

# David Sacks in Conversation

**Lisa Likhacheva, Nonô Saramago** David Sacks is a 22-year-old you've never heard of before, but definitely need to hear – and hear about – now. David is graduating from Brown University, where he studied Latin and Ancient Greek, and going to Stanford Law School in the fall. He is an accomplished concert pianist, an outspoken purveyor of free inquiry, a novelist, a translator, and a deeply interesting and funny person. On a lovely April Saturday, David spoke to the *Exsi* about the indisputable masterpiece that are Pixar cartoons (and *Anna Karenina*), pondered a tongue being ripped out in Ancient Rome, advocated loving thy neighbor through more than cookies and hugs, explicated music as the (literal) movement of the world, and attempted to define ...Love<sup>1</sup>

**The list of your accomplishments is almost literally endless: you are an Honors Candidate in Classics at Brown, you've got a 4.0 GPA, you are going to Stanford Law School in the fall, you also got admitted to Oxford and Cambridge Classics. You are a very accomplished concert pianist, you were the youngest participant at the Busoni competition, you published a novel. So, how did all of this happen? What was the intellectual trajectory that got you from being a 3-year-old who was actively humming, probably before he even started talking, to where you currently are?**

I don't know if I was a late talker, but I wasn't a big talker until I was about five, I definitely hummed much more. Music and writing, I always wanted to do them. I always wanted to write, specifically. I've always had a big imagination. I would spend recess in first grade walking around the playground, alone. I didn't want to hang out with the other kids, even though they actually invited me! *Who knew, weird stuff happens!* But I just hung out at the playground and just thought about scenes, I put myself in different scenes, and created my own little world. Talking about imaginary friends, I had an imaginary world of people. And it's still going in my

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<sup>1</sup>which may, or may not, explain and be responsible for *Ratatouille*, Brahms, David's novel, why we're all here, and what we need to in order to a) stay here, and b) do so with a slightly lesser sense of impending doom

head, a little bit. When I was seven, I wrote a tiny little mystery novel. And when I was ten I got the opportunity in English class at this very weird school to write a bunch of short stories. And it was really fun, and I was pretty good at it, for a ten-year-old. It wasn't exactly great fiction, but it was interesting and entertaining, and there were characters. After that, I didn't get to do it for a while. But then COVID happened, and I was like, «screw it all, I'm just going to write this novel.»

Music was always much easier because my dad is quite a good musician himself, an amateur of course, but he knows everything about music. He put me in front of the piano, and I would play. I didn't like practicing. I think there's this idea that all quote-unquote prodigies somehow like practicing – and maybe some do – but I think it is nonsense, I didn't like practicing. Now that I'm older, I see everything that I need to do, and I enjoy putting in the effort because it is a worthwhile and enjoyable process. But back in the day, the only way they were able to sit me down long enough to let me acquire the mastery I needed was by getting me to play

4-5 different pieces at a time, hard ones, as hard as possible, something that pushed me to improve.

I like creating, I like trying to interpret the world, and where I am. I've always wondered, since I was 3, why are we here? School helped me forget about it, but the question came back once I graduated high school. I feel that doing all these things you've listed, in different ways, helps me figure this question out, and do what I can to contribute to the world. Where I currently am is also a product of the COVID pandemic (and also, of a very serious and extremely painful injury I sustained in December 2020), because, after all of that, I just said, «Screw this, I don't need to worry about the little things anymore.»

The bottom line for this question is – I've tried to do what I could to understand, and then do something about what I've understood about the world. And I've also tried to harness my talents while doing so.

**You mentioned the overarching question being, «Why are we here?» What is the answer? Is there an answer? Or, is the process of trying to understand itself the solution for grappling with this di-**

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### lemma?

«Why are we here?» is a common question. I think most people at some point in their lives come to it. I don't claim to have a better answer than they do. I just try to do what I can, like, I think, many people do. I don't want to give theological views, I tend to think that we are not placed on this Earth for a reason by an intelligent creator. I do think that we have evolved to this point because of certain things and we are governed by natural laws as part of nature. And we have certain talents and abilities, and we are also, each of us, one amongst many – maybe I sound like a crazy libertarian, talking about natural rights – but yes, we, in the Lockean tradition, we should care about each other. I've recently been thinking about what «love thy neighbor means.» And it doesn't mean, «give your neighbor hugs and cookies.» But rather, care about your neighbor as a fellow human being. «Neighbor» doesn't mean the guy living next door, it means everybody. Everybody in the world, certainly everybody in your country, your city, it's everybody, at least to a certain extent. Nothing in life is per-

fect, you can't care about everybody, but you should at least have a certain regard for every person, every human being who has the same inalienable and also positive rights of living their lives, as you do. The other side of that is that we all have talents, things that make us special, and we should try to put that into the world, for ourselves and for others.

