

**Episode 2,378: Contradictions and Stupidities of Public Health**

**Guest: Laurie Calhoun**

**WOODS:**  I'm not sure I have this right, but I could have sworn that – I mean, I think I got to know about you quite a while ago. But I could have sworn that in previous years you wouldn't necessarily have been a plumb-line libertarian. I think you came to this from another set of ideas.

Am I wrong about that? Have you had some kind of evolution?

**CALHOUN:** Oh, absolutely. It's a little bit embarrassing to admit, but I was a registered Democrat my entire life until 2016. So, I have been drawn into the libertarian camp slowly by just the horrors of our government, primarily on the foreign policy front.

But what I call the "Coronapocalypse" was, in some ways, even worse because it all happened domestically. So, yeah, I left the Democratic Party. I'm kind of am embarrassed to admit it that I was a registered Democrat for so long, looking back at all that's gone on.

But you are right. I was not born a libertarian. I think I, like many people who are educated and middle class – and maybe females are more subject to this. The default position is Democratic Party. And then you realize: Oh my goodness, this is horrible, so.

**WOODS:** Well, that's the key realization. But okay, I'm glad that that wasn't just in my imagination. But when I was reading your book, at one point you refer to the non-aggression principle, and you describe it as this principle that we libertarians hold.

And I thought: *That's funny. I'm not sure that's how Laurie Calhoun would have spoken in the past*. I could have sworn that that was the case. I always thought of you as somebody – I wasn't exactly sure what your perspective was, but what I was sure of was that everything I read from you was really worthwhile and was really good.

And by the way, I'm sorry for being so scatterbrained, but I think now that I'm in the second half of my life (we'll put it that way) I could be excused for forgetting some details, but did you write a piece some years ago on just war theory?

**CALHOUN:** Yeah, I wrote a whole book on it. Actually, you interviewed me a couple of times. *War and Delusion.*

**WOODS:** That's right. Because there are a couple of articles I've read that when I first read them, they made me angry and I thought: No, this is all wrong. This person doesn't know what they're talking about.

But yet it would just eat at me and eat at me. It'd be like an itch I couldn't quite scratch. So, the other article I have in mind is John Hasnas's article about whether the rule of law exists and whether law can be objective.

And I thought: *Of course law can be objective! We all know the objective meanings of words.* And I read his article and he was saying: *Look, you're wishing for a phantom. You're wishing for something that can never be*.

And I thought: *You've got to be – what is wrong with you?* And then I thought: *Doggone it, he's right.* Well, likewise. I like just war theory. I like it. Here we have these criteria that we can use against the warmongers.

But doggone it, every single one of them has loopholes you can drive a truck through. And so many horrible people in history have just driven trucks right on through them. And it has never constrained or stopped anybody. And I just couldn't deal with that. But then I just had to. I just had to.

**CALHOUN:** Yeah, well, I argue in *War and Delusion* that it's much worse than just that they drive a truck through the criteria. I actually argue that they use the theory as a very powerful piece of propaganda to galvanize support for their wars.

**WOODS:** Yes, that was even worse. That you look at the various principles and you can, in fact, do that with them. And indeed, they have. I mean, just war theory was being bandied about at the time of the war in Iraq in 2003.

You would think: *Oh, my gosh, of all cases of a war that couldn't possibly meet these criteria.* But doggone it, these people, they'll figure out something. So, anyway, I think that makes your Covid commentary all the more interesting.

Because to me, it's just obvious that if the left has been sincere all these years – and yes, I do think some people on the left are, and have been, genuinely sincere. So, officer, take me away, I do believe that some people disagree with me are sincere.

But if they've been sincere about wanting to help the vulnerable or the working class, then you would think that in this situation they would have taken the Laurie Calhoun view. And some of them did, but not very many.

Or at least if they did, they kept it to themselves because they didn't want to lose their membership card to the left wing. Whereas I read *Jacobin* – I don't really read *Jacobin* magazine. But I pick up *Jacobin* magazine and they were running an interview with Martin Kulldorff against lockdowns.

So, some of them were at least willing to talk. But do you have any speculation as to why that was?

**CALHOUN:** Well, I talk a little bit about this in an essay in the book called "Is Virtue Signaling Vicious?"

And I'm sure you've seen this phenomenon where you go through neighborhoods in the United States and they're filled with these lawn signs, these yard signs, saying, "In this house, we believe..."

