

## Is the Cross-Examined Life Worth Living?

*Transcribed by Drake Boling, August 17, 2017*



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### **[Intro music]**

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### **[Theme music]**

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

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

**Weber:** *Philosophy Bakes Bread* airs on WRFL Lexington 88.1 FM, and is recorded and distributed as a podcast next. If you can't catch us live on the air, subscribe and you can reach out to us. You can find us online at [philosophybakesbread.com](http://philosophybakesbread.com) We hope you'll reach out to us on any of the topics we raise, or on topics that you want us to bring up. Plus, we have a segment called, "You Tell me!" Listen for it and let us know what you think.

**Cashio:** You can reach out to us in a number of ways. We are on twitter as @PhilosophyBB, which stands for *Philosophy Bakes Bread*, no surprise, on Facebook at Philosophy Bakes Bread,

**Weber:** You can of course email us at [philosophybakesbread@gmail.com](mailto:philosophybakesbread@gmail.com) or call us and leave a short, recorded message with a question, or a comment, or bountiful praise that we may be able to play on the show at 859-257-1849. 859-257-1849.

**Cashio:** On today's show, we are very fortunate to be joined by Chris Tatem, a clerk of courts in Wyoming and the host of a new podcast called *The Cross-Examined Life*: elevating the art of disagreement through cross-examination of controversial topics. You can download and subscribe the show at [crossexaminedlife.com](http://crossexaminedlife.com)

**Weber:** Chris grew up in a household where innovation, scientific discovery, and adventure were all encouraged, but there wasn't much encouragement about questioning the values, priorities, and beliefs of others, he told us. Throughout his childhood Chris found himself raising his hand to ask additional questions in class and questioning his parents until they were stumped—in part because of his general curiosity for the world, and in part because he likes pushing people to the edge of their comfort zone with challenging questions. He found, however, that most people don't like being questioned and they don't like having their beliefs and strategies second-guessed. This became particularly important for Chris when he fell in love with Socrates and Plato in college, he told me over email, and he started to write his own Socratic dialogues under a professor who writes almost entirely in the Socratic dialogue format.

**Cashio:** After completing his studies, Chris began working in the field of criminal justice and gets to witness talented attorneys and judges on a daily basis who know how to ask questions that cut to the quick of the matter in front of them. Chris has taken his love of question asking to the airwaves to host *Cross-Examined Life* podcast, which is a weekly debate-themed show in which guests defend controversial opinions and have their opinions cross-examined by the show's hosts. We'll be sure to talk about that in just a minute, but Chris, how are you doing today?

**Chris Tatem:** I'm doing great. I'm really glad to be here on the show.

**Cashio:** We're very glad to have you here. Our first segment, for anyone who hasn't listened before, we call it "Know Thyself!" We're going to cross-examine you now about the most important topic that one can talk about in philosophy: self knowledge. Do you know yourself? Tell us a little bit about yourself, a little more detail about your study and love of philosophy and what philosophy means to you. Tell us about yourself, Chris.

**Tatem:** Absolutely. I would love to. It feels like growing up every time I would raise my hand in class, other kids would snicker or the teacher would take a deep sigh before calling on me or sometimes not calling on me at all. "There goes Chris asking one more question", or other kids would be like, "Put your hand down. We just want to go out to recess." There I was with this insatiable curiosity. I wanted to know and it was more than curiosity too. I would hear people say things and it wouldn't resonate, they wouldn't add up. I would think, "Is that right? Is that actually true? Does that person really believe the thing they just said?" I would want to question that and poke it and prod it, and they didn't like that. Nobody likes that, for the most part. Don't you know, in high school I was taking a philosophy class, and it wasn't even optional, it was required at my school. The teacher gave us this required assignment to write a Socratic dialogue. You can imagine, for most first-time assignments, if you don't know what the thing is, you're going to go find examples of it to write something similar. I was after a Socratic dialogue, and I remember asking my parents if we have any examples, and they said, "Oh we have books by this philosophy professor who loves writing in the Socratic dialogue format. Why don't you read some of his books? Then you will be able to construct the dialogue. I started diving in to those books and I remember reading one of them and I felt really empowered to write a Socratic dialogue after I had finished it, since I had seen this professor undertake the same thing. I don't remember what the topic was I wrote about for the class, but I wound up writing it and my teacher at that time, senior in high school, he ended up loving it, "This is amazing. So happy to see you did this." It just seemed like a natural fit to go to a college where I could study under that professor who so understood my love of asking challenging questions.

**Weber:** Do you remember any particular cases or examples where you were stubborn about some issue or matter that other people didn't want to be asked about but they felt very confident about it and so forth. Does anything stand out? Sometimes it's perhaps someone's opinion about which singer is the best, or maybe it's a religious belief?

**Tatem:** I remember in high school my school had a fairly active, it was a Catholic school, and it had a fairly active pro-life club. I remember getting involved with it early on because that was the culture in which I had grown up, some family dynamics and stuff as well, kind of encouraged that sort of position. I remember talking with some other students about it and basically wanting them to care, wanting for them to adopt this issue as theirs too. I remember asking them questions like, "If you care about human life, how could you not care about this issue? If you love other people how could you not care about this issue?" People were basically like, "Go away. Don't talk to me." They were not interested in that. I have since come to have a more holistic understanding about what it is to care about human life and what it is to love other people.

