, is that right or do you do other things or is it mostly-

Leask: There's been a bread and butter for a while, we have done other things, I mean, LEGO Education doesn't just focus on STEM, they've got all kinds of other projects that they've created. I think the way I see it is it's not just STEM, it's STEAM, so there is the arts component and now they're talking about STREAM too. So there's a reading and writing component as well.

Weber: STREAM?

Leask: Yeah, that's the latest development.

Weber: You've blown my mind here, I love this.

Leask: The way I see it, it's not just about STEM anymore, the purpose of STEM was to teach children and youth to be innovators, to think outside the box, to be critical thinkers, and to be creative. I think the reason why it's become STEAM and then the STREAM, is because people are realizing that it's not enough to just be a technician or to focus solely on science and math, and technology. You have to be an all around thinker, that's who's going to be successful in the 21st century. So for us, there's the STEM stuff, but it's part of a bigger focus. We want to teach people to learn better.

Weber: That's awesome. I think for anybody who missed something here and is listening, or if anyone tunes into the radio and is catching us midstream, it's worth repeating that STEM is lingo in education fields for science, technology, engineering, and math. Science, technology, engineering, and math, and what Amy is saying is, you've got to the arts in there, so which

makes STEM into STEAM, and writing and [rhetoric 00:22:38], STEAM becomes STREAM. That's clever.

Cashio: It's like the tech industry has discovered that they are the liberal arts education.

Leask: Yeah, and you know what? Thinking-

Cashio: Oh, what about that?

Leask: It goes the other way too. I think the liberal arts have discovered that there's a lot of potential in buddying up with STEM too. There's exposure, and there's tools, and I think if you're living in this day and age, you have to know something about the machines that rule your life. Even if you are an artist and you're on the other end of the spectrum, you still have to know.

Weber: We may want self driving cars, but should they drive into the five people or steer over and hit the one person?

Leask: Exactly. We need each other-

Weber: The famous trolley problem.

Leask: -need each other.

Weber: You've mentioned a little bit, some clients including LEGO, I'd love to hear more about what the projects have been with LEGO, but just beyond that, who are your clients or what kinds of companies and organizations are you serving? Give us a little more information about that, and again, I'd love to hear more about the things you've done for LEGO.

Leask: Yes. We're pretty flexible about who we take on, training stuff, we do a lot right now for industry, so various trades for example, who need a more engaging way to train people. So, before you ever touch a machine, can we make an experience and a learning environment where you get a little bit of background? And this is where augmented reality sometimes comes in, giving someone the experience of being near the machine, or near these tools, or near this technology before they're actually operating heavy machinery, and it's not a substitute, but it's an opening. So anything like that, we work with-

Weber: It's like a flight simulator.

Leask: Exactly. And I think there's going to be more that, we're seeing a lot more demand for games, even for grownups in industry. The gamification of education, that's been coming for a long time with kids for obvious reasons. But we're seeing a lot of companies who employ grownups asking for that too; can we get grownups to play their way into these skills?

Cashio: What kind of games are we talking? Like a role playing kind of game?

Leask: Role playing or things with spatial concepts; how does this fit together, people want to play. It's so much more engaging than, okay I'm going to watch a video and then I'm going to answer some multiple choice questions, and I'm going to get my gold star.

Weber: What are you teaching with the use of the game? I worked at one point in a summer for a chemical company. Are you teaching them, here's a set of chemicals you want to arrange them in order of danger or something like that? What are you actually teaching them?

Leask: That's a good example. Obviously even in industry, there are educational objectives or training objectives. By the end of this, you want people to know the difference between this dangerous thing, and this not so dangerous thing. And can we make a game? Can we put it in a 3D environment where people have to explore and collect this or put this together? And it's really interesting. So it could be anything like that, something that's dangerous; can we get people to learn industry standards without having to just read them over and over and over again and memorize them? Is there a way to immerse them in an environment where they actually have to put them into use?

Weber: Good. So if you want to destroy this or that report or your report card as a kid, what chemical do you spill over the top of the report card to make it-

Leask: Nobody has asked us to do that yet.

Cashio: Well, Amy, when you're doing these games or maybe you're making an augmented reality application, you're training this in the humanities, and you've kind of talked about how that fits into the STREAM like that, but do you see philosophy playing a role in Enable Education?

Leask: Absolutely.

Cashio: At all?

