

Transcript for Jason Silva | Origins of a Performance Philosopher (Episode 603)

Full show notes found here:

<https://theartofcharm.com/podcast-episodes/jason-silva-origins-of-a-performance-philosopher-episode-603/>

JASON: There was a recent article in New York Magazine called *The Psychological Impact of Boring Buildings*. And it was actually saying that like city design, again, that boring buildings, that uniform buildings that don't have enough diversity, like city landscapes, can trigger depression, can cause anxiety. You know architecture, when it's too functional and not aesthetic enough, you know -- so as we walk, it should change enough that every five seconds there's a new structure or a new building, a different store front, that constant novelty. So it almost looks like a Disneyland for adults.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Today we're talking with my friend Jason Silva. He's a kind of performance philosopher, I guess you could say. Host of the Emmy nominated show *Brain Games* on National Geographic and has a new show called *Origins* which you might already be watching, also on National Geographic. Super passionate guy on his Youtube videos, super authentic, interesting. One of those guys that just seems like he's on another level. I'll let you fill in the blanks on that one. We're going to talk about how our concepts of ourselves are formed, and how that affects our behavior in the world. His addiction to cognitive ecstasy and connecting the dots on ideas and why this is important for us and for him. And if you liked our episode with Steven Kotler and Stealing Fire, you'll dig this episode with Jason Silva.

And by the way, if you're new to the show, we'd love to send you some top episodes and the AoC Toolbox where we study the science of people, we discuss things like reading body language and having charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, social engineering, networking and influence strategies, mentorship, persuasion tactics, and frankly everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm. Check that out at theartofcharm.com/toolbox or in our iPhone app at theartofcharm.com/iphone. Also at theartofcharm.com you can find the full show notes for this and all previous episodes of the show. All right, here's Jason Silva. We have mutual friends, Steven Kotler, Sam Harris.

JASON: Yeah Steven Kotler introduced right?

JORDAN: That's right. Yeah that's right.

JASON: Steven Cutler introduced us he was raving about you.

JORDAN: Oh, good.

JASON: Peter Diamandis I know from XPRIZE and through Ray Kurzweil. I'm a big fan of his and friendly with him. I love his passion. So Peter, Steven, Max from Current, who else?

JORDAN: Yeah, that --

JASON: And John Lee.

JORDAN: And John Lee.

JASON: Yeah I've been to some of those events.

JORDAN: So good.

JASON: What a small world.

JORDAN: Smaller -- well a lot of people have been emailing, "Why don't you have Jason Silva on your show? Why don't you have Jason Silva on your show?"

JASON: And you were like, "Who's that douche?"

JORDAN: I was like, "Is that the guy from [Brain Games?](#)"

(laugh)

JORDAN: "Because I don't have a TV so I'll pass."

JASON: Right.

JORDAN: No it's funny --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- because I saw that show once and I thought, "This is the coolest show ever!"

JASON: Oh, thanks.

JORDAN: It was like in an airport lounge --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- but I didn't have TV for --

JASON: Yeah, yeah.

JORDAN: -- 15 years. Because I was a cord cutter in the '90s basically.

JASON: Yeah. I don't -- I don't watch a lot of TV either.

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: It was on Netflix for a while though, that was nice.

JORDAN: Yeah, I did see it on Netflix.

JASON: A lot of people rediscovered it on Netflix now.

JORDAN: Is it gone now though?

JASON: I think it's back on Netflix now actually.

JORDAN: Okay because you know, I can always steal it like most people my age get their media --

JASON: Yes, got it.

JORDAN: -- we steal it. I won't do that with your new show though.

JASON: Okay --

JORDAN: Because that would be -- that would be bad news.

JASON: I appreciate that.

JORDAN: Yeah. We did get cable for certain educational reasons.

JASON: Great.

JORDAN: By the way do you ever watch your own stuff? Like do you watch the final production of your Nat Geo or are you kind of like, "Okay I'm so done with this. I don't want to deal."

JASON: Ah, I did watch the entire finished premiere episode on television for the first time.

JORDAN: Okay that's fair.

JASON: For the premiere of [Origins](#) and I had like, a little party going on in my hotel room --

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: And it was surreal, because we worked really hard on it and I think the final product was lovely. Yeah.

JORDAN: For me I -- it's hard for me to listen to finished products but it's also kind of required to get the full view. You want to sort of view it through the eyes of --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- the viewer, and not just the way that you think it went.

JASON: That's true. That's true. I also do a lot of short form content --

JORDAN: I know, yeah.

JASON: -- the [Shots of Awe](#) on videos and those -- because I'm simultaneously sort of the narrator but also the director and the creative, and overseeing the music, and all the editing -- with those I really love to watch the final product because I have such a sense of control and authorship --

JORDAN: Right, sure.

JASON: --over it that it's like my baby from frame to frame, you know?

JORDAN: You mentioned also that there's this concept that we're not who we think we are, we're not who other people think we are -- we are who other people think we are the -- whatever.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: And that kind of goes along with what you were mentioning, with watching the video and looking at the final product --

JASON: Totally.

JORDAN: Could you break that down for us a little bit --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- because that's complex yet fascinating.

JASON: Yeah, so I remember reading this article on this concept called "peopleing" and it's inspired by a book called [Others in Mind](#), and it has to do with our awareness that other have interior worlds. And therefore our inferences, our modeling, of what other people's interior worlds are like, if we want to communicate and/or commune with those people, any kind of interpersonal exchange requires a rendering within my consciousness, of the contents of your consciousness. And when I communicate with you, when I encode my thoughts verbally and transmit them through time and space, then I read your responses and cues, I can assess whether my modeling of your mind is accurate enough and whether I'm actually communicating accurately with your mind based on the cues that I'm getting back.

JORDAN: Does everyone do that though? I feel like my dad doesn't even do that. He just communicates unidirectionally and then goes.

JASON: Well I definitely think that the more empathetic you are --

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: -- the more rich your modeling of other people's minds are -- you know people talk about having -- being an empath or whatever --

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: You can really like feel other people. We all do it to an extent, I mean I guess some people don't and that's when you feel like you're talking to a robot that's like looking --

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: -- right through you. That has no idea of your inner world.

JORDAN: You must get that a lot because the passion and all the things you talk about --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- in the philosophy there's got to be people who go, "Wow that's so fascinating," and then they just kind of go, "I'm going to dip out of here before I show him how dumb I am," or you know --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: "How much I'm not following along." Because I watched a lot of your stuff and I went, "I'm not sure that I understood that, let me watch it again. And then I went, "Nope, nope, I still don't understand it, let me watch it again." And then I went --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: "Maybe this one's just not for me."

