

## SG Academy episodes, September 2017 through May 2018

### Episode #100: Who controls what you learn?

Totally screwed up Microsoft AI teenage girl bot that turned into a [“Hitler-loving sex robot within 24 hours.”](#) How does our environment inform us, program us, and teach us what to believe and how to behave? How do you discover your philosophical blind spots?

### Episode #101: What does it mean to be healthy?

The Guardian on [orthorexia](#), Wiki on [health](#), WHO with [global health facts](#), [wellness trends](#) in the US, health factoid about [ancient Egypt](#), [definition and word origin](#) of health. Is anyone getting it right? Should we consider just the body, our diet, our exercise, or also our lifestyles? Our psychology, relationships, job, etc? Can you go too far in trying to be healthy? How do we monitor our health? How do you even recognize it? Is being healthy our natural state, or a goal we never quite attain? And who are the ‘real’ professionals in a market full of alternative medicines and therapies and diets?

### Episode #102: What is the global effect of fake news?

The Guardian on [fake news algorithms for Facebook](#), a Stanford [research paper](#), Wiki on [fake news](#), fake news on social media about [shooting in Las Vegas](#), the [history of fake news](#). Leading thinkers are breaking their heads over how to stem the tide of fake news being spread through social media. Facebook and Twitter have made promises to clamp down. But where there is a will, there is a way. And fake news is nothing new.

### Episode #103: How do you become a visionary?

Wiki on [visionaries](#), [definition and word origin](#), Not everybody believes we [need visionaries](#). Who are good examples of visionaries – Gandhi? [Buckminster Fuller](#)? [William Blake](#)? Steve Jobs? Why do we call such people visionaries, what role do they play in society – and in evolution – and most importantly, can I be a visionary too?

### Episode #104: Is it turtles all the way down?

Wiki on [epistemology](#), wiki on [turtles all the way down](#), Wiki on [infinite regress](#). How do we know what we know? Do we even know? What is the ‘basis’ or root of our knowledge, what does it rest on? Is there a physical foundation for human knowledge or is it turtles all the way down?

### Episode #105: How does Google Maps change your perception of the world?

[Google Maps](#) – or whatever satellite-sourced online map interface you prefer. Zoom in, zoom out, check out Siberia, try to find a top secret base in Nevada, visit your old street where you grew up. What is the cognitive, cultural, and social significance of this tool? Of this way of viewing the world? Does it promote globalization, or an insight into the effects of globalization? Does it make us jealous of our neighbors, is the grass greener on the other side? Why are some bits of the map blocked out? Who controls this technology? Who has access to it? [Here be dragons](#).

### Episode #106: What is wisdom?

[Critical Discourse Analysis](#) and [deconstruction](#), [definition and word origin](#). Do you want to be wise? How is wisdom different from knowledge, or intelligence, or smartness? Is it about

choices, or an attitude, or calm reflection? Can you recognize it when you hear it or see it? Who is wise? Who is not? And how do you become wise?

Episode #107: What happens when the readers rule the writers?

[Fans influencing the story](#) in South park, petitions to [have Wonder Woman be bisexual](#), to have [JJ Abrams scrapped](#) from directing another Star Wars movie, or the drive to have the [ending of the third Mass Effect](#) game changed. Story writers in these instances aren't just inspired by their fans, but badgered into making changes to their stories. So who really owns the stories? Is this a consequence of modern technology, mass communications and online community forming, or a purely capitalist drive to maximize profits? What would all your favorite stories look like if they'd been 'shipped,' or petitioned by fans? Bonus: [6 basic story arcs](#) as defined by an AI.

Episode #108: What does it mean to be literate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The [Monas Hieroglyphica](#), an esoteric symbol created by the [royal astrologer John Dee](#) in 1564. How many symbol systems have you mastered? How many languages do you speak, read, and write? Should we force younger generations to learn programming languages? Will this make us and the older generations 'illiterate' by comparison? Is algebra broadly useful? Standard musical notation? Library search categories? How has literacy changed over the centuries, and what are the benefits and downsides of this process? What will happen to written language as globalization and digitalization continue?

Episode #109: What do you hope the world will be like in 50 years?