**Weber:** You're a natural born gadfly huh? You don't happen to have a copy of that Socratic dialogue you wrote in high school, do you?

**Tatem:** I'm sure I have it somewhere. Perhaps I could bring it up during a commercial break. I'm sure it's on one of these hard drives I keep here at work.

**Weber:** What was it about philosophy that you really enjoyed so much? Was it just the fact that you get to ask these particular questions? Is it that there adults out there who were role models who do the things that you love to do? What was it about philosophy that you enjoyed so much?

**Tatem:** i think what I love about philosophy is the way that it opens your mind to new possibilities and allows you to see a perspective and a set of ideas from a position that you have never before considered. Whether you are the one asking questions and gaining new knowledge, or you are the one being quizzed by someone else, inevitably you're going to leave a philosophical discussion more educated and more challenged to see the world differently than when you started. That's fascinating to me.

**Cashio:** Right on. Chris, you work in the legal field, which we'll talk more about soon, but was there a direct flow from your studies of philosophy...

**Tatem:** I have always had an interest in the way that attorneys do their work back and forth, and I always thought it would be fascinating to work in an environment with other litigators who are daily in court going back and forth about tough issues. I wanted to put myself in a position where I could be in court all of the time to see attorneys battling it out over the toughest issues and really see talented orators speaking about issues that matter their clients and trying to present them in the most persuasive way that they can to present them to judges and juries.

**Weber:** Chris, we asked you a little bit about who you are and how you came to philosophy and we have heard that. The next question is, given who you are and your interests and so forth and your experience, what do you take philosophy to be exactly?

**Tatem:** We are taught early on that philosophy is at its core a love of knowledge, but I think in an information age where knowledge can be synonymous with the entirety of Wikipedia, just loving all of the Wikipedia entries is not sufficient. I would better describe philosophy, at least its role in my life, as a love of inquiry. It's a love of gaining an understanding and a love of

hearing new thoughts and opinions that challenge your own. That, to me, is what philosophy is all about and it's what I love.

**Weber:** One of the distinctions that some in the tradition make is between knowledge and wisdom. In general, a lot of people try to push toward the love of wisdom, but there is a lot of pushback where people just focus on knowledge. In the field of philosophy, there is a lot of focus on what knowledge is. The field that we call epistemology. I appreciate that you look beyond just knowledge and think more about why it matters which is more understanding and inquiry. That's very healthy.

**Tatem:** I would even add to that, if I may, that a love of wisdom is important, and there are a lot of wise people in the world, but I think frequently we confuse and conflate experience with wisdom, or we conflate tradition with wisdom. Sometimes we can approach people with experience or an institution with a lot of tradition, and ask that person or institution for the answer, suspecting that they have wisdom, and we can fall in love with the answer that we receive. I think that we would be better suited to, instead of falling in love with the answers, is to ask more questions.

**Weber:** It is certainly the case that there are a lot of people that are very experienced and they think they are very wise. I remember, for instance, learning about Jack Welch, he was this businessman who presided over company's growth. I say growth but in the process he fired an awful lot of people. Is this good leadership? Does it mean coming into big companies and firing lots of people? He seems to think so. This is troubling. Drawing from one's own singular case in that way can't possibly be what we mean by wisdom and leadership, I hope.

**Cashio:** He grew his bank account.

**Weber:** That's right. In the field of philosophy, because you went on to study that in college, right? In the field of philosophy, what fields were of greatest interest to you?

**Tatem:** I was particularly interested in the intersection between religion and philosophy and the way that religious traditions have appropriated or appropriated certain religious traditions. Looking back on my studies now, I can say it's interesting to me how traditional Christianity in a lot of ways embraces Socrates and embraced Descartes and embraces Kierkegaard, but when you start getting up to Nietzsche and more 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers and especially 21<sup>st</sup> century philosophers, you're going to see a wholesale rejection from some of those more traditional religions and viewpoints. I think there is a degree to which some religions reject philosophical systems and modes of inquiry that don't serve their purposes and appropriate those that do.

**Cashio:** Can you mention what you mean? The Christian systems rejecting atheistic philosophers?

**Tatem:** There's two schools of thought around absolute truth. Moral relativism vs. moral absolutism. I think there is probably some strong arguments in favor of both, but I see time and time again Christians unwilling to engage those who see value in moral relativism, saying that if you want to have that conversation, it's a non-starter, they're not going to engage because it's a silly conversation to have in the first place.

**Weber:** There are certainly limits to any number of people's point of view about what they are willing to find interesting or to converse about. This is where the gadfly comes in and asks questions that some people don't want to answer. So Chris is one of these people who likes to

push the envelope and push people a little big in some of these questions. The gadfly isn't here to make people comfortable. It's the bug that stings the horse of the mind in the rear end and gets it racing. Thanks so much, Chris. We're going to come right back, everybody. Thanks for listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. This is Dr. Eric Weber with Dr. Anthony Cashio, my co-host, and we are talking with Chris Tatem of *The Cross-Examined Life* podcast. We'll be right back after a short break.