And they have a list of – most of them are tautologies, "love is love" for example. Or they're very undebatable statements, but they're taken to reflect...

**WOODS:** Yes. "Science is real." They actually think that the other side is saying, "Science is not real!" I mean, what?

**CALHOUN:** Yeah. So, somehow this has really taken root among leftists, that they have to somehow advertise their virtue. And that, in fact, advertising your virtue suffices to demonstrate your moral righteousness, and in fact, your moral superiority over all the people who disagree.

So, it builds up that Manichean dichotomy. It's us versus them, the good versus the evil. And you're either enlightened and you're on our side or you're a deplorable. So, that has really been strengthened, I think, since the election of Trump.

That's where that really got incubated the most powerfully. And it just carried through into the "Coronapocalypse"as I call it) as people took sides and they decided that all these people who disagreed, who asked any sorts of questions, were deplorable and they were ignorant, and they were also morally suspect.

And this went on and on. And it really set up this dichotomy that was very similar to what you see during wartime, which makes sense because they were calling this a war on a virus. And so, they used the same template, in my view, to galvanize support behind them.

And then people became afraid to speak out because they didn't want to be denounced. I mean, it's not a joke. The amount of denunciation and shrieking that went on in social media. I, myself, experienced it.

I mean, it was frightening in a way because people who had been my friends and even family members were doing things like calling me alt-right, QAnon supporter, you know, for asking just basic skeptical questions about what was going on. It was crazy.

**WOODS:** It was crazy. And it's crazy to hear somebody like a Noam Chomsky more or less suggesting that if you didn't get the shots, you should be banished from society. So, here's Noam Chomsky, who's concerned about the power of corporations.

But you better get this corporation's product or you can't be part of society. So, when push comes to shove, when everything the guy's been working his whole life toward comes to pass, he fails completely.

**CALHOUN:** I know. I was very shocked by that. And my only explanation for cases like that (and there have been others) is that the fear mongering propaganda campaign was so effective that it tricked even the author of *Manufacturing Dissent* – or "*Consent*".

Sorry, the name of his book is *Manufacturing Consent*. And so, it was shocking, but I think because he's in the vulnerable cohort, he got kind of sucked into it. When people were watching television in the early months of the crisis, they saw those death ticker tapes on their television.

They were constantly being told: *You're about to die. You're going to die. This is a pandemic*. The suggestion was it was like the black plague: *We're all going to die. We have to agree to do whatever the authorities do.*

The other factor that played into that was a general lack of a scientific background. So, people who were educated but had no formal training in science, because of their fear, they felt like: *We just have to do what the highest scientific authorities in the land tell us to do.*

So, they completely just threw out any idea of being able to criticize anything that was going on. In a sense, they viewed themselves as humble, epistemologically humble: I know what I know. I'm going to stay in my lane and listen to people who know about science and do what they say.

And I think that could also help to explain cases such as Chomsky. Although he's a linguist by training, so, you know, it's not natural science, but he's a very smart guy. So, it was a little puzzling.

**WOODS:** The thing is, I really want to like him because he praised Scott Horton's book on Afghanistan.

**CALHOUN:** Right. He praised my book on the drone wars. Yeah, I have an endorsement by him.

**WOODS:** Yeah. I mean, it's amazing, right? This is really fantastic for both of you. So, anyway, that's another thing. And by the way, this has nothing directly to do with Covid.

But in your chapter on virtue signaling, you reminded me of Ellen DeGeneres talking about her friendship with George W Bush and saying: *Look, this just goes to show that we should all try to be kind to each other, even if we disagree.*

And you just think: *This is just so, so awful*. Because the war in Iraq is worse than anything Trump did. I think it's worse than anything Obama did. I mean, it was such an atrocity. But for some reason, because they're not Americans who died, it doesn't really matter now.

I mean, you know: *Hey, look. Nobody's perfect*. Whereas if he had killed that many Americans, you know, with bombing them, I think it would be a lot harder to say: *Nobody's perfect.*

But it goes to show that all these virtue signalers who, oh, they're anti-racist, and they're very aware of the crimes of the white man and colonialism, and this and that. But when push comes to shove, they really don't care about foreigners at all.

As I said, if Americans had been killed by George W Bush, you think she'd be playing nice with him? But it's these towelheads, so she doesn't care.

