

SG Academy episodes, September 2016 through June 2017

Episode #67: Why are festivals becoming so popular?

Articles: [Umbel.com](#), [TheGuardian](#), and [SpongPR.com](#). The contrast with day to day life couldn't be greater. Is it escapism, a rite of passage, self-expression?

Episode #68: What is the placebo effect and why does it work the way it does?

Articles: [skeptical organization](#), [HowStuffWorks](#), [Harvard Magazine](#). How does the mind influence the body?

Episode #69: How should authorities deal with troublesome youth?

YouTube [video](#) provoking Dutch police, article in [English](#), and one in [Dutch](#). [Tensions in the Netherlands](#).

Episode #70: What does it take to destabilize a society?

A thought experiment. Let's consider society as a system, and how you as an individual or we as a small group could use the current chaos to destabilize that system – whether for a day, a month, or years. What are the most vulnerable, valuable aspects, artifacts, or ideas that our society would crumble without?

Episode #71: What is the meaning behind superheroes?

TEDx by [Stan Lee](#), [YouTube piece](#), [Smithsonian magazine](#). Why do we keep these figures around in an age of secular science? What do they really represent, symbolically?

Episode #72: How does our social conception of sexual deviance evolve?

Conference on [love and sex with robots](#). A [Wikipedia list of sexual fetishes](#), an [online BDSM test](#), and [rule 34](#). How do mores change, how do we deal with them, and where are they headed?

Episode #73: What has nihilism done for the world?

[School of Life on Nietzsche](#), other thinkers ([here](#) and [here](#)), [Wikipedia](#). Can we have a meaningful conversation about meaninglessness?

Episode #74: What is a good life?

[Plato](#), [Aristotle](#), [Epicurus](#), the [Dalai Lama](#), [Tony Robbins](#). Kim Dotcom looks pretty happy in this [video](#). How far can you go if you believe it's for the good? Do you need success? Money? Happiness? Intelligence? Being helpful to others? Traveling, eating, f*cking, and having all the best experiences? Self-knowledge, enlightenment, religious faith? And do you want to find out for yourself, or do you want someone else to tell you what it is? How do you know what the right parameters are? Can you even attain a good life?

Episode #75: Can you know your destiny?

Burned [turtle shell](#) cracks, [divination](#), [augury](#), [horoscopes](#), [palmistry](#), prophecy, computer models, scenarios, simulations, weather forecasts, etc. Can the future be known or is it all clouded in uncertainty? Would you even *want* to know your destiny?

Episode #76: What makes a good city?

[History of urbanization](#), [why cities?](#), [modern megaprojects](#), [visions](#), [Huffington Post](#), [WHO](#). What do you like and dislike about cities? If you could re-plan or even plan an entirely new city what would you do differently? Understand how your city shapes your life and the life of the environment and planet around it.

Episode #77: What is the legacy of European colonialism today?

[Slavoj Zizek](#), [neo-colonialism](#), [Akala](#), the Zwarte Pieten discussion ([Black Pete](#)), [what's happening in North Dakota](#), natural gas extraction in the north of the Netherlands ([article in Dutch](#)). About ownership, identity, and power.

Episode #78: What's your favorite explanation for reality?

[Why is there something rather than nothing](#), [is reality real](#), [Plato's allegory of the cave 1](#), and [cave 2](#). What is it? Why is it? Is it even real?

Episode #79: What would you change about human DNA?

Futurism.com on [genome editing technologies](#) like CRISPR, [evolved, by choice](#), [the sports industry](#), [climate change adaptive](#), WIRED.com on [humanity's genetic future](#). Start thinking about it because soon enough you'll have an app asking you whether or not you want to rate the new hydrogen powered fuel source it grew inside your pancreas so that you can survive in space or underwater indefinitely.

Episode #80: What makes death a taboo in some cultures and a celebration in another?

[Humanist video Alan Watts](#) [cultural behaviors](#) Wiki [Death and culture](#), [Death](#), [Taboo on the dead](#), [Origin of death myth](#)

Episode #81: What is the new world order going to look like in the era of Trump?

[RT news on propaganda](#), Samantha Bee with [Russian trolls](#), Vanity Fair on [Putin's master plan](#), Wiki on [the same](#), Daily Mail on [Russian propaganda](#), and [Putin himself](#). Are we entering a new Cold War between East and West? The EU is coming apart, the US is divided under a new leader, China is on the rise, Russia has occupied the Krim, the proxy war in Syria. How do we look beyond the media and propaganda campaigns from all sides?

Episode #82: Is it okay to punch a Nazi in the face?

Richard Spencer getting [punched in the face](#), [an interview with Marshall Rosenberg](#) (Nonviolent Communication). When is violence warranted? How would you deal with people who don't give a shit about your peaceful ways?

Episode #83: What is the future of human connection?

[The Innovation of Loneliness](#), [How Social Media Makes Us Unsocial](#), [Atlantic article](#), [Independent article](#), [Guardian article](#), [Q&A session](#) with Osho.

Episode #84: What is the imagination (creativity)?

Wiki [Imagination](#), YouTube [explanation](#), article on [Sartre's ideas about imagination](#). What is it, why is it, where does it come from, how does it work, when does it fail, and could there be a world without it?

Episode #85: Is it better to have a plan for your life or not?