**Cashio:** Welcome back everyone to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. This is Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber and we are today talking with Chris Tatem. HE is a philosopher who is also a clerk of courts in Wyoming and the host of the *Cross-Examined Life* podcast. In the first segment, we got to ask you about your life and how you got into philosophy and how it lead you into becoming a clerk of courts. Maybe you could tell us more about that. Maybe you could tell us more about where you work and what a clerk of courts does.

**Tatem:** Absolutely. Like so many industries and factories, there is always a behind-the-scenes. It's like the inside tour you want to take. It's just the same in the legal profession. Behind the scenes there is so many documents to process, so many things that are filed. Motions and hearing letters that are docketed. Those all have to be provided to the judge and they have to be brought up to the court room everyday so the judge knows what's going on with a case. He doesn't actually keep a stack of files in his back room. They are all brought up to him from the clerk's office. The clerk of court is responsible for docketing all of the document that are brought into court, for making sure that they are kept in an organized manner and for making sure that when a judge or jury or attorney needs documents they are readily available for review. I make sure that my judge has the files that he needs and I make sure that they are ready to go and they are organized. If an attorney hands me a document that's incomplete, I hand it right back to them and I tell them to fix it. That way I get to be in a courtroom with a judge and with attorneys on a daily basis, watching them strut their stuff around the court room.

**Cashio:** Sound like you have a front row seat to what is going on in the legal profession.

**Tatem:** I really do. I feel very lucky for my job.

**Weber:** Very cool. Chris, judges generally have to make decisions based on some kind of precedent, some rule or established decision-making procedure. Given that, are most cases cut-and-dry and straightforward, intellectually speaking, or are they actually interesting? If so, how so?

**Tatem:** Great question. I would say most cases that go to trial are especially interesting and the cases that resolve in negotiated resolutions are more cut and dry. Where it is clear what the answer is going to be, one attorney says to the other, "While I can't argue with you, the law is pretty well-defined here, let's just resolve this in some kind of negotiation." Where the law is a little fuzzy and vague, where it has been muddled over the years by human attempts to fix it, that is where you have two attorneys interpreting it differently, that is where you go to trail and have a jury resolve this.

**Cashio:** The aim of philosophy is the love of wisdom, as we've talked about, and the shared pursuit of truth. Do you find the adversarial nature of legal argumentation contrary to the aims of philosophy? Or would you say that lawyers and judges are philosophical? I know the Socratic method in their debates, but is there something about the adversarial nature of it that works counter to philosophical pursuit?

**Tatem:** That's a really good question. The short answer to your question is, that you're right. It is contrary in a lot of ways to philosophical pursuit. What the attorneys aren't really doing is trying to gain a new perspective. They are trying to reinforce their existing perspective and help the jury believe that. They are trying to sell this package of goods to the jury. I think where there is room for some philosophy is where you take this outside thing called the law and you take that to bear on the facts of this particular case. There you start making syllogisms and saying that these are the things we have to prove to you happened in the case in order to find the person guilty of say, burglary. Here are all of the elements I have to prove and let me show you how all of the facts you've heard today establish those elements. That's where lawyers become philosophers in making logically sequenced arguments to a jury, and that is where you hope that they are talented enough philosophers that they can make that in an easy enough way to understand and have the jury grasp it and wrap their minds around it and say, "Oh yes, I see that those elements are met for these reasons." Yes, Anthony. As a philosophical inquiry, it's not similar to a college classroom where new ideas are being discussed.

**Cashio:** I was going to talk about sophistry. You were talking about Socratic dialogues earlier.

**Weber:** What is sophistry, Anthony?

**Cashio:** The sophists were a group of teachers in Athens and Greece at the time, going around and teaching people how to be wise, but what they really did was teach people how to argue in court cases. In these Socratic dialogues, Socrates is often arguing with the Sophists. I'm wondering if there isn't a level of sophistry in the legal profession. Everyone is trying to argue their side as best as you can, but you're right. You're not being a good lawyer if you let the other side get too many points, so to speak. You're not really doing your job.

**Tatem:** I would say lawyering is absolutely polished sophistry to the extent that you are trying to come out with the best argument. I think where a lawyer really lands their argument like a gymnast landing a jump, is where it's not only a good argument because it's persuasive and has all of the elements of good communication, but it also just rings true. It makes sense and the logic is consistent throughout. That then becomes a combination of being a good Sophist but also a good philosopher.

**Weber:** For the sake of our listeners, I want to say a little more about the nature of sophistry. In the dialogues we get from Plato, Socrates is talking to these people who are very famous for knowing this or knowing that. What Socrates is really famous for is asking people questions who are known for knowing stuff, famous for knowing stuff, and asks them questions. It so often turns out that they really don't know what they are talking about. It's embarrassing, it's upsetting. Socrates is this gadfly and those people that proclaim to be wise turn out to be pretty ignorant. The big thing that Socrates knows is that he is aware of his own ignorance. The thing about the Sophists, though, the sophists are the enemy to Socrates. I do think today a good attorney can be very thoughtful and philosophical. At the same time, in a sense, the role you have to play sometimes is to give the best case you can even for something if it isn't true or right. The absolutely guilty person is entitled to the best defense you can get anyway.