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: And there was a few like that.

JASON: I think it depends on the topic. I think some people respond to the passion and to the fact that I seem genuinely excited --

JORDAN: You are.

JASON: -- or curious about what I'm talking about. I'm definitely out of my head in those videos. But to -- just to finish the thought about, "I am not who I think I am." So the idea was that when I talk to you, I am running a simulation of your mind and interacting with that and then I'm also running a simulation of your simulation of me. So within my simulation of you, there's a simulation of how you see me. And that's who I then try to be. I want to be who I think you think I am. Unless I'm not interested in connecting with you.

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: But we're making those little micro assessments all the time and then there's [a sociologist called Cooley](#) who calls this the looking glass self, and that that's how interpersonal relationships work. And so his famous line is, "I am not who I think I am, I am not who you think I am. I am who I think you think I am." And human beings are social creatures.

JORDAN: Sure.

JASON: So this is happening subconsciously all the time. But anyway I thought it was an interesting thing to make a video about because it feels like when you have two mirrors that look at each other and it creates an engulfing infinity, a recursive loop, that's kind of how consciousness works. I don't know if you ever read [Gödel, Escher, Bach](#).

JORDAN: A long time ago --

JASON: Very famous quote --

JORDAN: -- when I was trying to be like, "If I talk like this way, people will think I'm really smart."

JASON: Okay.

JORDAN: It didn't work out for me. It worked for you. Whatever you've been doing -- it's working.

JASON: Well, I think I'm just genuinely curious to try to deconstruct things I don't understand and he had a theory in that book about consciousness that feels like Cooley's looking glass self. And basically what he says is, our brains are media. Think of them as media that store patterns, like a hard drive.

JORDAN: Sure.

JASON: And that pattern mirrors the world. It models the external world. Now if you make a model of the external world, eventually you have to realize that model of the world includes the observer within that world making the observation of that world.

JORDAN: Sure, sure.

JASON: And what he calls an inevitable vortex of self-mirroring that eventually a real causal mind emerges. It is like when you plug a video camera to the TV screen and then face the camera at the TV. It creates an engulfing infinity.

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: That's consciousness. It feels like the movie [Inception](#). You know that scene?

JORDAN: Sure.

JASON: Mirror reflects the mirror reflects the mirror reflects the mirror.

JORDAN: And to your point, when you do that, you still get the screen of the TV in the shot --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- again, and again, and again, and again.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: So the observer is --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- always going to be --

JASON: Always.

JORDAN: -- in there. Right. Okay that --

JASON: Always. I mean you can trip --

JORDAN: [0:08:29.5]

JASON: -- out with this stuff --

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: -- it starts to get like really weird and odd but I've always thought that getting a handle on a weird an odd idea gives me a semblance of control. And I think the reason for my interest in making this -- particularly short form videos is that, the heavier the idea, the more the creative challenge to kind of hone it in, to clothe it in language. And if I can do that effectively, it makes me feel like I'm in control because I can like articulate this. I've rendered this into like a solid thing, it fits in a drawer. Okay, been there done that moving on.

JORDAN: Right, right, go on to understanding something else. And I can completely identify with that point. I mean the show seeks to do that with human behavior in a lot of ways. Figuring out, okay, what's happening here? And I heard in one episode of a show you were like, "Well how come this love thing worked out that way?" Or, "How come this texting thing didn't work out this

way?" And I thought, "Well I can definitely explain that to you because I spent a decade and a half thinking about why these problems happen and how they can be solved. But you are a super passionate guy in your videos. You're a performance philosopher I think some people have said --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- which I think is really a cool description.

JASON: It's an interesting title. So that comes from a quote by [Timothy Leary](#). And Timothy Leary, of course, was a counterculture sort of --

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: -- hippie rock star in the '60s.

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: Harvard professor. Took a bunch of LSD, realized oh, my God we can hack our consciousnesses, let's create a social revolution. And maybe he took it a little too far at the time and society responded in turn --

JORDAN: At the time though.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: Right now you'd be like "Yeah, buddy. Tune in drop out. Big deal."

JASON: Yeah, yeah, yeah --

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: -- exactly. But um, after his psychedelic thing, his peak, he came out in the '80s as a cyberneticist. Like his whole thing was the Internet is the new LSD. Computers will literalize the psychedelic dream of mind expansion. It was a very interesting like Silicon Valley meets counterculture merger.

JORDAN: Which led directly to probably Steve Jobs and all these other guys --

JASON: Yeah. Yeah.

JORDAN: -- dropping acid.

JASON: Yeah precisely.

JORDAN: Well we have the Internet and acid --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- why not just combine the two?

JASON: Yeah there's a book called [*What the Dormouse Said*](#), which is about how the counterculture and Silicon Valley merged. And so much of the techno utopian dream singularity Kevin Kelly, like we will become as gods and extend our intelligence, came from inspiration that came out of this sort of psychedelic vision. That we reconceived of computers at these big mainframe things for social control and instead become tools for personal liberation --

JORDAN: Right, instead of this.

JASON: -- and personal self expression.

JORDAN: Right, and I assume that when you're talking about personal liberation and self expression, you're referring in many ways to the things that you started creating. And you did this before there were vloggers, right? You were kind of just like, "I'm going to make these little films."

JASON: Yeah I started doing my little videos in like -- well I've been doing videos since 1994, is the truth.

JORDAN: In Venezuela?

JASON: Yeah I was doing videos and short films. I've been obsessed

with the camera and I think it was mostly because it was a way of capturing reality. You know I was always like, acutely aware of how ephemeral life is. How ephemeral moments are. Everything is impermanent. Everything is temporary. And this was, again, back to the control thing.

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: If I can capture it, I can own it. Eternalize temporary moments. And I went to film school, double majored in film and philosophy and then I got to college and ended up getting a gig and Current with Max and then we worked there for four years. And when I left the network, I just wanted to go back to doing these philosophical short films and put them on the Internet. And that was like 2010. People still rolled their eyes at you when you're doing online video in like 2010 2011.

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: Now it's like, you know, not a big deal.

JORDAN: Right, now everybody's doing it.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: If you're not do it -- like I don't do a lot of online video and people go, "What are you doing?"

JASON: Yeah, exactly.

JORDAN: "You're wasting this opportunity."

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: So here we have these GoPros in our face and I'm trying to pretend like they're not there.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: Because, just like you mentioned earlier, when something is observing you, you get a little bit of that. So I'm like trying not to

let it modify my behavior and it's like --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- it's hard.

