



# The Daily Show and Philosophy Moments of Zen in the Art of Fake News

Media In The City, September 08, 2007

URL: <http://www.pr9.net/business/marketing/6301september.html>

*The Daily Show has achieved an undeniable cultural significance. Want the real deal on fake news? Want to know how Jon Stewart stacks up against public intellectuals past and present? It's time to take "The Daily Show" seriously, says Jason Holt, Editor, "The Daily Show and Philosophy: Moments of Zen in the Art of Fake News", September 20, 2007. In "The Daily Show and Philosophy," noted philosophers look at topics such as "The Fake, the False and the Fictional: 'The Daily Show' as a News Source" and "Can 'The Daily Show' Save Democracy? Jon Stewart as the Gadfly of Gotham." Authors compare Plato's ideas of democracy with the show's coverage of American politics.*

PR9.NET September 08, 2007 - USA New York, NY – In a new book to be published by Wiley-Blackwell, "The Daily Show and Philosophy: Moments of Zen in the Art of Fake News", September 20, 2007, editor and contributor Jason Holt has assembled an impressive team of seventeen fellow philosophers who, in 19 chapters, take a good look at the Emmy and Peabody Award-winning "fake news" program, "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart".

"First of all," says Holt, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Communications at Acadia University, "The Daily Show is funny. It provides a unique take on the media and culture. It taps in where other shows don't – even though this is admittedly a 'fake news' program."

Chapter Two, "The Fake, the False, and the Fictional: The Daily Show as News Source," starts with a Jon Stewart quote from March 18, 2003: "Welcome to The Daily Show, if you're in a certain demographic" and ends with the conclusion that "...the moderately attentive viewer leaves the show better informed about the world, especially the political climate and the current state of the media. It's fake news conveying real messages, and great entertainment to boot."

Another chapter, "Amusing Ourselves to Death with Television News: Jon Stewart, Neil Postman and The Huxleyan Warning", recounts Stewart's famous retort to an accusation by Tucker Carlson on CNN's Crossfire, who claimed that Stewart had been soft on John Kerry during a 2004 interview. Wide eyed, Stewart remarked that he didn't realize that news organizations look to Comedy Central for their cues on integrity. "There is a parallel between Jon Stewart and Diogenes and the Cynic School of Philosophy", Dr. Holt claims, "Stewart makes no bones that the media is not doing enough. They're failing to live up to their potential."

Although H.L. Menken stated that no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the public The Daily Show assumes a fairly high level of political knowledge on the part of its audience. Dr. Holt contends, "There is an intelligence that goes into constructing this humor and an intelligence that goes into understanding it. The program makes informed comments on the culture at large. However, meaning is presented, not stated. Neither does it suggest solutions. The audience is left to figure it out."

In Chapter Five, "Jon Stewart and the New Public Intellectual" Terrance MacMullan, from Eastern Washington University, states that despite his protestations, Jon Stewart embodies the ideal of the "new" public intellectual and that this is a good thing. Chapter seven, "Can 'The Daily Show' Save Democracy? Jon Stewart as the Gadfly of Gotham" points out that in 2004, The Daily Show was the first comedy to win Outstanding Achievement in News and Information from the Television Critics Association. It would seem that criticism of the show by the mainstream media is in part driven by professional jealousy. Stewart probably bristles at this whole idea since he maintains that his goal is to be funny. Can The Daily Show lampoon humorously and be thought-provoking at the same time? Undoubtedly so. However, the authors state, "though the show may not be able to save democracy single-handedly, democracy would be in even more peril without it. And it certainly wouldn't be as funny."

The title of the third segment of the book, "Regular Feature: Critical Thinking and the War on Bullshit", would seem to define the thrust of this interesting, entertaining, important work. With additional sections covering The Daily Show spin-off, The Colbert Report, and one dealing with God and Darwin, the book covers a lot of territory. "The Daily Show and Philosophy: Moments of Zen in the Art of Fake News", Edited by Jason Holt presents its points with finesse – sometimes wryly, sometimes even angrily but always with a logically laid out incisiveness. The authors explain, in a thoroughly readable way, why The Daily Show has achieved an undeniably high state of significance in American culture – truthiness aside.

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## About Elisa Keys

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