Leask: In the educational development for sure, because we have to identify what's the objective here, why do you want to do this, why do you want to teach people this. And pedagogically, it's really useful to have an analytic spin on things; what does this mean exactly? You're asking us to teach this, what do you mean by that and how is it going to play out? Who are your learners? Are you beholding to this or this, or this?

Weber: What do they know and what don't they know, right?

Leask: Yeah. I taught for more than a decade, and I don't know how I would have done it as effectively if I hadn't a philosophy student. So pedagogically, it comes in handy as a manager too, as a business owner, culture is everything. I think we've been learning this over the last few years. Company culture is everything, and a really, really important way to get your employees, your team members not drink the Kool-Aid, but to buy into your mission, is to give the 'why'. You're not just coming to work to do X, Y, Z for me, this is what's happening at the end of the day. When you go home at night, this is who you've helped, and this is why you did.

Weber: That's nice.

Cashio: A clear mission statement.

Leask: Yeah, in terms of keeping the team together.

Weber: Mission statement, yeah. I think one of the things people get really frustrated about in the business world, is that mission statement can sound like nonsense and gobbledygook, and can be totally disconnected from the actual operations of a company. But isn't it such a relief and a pleasure to see a company with a good mission actually do it and embody the values it's supposed to?

Leask: Yes, absolutely. We actually did an exercise probably about a year ago. We redecorated the office, and we wanted to put up our company values on the wall, and I wanted to represent them in a way that represented us. We're fairly easy going bunch, we have a great sense of humor, we like to play. So I put up these wonderful black and white postcards that I've collected, and they've got wacky people with tinfoil hats, hugging a bear and that sort of thing. So I put them up on the wall, and I gave everybody in the office a set of sticky notes with our values written on them, and they had to go around and stick up. I think this picture represents this value, and I think this picture represents that value. So they're up on our wall in our reception area now, and they were chosen by our team.

Weber: That's cool.

Leask: That was what they thought worked.

Cashio: That's good-

Weber: That's very cool.

Cashio: -everyone's invested, that's great idea.

Weber: Yeah it is. Well, we've had a couple of episodes recently on culture and emphasizing how important culture is and what philosophy has to do with thinking about and helping us to reshape our culture. We're going to come back to that topic I'm sure, but we have been delighted to talk with Amy Leask on Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Eric Weber, with my cohost Anthony Cashio, we're going to come back after a short break.

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Cashio: Welcome back to Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Anthony Cashio and Eric Weber, and it is our privilege and joy today to be talking with Amy Leask. We've been talking about Enable Education; a company she co-founded with her husband, we talked about that in the last segment, in this segment we're going to ask Amy about Red T Media, and doing philosophy at home, and with kids. So I think the first and obvious question Amy, has really been bugging me, maybe you can help me understand, why Red T? Why not Blue T or Green T? I love green, I like green.

Leask: No, there was a lot of thought behind that before we branched off, Red T is the publishing arm of Enable, and we felt we wanted to separate it out because it was a little bit different than the other projects we were working on. But before we actually founded Red T, when we did the Think About It series, the main character, the narrator, the kid explorer of all these ideas, her name is Sophia. And when we were designing her, when I was working with the

illustrator, I wanted her to be a girl because we still got a little bit of space to make up in terms of getting women into philosophy. So I wanted her to be a girl, but I didn't want her to be girly. I didn't want her to be pink and fury and that sort of thing, so we put her in basic kid wardrobe staple. We stuck her in a basic red T-shirt and jeans, and it's become our calling card. There's this little girl with crazy ponytail who's in her red T-shirt.

Leask: So that was part of our branding, we pulled it from her, but there is this great poem by Margaret Atwood, Canadian author, called, "A Red Shirt" and it's really long, and it's great, but she's sewing a shirt for her daughter, her little girl, and it's red, and it's got this crazy pattern on it. The poem talks about all the things that red represents; passion, and danger, and enthusiasm, and anger, and that sort of thing. So it was kind of pulled by that, inspired by that too.

Weber: Nice.

Cashio: That's fantastic.

Weber: Yes, some people associate blue with boys, and red with girls. My son's favorite color is red, and I happened to be wearing a red shirt today. But that's really an awesome ... I love it's kind of like you've got a mascot that you created who's this person who doesn't scream, [certainly 00:32:42] gender that it's got to be a woman, and yet clearly shows that girls like me like philosophy too. That's clever. The big picture question that we should also begin with of course, is what led you to found red T Media? What is it and what needs were you aiming to fill?