JASON: Well you know one way of doing that is to get into a flow state and to get out of your head. And you know the Timothy Leary quote was, "In the information age, you don't teach philosophy, you perform it." Now, and it was not so much that I read that and I'm like, "Well I want to go perform philosophy."

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: But rather that, philosophizing is a verb, is an act lived out loud. It's pondering and contemplating, it's not something prescribed or even thought out beforehand as much as like discovered in real time as you probe the idea. But that requires getting out of your head. That requires silencing what Steven Kotler calls the inner critic. The dorsolateral prefrontal cortex or whatever, right? And so that's when I kind of fell in love with some of the ideas of [The Flow Genome Project](#) and their new book *Stealing Fire* and all about like silencing the monkey mind -- the key idea is this part of the brain that is doing the self editing, the inner critic, the self doubt, the over thinking of everything, we've inherited. You know? Because it was the planning for the future, it was worrying about the predator --

JORDAN: Sure.

JASON: -- I mean we are the descendants of the most neurotic humans. It's served us very well. It allows us to think about the future and plan accordingly, fair enough. But it also betrays us because it prevents us from ever truly being in the present. Because we're always five steps ahead --

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: -- and when there is not things to worry about, we're still finding things to worry about like, now -- well I'm -- now my self-esteem is what I'm worried about.

JORDAN: Right on right.

JASON: I'm worried about how I'm coming across. Not the fact that a lion is going to eat me. But it turns out, and this comes from those [fMRI scans that they did on freestyle rappers](#) --

JORDAN: Oh, right, right.

JASON: -- versus people reciting memorized lyrics. The freestyle rappers shut down the neocortical hardware, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. In the zone, the jazz musician in the pocket, the elite athlete when he surrenders and submits to the amazing feat of athleticism. In these moments, as Jamie Wheel says, the aperture focuses. Not so much use more of your brain. It's actually you shut down parts of the brain that don't serve you in that moment and the self-experiences that as liberation. So with my videos, I quickly realized that's the function they served for me. That was my jazz. That's why they're fully improvised, they allow me to dive into the moment. One of the key insights for me happened in high school when I used to experiment -- I was experimenting with cannabis and cannabis has a history of being used in improvisational context. That's why jazz musicians -- jazz musicians love incorporating cannabis into their jam sessions, because you get a flood of dopamine, it increases pattern recognition, it increases lateral thinking, increases associational thinking, and it thrusts you or hurls you into the now or into the forever box. And I think for me it was very interesting that anything that could be a catalyst to get me out of my head, to hurl me into the present, that's the surrender part. But then the control part was make sure I have a camera around.

JORDAN: Sure, yeah.

JASON: -- to capture when this is happening. And it reminded me of a line from [Black Swan](#) where -- you know that Natalie Portman film?

JORDAN: Yeah of course.

JASON: So the dance choreographer is talking to Natalie Portman and she wants to be, you know the black swan. And he's like, "Look you're a perfect white swan. You're all about control and

deliberate moves and practice and meditation, and judiciousness and control, control, control. You're a great white swan. But the black swan has to let go, has to surrender, has to surprise herself. Be dangerous, transcend." And so he finally says to her, "Look perfection, any kind of perfection or exceptionality in anything is not just about control, it's also about letting go." So it's actually both. Being able to do both. To ping pong between one and the other. And I think with those videos, you know, the control could be all the reading that I do, all the thinking that I do about these ideas, all the planning that goes into bringing the camera, getting the right people together, creating the vibe, authoring the environment to get myself there. And then it's about submit.

JORDAN: You don't script the videos --

JASON: No, not at all.

JORDAN: -- and that's great. You still have to prepare for the videos. And I think a lot of people go, "Wow this guy doesn't even prepare for his videos." And that's just not true. They're unscripted but there's a lot of prep. The control element still has to be there to create the product.

JASON: Yeah, I would say that the control is to put myself in an environment where I feel safe, I'm around people that I trust, so that I can be really vulnerable and fully surrender to -- so then I can surprise myself, to go beyond myself right? And see what I find.

JORDAN: You can see yourself surprising yourself in the video if you look closely enough.

JASON: Of course.

JORDAN: I don't know you that well but --

JASON: That's exactly what I think that subconsciously people process from the video. And Steven Kotler wrote about this in [Stealing Fire](#). He's profiled so many athletes and surfers and big wave surfers, you know, that get in the zone. He's never really talked to an artist, you know what I mean? And I think what was

interesting is that he said that in my videos, both the verbal diarrhea --

(laugh)

JASON: But the intensity of words that comes at you combined with the jarring editing and cuts, shuts down conscious processing in the viewer. Because it's overwhelming. You can only hold like three or four items in mind at once through conscious processing. But then you switch to unconscious processing. So you move into an altered state and then you receive the intensity of the video. So when I'm talking about creativity in altered states of consciousness in these videos, I'm also inducing an altered state of consciousness in the viewer. Which is different than just telling them about an altered state of consciousness.

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: And the reason that they respond that is because that's what's actually happening to me as a performer, when they watch those videos.

JORDAN: Because of the way that we mirror things that we see and all that subconscious --

JASON: Yeah, yeah.

JORDAN: -- communication.

JASON: They call it the four trillion dollar altered states economy. The money that people spend to get out of their heads. Whether it's watching a musician in a concert or going and watching an MMA fighter, you know? Or oh, going and watching a horror film, like we want to watch other people in altered states because it gets us into an altered state vicariously. And, you know, when you were mentioning that in my videos you see me surprising myself -- because what's happening there is, I'm coming to realize where I've ended up with this like verbal tirade --

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: -- and then finding myself delighted that I landed in some interesting spot. Which is very similar to when these rappers freestyle. It's just that, that's one particular context that we're used to seeing. You know, what are you going to rap on 30 seconds, give me go! You know? And that's fine, they're just, in my context it's a little different because it's a different context and it's maybe a different set of things that I'm talking about. But I'm convinced it's the same mental process.

JORDAN: Yeah, you can even see it happening in your nonverbal communication. We're link to some of your videos --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- in the show notes.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: AoC family, if you agree with me, Jason starts moving more when the idea starts to blend together. You start to move your body more and then you look up and you're like, "And then boo!" And it's like your hands even go up and it's like an eruption of the idea comes out of your head.

JASON: And I've actually read that when we use our limbs to speak, they are part of our thinking --

JORDAN: Sure

JASON: -- is happening through the limbs. Like this aids me in my expressiveness and there's feedback happening between my arms and my brain and my brain and my arms. You know? I remember when I started working at Current TV for the first time and one of the producers, who's not my best friend -- you know I have to do these host raps and he's like, "Put your hand in your pocket. Like, you know, be a little bit more calm, a bit more chill." And he doesn't realize what he's doing is he's like silencing my soul in that moment. He's making me self conscious.