**CALHOUN:** Well, I think charitably that a lot of people really are ignorant of the magnitude of carnage that was caused throughout the War on Terror. I honestly believe that they're ignorant of this. And so, it could be – this is charitable.

I mean, you can say: *Oh, no, you're wrong, they do know.* But I think that because it's not discussed by the mainstream media, unless you're someone who researches in this area and writes in this area and thinks a lot about this area, you may not actually be aware that most of the victims of the war on terror were persons of color.

So, you see these people railing about George Floyd and the victims in the homeland when they have no idea that most of these "suspects" who were killed with drones in the Middle East were young men, persons of color, who, in a way, were racially profiled because of the way they were acting and the way they looked. And they were just assumed to be evil terrorists.

**WOODS:** I genuinely do appreciate your attempt to be kind to them. I just – I can't.

**CALHOUN:** You don't buy it. Okay.

**WOODS:** I feel like if you're ignorant of the scope of the carnage, then it's a culpable and wicked ignorance, in my opinion. But anyway, that's not the point. Let's talk about – you have a background in philosophy?

**CALHOUN:** Yes.

**WOODS:** How does having a background in philosophy help you look critically at the past few years?

**CALHOUN:** Well, for one thing, I'm very sensitive to contradictions. And so, when public officials start spouting contradictions, that's a red flag to me. Theories that are true can't include contradictions. So, when we saw – we were really flooded by contradictions for three years.

And it was shocking to me because people – Fauci would say: *Oh, you don't wear a mask, or you do wear a mask, or etc etc.* The contradictions never stopped. The classic, the creme de la creme, I suppose, was: *We must protect the vaccinated from the unvaccinated.*

You know, at that point, all critical thinking and reasoning had gone out the door. People were just blindly following along. They were parroting this. Relatively intelligent (in some cases, educated) people were walking around saying: *We must protect the vaccinated from the unvaccinated.*

The president of the United States, when he announced his OSHA mandate, said: *We are going to protect vaccinated workers from unvaccinated workers.* So, with my background in philosophy (and just being naturally skeptical) I was struck by these contradictions, and I realized that something was really awry.

I mean, we'd really moved into 1984 territory where 2 + 2 = 5. And people were just going along with it because they were so terrified of what they had been told was there imminent death, even though the statistics told a completely different story.

But they had surrendered to the authorities, again, in some cases because they had no formal training in science. And so, they just felt like: *We just have to do what we're told, and we'll get through this together.*

**WOODS:** Right. Incidentally, that whole matter of protecting the vaccinated from the unvaccinated, I have a piece somewhere I wrote during the midst of this where I said: *These shots apparently work so well that the only additional thing they require is the complete shutdown of the rest of society*.

Other than that, they work great. All we need is everybody to get the shots and then shut everybody else out of society and then it'll be great. Is that really what you want to say? Is that really the best marketing you can do for these things?

And incidentally, you have a chapter that also touches on that subject, alleging that people are being selfish. They were being selfish because they wouldn't get the shots. But that whole thing, people were accused of selfishness long before the shots.

The whole time they were accused of selfishness. You want to leave your house? Your selfish. You want to eat in a restaurant? And incidentally, most of what we wanted to do was not necessarily get a haircut or eat in a restaurant.

Those are the two things they kept saying: *You want old people to die so that you can go get a haircut.* Instead of saying: *You know, what we're asking of you is really, really unprecedented. And we really do understand that this is a very significant sacrifice you're being asked to make*.

No, it's, we mock people. We make no attempt to show empathy in this situation. Whereas I always felt from the very beginning that the real selfishness was saying: *Because of me and my needs, your life has to be shut down indefinitely*.

And at first it was, *"Two weeks to flatten the curve."* or *"to slow the spread"* or whatever. And at the beginning, some of the officials really were willing to concede that this is a big ask and so on and on.

But as they got used to it, it would get to the point – especially like in the UK. It would get to the point where they'd go on TV and they'd say: *Oh, by the way, your life is shut down another five months and we'll get back to you.*

**CALHOUN:** Yeah, it was unbelievable. I mean, I wrote about this early on. And people became very angry with those early essays where I pointed out that if you're already old and sick and vulnerable, then you should absolutely stay at home.