[Jacques Fresco](#), an American engineer and designer who [planned out an entire society](#) from the ground up on the basis of what we can already achieve. Have you looked this far ahead? To the time of your retirement, your death perhaps, and the world you leave behind to your (future) children? To what you think can be different, what humanity can achieve in that time? Do you think it's too much to ask to think positively about the future?

Episode #110: How does logic affect the creation of your worldview?

Wiki on [multivalued logic](#), Wiki on [Jain logic](#), introduction to [different forms of logic](#). How do language, logic, and meaning try to control our senses and our perception? And how can the mechanisms behind this control be used creatively to construct a completely different worldview?

Episode #111: Is there such a thing as a waste of time?

We measure time, we plan and schedule our time, and we try to spend it as wisely as we can because there never seems to be enough of it. What is time to you? What is this central aspect of our lives, which we rarely question? How do we perceive it, how do we think about it, and how do we conceive of our relationship to it? Can you waste it if you don't know what it is?

Episode #112: What are the social and cultural implications of the #MeToo movement?

Aziz Ansari reacts to allegations of sexual misconduct on [Time.com](#), Wiki on [#MeToo](#), Catherine Deneuve speaks out in [The Guardian](#), NY Times and [reactions to the movement](#), [critical article](#) at National Review, early article at [Unilad.com](#), list of Tweets with #MeToo hashtag at [inverse.com](#), TeenVogue on [#MeToo censorship in China](#). It seems clear that this is the biggest cultural issue of this moment. In the face of this outpouring of suffering and trauma, our society's response is

mixed. What triggered #MeToo to happen when it did? What does it mean that so many women (and trans men and trans women, and seemingly, a minority of men) are victims of sexual violence? How does social media factor into it entering the public eye? What will its effects be on everything from gender equity, to justice, power, sexual norms, and dating do's and don't's? Will public perception of men change? Or of women? (How) Will behavior change? Will abuse diminish? How do you form your own opinion in the face of a global cultural issue like this? And do you question your own behavior differently now? What does this online movement imply about the power of internet itself and how, for better or worse, it is shaping our society?

#### Episode #113: What is silence?

A visit to [de dodekamer](#) (the dead room, or anechoic chamber) in the Physics department. We live busy lives. Even if you are disengaged, sloth like, and have no social life, our society demands our attention and provides more sensory input and stimulation than any organism is likely to have experienced on this planet before us. What happens when you (or your brain) become detached from all that input? Who are you when you're not reacting to the world?

#### Episode #114: Are you entertained?

Wiki on [entertainment](#), the [life of a YouTube star](#) on Business Insider, NPR on the [stress of being a YouTube star](#). Is there a moment in your day where you do not demand to be entertained? Or do you also pull out your smartphone during a long visit to the toilet? Or when you go to bed? Or when you're sitting in the bus, train, or tram? Do you watch movies, series, YouTube channels, listen to podcasts, music, read books, play games, and so on? How much of our time do we collectively spend this way? How does it benefit us? And does it have any negative consequences? What does it show about what we value in our lives? Is there room for disruption, for social change through entertainment? What is the future of entertainment, in a free society, or in a controlled society? How does entertainment shape globalization and our understanding (and control) of other cultures? Does it make you happy or is it pure distraction? Do you provide entertainment yourself or do you only consume it?

#### Episode #115: How easy are we to manipulate?

PBS show [Persuaders](#), YouTuber on the "[One sentence that gets people to do what you want](#)" hypnotist [Derren Brown trick Simon Pegg](#) with NLP-like techniques, [What is NLP?](#), [NLP techniques](#), Wiki on [Psychological manipulation](#), [Machiavellianism](#), and [Neuro-linguistic programming](#). How ethical do you think it is that some people have superior skills in trying to persuade others? Would you know it if somebody used such techniques on you? Whether in person or through a screen or a speaker? What does this indicate about power levels, control issues, and the decision making process for both individuals and societies? Do you think everyone should be taught these skills? Or is it okay for access to be restricted?

#### Episode #116: Is privacy possible?

Dutch [referendum on intelligence gathering](#) on NRC, Wiki on [the same](#), and Wiki on [privacy](#). The way we go about defining privacy, creating it, respecting it, and transgressing it is changing, especially online. What is your opinion on the issue? Are you politically engaged, a hacktivist, or apathetic? What is the future of privacy in our society, and what will it mean to your kids and grandkids? Is there such a thing as a holy-of-holies where your privacy will remain intact, in your home, or in your mind, or is there no hope for it as surveillance technology and brain scans become more complex? What does a world without privacy look like; it's morals and ethics,

methods of interaction, taboos, etc? Can privacy-invading legislation and technology keep our society safer? Can it deliver what it promises? Is privacy even a good thing at all?