Leask: Well, when I was teaching probably my last couple of semesters where I was at college, I was always frustrated, and I think I'm not alone in this. Anyone who has taught college philosophy, you've got a lot of students who come into the classroom, and they don't have solid thinking skills. They're afraid to question.

Weber: What?

Leask: Oh no, way. They're afraid to question what's put in front of them. As we've all found, they just want to know what they have to put on a test to get a good mark. And that scared me a little bit, that you could get to the age of 18, 20 and not know how to put together an argument just purely from self-defense, how do you filter everything that comes at you through the media, and how do you keep people taking advantage of you, and all these things. So I did some research and I found out about Matthew Lipman, and the whole P4C movement, and I thought I can do this.

Weber: Philosophy for Kids, Philosophy for Children.

Leask: Yeah, I can do something like this, so I started writing a manuscript at that point. So while I was finishing up my teaching career in college, I was working on this other project. And the manuscript went through a million different iterations, and here's me as the writer and the editor again, no, that's not right, I'm going to add this, I'm going to do that. And at one point in our life as a company we had an illustrator on hand, and we had web and app programmers and we had all these talented people in the office, and I thought, it's time. Let's do this as a pet project or a passion project. And it's mushroomed over the years, we took these print books and we put them into interactive e-book format. Later on, they turned into a cartoon, an animated shirt with the help of a producer who was my friend in the area, and now we have this app that I

like to call the Digital Playground, and it's got 3D games, and it's got mini games, and it's got creative tools.

Leask: There's been a few other books. We've got a new one that just came out this week that's for younger children too, and it's all about questioning perception. So, that's how it's built up, and as our team has built up here at the office, we've used the talent that we had on hand to try something new.

Weber: Is that the *Zoom In, Zoom Out*?

Leask: Yeah, the *Zoom In, Zoom Out* is the newest one.

Weber: I've got a copy of it, and I showed it to my wife last night and she's like, "We totally got to sit down Simon." That's my son, and we didn't get around to it last night, but we're going to do it really soon.

Leask: Excellent.

Cashio: It looks awesome.

Leask: That book actually started out because our CTO here is the most amazing photographer, and he does these-

Weber: A CTO?

Leask: Yes, chief technical officer.

Weber: I want to have one of those.

Leask: He's amazing and he does these really cool macro hyper close up shots of things, and I thought this would be so interesting as a guessing game book.

Weber: I think the book looks awesome.

Leask: Yeah. And the illustrations were done by one of the same people who did the animation for the animated short, and so it's cool. That's how we got here.

Weber: We'll be sure to put links to all these in the show notes when this comes out in the podcast.

Leask: Excellent.

Cashio: I like the website. Often, when people are thinking about doing philosophy with children, the P4C, they usually think about ways of bringing philosophy into the classroom. Can we go into the kindergarten classroom, the fourth-grade classroom and do philosophy and teach it in schools? But what I like about Red T Media, is it seems to be breaking that mold by offering these books and apps, and in books for parents, helping them to do philosophy with their own kids to use at home. So what led to this decision or was it just because the infrastructure was already there or was it something you really thought, I mean did you do this at home as well?

Leask: We've always aimed at parents and kids. When we wrote the Think About It series, I wanted it to be something that the child would pick up by themselves. And we've heard from parents that that's been the case too, I left this book on the coffee table and my son picked it up, and then he came and said, "I've been thinking about this for a long time, this question here, I want to know." I didn't know how to put it into words, but here it is. And there's so many people in P4C working in schools, and they're doing an amazing job. I didn't feel like I had to reinvent the wheel there, but there's a lot of fear and a lot of trepidation among parents about taking on these kinds of questions with their kids. There's always the early adopters; parents who find our books at a book fair or something like that, and go, "Yay, where has this been? I'm ready."

Leask: And then there are some of them that read it and go, "I don't even know where to start. I'm going to have to admit I don't know, I'm going to have to admit that I'm going to have to think about something." And that's a little scary. So I wanted to make it as comfortable as possible for parents. The kids will do it anyway.

Weber: Very cool.

Leask: They are an easy sell.