**Cashio:** That is one of the virtues of our legal system, I would argue.

**Weber:** Or is it one of the vices?

**Tatem:** Public defenders and other defense attorneys would argue that they are not presenting false arguments to the court or to the jury, but that they are forcing the government to meet

their burden of proof, which is proof beyond a reasonable doubt. They are just holding the government to their burden of proof rather than just making false claims. That's their argument.

**Weber:** Let me be devil's advocate for a minute, because that may be the case for some perhaps noble attorneys, but then there is this story of Abe Denison, this one guy who would put a wealthy businessman in an \$80 suit and would make sure he had a bus pass sticking out of his pocket. He would do little things like that to make this guy more like the common man, when he might have shown up in his \$15,000 otherwise, in a Rolls Royce driving up to the courthouse. An attorney will also, not the attorneys that you watch, who are noble attorneys, but there are attorneys out there who want to make things look in the right way so as to be most persuasive, whether or not there is real substance behind that. This is me being the most skeptical kind of Socrates we can offer. What do you think about those kinds of cases? Are those immoral?

**Tatem:** I don't think they are immoral any more than politicians who go out and hang out with people that they don't ordinarily hang out with are immoral.

**Weber:** That's a low bar. (laughter)

**Tatem:** It may be, but collectively as a society, we have decided that the politician going to the steelworkers plant in Detroit is doing something not super impressive, but also not immoral. I think that's what we decide as a society. We still allow them to do that and to get away with it and we applaud them when they are there and you are in the audience.

**Weber:** The important thing as I take it is that they are making sure to hold the prosecution to the standard that they ought to be able to meet.

**Cashio:** Since we are talking about sophistry, I have another follow up question to this. Maybe you have seen this, Chris, while you are clerking and you get to see all of the lawyers and judges. One of the concerns with sophistry and that Plato had with the sophists, and you maybe can have this with lawyers and politicians, is that when they make good arguments and they win their cases, they also make the mistake that because they make good arguments and win the cases, that they are also good people. They are better than others. Do you see this a lot with lawyers who are really good and they make the mistake that they go from good lawyering to being good persons? You can say the same thing about politicians with the example you were just talking about.

**Tatem:** I do see that. I think more so than other professions, lawyers identify their most intimate sense of personhood with their profession. Inside the legal profession they often talk about how lawyers basically help other people for a living and when necessary they charge a fee. Of course we know that that point has some elements of truth to it...The point is that they see themselves as helpers and as saviors in some sense when someone is in a real bind. For a lawyer who is on a consistent streak of wins after wins or success after success in the courtroom, you do often see a lawyer who is a little puffed up and proud of themselves and is proud of the ways in which they have helped other people. I think that often does influence how they treat other people and interact with members of their community.

**Weber:** Interesting. Chris, in the next segment we're going to ask you about your podcast, but before we get to that, I want to think about this from the point of view of a clerk of the courts. When you hear all these attorneys and judges ask questions, a big-picture question I have as a philosopher is to ask what makes a good question in the legal profession? What makes a

question a good one? We said there are certain differences between the legal profession and being a good philosopher.

**Tatem:** I think questions asked in the legal world take one of three forms. Some of them are more useful than others. One of those might be that if you have put a witness on the stand that you want the judge or the jury to hear from, you're going to ask that witness a series of questions that you already know the answer to, but you want everyone else to hear so that they can learn and be educated. It's an educational process. The second kind of questions are when that witness said something that you didn't necessarily plan for, and that you didn't know about ahead of time or you didn't expect. They're going to say something and you may ask a follow-up question and say, "Tell me more about that," or, "I don't remember us talking about that. Can you explain that?" That is really a question seeking new information. A curiosity question. Now the third type, and the type we see most often on television, is the rhetorical question. That comes when the other side has presented a witness and now it's your turn to take down that witness, and to show that that witness isn't as credible as they want everyone to believe they are, or that witness isn't as truthful or reliable as they suggest. So you ask a series of rhetorical questions picking at them and chipping away and poking at them to show that what they just told the court isn't really the full story. That's what we call cross-exam. I think those questions can be, not the most interesting, but the most useful for achieving a lawyer's objectives.

**Cashio:** I bet they make for some good philosophy too.

**Tatem:** They do, especially when people give contradicting responses and when presented with them, try to rationalize away seeming contradictions.

**Weber:** That does sound Socratic, right there especially. Thanks everybody for listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. We're going to come back after a short break here with Chris Tatem who is the host of *The Cross-Examined Life* podcast. You're going to hear from me also, Eric Weber, and my co-host Anthony Cashio. Thanks everybody, for listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*.

**Cashio:** Welcome back everyone to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. It is your pleasure this afternoon to be listening to Dr. Eric Weber and Dr. Anthony Cashio, and it is our pleasure to be speaking with our guest today Chris Tatem. Chris is the host of *The Cross Examined Life* podcast, which is really fantastic, if you haven't heard it yet. Chris, we want to talk to you about your podcast. Why did you start it? What did you hope to accomplish with it? Tell us about it!