But if you're already staying at home and you're not letting anyone into your house, then why do you care if other people go to work and go to school?

And people became so angry that I would say this: *But it's just logic. I mean, how does that help you that college students are going back to university, or children are allowed to go to school? How does that hurt you?*

And people had just become completely irrational at that point. They started to believe that somehow these Covid dust particles were going to be circulating around their house, I guess, and somehow get through the air vents. I mean, I don't know. They were really irrational.

**WOODS:**  Talk to me about your views on so-called "Big Pharma". Because mine evolved really fast over the past few years. And I've said this a number of times on the show, that I have a lot of friends who were skeptical of so-called "Big Pharma".

And I never gave them a hard time about it, but in my view, I always thought: Look, I'm not a libertarian because I think every single orthodoxy is wrong. But you know what? Now, I'm almost to that point, I'm almost to the point where at the very least, every orthodoxy must stand in judgment.

We must stand in judgment of every orthodoxy at this point, because now I don't believe anything, including Big Pharma. I mean, really. I'm skeptical of everything now, because of the way so many things that were obviously, at the very least, debatable (if not outright lies) were treated like religious truths.

**CALHOUN:** That's right.

**WOODS:**  And so, every time I see that, I'm immediately skeptical now.

**CALHOUN:** Yeah. I think I had a little bit of an advantage because I knew the history of pharma before this whole thing started. I knew about Pfizer. Pfizer, for example, paid the largest fine for health care fraud in the history of the world.

So, I knew about Pfizer. And I knew about what happened in the late '80s after the launch of Prozac. I knew that in 1997 they began direct-to-consumer advertising, where they would get people to go to their doctor and ask for drugs.

So, I have this chapter called "The Pharma Revolution is Being Televised", and I talk about the four stages through which the pharma industry has really become incredibly powerful, particularly in the United States.

And so, I locate this with the launch of Prozac. That's where lifestyle and comfort medications began to be prescribed widely to people. It's also about when the VA's stopped offering talk therapy to soldiers and only gave them pharmaceutical remedies for their PTSD, etcetera.

And so, what happened is as they sold more and more pills, they had more revenue for advertising. The FDA began allowing them to advertise directly to consumers in 1997. I think we're only one of two countries who do this.

And that's because the concern in the past was always that you don't want to use the tools of marketing to persuade people that they have diseases, and then get treatments for which they actually have no need.

But they've been seduced into believing that: *Oh, I move my legs at night. I must have restless leg syndrome. I must go take some gabapentin*. Or: *I get nervous when I do public speaking, so I must have an anxiety disorder.*

The list goes on and on and on. And I'm sure you've noticed (if you watch television anymore) that every other ad is for a pharma product. So, what happened is as they got more and more revenue, as they sold more and more pills, as they found market niches everywhere, they became more powerful, and they got their foot into the door of the regulatory apparatus.

And so, this is why the people who work in the FDA, they often receive kickbacks from pharma. Certainly, lobbyists are very prominent in Washington, and they have a big effect on legislation. So, I believe there are more pharma lobbyists in Washington, DC than there are congresspersons.

And they dole out lots of money also to doctors and universities. So, they have a big effect on the research that gets approved at universities. It tends to be geared toward what is going to be profitable, logically enough.

And so, what I argue in "The Pharma Revolution Being Televised" is that with the coronapocalypse, we saw the fourth stage of the pharma revolution.

Which is, they'd already captured the doctors, they'd already captured the regulatory apparatus, and the consumer base, by going directly to them via television and the Internet.

And in the fourth stage of the pharma revolution, they got a seat at the table with governments. So that governments could mandate their products, and then that would of course, astronomically increase their sales because people were being forced to take their remedies.

**WOODS:**  And speaking of that – of course, you've talked about the various mandates. Obviously, those mandates (most of them) have been removed, in terms of private employers and a lot of times in the public sector, too.

It was interesting what happened in the UK, where enough people in the health system refused to take it, that they had no choice but to reverse their mandate.

But now that mandates are more or less gone, I'm just wondering if the people who vociferously supported them are in any way admitting that apparently they weren't necessary in the first place.

If we don't have don't need them now, we didn't need them then, They obviously didn't do anything. Obviously, the "unvaccinated" have not died off in droves. And not to mention – as a matter of fact, off top my head, I can think of the vaccine passport systems in California.