Weber: Well, I'm holding several copies here, and I love how the cover jumps out that your a kid would want to pick this up. And I'm holding, How Do You Know What You Know, so a book on epistemology for those who want the fancy words. Then we've got, Let The Thinking Begin, which is another edition of the series, Think About It. Very cool, they look great. So I've just mentioned two of them, but let me ask you a big picture about the series and what you've done, and what you're going to do, and so forth. What topics can you cover with kids in your books and your apps? How do you go about crafting the material that you think would be appropriate for use at home?

Leask: The Think About It series, I actually based on my first year university textbook for philosophy. It covered most of the major branches of philosophy and I thought that'll work. From a teaching perspective, it's useful too, because it's a little easier for a teacher to use these in the classroom if I can say this one goes with art, and that one over there probably goes with science, and that one over there, when you do outdoor, that will work with that. Big picture, I will take this as far as it will go. We just keep adding other arms onto it. I'd like to do more materials like zoom in, zoom out, which is for a slightly younger audience, but still philosophically based. I think everything we do with Red T is always going to be about big questions. We have a standalone book about robots too that we did in response to parents who were going to robotics competitions and didn't know what a robot was.

Weber: I'm not sure how much we've explained exactly, what zoom in, zoom out is, one way of thinking about it I think as I'm looking at a copy of it right now, is to say that these images that are highly zoomed into something, maybe give you another perspective on something. Give you another way of looking at some things that you're used to looking at, but you see them totally differently. So it's metaphorical way of changing perspective, which is very philosophical.

Leask: Yes. And just the whole notion, it's a little nugget that the book is planting; can you trust your eyes, or is there something else that has to intervene? And you've got our little critters, there's an eyeball like Mike Wazowski, like from Monsters Inc. And there's a little camera, and both of these little critters are having a look at this, what is that? What do you do with that? And then the end, spoiler alert, there's a little brain that's introduced too, and the last lines of the

book are about, well, you've got your camera, you've got your eyes, maybe you need someone in the middle to explain things to you. So you're not sure, maybe you go for the brain. The e-book form of that is actually coming out as an app at the end of the month too, and it will have a little more of an interactive so you can play with the characters a little bit more, and the zoom in, zoom out kind of feel that will be electronic.

Leask: So you can actually push a button to zoom in and out, you can go back and forth, and back and forth, and go, "Okay, I see what that is."

Weber: And people can get these on Amazon.com, as well as on your website, right? Red T Media?

Leask: Absolutely. Yeah.

Cashio: All right, cool. So it looks like you put a lot of thought into crafting the material for a specific age group, is that correct? Like you want some for younger children and this Think About It book series, what age group would you shoot that for?

Leask: We say seven and up. We've had some precocious, and it depends how you read to your kid. We've had people tell us that there's some precocious five-year-olds out there who are reading it to themselves, but who will sit down for a few pages and then have a chat. And that's great. I've also had a teacher who does English as a second language with adults say that she used it in her class because it's simple enough language that someone who is new to English wouldn't be struggling with it too much-

Weber: Yet it has substance.

Leask: But it had big ideas. It has something they could talk about afterwards. So we've had some parents and teenagers themselves say, I read it on my own. I bought it for my kid but ...

Weber: Well, it was fun. So you've got a couple of different media that use, you're writing books, and I've got a couple of copies of these and they look great. You're also using apps, I haven't tried the apps out, tell us about how you think about the difference between these media and what you can do with the opportunities or the tools available as a result of let's say, using an iPad or a cell phone in connection with this material.

Leask: I am excited every time something new comes out. When augmented reality became more popular, I got excited about that, and I hope in the future to do more books with augmented reality targets in them. There's a little bit of reluctance sometimes to tie philosophy to tech, and I've been told flat out by some people, "My child should be outside climbing a tree and if they're going to do philosophy, it's going to be from the printed page." But I see that interactive technology is a conversation in, and of itself. You're inviting someone to do something with the media they're consuming. I think that's what we want to do in P4C too, we want to get kids engaged. I don't want to lecture anymore, I did that for a long time and I'm not sure that it's always the most effective, especially with children. I want them digging into it and doing something with their hands.

Leask: We very much believe here that there is no one typical type of learner either. So I want the kids who don't learn by sitting down and reading into it. I want the kids who need to doodle into it, I need the ones who are very verbal and who need to write something down into it. So

with every new game that we develop, I like to think that we're attracting a different kind of kid. "Hey you over there, if you like puzzles, here's something you can do with that."

Weber: Yeah, and you're already offering for people who don't want their kids on a cell phone or whatever, you're already offering them a book they could get instead. So, you got stuff for book, right?