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: He's actually taking away what could possibly make me good at what I do and he's putting me back in my head instead of letting me take me out.

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: Because I -- "Concentrate on like keeping your hand,--" and now -- now I'm self-conscious. Now you've completely crippled my creativity.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: Well we've got the mind following the body and the body following the mind so if you shut one of those things down, deliberately to look better in some sort of dumb frame that you could probably fix with a wider lens or by backing up two feet --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: You're going to ruin the final product.

JASON: 100 percent.

JORDAN: In anything even like this, with the cameras, the thing I have to get used to is, don't knock this thing out of whack --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- because when I'm in my home studio, I'm flinging things around and if I don't hit my desk hard by accident at least twice, it's just probably not a good show.

JASON: Yeah I think any performer but like, I love movies so I always watch interviews with actors that I love talking about their craft and you know they talk about the search for truth. To be fully present and committed to a -- the reality of an imaginary circumstance. That's a powerful thing. Like to hypnotize yourself, to get into an altered state, a frenzy, a trance of such significance that a crew of 25 crew members and cameras all around you, can nonetheless not thwart your capacity to induce

an alternate reality, that for all purposes is real.

JORDAN: Right -- for you -- yeah.

JASON: Right? The camera -- the camera doesn't lie. When we see transcendence on screen, that's because that actor's having a real experience under imaginary circumstances and that's beautiful to watch. And so in my own small way, when I try to be creative, when I try to make creative work -- and I'm sure that you get into that space in your podcast. The reason that it's so successful is no doubt because you're able to induce that altered state, that truth with your guests, is that you go to that place, man, and you're not there. It's the going beyond yourself. You know you finally stop worrying about, you know, how you're coming across and how you're going to be perceived and -- you now all that junk. The cul de sacs and error messages as Jamie Wheal calls them you know?

(laugh)

JASON: I love those guys.

JORDAN: They're so brilliant. When I read that book, I thought, "Wow there's so much good stuff in here."

JASON: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: And so of course when I read books, one of my sort of tricks is to read the acknowledgements section and make sure that I highlight the names they talk about because --

JASON: yeah.

JORDAN: -- you have to get your inspiration from somewhere. If you can find those people, you can sort of pull up the roots or look under the hood of what's even deeper into the book. It's the way to do it.

JASON: 100 percent. I don't know if you're familiar with [The Edge Foundation](#)?

JORDAN: I've heard of it but I'm not that familiar.

JASON: Yeah, so John Brockman, he's a famous literary agent. He represents a lot of science writers, people like Sam Harris and others. And he's got this organization called Edge. And their tagline is something that I've borrowed as kind of a life philosophy, back to what you were saying about looking in the Cliff notes of the book and digging deeper into everything. He says, "To arrive at the edge of the world's knowledge, to gather the world's most interesting minds, to put them together in a room and to have them ask each other the questions they've been asking themselves."

JORDAN: Oh, man.

JASON: And so -- that's beautiful right?

JORDAN: Yeah it's nice.

JASON: Yeah. [0:26:03.1]

JORDAN: That's a good one. So if you're going to steal a slogan, that's a good one to steal.

JASON: Yeah but that's the dream like, my relationship, my friendship with people like [The Flow Genome Project](#) founders Steven Kotler and Jamie Wheal, comes from wanting to find the people who could verify and legitimize interior experiences that I had had, in a language that is both poetic and archetypical as well as scientific.

JORDAN: Scientific.

JASON: And that's what those guys do. So you have you know, Steven Kotler brings the neuroscience, like breaks it down harden the materialist. And then you have Jamie Wheal waxing rhapsodic a la [Joseph Campbell](#) and like archetypes and bliss**** crucifixions and dying into the moment and all this stuff. And I'm like, "Holy **** these two know how to tango," you know? And so I became best friends with them. Because they're like my gurus.

JORDAN: Did you ever deal with, say, some kind of imposter syndrome? Because I feel like a lot of folks would say, "Well you know, what qualifies you to do this type of thing?" And finding guys like Steven Kotler and Jamie Wheal, who legitimize it in science --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- is you can kind of, take the mask off and go, "Look this is real, so screw everybody who doubted me."

JASON: Yeah so Steven Kotler, in the process of interviewing me for that chapter, revealed me to myself. He really anchored my meandering journey. Because I'd never had a plan all right? There's no directions that I followed. I never had a map but Chris Anderson from TED once said in an interview, "We don't use maps, we use a compass." And that's always what I've had. But then, sometimes looking backwards, you see that you did kind of follow a trail. And it was the trail of finding these flow states and building your life around them. And you know, your instrument happened to be film and video, you know? You use the storytelling technologies of media that you had to find and articulate your voice that got you into that altered state and so on and so forth.

But then, explaining the neuroscience behind the experience I was having, and then having people like Jamie articulate the sort of existential context for why this matters. It just made it all make sense, you know? And as far as imposter syndrome is concerned, I never would call myself an expert in anything. I don't want to be an academic, because I think that the people that are academics have a different kind of training and I think they're very important and I don't want to confuse people between what I do and what they do. I am an artist, which means I want the poetic license and the freedom to interpret and to take poetic license and to get inspired and I call my videos art.

And you know, I host a couple series of National Geographic. They're about science because I'm a good synthesizer and I explain some of these ideas maybe in a poetic way, but I'm not a scientist. I'm an artist. I'm an artist and [Marshall McLuhan](#) used to say, it's always been the artist who realizes that the future is the present and uses his work to prepare the grounds for it. So

it's like the artist matters too. And I'm just trying to like legitimize the artist as a voice that can communicate important ideas related to science and technology and the implications of science and technology in our rapidly changing world.

JORDAN: Being such an artistic free thinker was a little bit surprising for me. You grew up in a repressive regime. I mean there's no getting around it. Chavez, Venezuela --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- Not exactly this bastion of, "Hey let's let the kids experiment with all this stuff and video tape it and talk about whatever they want." I mean it's literally the opposite of what people think about --

JASON: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- communist socialist regime.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: What's going on there?

JASON: Yeah so, Chavez is like a terminal cancer that shows up to cripple its hosts. He was a cancer and he died of cancer.

JORDAN: Yes.

JASON: So I don't think that's a coincidence.

JORDAN: There's a little poetic justice in there.