In Los Angeles, you had to show the vaccine card to get into a restaurant, that whole thing. But neighboring Orange County didn't have that. Now, sometimes when you make comparisons between one place and another, the excuse factory goes into overdrive and they say: *Oh, that's invalid because those populations are too different*.

Okay, how about when they're right next to each other and obviously demographically identical? Orange County did not have that. And their curves, for whatever metric you want to look at, hospitalizations, whatever you want to look at, are identical or maybe Los Angeles is slightly worse.

So, there's no denying none of this did anything. So, I just wonder, how are they rationalizing this in their minds? Are they just forgetting about it? Or do they think it was needed at the time and somehow three months later it wasn't? I don't know.

**CALHOUN:** I think some of them are just in denial, so they continue to push for various requirements of vaccination. For example (and most disturbingly) the CDC has added the Covid shot and all subsequent boosters to the child immunization schedule.

Which is really, really crazy because children are the least vulnerable to Covid of all groups. And I argue in a chapter called "This Was a Test of the Emergency Use Authorization System", that the reason why they're being added to the schedule is twofold.

One is, of course, to sell these elixirs forever and generate enormous profits. The CDC childhood immunization schedule is a recommended list of vaccines. But what happens is states then follow that recommendation to impose mandates.

So, states such as California and New York can be expected to require these shots of public-school children. So, they added these shots to the schedule, even though we now know that the shots don't work.

And in fact, Anthony Fauci coauthored an article, a peer reviewed scientific article, that came out in January 2023, which states that because of its constitution, the Covid 19 virus cannot be controlled effectively by vaccine.

He actually states this in a published paper, and yet they've put the shots on the schedule for children who are at nearly no risk from the virus. And this is going to increase sales, but it's also going to provide the manufacturers with – I hate to say this – but guinea pigs, in perpetuity.

Because each year's booster shot is, of necessity, an experimental remedy. And so, once they got on the schedule, this means that a lot of kids are going to be shot up with these things, like, forever, these mRNA shots, even though they didn't actually work.

So, this is a really clear case of regulatory capture by the industry because there's no reason for believing that shots, which Anthony Fauci himself says cannot effectively control the virus in any permanent way, should be administered to children over and over and over again.

But it's happening. The other reason for doing this is to acquire data. So, people like Stephane Bancel, the CEO of Moderna, his company is really a gene therapy company. He's been wanting to produce mRNA remedies for cancer and lots of other intractable diseases for a long time.

The Covid shots were his first product ever to make it to market. He never got any of his products out of the animal trials, and this was a major opportunity for him to get as much data as he possibly could.

And so, they really pushed for uptake, for universal uptake. And they managed to persuade many government officials to insist on mandates.

So, to answer your question, they're acting like the results of this are the opposite of what they were. And another example is the WHO is still pushing for vaccine passports.

They want to have this health passport system, this supranational vaccine passport system, even though the vaccines do not protect against transmission or infection.

Which means that they actually serve no public health purpose whatsoever, and yet they're still pushing for these passports. So, to answer your question, I think they're pretending that the results were the opposite of what they were.

**WOODS:** Boy, doesn't that sound like the entirety of the last three years, pretending that the results are the opposite of what they were?

I mean, after they try thing after thing after thing, and there is no correlation between the trying of that thing and any improved health outcome, they go on television and say: *Well, we know what works: Following these protocols.*

But yet there is no connection between those protocols and anything. And yet nobody on television calls them on that most obvious thing of all.

**CALHOUN:** Well, television is very much subsidized by the pharma industry as well. So, a lot of these programs are sponsored by pharma. I mean, they've really infiltrated not only the regulatory apparatus, but also the mainstream media.

So, that's a big part of that. And you're right that this double-down strategy of, it didn't work, so we're going to, for example, lock down harder. The lockdowns didn't work. So, the reason the lockdowns didn't work isn't that lockdowns were a bad idea, it's that we need even more stringent lockdowns.

So, we see this same sort of mindset with regard to the vaccines: Well, the pandemic would have been much better if we had had these vaccine passports in place. It's wild.

**WOODS:** In a way, I think we see this in pretty much everything that the state does. So, the Keynesian stimulus of Obama didn't yield the outcome we wanted, so that must be because we didn't do enough of it.