[Life hacks](#), [Tim Cook](#) from Apple, Osho (“When there is desire there is future, and with the future anxiety enters into your being”), and a [funny one](#). How far ahead do you look? And what does it do for you?

Episode #86: What would you do if you were an all-powerful god/dess?

[Bruce Almighty](#), Wiki [Demiurge](#), activating [God Mode in Windows 10](#). Are there elements of cosmology, physics, biology, sociology, that could use some updating? How would you even perceive the reality you used to take for granted? As a game, an experiment, a gift, a mistake? What about disease, inequality, climate change, violence, etc? How would your engineering skills and knowledge come to bear if you were all-powerful?

Episode #87: What is the best way to make decisions as a group?

The [polder model](#), [the Paradox of Choice](#), Wiki [Corporate Governance](#), [Stakeholder Theory](#), [Sociocracy](#), [Dictatorship](#), [Open-source governance](#), [United Nations](#). A look at the pros and cons of having leaders and representatives, of having hierarchies, of having your say. And alternatively, of not being bothered to participate in decision making at all. Because for some people participating in decision making is just stressful.

Episode #88: Can we figure out the Tao?

Wiki [Tao](#), [Taoism](#), [Tao te Ching](#) (the first three verses), [Laozi](#), [Zhuang Zhou](#), [Zhuangzi](#). Be like water, said Bruce Lee. Be like a cat, said Alan Watts. A look at the metaphysics, ethics, dualities, morality, and social norms of Taoism.

Episode #89: Why do we dream?

[Freud vs Jung](#), [recording dreams](#), [TEDx video](#), Wiki [Dream](#), [Cognitive neuroscience of dreams](#), [Oneiromancy](#). Individual and cultural significance of dreams and the role they play in our modern identity and consciousness.

Episode #90: What is awkwardness?

[Word origin](#), [Vsauce video](#), [awkward video](#), [just for laughs](#), Wiki [Embarrassment](#). When and why do we feel awkward? Is there a social or evolutionary purpose to it? Why is it such a profitable factor reality tv shows, Idols, cringe comedy, etc?

Episode #91: What are you without your ideas?

[Richard Dawkins on memes](#) with song, [Richard Dawkins](#) without song, Wiki [Meme](#). Do ideas behave like genes? Are they like viruses? Do you have any original thoughts at all? If you agree with Dawkins’ hypothesis, what does it mean for your personal beliefs, the evolution of individuality, and culture?

Episode #92: Who decides who gets to have children?

[Dutch news article](#) on local eugenics in Rotterdam, [The Independent](#) and [Dutch News](#) site on the same, Wiki [Eugenics](#), Young Turks video on [Israeli eugenics](#). Imagine the challenges for policy makers, (potential) parents who face eugenics, and the future of population control.

Episode #93: What is ownership?

Wiki [Ownership](#) and [Marxism](#). What makes stuff yours? How are resources claimed, divided, controlled? With what right? Where did the concept come from? How do different cultures look at it? When do you own enough? When is it theft? Should some things never be owned? Could our system of ownership ever change?

Episode #94: If not you, then who?

A discussion about responsibility. For the world, for your own life. Who is going to free the oppressed? End all wars? Feed the hungry? Cure the sick? Why do some people undertake selfless action, while others don't? Can we rely on governments, NGO's, donation campaigns, and others in general to do the 'good work' for us? Could our system and society be improved in this sense?

Episode #95: (When) is honesty the best policy?

Wiki [Honesty](#), [Radical Honesty](#), [Dictionary](#) and word origin. When and why do you lie? What biological, cultural, and social processes are at work? How do you know for sure that you're being honest? Can you tell when others are honest or not? How do you rationalize lying or being brutally honest, and sketch out the scenarios and consequences?

Episode #96: How do you communicate scientifically with non-scientifically-minded people?

Karl Popper's book on the [foundations of scientific 'truth'](#) claims, YouTube [science fun stuff](#), Alan Alda on the [art of science communication](#). If somebody says, "Science is just an opinion," how do you respond? How far would you go to convince people of the value of science, or, conversely, to convince them of the demerits of their own beliefs? And apart from your personal approach, what do you think of scientific discourse on a societal level, the political level, and so on?

Episode #97: What can we say about reincarnation?

[Wiki](#) on reincarnation, (controversial) academic psychiatrist who [researched reincarnation](#). The belief in reincarnation is widespread. Why do some cultures believe it and some reject it? How does this (dis)belief fit into the general structure of a culture? How does it affect a society's and an individual's behavior? Can we talk about it in terms of biology or logic?

Episode #98: What is intelligence and where can I find it?

[In this video](#), Jeremy Narby, a Canadian anthropologist, describes his investigation of different perspectives on intelligence in nature, from Western scientists, to Eastern scientists, to Amazonian shamans. [Wikipedia](#) also has some things to say on the topic. Is intelligence something specifically human? Or is it found throughout nature? What (and who) exactly defines intelligence, and what kind of intelligence are we even speaking of?

Episode #99: Why learn history if we're just going to repeat it?

Wiki on ["The End of History,"](#) Wiki on ["The Poverty of Historicism,"](#) and [Epic Rap Battles of History](#). What do we really learn from history? What role do you play in historiography (the writing and consuming of history), and how do you know when to be skeptical and when to trust it? Is history simply a recording of events, or is there more to it? What do you think kids today should be learning in history class, if anything? Will there ever be an end to history, as some have claimed?