JASON: But -- yeah 1998 he took over and he really made things far worse. Venezuela for a while, you know, in the back of oil income, was one of the wealthiest nations in South America, had a really strong middle class, very high standard of living. We were like the Switzerland of the South America for a while. And my grandparents, who were immigrants, came there and did very well for themselves. So I grew up in a very cosmopolitan bubble in Caracas. The country was much better

off back then but it still had that Latin American signature social division where --

JORDAN: Right, yeah.

JASON: -- a small percentage of the population is extremely cosmopolitan and the rest are very rural. You know, people who live in the countryside, farmers, etc.

JORDAN: You're an '80s and '90s kid?

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah okay.

JASON: I grew up in the '80s, yeah exactly. I was in this cosmopolitan bubble and I went to an international school. My mom, who was a teacher at the international school to high school English literature is a intellectual and a poet and an artist and so the environment of my home was extremely bohemian.

JORDAN: Surprise.

JASON: The most bohemian. Sculptures and art and paintings and psychedelia and my friends would come over to my mom's house and they'd be like stoned and they'd be like looking at her art and they just couldn't believe that this was real. Like I was lucky in that sense.

JORDAN: A lot of the videos that you create are based on how some elements of our brain and perception and things like that can combine to kind of trick us, right? [Brain Games](#) is in fact many of the episodes --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- that I've seen --

JASON: Sure.

JORDAN: -- are about that. What are some of your favorite cognitive

distortions that you just can't talk about enough? This is so important how does not everybody know this?

JASON: Yeah, yea.

JORDAN: Everybody in my family's got to be aware of this.

JASON: Yeah, yeah, well one of my mom's bumper sticker quotes in her classroom was "We don't see the world as it is, we see the world as we are." So our interpretive frameworks matter. The set of codes and symbols and moralistic philosophy, like our cultural reality tunnel, to quote Robert Anton Wilson, matters. So again, what that does is, it informs what we decide about what happens to us. Like how we feel about what happens to us. And so when we feel disempowered, sometimes it can serve us to try to take ourselves out of context and realize, "Am I really disempowered? Is the whole world really conspiring against me?" Or do I have an interpretive framework that is fatalistic that is defeatist that is not serving and how can I change it?

You know the notion that reality is coupled to perception is very important to me. I've had enough experiences in altered states of consciousness to realize that perspective is reality. The angle with which you see the world is reality. You know, you can talk about some of these film theorists that talk about how when you edit a film, depending on the order of how you show certain frames and certain shots you can get the audience to have a certain opinion about what they're seeing on screen --

JORDAN: Sure.

JASON: -- with very, very little context, you know? There's [that famous shot of Hitchcock showing](#) that if a shot was shown in a certain way in a certain order he looked like a pervert and if it was shown in another way in a certain order he looked like a really nice old man.

JORDAN: Interesting. We've got to find that and throw it in the show notes.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: I'm sure it's on YouTube somewhere.

JASON: Yeah, The Nerdwriter did a video essay --

JORDAN: I know him.

JASON: -- about the film *Arrival*. He's brilliant. He's --

JORDAN: That guy is a next level thinker. Like yourself, actually.

JASON: Oh, well he's one of my heroes and I've become very good friends with him as well. I adore his work, [Evan Puschak, The Nerdwriter. He did an analysis of the film *Arrival*](#), which is really an analysis of consciousness in cinema and how it plays with time and context and this is where he used the example of Hitchcock. But again, that applies also to our day to day reality outside of movies. Our day to day reality has been edited to a certain degree by context, by the culture, by language can even sculpt our world view. By the clothing we wear. We're a different person --

JORDAN: Certainly.

JASON: -- with a blazer on than when we're not, you know? David Lenson wrote a wonderful book called [On Drugs](#), said that consciousness is a collaboration between subjective and objective. So it's person multiplied by place, multiplied by time.

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

JASON: Revealing a garden of forking paths of possible consciousnesses, right? I mean that's -- that's what we are. I mean, you know they say if you're a some of the five people you spend the most amount of time with. Yeah but you're also your language, the context, where you are, who you're with. People who are multilingual tend to be more tolerant and creative because they see the world through two different lenses,

(SPANISH AUDIO)

JASON: And that sensibility, it just allows you to more easily see the world through the eyes of others because you know what it's

like to see the world through two different eyes.

JORDAN: Are there certain concepts that you think about more in Spanish than you do in English and vice versa?

JASON: It's a hard question to answer because I don't know what language I think in.

JORDAN: Really?

JASON: I guess maybe I think in both. I don't think that I'm thinking in any particular language unless I'm trying to say something in particular.

JORDAN: Right the voice in your head I guess is the only one. Because right, if I think about what language I think in, I don't I just have feelings, right?

JASON: Yeah, yeah exactly, exactly but-- what's interesting about me is that I literally grew up with both. So my parents are both native Spanish speakers and my mother is also a native English speaker. So even though I grew up in Venezuela, I was completely bilingual. What that does, again it's two worlds. It's like if I'm talking to the nanny or some of my Venezuelan relatives it's like this is Venezuelan culture, this is where they're coming from, this is their world. But then I would switch to English with my mom and it allowed me to disjoint that two worlds. It just right away allows you to ping pong between different monkey suits.

JORDAN: When I switch languages, and I'm not fully bilingual --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- but if I switch to German or something like that, it's -- the context switches pretty much immediately and it can be --

JASON: Yes.

JORDAN: -- almost like a knife cutting --

JASON: Yes.

JORDAN: -- open a fabric. That you think you're looking --

JASON: Yes.

JORDAN: -- at reality and then the knife goes through --

JASON: Yes, yes.

JORDAN: -- and then behind it is -- oh, that's what I'm really --

JASON: Yeah

JORDAN: That's who I really am.

JASON: And paying attention, deconstructing how conscious experience is informed by context, place, even music, can be very empowering. To use the metaphor that Steven Kotler and Jamie Wheal used a knobs and levers approach to perception. Now they're using it very much in the context of psychedelics but I think the knobs and levels approach can be as simple as, "If I go to Amsterdam with my buddy Ben and my buddy Jason Goodman, and we take this stereo system with us when we're riding bikes and we're listening to this particular cinematic score, I'll be able to frame a particular reality." It's like being a stage designer, the people who choreograph the stage. Like you know when you go to the theater, you sit in the chair. If the stage is made to look like an 18th century British home, you're like already contextually ready to receive that.