It can never be that maybe we've just misconstrued this whole problem and maybe we're applying the wrong remedy. It must just be we haven't given enough of our wise assistance to everybody. That's always it.

It's never, ever a time to go back and have a serious re-examination of preconceived ideas. I can't even believe I'm saying that these words coming out of my mouth. That's never going to happen.

**CALHOUN:** No, that's right. And it's in some ways even worse in foreign policy. So, we left Afghanistan after 20 years of saying: *Oh, we're going to impose democracy on Afghanistan, we're going to democratize this country.*

Well, we left Afghanistan. The Taliban's in power as they were in 2001, and the entire military apparatus just pivots to the next conflict as though Afghanistan never happened.

No soul searching, no question of, like: *Maybe this was a bad idea. Maybe we shouldn't be trying to invade all these countries and impose our views on all these people.*

No, they just forget that it happened and move on.

**WOODS:** And unfortunately, we have an extremely compliant general public that is all too happy to let them forget that and move on. There are other things they will not forget and move on. They'll emphasize – they'll talk about January 6th when it's – seriously, it'll be 800 years from now, and that will still be their obsession.

But all the people who died in their evil and stupid foreign policy, they will still be in unmarked graves somewhere. And that's the way history works, apparently.

**CALHOUN:** Yeah, but think that all of this tells us that we need to be very, very wary of these government pushes for censorship. Because the reason why people have those views and go along with the "official story" is that they don't have any alternatives.

Unless you're someone who goes out and reads, like, indy publications and has friends at the *Libertarian Institute* and the *Tom Woods Show*, you're not going to get any of these alternative takes.

And so, it's very frightening that the government wants to now erect this disinformation governance bureau whereby they're able to control what counts as information and disinformation and misinformation, when in fact they're the largest purveyors of disinformation of all.

And it's incredibly frightening that half the country is behind those sorts of initiatives. They're like: *Oh, yeah, we have to silence the anti-vaxxers.* Without even investigating, like, what these people have to say.

Without being at all aware, for example, that the public health apparatus redefined the word "vaccine" and redefine the word "pandemic" so that the thing that people think they're talking about is completely different than it is.

So, this rebranding and neologism went on throughout the Coronapocalypse, and it's very dangerous because people have no idea what anyone is talking about. And public officials base their policies on former definitions of these things.

So, it used to be that vaccines were known to reliably immunize you against a disease. So, you would take the vaccine so that you wouldn't get the disease and you wouldn't die of the disease. And what they did is they weakened the definition of a vaccine, so it just "stimulates" the immune system.

That's such a broad and general definition that it can include just about anything. And it notably does not include "prevents transmission and infection". So, they immediately marketed these shots as vaccines and people just went along with it.

And that's how they set up this whole dichotomy between the selfish and the unselfish. Because it was obvious to most people in the populace that if you refuse to take a vaccine, you are just a selfish, evil person. You don't care about anyone else.

But in fact, they redefined vaccine so that it no longer protects people. It's crazy.

**WOODS:** But then, on a dime, in order to defend Pfizer, when all of a sudden people said: Look, Pfizer admits that they didn't even look into whether it stopped transmission.

These very same people who insisted that it did, or at least strongly implied that it did, on a dime, they switched to: *Oh, no, they always told us that they didn't know that. And they always said that they didn't look into that, and they never claimed it.*

And this and that. And then we found the CEO coming right out and saying: You've got to do this. If not for yourself, then for your friends and family. Now, what else could that mean, other than...

**CALHOUN:** No, there are contradictions all over the place. And those people who come out and rally in favor of pharma and government, these people often don't even stand to profit. But they've been seduced into believing that they're somehow good and righteous for doing this.

Again, you see the same thing in foreign policy. There are, I think, three different levels. There's a small group of elites who have an agenda. And then there's this second group, which is pretty big. It's people who stand to profit, mercenaries and opportunists who stand to profit.

And then on the bottom you have the populists who are somehow persuaded to believe that in following what they're told to do, they are good and virtuous and right, and that people who disagree are actually the evil enemy.

And those people make a lot of noise and they exert a lot of social pressure on everyone else, even though they don't actually stand to profit financially at all. And they have no idea what the elites' little agenda was.

But they get into this mode of thinking that they increase their sense of self-esteem, I guess, by being on the right side. And you see that in war and you saw that in the Coronapocalypse.