Leask: Yeah. And it is a touchy subject too, how much screen time is okay. We hear a lot of scary reports of, "My kid just lost it after spending three hours playing Minecraft." I have to say I would lose it after three hours of Minecraft too but-

Cashio: That's a lot of time staring at the screen.

Leask: Yeah, and we want to be sensitive to that too, that parents need to feel comfortable about letting their kid have screen time.

Weber: I mean, this is a very exciting development, very cool company and series, and we're going to ask you a little bit more about it when we come back after a short break. With Amy Leask, this is Eric Weber, my cohost is Anthony Cashio, and you've been listening to Philosophy Bakes Bread. We'll be right back.

Cashio: Welcome back everyone to Philosophy Bakes Bread. This is Anthony Cashio and Eric Weber, today talking with Amy Leask, of Enable Education and Red T Media. In this final segment we'll wrap up with a final big picture question or two, some lighthearted jokes and a question for all of us to ponder as we wrap up the podcast and show. Eric, why don't you ask your question?

Weber: Sure. Amy, there are a lot of people who are frustrated with the academy for a variety of reasons. What would you say to them about ideas of venturing off and creating an educational company like the Red T Media or Enable Education?

Leask: I think and I hope, and I don't think I'm alone in this, that the academy is changing. So frustration with the academy, yes that's not a new thing. But I think the way we teach and learn at all levels of education is shifting. So I'd asked people not to give up on it entirely yet.

Cashio: I like that.

Leask: There's lots of hope and dreams of venturing off and starting a company, absolutely. It's not easy, but as I said before, this is the best gig I've ever had. And I really loved teaching, but it's-

Weber: Tell us about that, what makes it the best gig? What is it about it?

Leask: My husband and I have this little analogy we use, it's like we're the cool aunt and uncle. We swoop in and we've got the toys, and we've got that tech, and we've got the games, and all this fun stuff, and there's creativity involved, and there's high level thinking, but we don't have to clean up afterwards.

Cashio: You get to hand the kid back and leave the mess to someone else.

Leask: Exactly.

Weber: Spoil the child and...

Cashio: -send them on their way?

Leask: Exactly. So we're helping to teach-

Weber: Fill them with some soda and shake them up, and give it back.

Leask: Exactly. So we're helping to teach thousands and thousands of learners without actually having to be in the classroom and doing the prep, and doing the marking, and that sort of thing. We sleep better at night knowing, okay, we probably made it better and easier for those who do have to take care of the kids a full time basis. It's an interesting thing from that perspective, it's really cool to be at the front of all these changes that are happening too. And when a new trend comes down, or a new innovation comes down the pipe, you can ... it's nice to be in a position where you can say, "Wow, that's really cool. I could do this, and this, and this, and this with it, and it probably isn't going to work for that, but maybe it could be applied here." The whole idea of grownups wanting to play games at work, that was a revelation. It's really fun.

Weber: Awesome, that sounds really awesome.

Cashio: So I want to ask you about bringing philosophy into the home, I think it's a really great, that the material you offer, just looking at it is really fantastic. So in what ways do you see value for bringing philosophy into the home for maybe parents and kids to do philosophy around the dinner table, you see that enhancing the home life in any way? Any change on that?

Leask: Absolutely. You can always sell to parents by saying this is going to make your kid better in math, or this is going to make it so that your kid actually reads. The whole better at school-

Weber: And those things are true, that's been studied.

Leask: Yes, absolutely. And good for them, if that's all they want to take away from it, that's great. I think having these discussions with your kid builds trust too, being a parent myself, my kid thinking that she can come to me with a really difficult question that doesn't have any easy answer, and I'm not going to tell her I don't know, go away or go ask your father, or-

Weber: But don't you dare ask me that question.

Leask: Exactly, that she knows, not just that she can come to me and say, somebody picked on me at school or whatever, but that she can come to me and ask things like, "Where was I before I was born?" Or "How do I know that the food that I'm eating tastes the same to me as it does to you?" And I'm not going to give her an answer, but I'm not going to run away scared either. I think that's built a lot of trust and that's great. Character development, so many parents say I want my kid to get their character education from me at home. Well, philosophy, it's the great central station for that. So there's opportunities there too.

Weber: That's clever, and we've talked before ... Being the grand central station of developing character at home, that's clever.

Cashio: Yeah, that's really ...