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: If the actors are dressed a particular costume, you're ready to meet them at that reality. David Lenson calls that stewardship of internal life. When you realize the creative capacity that you have through your creative and linguistic choices, to inform consciousness, that's like the best kept secret to any kind of happiness. It's not when I buy that car but it's when I get in that car, that is a particular monkey suit. That's a particular reality that I want to render. I want to feel like James Bond or -- you can get really creative like in a -- it's a jukebox style selection of

like the kind of reality authorings you want to create for yourself. And I don't want to sound like a new age thinker but I'm talking literally about -- it's no different than like if you have a girlfriend that's really into hosting dinner parties and she's like an expert like having the candles and the lighting in a certain way and she plays the perfect jazz music in the back. She creates little movies. Just think of yourself as, you're an editor and an actor. You're living the reality but you're also in the editing room tweaking the scene and then making the movie play out in a certain mood, in a certain vibe and a certain flavor.

JORDAN: You know who's good at this is kids?

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: At some -- at some point --

JASON: Of course.

JORDAN: -- around 8 or 10 --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- we just kind of switch to -- instead of creating that all internally, we go, "Well no, actually now I need this external thing to do it.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: And it just gets worse as we get older.

JASON: Yeah because the price of what you need to get there changes. And sometimes you get so jaded that nothing will make a difference.

JORDAN: Well we're in Hollywood --

JASON: Some people --

JORDAN: -- you can find examples of that everywhere.

JASON: -- yeah, some people can fly, you know, first class to Paris, stay in a five star hotel and complain of being bored. I think it's a dance. I think, you know the little kid can build a fort made of sheets. I mean the little kids have maximum imagination and minimum -- even the little kid -- some environments are better for thriving than others, you know?

Like I had an enormous yard in Venezuela. Like we had a practically half a mountain within our property. So that mountain was a freaking world. It was a safe, contained environment that I could make a part of my mental landscape. It's like when you go on nature walks, right? Like really beautiful nature walks. They say that those are so good for contemplative introspection. Why is that? Well if you're in a nature walk in the middle of nowhere and there's nobody else around, except you or maybe your friend, the landscape becomes your mental landscape. You appropriate the mystical surrounding. And that mystical surrounding becomes the mystical mood that you're in. But the minute that somebody else pops in, some like annoying tourist--

(laugh)

JASON: What does that do? Now you have to model their mental world and now your dreamscape has to be shared with them. And that's oh, ****, buzzkill.

JORDAN: Right buzzkill.

JASON: Somebody else ruining my sacred holy moment. So I always say, you have to be able to design the context that you can then appropriate to become your mental reality. And nowhere is that more clear, you know now that pot is getting legal in all these places in Colorado. Why do some people smoke pot and get paranoid and wig out? They're like, "Oh, I got so awkward in that room." And then some people smoke pot and they're like -- they go into archetypal realm of ideals --

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: Context bro. They're appropriating a different landscape that surrounds them into their mental experience. Cannabis and

many other techniques of ecstasy, one of the key things do is they're nonspecific amplifiers of consciousness. What that means is they make you aware of how your creative and linguistic choices are making you feel.

Some people can listen to music so much that they're so satiated, they don't even notice the music that's playing in the background. They don't stop and smell the roses. One of the first things that happens when somebody gets high, you play them a song they've heard a thousand times and they're like, "Wow I forgot how much I love that song." What's different? The only thing that's different is that you're noticing how the song is making you feel. Normally the song is doing that, you're just not aware of it. You're not paying attention, right?

JORDAN: Right you're thinking about your grocery list.

JASON: Whatever it may be, yeah. And so people say learn to be in the present. Learn to be mindful. They're all the same thing. They're saying your creative and linguistic choices are constantly informing your interior experience. If you learn to tune in to how those signals are authoring your interior experience, you've won. Because then you can start cultivating those signals like a freaking DJ. Now that's really empowering. I mean if you're interested in human flourishing and you're frustrated by the fact the things you buy don't satiate your soul, it's because the mental apparatus that you're incorporating into that is a pivotal part of that feedback loop.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: How do you get yourself into and out of feedback loops that are negative and positive when you do your videos. For example, often times you're out in nature, you in like a --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- weird barn or something --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- with the roof caving in --

JASON: Yeah, yeah.

JORDAN: -- and I think, "Okay this isn't just cool scenery"--

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- there's something going on here because I would imagine it would even be hard for you to function in society if you were like you are in those videos everywhere you go all day long.

JASON: Of course and the reason that I wouldn't want to be in a place where I have to manage consensus reality, right -- I can't appropriate New York City, right, as part of my mental landscape, unless I'm ready to include all of those people as part of my mental landscape. So what I do is, I just don't do it. I'm like, I'm in borrowed space, I'm in borrowed land. This is not my mental landscape, this is a shared space. This is like being on a plane. You want to behave, you want to follow protocol, you want to be compliant. And that's fine. Society requires that. Thankfully there's a lot of outlets where each of us can move into our own personal universe. So, if I, you know I'm in Lake Mead, outside Las Vegas, and I rent a boat with my friend and we go to the middle of the water and we turn the boat on and play our favorite song, all of a sudden we're authoring our own little operatic moment. You know what I mean? And so I've learned that and I've cultivated, I think, the art of artfully curating particular environments that catalyzed certain states of consciousness. And I use different tools at my disposal --

JORDAN: Got it.

JASON: But with a huge respect for all of these variables. So my favorite place to make videos is Amsterdam. There was a recent article in New York Magazine called [*The Psychological Impact of Boring Buildings*](#). And it was actually saying that like city design, again -- this is happening all the time whether we're paying attention to it or not. That boring buildings, that uniform buildings that don't have enough diversity, like city landscapes, can trigger depression, can cause anxiety. You know architecture, when it's too functional and not aesthetic enough, you know, can have all these negative repercussions and it makes sense. That the ideal design of a cityscape should be

first of all for walking speed, not for cars, because that's what we're designed for, and that every five seconds we should look at something different. So as we walk, it should change enough that every five seconds there's a new structure or a new building, a different store front, that constant novelty. So you have a city like Amsterdam, it's like New York's West Village turned into a city.

JORDAN: Sure.

JASON: Low buildings, gorgeous like old European style city with beautiful canals. And then what do you have? Severely restricted automobile transportation in the city and a huge bicycle infrastructure. So everybody is moving around in bicycles. Like kids, grandmas, and everything in between. People put their kids on the baskets of their bicycle. So it almost looks like a Disneyland for adults. So you already have that surrealist environment. That sense of agency and volition that being on a bicycle and being able to go everywhere gives you. You also have the element of being in an alternate reality because it's a different culture. So it's kind of like you're watching this VR simulation. That's like, "Oh, this is like another reality but I'm like slightly outside of it but looking in." So interesting. Then, cannabis is legal there.