#### Episode #117: Can you perfect yourself?

Wiki on Marcus Aurelius' [Meditations](#), wiki on [Stoicism](#). The modern age is rampant with self-help books, videos, courses, workshops, and more, but it's not a new trend. Do you think people can improve themselves? Can you be the most perfect version of yourself that you can imagine? What are the elements that make us 'better' or even 'good'? Why even try to be something other than your current self? Can philosophy and writing be of use here?

#### Episode #118: How evil are we?

Wiki on the [Bhagavad Gita](#). To frame it moralistically: how evil are we simply for being alive in this society which thrives on the exploitation of other lives and resources? Is the 'average' person in Delft more or less morally corrupt than, say, a pre-contact Amazonian native? How do you conceptualize your own moral condition? How *can* you; what does it take to build a moral framework?

#### Episode #119: Barely used set of bionic eye implants for €500 only €250 - interested?

Wiki on [actual cyborgization attempts](#), Elon Musk in the Guardian [thinks it's imperative](#) for humans, The Atlantic on [our lives as cyborgs](#), a [fragment from the movie Ghost in the Shell](#). What are your personal boundaries in considering body augmentation or cyborgification? Your legs? Your arms? Your digestive system? Your genitals? Your eyes, ears, or nose? Your skin? Your bones? Your brain?

#### Episode #120: Is assassination an acceptable form of statecraft?

Wiki on attempts on [Fidel Castro by the CIA](#), a list of [historical assassinations](#) on Wiki, Wiki on the ['original' assassins](#), Wiki on the [concept of assassination](#) itself, USA Today article on ['suspicious' deaths](#) attributed to Russia. Is there ever an age or a civilization where assassination is not employed? By the powerful, the weak, the religious, and the ideological alike? Why do people turn to assassination? Is it simply because it's 'easier' than diplomacy or democracy or other means, or is there more to it? What goes into the act of assassination – in terms of context, decisions (and ethics), strategy, and fallout? How effective is it relative to say, war, blackmailing, or incarceration? How do you feel about the compliance of (insert your country's name here) in modern or historical assassinations? Would you ever order an assassination yourself? Can we investigate the economical, ecological, and evolutionary advantages and disadvantages of assassination?

#### Episode #121: What does it mean to be well adjusted?

What does society want from you? And how do you negotiate with it? Where do you get the tools to do so? And what if it clashes with what *you* want to do – or what you're evolved to do? Let's take into account the dynamics of (cultural) evolution and adaptation; the many statistics for crime rates, psychiatric medication and therapy, suicide rates, and burnouts; but also the 'happiness' levels recorded in different societies. In our fluid and ever-changing cultures and societies, which tend towards everything from hyper-individualization to conservative, nationalist, even racist in-group identities, what does it mean to be well adjusted? What do you want to adjust to? And is there anyone out there who is getting it right?

### Episode #122: Are we more easily offended?

[BBC article](#), Cracked list on why being offended is [becoming meaningless](#), comedian takes a jab at [taking offense](#), The Atlantic on why [Confederate statues](#) should be taken down. Political correctness, social justice movements, tumblr activists, safe spaces, white fragility, liberal snowflakes, Colin Kaepernick taking a knee, Civil War/slavery/colonialism related statues in public spaces, non-native people wearing native American headdresses at musical festivals, etc. Are offensive acts taking place more often? Or are they more readily challenged through internet activism and mass media? Is it the divided political scene causing this, or the increased self-awareness and diversity in global society?

### Episode #123: What is natural about wildlife in the Netherlands?

Dutch [news article](#), [blog post](#) from a nature photographer, [article](#) on the Guardian. the ecosystem of the Netherlands is almost *entirely* planned, or at least heavily influenced, by human activities and infrastructure. Forests are planted. Dunes are reinforced. Rivers are dammed and turned into canals. What is wildlife at this point? Why do we even want wildlife? What is the general future of wildlife in our ecosystem and economy, not just in the Netherlands, but in the world at large? How do we make choices about biodiversity in the face of mass extinction, not to mention public opinion?