**Tatem:** *Cross-Examined Life Podcast* is all about improving the way that we disagree with one another and its genesis goes back to the 2016 presidential election, during which my wife and I committed to watch every single debate, and we were going to watch them with one another, even when they got brutal.

**Cashio:** A drinking game involved? A crying game?

**Weber:** Even the primaries?

**Tatem:** Even the primaries. Even when people didn't want to watch them anymore, they said, "I'm done. I've had it. I'm turning it off." We kept watching. We watched every one. What was pressed upon me by September, was that people, certainly presidential candidates, but I'm going to say people at large, have a fundamental inability to disagree productively.



**Cashio:** I think you're wrong. (laughter)

**Tatem:** People are poor at disagreeing with one another. They are bad at listening to one another, and they are especially bad once they get into arguments at staying on the point, continuing down the thread that they were on and not letting rabbit trails taking them in directions that they have no business and actually no interest in going down. As this was going on, as I was watching the tenor of public discourse in our country unravel at lightning speed, it occurred to me that perhaps if there was a space in which people could thoughtfully and respectfully disagree with one another over controversial issues that really matter, that that could provide a place for people to get a new idea of what it might be like to disagree. Even when it is important to you, even when you really care, how could you disagree more thoughtfully and respectfully? That's what we try to do on the *Cross-Examined Life Podcast*.

**Weber:** Is one of the things you focus on the relationship between hand size and genitalia for men?

**Tatem:** Strangely, that hasn't come up yet and I doubt that it will.

**Weber:** It sounds like torture to watch all of those debates.

**Tatem:** I wouldn't wish it upon anyone but the fact that it gave origins to this podcast is something that I'm grateful for.

**Cashio:** It's good to know that something positive has come out of the debates.

**Weber:** You've told us a little bit about the origins of it, but there is a basic idea behind the show. You work in a legal setting and you call the show *The Cross-Examined Life*. Tell us about the basic idea behind the show with respect to cross-examination. Explain that to us.

**Tatem:** Socrates is credited with saying that the unexamined life is not worth living. The profession in which I work says something similar but different. The legal profession says that if you really want to know the truth, if you really want to know the underlying cold, hard truth, all you have to do is cross-examine someone. If you ask them enough probing, tough questions, eventually they will crack, they will break, and you'll see what's really going on. I said, "Yeah, the unexamined life is not worth living. What about the cross-examined life? What about a life where every position and every idea is cross-examined, subject to those intense scrutinizing questions and poking and prodding, to tear away the façade and reveal what is really underneath? That would answer two things. One is that the legal profession is correct that the cross-exam is the best way to get to the truth. Two, is that format a better way of disagreeing? The incessant question asking and poking and prodding a better way of approaching a subject that is difficult to talk about.

**Weber:** A guest on your show is someone who wants to be cracked and broken?

**Tatem:** Exactly. They are so difficult to find.

**Cashio:** What have you found? You just posed two questions. Have you come to some beginning conclusions or beginning thoughts in answering those?

**Tatem:** I have come to some, and I appreciate the question. It gives me a little space to reflect on the realization that questions are incredibly valuable and I love asking them. I'm finding more and more that there are some things that that I just want to affirmatively say. That you

can't have a full and complete disagreement with just the questions. You can reveal the inadequacies with someone else's position or where it falls short in some ways, but you can't fully explain why you support something with just questions. Our legal profession tells us to do something funny with those. It says, "Just couch that position of yours inside of a question, inside of a rhetorical question". You basically state your whole position and you say, "Isn't that true?" I'm not convinced that's the most sincere way of engaging a disagreement.

**Cashio:** Philosophers do that as well. In conferences you see it all the time.

**Weber:** Socrates over and over again tries to say that he knows nothing, but when you read *The Republic*, he seems to have an awful lot of opinions. Let's see. How do you choose your guests for the show, and what makes a topic worthy? What makes something pressing such that you want to cross-examine that?

**Tatem:** Let me take your second question first, and then I'll tell you about the guests. When I'm choosing a topic for the show I always tell guests that as they choose the topic that is important to them, it should be both important to a lot of people, and it should be one about which reasonable people disagree. I have had people propose things that could be wildly controversial between like 500 people on the planet because I know nobody else cares about that issue, and have had people propose things, this seems to be more popular, people would propose something that lots of people care about but the way they frame it isn't especially controversial, or most people kind of agree on one position and not the other. I try to walk that line with my guests and a lot of times it leads to conversations ahead of time where I'll get on Skype with a guest and talk about: "What are some things you care about and what are some ways we can frame that around public controversies we see?" Finding a guest oftentimes is talking to past guests and saying, "Do you know someone who would enjoy being on my show?" Almost always, they say, "I know someone", or "I know two people." Then talking with friends and family who write in and say, "I really like your show. I like what you're doing", I say, "Do you have a suggestion for a guest?" Almost always they have someone to plug me into and say, "You need to talk to this person."