**Speaking of! *Melancholia*, the book that materialized in 2020 as the result of «screw it, I will write a novel» – and did so, in a month, in what was a quick and beautiful process... One could say it's a work of philosophical fiction about very intelligent and articulate teenagers with some physical comedy, some very profound insights into philosophy, literature, art, culture in general, and yet very much fail to capture what is actually going on in this novel. So what is *Melancholia*? What is this book?**

I sat down in 2020 to write a different book. Instead, I wrote about some feelings that I'd been having for a few years about different things that I'd experienced. It's not just that. There are 2 or 3 characters who are

based on real people, but many of the characters are – *gestures towards his head*– are totally unique. The father, by the way, is not my own. He was possibly based on a teen soap I came across during the pandemic. I thought it was a very entertaining and ridiculous character that I made less ridiculous, because I had other things to explore. What is *Melancholia*? I don't know. Many people have asked me «What's your novel about?» And I'm like, «Oh, it's about this, it's about figuring life as a teenager when your friend tries to do something that you didn't want, and – oh crap – suddenly you realize you have feelings for her!» It's a little *Dawson's Creek*. Although I do hope it's a little better than *Dawson's Creek*, since I hate *Dawson's Creek*. It's like advice to myself, «Hey, don't be a jerk to your friends and people around you, because you might be an idiot and not realize that people might be much more like you than you think they are. Everyone has their own problems, and you find your community always!» I like this idea, inspired by what David Lynch said about *Mulholland Drive*: The best art defies definition. I would

say *Melancholia* probably falls in that category — it's a little bit like *Mulholland Drive*. You don't quite know what's going on, you don't know why it's going on, you don't exactly understand what the point is, but you are a different person, I hope, after experiencing it. Now, I realize I just compared my book to one of the best movies of the 21st century, and I don't mean to imply that *Melancholia* is as successful or as good as *Mulholland Drive*, but there is something similar.

**In a way, *Melancholia* is very cinematic. Many of the scenes, you could just take them and film them that way. Did you do this on purpose? Why?**

Remember my imagination thing from earlier? When I'm writing this book, I see the main character walking into the room, and then there's a girl, and he's, like, «Oh god!» I see it happening. I must admit, it is somewhat inspired by the Marx brothers. Just crazy physical comedy—it makes you laugh out loud. I see it, and I write it down as I see it. *Melancholia* might have what people might consider an excess of and-here-we-go-over-there-isms, and that's be-

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cause I really wanted people, at least in this novel, to see and feel what was happening. I thought that was the choice for this novel. In the next novel, I don't know if I'll do it the same way, but I do think that the visual is a good aid.

**I feel really tempted to try and get you on the record saying that the next novel will indeed get finished and published very soon. Not sure if I'll succeed, but I would definitely like to try.**

The next novel will be completed by, I'd like to say, the end of June, and hopefully published by the end of July. It is called *Damien* probably, and it is a novel about two guys and a girl — and no, that shouldn't be confused with the film with Robert Downey Jr., *Two Girls and a Guy*. It takes place in a high school. It's an absurdist comedy, definitely political satire, certainly a coming-of-age story, and also a tragic romance. You may not understand the tragic romance part immediately, and I hope you don't, but spoiler alert: It's going to happen. Also, it's supernatural.

<sup>2</sup>The editorial team encourages the curious reader to hear just how much of an understatement this was, here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vy5mrBvVqkg&t=0s&ab\\_channel=BrownUniversity](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vy5mrBvVqkg&t=0s&ab_channel=BrownUniversity)

**Moving on, to the other sphere of your activity, which is music. Last October, you performed Brahms' 2nd Concerto, and it was a beautiful and transcendental experience. So, what does it feel like to be that person?**

Which person? The one who plays the Brahms 2nd twice with an orchestra, when they are 21 years old?

**Yeah, and does so in a way that's absolutely amazing and moving!**

Well, thank you. It feels good! I don't know how to go on with that answer, but it feels very good. And here's where I reveal my tremendous ego, but I really feel like a person who can commune with the most beautiful way of understanding how life is lived. And the Brahms 2nd is like a beautiful moment that Brahms constructed, it's just a beautiful expression that just works. And I rendered it somewhat well...I take it from my interviewer that this might have been an understatement.