Weber: On the show we've talked before about the notion that there have been people in the Texas GOP actually at one point, said that it opposed critical thinking to be taught in schools. And allegedly this wasn't supposed to come out in their platform in the end and so let's be fair, but it actually did come out-

Cashio: But they were still considering it.

Weber: Well, they put it in the platform and it came out, which said that they opposed the teaching of critical thinking in K12 education because one of the reasons is that was given, was that it challenges parental authority. And you've just painted a picture which says, actually teaching critical thinking empowers and it builds trust for parental authority. That's a fantastic turn, that's a really nice way of responding to people who are being funny and silly about ... And I guess you teach critical thinking when someone's already an adult, that doesn't make any sense, but I'm impressed with that answer, very nice.

Leask: How much more empowered can you be as a parent, than when you're modeling good thinking? If you want your kid to look up to you and trust you and to say I am a thinker too, and I'm in the process of this as well, and I'm just trying to figure it out, and I'm willing to consider all kinds of different perspectives, and I'm going to reason my way through that, it's like getting your kid to love reading by having books all over the place at home and being a reader yourself. Why not be a thinker too? How much more empowered can you get than that?

Cashio: All right. That's good. I know the people in the Texas GOP probably want more children that are obedient and subservient; just do what I say and don't ask, but I think you're right. There is something about this idea of, when your kids trust you, they will obey you, and for the right reasons, because they understand that you're not just being arbitrarily dictatorial in your rules.

Weber: For what's that's worth, I know plenty of Texans who are Republicans who would think it was silly that that ended up in the platform, but it did end up in the platform. This is not bias to speak the facts. But anyways, thank you for that. That was a really lovely way of thinking about this matter, I think.

Cashio: All right Amy, one of our final questions comes from the inspiration for our show, and I'm sure we've already got an answer from you but I think we can clarify a little bit. So, would you say that philosophy bakes no bread as the famous saying goes, or that it does?

Leask: Philosophy bakes bread, it washes your car for you, it does your pants, it balances your checkbook.

Weber: I need to get some of that philosophy.

Leask: There are little crevices in every ... The old Leonard Cohen poem, there's a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in. Well, that's how the philosophy gets in too. So yes, philosophy bakes bread, and then some.

Weber: So, how does it do that? What makes you say that?

Leask: I don't know. Maybe it's because it's the 21st century and there's just so much going on, and there's so much information, and we're in front of screens all the time and stuff is flying at us, and I don't know how a decent thinker can get through a day in the 21st century without having some filter. I think he'd go nuts without it, so from a very practical everyday standpoint, it's your filter, it's the net that catches all the debris that's trying to sneak through. I think if nothing else, if that's all any kid gets from our materials, it's just the notion that I don't have to just suck up anything that comes at me. I can stop, and I can pause, and I can question something, that's fine. If they never read Plato's Republic, great, okay. I hope they do, but you if they don't, that's fine. But if that's the only thing you get from it, awesome. I think that's a practical application for any age group.

Weber: Very nice. We recently had great Nick Caltagiarone in the show, and he was talking about how philosophy helps kids avoid being taken in by nonsense.

Leask: Yes.

Weber: We're planning on having Michael Lynch on soon, who's at the University of Connecticut, and he's got a book out about Knowing More and Understanding Less in the Internet Age basically.

Leask: Yes. Well, that's a really good way to put it.

Weber: We're going to talk with him soon, and that, I think overlaps very nicely with what you're getting at.

Cashio: Finding the cracks for the light to get through, I love that image.

Weber: Well, as you know, Amy, we want to make sure people know the serious side of philosophy, as well as the lighter side. So we call our next short bit, "Philosofunnies".

Cashio: Say philosophunnies.

3-Year-Old Sam: Philosofunnies.

Cashio: Say philosophunnies.

3-Year-Old Sam: Philosophunnies.

Weber: So, we'd love to hear if you've got a favorite joke, or a funniest fact, or a story about philosophy, what's something funny from your experience, any of that. Have you got a joke or a funny story to tell?

Leask: When I was thinking about this, they bleed together. If you do philosophy with kids, it's nonstop. So I've had conversations with kids about whether boogers are real, or the whole hall is Superman-

Weber: How could you do that?

Leask: Is Superman a better person-

Cashio: Boogers are the most real.