**WOODS:** And I think there's just this pleasure they get from feeling like they're on the side of science. And guess the proxy for science is the officially approved scientists. So, if I agree with the officially approved scientists, then that makes me on the side of science.

That's very satisfying because it means that my opponents are all stupid rubes who are probably sacrificing goats to the sun or whatever. And I can, by contrast, be this wise scientific voice of reason against these stupid, backward idiots. That's deeply satisfying to them, to no doubt.

**CALHOUN:**  And especially the less education they have in science. The people who yell the loudest are the ones who have no formal background in science, but they're always: *Listen to the science! Listen to the science!*

When I published this essay called "The Intellectual Fraud of 'Listen to the Science'", you can't imagine how many people became angry about this. I mean, people were screaming at me on social media. They were so outraged.

I don't even think they read the essay, but they were so angry that I would even suggest that you shouldn't listen to the science. Well, they have no idea what I talked about in that.

I talked about the distinction between description and prescription. The is/ought problem, where you can't derive normative principles from factual matters. So, you can settle the facts, but then there's the whole extra normative question of what you should do.

And that's called the is/ought fallacy, when you suppose that the facts somehow dictate your comportment. So, that's one of the arguments. The other argument in that essay is about the fact that scientists themselves are human beings who are subject to all of the emotions and incentives and traps that all of us fall into.

And I talked about Thomas Kuhn's, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* And he chips away at this idea that scientists are somehow completely logical, completely objective, they have no conflict of interest whatsoever.

So, talk about those two aspects in the essay, and people became so angry with me. And most of the people who became angry have had no background in science. So, one person said: *Oh, what does a philosophy major know?*

Because they didn't know I did graduate school at Princeton in philosophy, but I also have a degree in chemistry. So, they had no idea I had a degree in chemistry and did research in chemistry.

So, they're like screaming at me. Another woman was like: *You're not an epidemiologist! I'm just going to listen to the epidemiologists!* And then proceeded to unfollow me. That was crazy.

**WOODS:** Yeah. Now, first of all, I don't know what to think about epidemiology at this point. I don't know if it's a pseudoscience. I don't know if it's like reading tea leaves. I don't know what it is.

**CALHOUN:** Well, I'll tell you one thing. The people who go into epidemiology are always people who couldn't get into medical school, most of them.

**WOODS:** Yeah. Or it seems like they're all hypochondriacs and weirdos and lunatics. And yet I know Martin Kulldorff is an epidemiologist, and he's a really great guy.

And he assures me that of the normal people in his field, the vast majority of them agreed with him that you don't shut down all of society, you do exactly what he recommended. But they don't get on television. And that gets back to the whole question of misinformation.

Even if it weren't the case that the government has consistently been the worst source of misinformation, even if it were always reliable, the idea of giving them the authority to police information, what it really means is you're giving some entity a monopoly on deciding what's misinformation and what isn't.

And who would ever trust that to one monopolistic entity rather than just letting the ideas hash it out in the public square?

**CALHOUN:** Exactly. The basis of democracy is free speech. If you don't have free speech, then you don't have a democracy. Because the whole apparatus requires that you have what John Stuart Mill referred to as "the marketplace of ideas".

Because you don't know, at the outside. We're all mired in opinion. We all have opinion, and we're constantly confronted with information, and we have to sort it out for ourselves and try to figure out what's true, what's false, what's right, what's wrong.

We know when we bump up against a contradiction that both conjuncts cannot be true. If someone tells you P, and they tell you in the same breath not-P, you know that this statement is false, because it cannot be true. So, one or the other has to go.

And so, you have to have debate. When I see these people saying: *Oh yeah, you don't debate with Robert F Kennedy Jr because he's an anti-vaxxer.* That is a crazy position, because if you're on the side of the truth and knowledge, you should be able to demonstrate this to other people. And if you can't, there's something wrong.

**WOODS:** I couldn't agree more. Well, I want to urge people to check out your book, because if it's – I mean, I think just this conversation about it has been a thrill and really, really enjoyable, but the book is all the better.

So, once again, it's *Questioning the Covid Company Line: Critical Thinking and Hysterical Times*. I've got it linked at TomWoods.com/2378. Well, thanks again, Laurie, and best of luck with it.

**CALHOUN:** Thank you very much, Tom. And happy belated birthday.

**WOODS:** Thank you very much.