**Oh yes, what an understatement, yes!** <sup>2</sup>

It fills me with great pride, although,

to counter the ego, it's also a humility. What I do is in service of a force greater than myself — Brahms and what he tapped into in nature. But I'm glad I can be that person, because, in a way, my life goal is to be a purveyor of nature — and the world. I want to assure my readers that I'm not talking about being a priest. Even though there's something in my head saying, «a priest of nature» — no.

**A rabbi of nature, in that case!**

Right, a rabbi of nature. *Laughs*. I want to make people feel better and maybe live life a little more richly, if I can, and that was a way of doing it. I should also say that playing the piece, aside from this high and mighty stuff, I just wanted to do it for like 11 years. It was my lifelong dream. So it was an amazing moment, the best moment of my life probably — or one of them for sure...top 5 easy!

**So music, this strange transcendental phenomenon that you just spoke about, that could help you be the purveyor of nature... What is it?**

I can't say what music is. Music is such a part of my life, part of my story. It's, like, the movement of the spheres, a slightly Pythagorean thing.

Or, in other words, a beautiful way of interpreting the story of the world. Or, the way nature works and moves, and how time and space progress. When those things are happening, what you hear is music. And what I think composers do is manipulate nature, in a way. They take from nature. They interpret and understand nature, and render something of their own. And that's sort of what they hear in life. It sounds incredibly pretentious, but! You feel something around you, and you put it into music or you put it into words. I think the harmony of the spheres is actually not a bad way of understanding music. I would make it the movement of the world.

**In your personal statement for law school you wrote, «Music reveals truth and beauty in the world that open our eyes to the transcendence of existence.»**

I gave you the more technical definition above, but that's also a way of putting it. *Laughs*.

**It's a more laconic way of putting it, and now you've given us the actual whole story behind that sentence!**

How laconic I must have been for Stanford to want to admit me!

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**Part of the reason for this interview is that this issue is about love. Can we have your take on the aesthetics / metaphysics / ontology of Love?**

You can, Lisa, and all you have to do, the people reading this, is buy *Damien*, my novel, in July. There, the second chapter is devoted to this subject, and really the whole book. *Laughs.* No, I can give you a preview. «He said, sarcastically.» I would say that there are many kinds of love. I would remind everyone reading this that, unless you are a professor, you are very young. And we have not experienced every love, although, I think, at this point I have experienced quite a few. I mean I'm not going to go through the Greek loves, even though I'm a Classics major, I don't care that much. *Expansive gesture indicating amused indifference.*

I would say there is a friendship-love, which is perhaps the most binding, I think. Not binding in the, «Oh crap, you are stuck» sense. Binding in the sense that it pulls you together. And, if you're talking about your other half, I think your family is your other half. And friends might be the best family you can have. There's romantic

love, and there are many kinds of romantic love. I'm sure we are familiar with infatuation, which can grow into something much less scary than infatuation — unrequited love. I'm sure we all know unrequited love. It may not be the most mature form of unrequited love, but I have a feeling there are many of us who have gone to great and noble heights for someone you see something in that compels us. That's unrequited love — not just puppy love or obsession, it's more.

True love, I think, would start with two people feeling the sort of love unrequited love drives you to have, because what is common between these two kinds of love is just seeing that something in the other person. I could talk about Socrates in the Symposium here. You see something in somebody that draws you in, interests you, builds you up, makes you more interesting, challenges you, and also gives you solace. For young people, this might just be something that is superimposed or projected by us, but it can also be quite real. So, I think true love is two people seeing that in each other and acting on it. I've never had this with somebody.

There's a certain friend or two with whom I've had something like it in a friendly way. But, I imagine true love is like two people having unrequited love— only it's requited, and you build on it with time. So, it's the best of both worlds: friendship and love.

**Now a question that has many parts. These need not be currently alive (in case they're people) or recent (in case they're artworks). Best/favorite politician?**

Doesn't have to be alive? Can I get both?

**Yeah, you can have both — one dead and one alive!**

So, favorite politician? Cicero. Cicero is sort of the savior of the republic. He styles himself that way, which I think is really funny and cute, if incredibly pompous. But also he really tries, he tries in a very subtle way, he tries to be pragmatic about it. As opposed to Cato, who just says «Caesar, kill me now!» – kills himself. That's not pragmatic. Cicero is more pragmatic than Cato. So, I like him for trying to save the republic. And he did a pretty good job until Octavian... Octavian, fun fact, fought for two days to try to get Cicero not

killed, in the plan between him and Marc Antony and Lepidus. He fought for two days, and then he lost, and they killed him, and ripped out his tongue and his hand and they stuck it to the Rostra, where he gave his speeches. I like Cicero. He was a good guy.