Leask: There you go. Is Superman a better person than Batman, there's a lot of that. So when you work with kids, you get a lot of that. But I kind of like my philosophical humor in one liners, and I have a collection of T-shirts and mugs and stuff at home. I have swag-

Cashio: Wait, why does Batman have to hide his face? What's he hiding? Clearly Superman's a better person.

Leask: -you get into this.

Cashio: I want to know about the swag-

Weber: Yeah, tell us about the swag and the one liners.

Leask: I spent a lot of time online, being in the digital business, so I have a T-shirt with a picture of Descartes, the quintessential picture of him where he's looking snooty and underneath it says-

Weber: Yes, he did that.

Leask: He's looking down his nose at the rest of us. And it says [foreign 00:56:34] on the bottom of it.

Weber: That is funny.

Leask: Yeah. I saw one the other day, what did it say? Is it solipsistic in here, is it just me?

Cashio: That's always been one of my favorites.

Leask: And I have a mug at home, my coffee mug or my team mug, it says: "I Kant even" on it, with a K.

Weber: I can't even, yeah, that's good.

Cashio: I can't even handle this. Pun puns are always welcome in my-

Weber: That's right. I love it. I need to get some T-shirt, this sounds great. Excellent. Well, Anthony and I always make sure to try, and gather some, and we usually find maybe two or four or something like that. And today we were thinking about kid jokes, because you're going to come across kid jokes if you talk through ideas with kids. So Anthony and I actually have a few more than usual, but I think we were excited to tell these if you don't mind bearing with us as we tell you some of these.

Leask: Yes.

Cashio: Rapid fire this.

Weber: Rapid fire.

Cashio: What do you call something that's orange, and sounds like a parrot?

Weber: I don't know.

Cashio: A carrot.

Weber: All right. What do you call a fish with no eyes?

Cashio: What's that?

Weber: A [fsh 00:57:48].

Cashio: What's Beethoven's favorite fruit?

Weber: I don't know.

Cashio: Ba-na-na-naaaaa...

Weber: All right. What did one snowman say to the other?

Cashio: What's that?

Weber: Do you smell carrots?

Cashio: How do you fix a broken tuba?

Weber: I don't know, how do you do that?

Cashio: With a tuba glue.

Weber: Last but not least, you got to go ahead and answer this for me. What do you call cheese that isn't yours?

Leask: It's Nacho cheese.

Weber: Nacho cheese, that's right. Yes I can tell you have a kid at home. Awesome.

Cashio: All right. Last but not least, we do want to take advantage of the fact that we have powerful social media that allow for two-way communications even for programs like radio show. So we want to invite our listeners to send us their thoughts about big questions that we raised on the show. I think we raised several today.

Weber: Indeed, given that Amy, we'd love to hear your thoughts about what question you think we should pose for our listeners for a segment that we call, "You Tell Me", have you got a question you propose for our listeners?

Leask: Yeah, working in the digital, being on social media a lot, something that pops into my head a lot is the question, are we entitled to our opinions? And all the fun questions that go with that too, I actually posted something about that on Reddit last week, and it went kaboom.

Weber: I believe it.

Leask: So it's on people's minds. That's what I'm thinking about these days.

Weber: Folks we want to hear your opinion about whether or not you're entitled to your opinion.

Cashio: You might not be entitled to your opinion about your opinions, specifically-

Weber: I don't know, are you entitled to your opinion of your opinion? Am in, here we go.

Cashio: Well, thank you everyone for listening to this episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership, your host Anthony Cashio and Eric Weber, are really grateful to have been joined this morning by Amy Leask. Thank you again Amy. Thank you for joining us.

Leask: Thank you. This was fun.

Cashio: We hope you 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 the specific questions we raised for you today, are you actually entitled to your opinion? That's a good one.

Weber: Remember folks, you can catch us on Twitter, Facebook and on our website, at philosophybakesbread.com, and there you'll find transcripts for many episodes thanks to Drake bowling, an undergraduate philosophy student at the University of Kentucky. Thank you Drake.

Cashio: Thanks, Drake.

Weber: And one more thing folks, if you want to support the show or to be more involved in the work of the society of philosophers in America, the easiest thing to do is to go learn about what it takes to be a member of the society by heading to philosophersinamerica.com.

Cashio: And if you're enjoying the show, take a second to review and rate us on iTunes or Google Play or your favorite app to get podcasts, and you can of course, email us at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com, and you can also call and leave us a short recorded message with a question or comment that we may be able to play on the show. We really do love to hear from our listeners, they can reach us 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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