**Weber:** I can tell you now, you need to talk to Dr. Anthony Cashio because he's terrific.

**Cashio:** I hear good things about him.

**Tatem:** Do you have a lot of strong opinions?

**Cashio:** I'll have to think about that. Probably. I don't know if I can defend them but I have them.

**Tatem:** I appreciate your honesty.

**Weber:** Do you want to be cracked and broken, Anthony?

**Cashio:** I'm having a masochistic day, so yes. (laughter)

**Tatem:** You know what's funny, I have a lot of people tell me that they don't have an opinion that they think they could talk about, and I think that's an inherent mistake. I think everybody on the planet have some things that they feel very strongly about. The best way to get at what that is, I think, is to think about the last week or two. When were you in a situation where someone said something that you thought was wrong, mistaken, or misguided, and you got up on a mini-soapbox and just for a couple minutes, explained to them the way that thing really is

and really appears to. Those are the things that you really care about and that you can talk and defend for a long time. People often forget that they have that.

**Cashio:** Do you have an example of some of the topics you've talked about for our listeners who haven't heard your show but are like, "Oh, I should check that out. It sounds awesome"?

**Tatem:** Most recently, my guest defended the position that driverless cars should not be widely implemented for a host of reasons that related to safety and who we are as a society, he thinks they are just a bad move. Before that, my guest came on and said that the use of the word 'terrorism' or 'terrorist' should be absolutely be done away with. We have no business using those words because they are not helpful in the English language and they lead people to wrong suspicions. I thought that was a really bold claim. I thought that she was going to have a completely uphill battle, and in many ways she did. But by the end of the episode, something curious happened, and I encourage you to check it out to see the question she wound up turning on me and see how I responded to it.

**Weber:** Watch out folks, there's the hook to get you in there.

**Tatem:** I have had more possibly extreme positions defended. One of those is that anarchy is not a crazy idea for the United States, and another is that voting for a candidate that you expect to lost in a presidential race is a pretty good idea, and finally that every single solitary word of the bible is directly from God's mouth.

**Weber:** Including the fact that the hare chews the cud? Because the hare means the rabbit and rabbits don't chew cud. Maybe the Lord was playing with us on that line.

**Cashio:** Rabbits are just not doing it right.

**Weber:** Maybe the rabbits back then chewed cud.

**Tatem:** It has been a wild ride, and so far if nothing else, it has taught me that opinions that I first thought were crazy and out there like this thing about terrorism and self-driving cars, there's actually legitimate opinions about why someone might feel that way. I can totally see their point of view. I might not agree with it, and I love the episodes where my guest feels the same way at the end and say, "I still feel strongly about my position, but you've helped me see a new perspective about this that I hadn't previously considered."

**Cashio:** That's fantastic. I think that really gets at the heart of what you're doing is really special, teaching the art of disagreement. How can two people who are on two different sides of the thing can come down and listen to each other. Do you have any advice for our listeners on how they can be better listeners, better disagree-ers, better healthy arguers in their own lives?

**Tatem:** Yeah, absolutely. I'll say that I give, at the end of each episode, tips that people can employ when they are in a disagreement. Sometimes it's ten tips and sometimes it's just four or five tips, but they are always very practical things you can use when you are in a disagreement to improve the way you disagree. One of those things is to define important words that you are using early on. We often find ourselves ten, twenty minutes into a conversation and then we realize that us and our conversation partner have been defining a word totally differently. To define that word early on sets really clear boundaries about what you're talking about and disagreement wise. I also think that if someone isn't hearing you they are not understanding what you're trying to say, we often will say the same thing in slightly different words, or we'll say the same thing in the exact same words and we'll say, "As I told you before..." and we'll just

repeat ourselves. To me, that's as silly as talking to someone who doesn't speak English louder in English because you hope that they'll understand you.

**Cashio:** That doesn't work? Oops!

**Tatem:** When someone is not hearing you, you need to frame your position in a different way and put yourself in their shoes for a moment and say, "What words and what phrasing of this might work differently for me to be able to understand this?" I also find that we interrupt people very frequently. When we have this idea, we're just waiting for this half a second pause and we want to jump in and ram the next point down their throat. More than anything else, the one tip that I've been seeing repeat itself over and over again is: Wait for the person to finish speaking before you come back with a new idea.

**Weber:** ...(pause) Just like that? (laughter)

**Cashio:** You leave the pause in this time, Eric.

**Weber:** Let me be blunt here, you must work around some nice attorneys or something, because most people tell pretty mean jokes about attorneys. Why emulate one? Basically are people's prejudices against attorneys undeserved?

**Tatem:** Yes. We all have different prejudices around lots of professionals, whether they are doctors or coal miners or auto mechanics.

**Weber:** Or professors.

**Tatem:** By and large, only very few of those things are true. You do see some attorneys living out the stereotypes and the jokes. I think it is a community of people who, like doctors, have a skill that they want to use to help others.