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: So what that means is you can have an espresso, you can have a beer, you can also have a joint. Which as, David Lanson says creates a dialectical pattern of reconcilable estrangement with everyday perception. So what does that mean? It means the ordinary becomes slightly new and different. Right? You see as if for the first time and you reconnect with ordinary perceptions as if they were new. Right? The sense of first sight unencumbered by knowingness. Rather than the been there and done that's of the adult mind. So you see the world through the eyes of a child. So you bring all those elements together then you bring maybe your closest friends, and that's a really nice space to induce childlike state of wonder and curiosity. No worries and constraint. Zero anxiety. And an easy -- you can incorporate the mental landscape very easily because even the other people that are there, they're operating on a different channel than you.

JORDAN: That totally makes sense. So you're changing your environment, you're changing the people you surround yourself with.

JASON: Yes.

JORDAN: You're maybe adding or subtracting something from your --

JASON: Yes.

JORDAN: -- consciousness by --

JASON: Yes.

JORDAN: --taking something --

JASON: Yes.

JORDAN: -- or whatever.

JASON: Yes, you bring trusted friends with you so that in that other realm when things get a little weird, you can always look at them in the eye and be like, "All right we're both in here. Okay we're on this together."

JORDAN: Right. Right it's safety element.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: It's paying attention to everything you need to travel to another realm dude. It's the same thing that you would want to pack for an epic journey. Treat your life like a journey. You know, and pack accordingly. The right friends, the right vibe, the right people, the right equipment and everything.

JORDAN: The videos are excellent for people who haven't seen them. It's -- you did the videos maybe to share a little bit of your thoughts,

get people a head trip, it's kind of like you're crawling into someone's head and then starting to paint on the walls.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: Does that make sense?

JASON: Yeah so my videos are called [Shots of Awe](#). And you can see them in the YouTube page [Shots of Awe](#) or [follow my Facebook page Jason Silva](#). And they're -- they're kind of like trailers for big ideas. They're kind of like an entry point to dig deeper into something related to technology or creativity or the human condition.

And what's interesting is those videos, that were very much a passion project and continue to be a passion project have led to everything else. So [Brain Games](#) came because Nat Geo execs had seen some of these videos and dug my passion and were like, "Let's do this brain show together." [Origins](#) came because [Brain Games](#) did really well. My videos were continuing to explode and Nat Geo gave me a chance to do a project that would bring some of the sensibility of my videos to TV. So if you watch [Origins](#), my new TV series on Nat Geo -- it's about the origins of humankind. It's really about the McLuhan quote, "First we build the tools and then the tools build us." Looking at human cultural evolution through that lens. So, we domesticated fire but fire also domesticated us.

JORDAN: True, yeah.

JASON: Feedback loops, feedback loops. And the show is structured in a way that every act has a Shot of Awe-esque opening, in every single act of the show, that we call them symphonies that I did with John Boswell from [Melodysheep](#). And they basically look like Shots of HBO level -- like --

JORDAN: Yeah.

JASON: -- they're beautiful. And then we have these amazing historical recreations shot in Africa that look like mini movies that chronicle these key moments in history. So the visuals are -- we stepped it up. And so it really does feel like my passion and

curiosity need to create these like media brain bombs in the short form and now getting to unpack them in the larger form for [Origins](#), has been finally like, literalized. And the goal with [Origins](#) is the same as with [Shots of Awe](#), is I don't just want to tell you about an idea, I want to get you into an altered state --

JORDAN: Sure.

JASON: -- and then feed you the inception.

JORDAN: Yes, which you do very well.

JASON: Thanks bro.

JORDAN: You mentioned the tools, which is a great segue --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- because AI is coming -- right we're talking -- people are afraid of it, people are excited about it. Technology is and has always probably been a cognitive appendage.

JASON: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: It's becoming a part of our brain, and a lot of people complain about that. I don't necessarily think it's bad.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: In fact I think it's probably really great.

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: We've been adapting our tools since the freaking --

JASON: Sure.

JORDAN: -- stone age. We're still here so--

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: But how do you think AI is going to change us? Instead of a robotic arm or a hand --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: I might have an 800 X brain --

JASON: Of course.

JORDAN: That's doing the computing --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- and what's that going to do to the world? And further, if my AI is talking to your AI, do we still have a relationship? I mean, if my AI is doing 800 --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- that's what my brain is doing.

JASON: yeah.

JORDAN: Which part is more real?

JASON: Things could get weird. But as you said, very eloquently, we've had these cognitive appendages already for a long time. So two of my favorite thinkers are David Chalmers and Andy Clark. They're cognitive philosophers, so they wrote this essay online called [The Extended Mind Thesis](#). And Andy Clark wrote a book called [Natural Born Cyborgs](#). And the key idea is that we've always incorporated nonbiological props and scaffoldings into our mental architecture.

So they talk about an example of like an airplane. So an airplane is a symbiotic organism, a biological and nonbiological intelligence. So, the airplane is controlled because the pilot watches the autopilot and the autopilot watches the pilot. And it is in that feedback loop, that infinity loop, that figure 8, that you have something that is as reliable as it is. Because it's

distributed between biological and nonbiological intelligence.

When you interface with your phone, which allows you to express yourself on video or send your thoughts and ideas to people across the planet in real time or broadcast tweets and -- all the media that you can do that is essentially versions of your mind turned inside out, is made possible through a feedback loop mediated experience between you and your phone.

Part of your thinking is happening on your phone when you write something down. Part of your thoughts, right, are being transmitted through that phone and then you can then watch back later and reflect on. So there's constantly feedback loop. What these guys say is that, the mind as we know it, right, is not limited to the brain. The brain is a crucial component but that what we call mind emerges in the feedback loop between brains, tools, and environments. And so environment is informing thoughts and ideas. The way you interface with your tools is informing thoughts and ideas. So that it is just feedback loops is a better metaphor for life than the DNA logo.

JORDAN: So if we're looking at these feedback loops and we're looking at your art, your videos --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- as influencing your mind and the minds of other people through your videos, is it safe to say that transitively you're looking at people almost as art projects?

(laugh)

JORDAN: I mean I'm not trying to pin you into a corner --

JASON: No, no, no, no.

JORDAN: -- it just seems like that makes sense to look at it that way.

JASON: I mean I think that it would be appropriate to -- I think it was Dawkins who said, "If you want to understand life, do not think of throbbing gels and oozing liquids, think about information technology, words, instructions." So DNA is code, we are made

of language, we are linguistic all the way down. DNA replication was an information technology, the dominant form of information technology on earth until consciousness and language.