**Weber:** Right on. Thank you everybody, for listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*, but when you get a chance at the next opportunity, go check out *The Cross Examined Life*, because you're hearing here some pretty good advice from Chris Tatem, the host of *The Cross-Examined Life*. We'll be back with one last segment, me, Dr. Eric Weber, with my co-host Dr. Anthony Cashio. Thanks again for listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*.

**Cashio:** Welcome back, everyone. This is Dr. Anthony Cashio with Dr. Eric Weber and you are listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. Eric and I are sitting down today with Chris Tatem, who is the host of *The Cross-Examined Life* podcast, and we spoke about it in the last segment. In this last little segment we're going to go over some big-picture questions, some lighthearted thoughts, and we'll end with a pressing philosophical question for our listeners. Before we get to all of the fun...Well, it's all fun. Chris, we wanted to talk to you and ask if you had any big-picture thoughts, idea you want to share with everyone, our listeners. You got one shot here. Go for it. Don't blow it. No pressure.

**Tatem:** I will say this. Although philosophy, by and large, doesn't happen in the courtroom, what does happen in the courtroom gives us tools that we can use in other areas of life. Everyday in the courtroom, there's explosive opinions and wild disagreement happening in a very intense way. The rules and the structure and the forms of questions that have evolved out of that are

very useful for controlling that chaos. If we can translate and transpose those rules and those systems and those forums that ask questions from the courtroom to other areas of our life where there is chaos or disagreement or dispute, I think we'll all be better off for it.

**Weber:** Have you ever seen violence break out in a courtroom?

**Tatem:** Not yet. I know that it happens routinely.

**Weber:** That's a good example though. IF you've got people with varying strong disagreements or hot tempers, and they come together to reason and to hear a judgment and they don't end up in violence...

**Tatem:** Do you know who it is? It's the family members because the accused have accepted their fate to some degree, but it's always the family members who are like, "This could never happen to my kid," or "My kid would never do this," who go storming out of the room or say something inappropriate to the judge. They stand up in anger like, "This system is crooked", or something. It's always the family.

**Weber:** These are some cool thoughts about how we can consider what processes of inquiry and conversation occur in the courtroom that we might learn from and draw on outside of it and employ in the context of trying to seek out truth together, ideally, and not just to win my side.

**Tatem:** I would very much love to sit down with philosophers who say, "Let's attack this issue by each of us taking turns asking the other questions." That would be dreamy.

**Weber:** For what it's worth, there were a number of reasons that we wanted to talk with you, Chris. One of the obvious ones is that you have a philosophical podcast. That's one obvious reason. Another is that you're somebody who has some background in philosophy, have studied philosophy, and who sees it and its import in what you do other than being a philosophy professor. We really appreciate that and we see that. Given that, you have an especially good position from which to answer the question which inspires our show *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. So the question for you, Chris, is whether you would say that philosophy bakes bread. Or would you say that it doesn't? If you would say that it does, what would you say to people who would disagree?

**Tatem:** I would say that philosophy does bake bread. I would say that for the following reason. When you're talking about baking bread, you're talking about, not a person doing the work, a person can mix the ingredients, but ultimately the oven is the thing doing the baking. If you're talking about baking bread, you're not talking about selling it or marketing it or shipping it to another country. You're talking about literally baking bread without sales. I look at the role of an oven in baking bread, and an oven applies heat, creates a controlled environment. An oven encapsulates the whole thing. It's all around the thing being baked and applying that force or that element of heat on all sides of it to make a change happen. At its core, philosophy does exactly that. Philosophy applies this extra pressure, this extra element, this extra heat to all sides of an issue or all sides of a transaction or disagreement and says, "When this is encapsulated in philosophy, when this is encapsulated in inquiry and discussion, what happens?" The answer is that the same thing that happens in baking bread, that something new and totally different comes out of it. New perspectives are gained, new positions are originated and new thoughts are formed so that the end product doesn't look anything like the initial ingredients, but when you taste it you recognize where it came from. In that way, philosophy absolutely bakes bread.

**Weber:** I think we're done with the show. That's the conclusion to the series right there.

**Cashio:** That's great. I really like that. It's nice, it's thoughtful. Thank you, Chris. That was really fantastic.

**Tatem:** I love what you guys are doing with the show.

**Weber:** We're all done now, I think you've answered the question and we've concluded it. This is it. This is perfect. Beautiful use of the metaphor. I think you're right. We're transformed by the process.

**Cashio:** And it works well with the cross-examination, the heat the pressure. The cross examination gets the bread to rise.

**Tatem:** You guys are applying the heat to bake the bread, and I'm just raking people over the holes.

**Weber:** Bread does crack when you bake it, that's why you have to slice on the top. I guess we are preparing it to be broken, aren't we? The metaphor is about to be kicked as far as the dead horse.

**Cashio:** You do have to break bread to share it.

**Weber:** We are the same. We want things to be cracked and be broken.

**Cashio:** You break the bread, you share it. Let's tell some jokes, Eric. I don't have anything to add to what Chris said. I think that was good. Thank you.

**Weber:** As you know, Chris, we want people to see both the serious side of philosophy, and we've heard a good bit of that, as well as the lighter side. So in each episode we include a short segment that we call 'philosophunnies'.

**Weber:** Say 'philosophunnies'

**Sam:** Philosophunnies!

(laughter)

**Weber:** Say 'philosophunnies'

**Sam:** Philosophunnies!

(child's laughter)

**Weber:** We would love to hear from you, if you've got either a joke or a funny story to tell either about philosophy or the courtroom or your podcast, or what have you. Some funny story or a joke that we can tell our listeners. Have you got anything for us?

**Tatem:** I do. I've got a short story accompanied by a very short joke. Growing up, I would always try to push the boundaries and try to interpret things as literally as possible to find any loophole to benefit me, if you can imagine that. One time, I did something to get in trouble, and my parents told me that I wasn't allowed to ride my bike anymore. I was disappointed and sad,

and I was determined to keep having fun outside even though I was prohibited from riding my bike. But they didn't say anything about my sister's bike. So I got on her bike and I started riding it. Don't you know, I'm like 10 feet down the street, "Chris Tatem! Get inside right now! What are you doing on that bike?" "Mom, it's not my bike." She was not happy. I was brought back to that moment when I read this very short joke, because I was like, this basically encapsulates every question that I asked in my childhood. A guy shows up late for work, and the boss yells, "You should have been here at 8:30!" The guy replies, "Why? What happened at 8:30?" (laughter)

**Weber:** We have had a couple episodes recently involving children, and they have been pretty funny too. It's pretty hilarious how the expectations of children can really startle us and surprise us. Anthony and I gathered a few jokes, and we tend to find two, or maybe three or four, but in the case where we were going to talk with someone about cross-examined life and thinking about the courtroom setting, we found it pretty easy to find quite a few jokes. We've got a few for you now. Anthony, you want to tell the first one?

**Cashio:** I'm with Chris. I don't think all lawyers are bad.

**Weber:** But the jokes seem to suggest that they are.

**Cashio:** The jokes are good. How does an attorney sleep?

**Weber:** I don't know, Anthony. How does an attorney sleep?

**Cashio:** First he lies on one side, and then he lies on the other. (laughter).

**Weber:** The attorney tells the accused, "I have some good news and some bad news."

"Well what's the bad news?" asked the accused.

"The bad news is that your blood is all over the crime scene and the DNA tests prove you did it."

"So what's the good news?"

"Your cholesterol is 130." (laughter)

**Cashio:** Eric, it's important to know, how can you tell when an attorney is about to lie?

**Weber:** I don't know. How can you tell?

**Cashio:** Her lips begin to move.

**Weber:** A lawyer emailed a client: "Dear Jennifer, I thought I saw you on the street the other day. I crossed over to say hello, but it wasn't you, so I went back. 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an hour. \$30.00" (laughter) We've got two more.

**Cashio:** Tom says, "My father knew the exact day and time when he was going to die."

Bill says, "Wow! What an enlightened soul. How did it come to him?"

Tom says, "The judge told him." (laughter)

**Weber:** Last but not least, what is black and brown and looks good on a lawyer? A Doberman pinscher. (laughter)

**Cashio:** That was the worst of them all. We don't wish violence upon lawyers. At least not all lawyers. "My best friends are lawyers." Last but not least, we want to take advantage of the fact that we have powerful social media that allow 2-way communications even for programs like radio shows. WE want to invite our listeners to send us their thoughts about big questions that we have raised on the show.

**Weber:** Given that, Chris, we would love to know if you've got any particular questions that you propose we ask our listeners. Have you got a question for us to ask everybody?

**Tatem:** I have got a question for you to ask everybody, but like most of my questions, it's not going to be one that people are excited to answer, but I hope that they are willing to answer. The question is this: As you are speaking with others, do you actively listen, or are you just waiting for your turn to speak?

**Weber:** This is a question that is asking people to pay attention to how they engage with others for a while. If you are so inclined, let us know.

**Tatem:** I would love for people to respond and indicate if they are actively listening or just waiting for their turn to speak when someone else is talking. I think there is a big difference.

**Cashio:** I'm guessing if they answer in the latter, if they are just waiting for others to speak, that hopefully they will realize that and begin to practice more active listening in their lives or disagreement.

**Weber:** Waiting for their own chance to speak, right?

**Tatem:** I know that I live in both of these camps on a daily or hourly basis, but I try to live as much of my life as possible in the actively listening camp.

**Weber:** I think that's good advice. One more time, if you haven't yet done it, check out the *Cross-Examined Life* podcast. You'll enjoy it, and you'll be glad you did.

**Cashio:** Thank you everyone for listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*, food for thought about life and leadership. Your hosts, Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber are really grateful to have been joined today by Chris Tatem. Thank you again, Chris. This has been a really fantastic afternoon.

**Tatem:** It's been a pleasure. Thanks so much for having me.

**Cashio:** We hope you listeners will join us again in the future. Consider sending us your thoughts about what you heard today or what you would like to hear about in the future, or about the specific question that we've raised for you When you are speaking with others are you actively listening or are you just waiting your turn to jump in and speak? Let us know what you are doing in your own lives to be actively engaged and practicing disagreement in the full, healthy sense that we've eben talking about today.

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



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

**[Outro music]**