Then we went from trading in genes to trading in memes. Right, and memes are the new replicator, right? Born from the primordial soup of human culture, the vector of transmission is language in electronic communication. So this information transfer, right, is happening now in this space of memetics. So you could argue that I interface with my phone, my phone interfaces with me. I interface with the books that inspire me, those books interface with me. That changes the ideas that come out of my mouth, regurgitated and synthesized in the form of media that other people watch. And then, maybe they send comments or ideas back to me that inform my future video and so those billions of signals and -- the planet is cloaked in data and there's more information produced per second now I think than like, in all of human history combined.

And so I think, you know, I'm just a grain of sand. But within my world, I take in, I put out. I take in and put out. Those feedback loops continue. You know, I'm just trying to create self replicating memetic structures in the form of these videos, that can then live on their own. I can be sleeping at night and somebody can be having ontological awakening watching one of my videos. That is a trip. It's the same thing that you're doing. I mean with the enormous success that you have had with this podcast, like, I don't want to get like sexually crude --

(laugh)

JASON: -- but if we are designed to disseminate our seed, our gene, right? You could have sex with a thousand women, okay? And that will not disseminate your memes as effectively as the two million downloads you get per day with your podcast. So this is your way of fulfilling your wiring to disseminate you widely.

JORDAN: I'm the Genghis Khan of iTunes right? Yeah.

JASON: There you go.

JORDAN: I think that's a great way to think about it. You're right in a lot of

ways when I think about this. We curate our input we curate those around us, we shape our future selves. And The Art of Charm, the show and what we teach, is essentially the study of how we do this for ourselves. Why is that important for you? I mean why is it important that while you're sleeping your ideas, your thought process, your subjective reality --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- is affecting other people.

JASON: It's crazy, right?

JORDAN: Why is that even -- why is that even necessary? Why is it important?

JASON: Ah, is it necessary or does it feel necessary to me?

JORDAN: Right.

JASON: The reason for getting up in the morning, the reason to be compelled to labor at creating something of value in the world -- initially of value to me, but then secondarily of value in the world, is from a fire in the belly. It's from existential dread, it's from a terror of meaninglessness, it's fear that the joy and ecstasy of yesterday means ***** nothing the next day. Unless I've turned it into something magnificent that can still mean something days from now. There is a -- I think it was Tolstoy who said that, "Man needs to find a bridge between the finite and the infinite in order to live." Ernest Becker in [*The Denial of Death*](#) says, "Man cannot live without a continuous belief in something indestructible within himself." He was paraphrasing Kafka.

But what the hell do we do as mortal beings who dream of immortality. With our minds we can ponder the infinite, right? Yet we're housed in heart pumping, breath gasping, decaying bodies. So we have to respond in some creative way to rage against the darkness because otherwise, the reality of our condition, as naked, rotting, conscious, flesh --

(laugh)

JASON: -- so everything I do is a response against meaninglessness. It's a desperate attempt to carve my name on a tree. In fact, even more than that, to turn myself inside out, in a very real way, you know?

JORDAN: You obviously read a lot. How do you remember all of the things that you're -- I mean you're quoting all of this complex thought. It's not the thing that happens when you --

JASON: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- hear something once and go, "Oh, cool, that'll sound great on podcast."

JASON: Yeah well if you hang out with me a lot you'll realize that all the stuff I quote is all related and it all comes back to one thing. It's how do we deal with our existential condition. And every quote and every other quote is some mystic or some sage or some thoughtful person who came up with an interesting set of words that gave me the chills because of the way they said it.

(laugh)

JASON: I think I remember something because I feel like nobody has said it better than that and that speaks so deeply to how I feel and it makes so much sense to me that it now becomes a part of me. Very much the way that especially artists who really personalize their homes, it's themselves written all over the walls. It's every book they've ever loved, it's every poster that ever moved them. I mean we're all affirming our insides outside of ourselves in our private property. Because I live on the road and I live out of my suitcase a lot of the time, I've had to do that within the contents of my mind.

JORDAN: Sure, sure.

JASON: Who I am is what I remember and all the references and anchor points that ground me in my ontological reality. So again, it comes back to the control thing, bro.

JORDAN: It does, always, yeah.

JASON: Yeah yeah.

JORDAN: You're an ontological DJ --

JASON: Yeah, yeah.

JORDAN: -- for a lot of people. Jason thank you for helping me infect slash impregnate my audience, the AoC family, with our new subjective reality that we've created here.

JASON: Beautiful bro. Thank you for having me on your podcast and congratulations on your success and thank you to all your listeners.

JORDAN: New show [Origins](#) out now? Or real soon?

JASON: Yes, yes, yes. Monday nights at 9pm eastern on the National Geographic Channel. [Origins](#), blow your mind [0:56:38.5]. Follow my Facebook page facebook.com/jasonlsilva

JORDAN: Thank you so much.

JASON: Thanks brother. Cheers.

JORDAN: Super interesting episode. I think now everybody knows what I mean when I say that Jason's on another level, right? That's how this guy rolls frankly. And I like it. I like his message, I think a lot of it is super important. It gets you thinking in a totally different way. Great big thank you to Jason Silva. The show is called Origins. It's airing now on National Geographic and if you're listening to this way late in the game, well go look it up because it's super interesting. And if you enjoyed this one, don't forget to thank Jason on Twitter. We'll have that linked in the show notes as well.

I'd love it if you'd tweet at me your number one takeaway from this episode here with Jason. You can tap our album art in most mobile podcast players to see the show notes for this episode. We'll link to the show notes directly on your phone. Boot camps, our live program details, also at theartofcharm.com/bootcamp. Those are super rewarding, they're residential, you can come in

and learn from us with us as your AoC coaches here and be a part of the AoC family. The growth you'll experience over the next few months and years is astounding. I also want to encourage you to join us in our AoC challenge. That's theartofcharm.com/challenge. Or you can text the word charmed C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444.

The challenge is about improving your networking skills and your connection skills and inspiring those around you to develop a personal and professional relationship with you. We'll also email you our Fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show which includes some great practical stuff ready to apply right out of the box, on reading body language, having charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, mentorship, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm.

It will make you a better networker, it'll make you a better connector, and it'll make you a better thinker. That's theartofcharm.com/challenge or text the word charmed in the U.S. to 33444. For full show notes for this and all previous episodes, head on over to theartofcharm.com/podcast. This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor. Show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty. Theme music by Little People. Transcriptions by TranscriptionOutsourcing.net. I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell your friends. Because the greatest compliment you can give us is a referral to someone else, either in person, or shared on the Web. Word of mouth really is everything. So stay charming and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.