Modern I just want to give a shout-out to somebody. I have two modern people. Tulsi Gabbard and Chris Sununu. Tulsi Gabbard tries, she really tries. She is not the most brilliant person I've ever seen in politics, but she really tries. I think she's honest, I think she's sincere. And she understands natural rights. Chris Sununu I mention because he is sane and moderate on cultural issues, and, on economics, he is liberal, which means – you know, in American vernacular – that's conservative. So I think that he is a good one.

**Philosopher?**

Plato! In modern times, I don't think anyone is good enough to count. Perhaps, Roger Scruton, but he is dead. He was a very interesting philosopher, not just for his conservative political philosophy, which I thought was very ingenious, and pretty much liberal — it is liberal-conservative,



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for the most part. Charles Larmore is probably worth checking out, his political philosophy is sort of in the vein of John Rawls's political liberalism, but I would say Plato is the right answer.

**Poet?** This is a good opportunity for me to plug a few poets. I would say it's a tie between Pindar and Shakespeare. And if we're talking about modern poets — I've read some who were good, but those did not include Ocean Vuong. If you want to read a modern poet, read my translations<sup>3</sup>. *Laughs*. It's worth reading Pindar in translation: Pythian 1 and 8, Olympian 1 and 2, 11. I have one good Pindar translation, and for the rest of Pindar's poems, I would recommend the book by Frank Nisetich<sup>4</sup>. And you've got to read Shakespeare. You have got to read *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and — even though I haven't read it, to my great shame — you've got to read *Othello*. Also read the sonnets! I'd also read *Much Ado*, *The Tempest*. Milton's *Paradise Lost* you should also read, at least an excerpt.

Two of my greatest inspirations, besides Shakespeare and Homer, in terms of my sound and teaching me to pay attention to words are William Butler Yeats — «The Second Coming», «The Song of the Wandering Aengus», «Down by the Salley Gardens» — and E.E. Cummings, especially «since feeling is first.»

### **Composer?**

Living, I would say there are no great composers. Elliott Carter died in 2012, he wrote the piano sonata, and I actually recommend one of my recordings<sup>5</sup> — or Paul Jacobs's. I did get to work with Ursula Oppens on it, who was one of Carter's chosen people, so it's actually somewhat authoritative, maybe, or not — you may find it crap.

The greatest composers in my view are Chopin, Brahms, Beethoven, Debussy (the order for these two is tough), Mozart, and Bach. Chopin got an emotion no one ever knew. I love Maurice Ravel, but he's just not them. I really like his String Quartet. There's a moment in the third movement of the Debussy String Quartet

<sup>3</sup><https://davidsacks.substack.com/p/ancient-lyric-an-introduction?s=r>

<sup>4</sup>Or this one [https://www.amazon.de/-/en/Pindar/dp/0199553904/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swa\\_tch\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&qid=1651605255&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.de/-/en/Pindar/dp/0199553904/ref=tmm_pap_swa_tch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1651605255&sr=8-2)

<sup>5</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWOP2C9AhCE&t=587s>

that you must hear. You've got to listen to the third movement — it might change your life. It's an early example of Debussy's genius. You should also listen to *Péleas and Mélisande*. Beethoven, listen to op. 109 and the *Diabelli Variations*. Brahms — Piano Concerto No. 2. Chopin — *Polonaise Fantaisie* and the third movement of the b-minor sonata. Mozart — you should listen to Don Giovanni and also to the F-major piano concerto immediately after. Bach— check out the Busoni transcription of the D-major prelude and fugue for organ (BWV 532). You should also listen to Bartok<sup>6</sup>

### Movie and movie director?

I think *Mulholland Drive* is definitely the best movie of the century, even though it's not the greatest movie of all time, and David Lynch is weird as hell (no offense, David). I also think *The Incredibles* and *Ratatouille* are also among the best movies of the century. I think Wes Anderson and Paul Thomas Anderson are the best directors working today. *Rushmore* is an excellent film, so is *There Will Be Blood*. *Punch-Drunk Love* is good. And *Magnolia* is a flawed masterpiece

— I hate the characters, but it's a great movie. The best director, I think, was Hitchcock. *Rear Window* and *To Catch a Thief* (a nice little movie that is so good!). The person who influenced everything, in what's a perhaps more interesting way, was Federico Fellini. Best movie of all time... I don't think I know enough movies to answer that, but maybe I do. You, my intrepid interviewer, want me to say *8 1/2*. I can't in good conscience say *La Dolce Vita*. Both of them are, like, top 8. *La Strada* probably isn't a top 8, but it's an amazing movie, and Giulietta Masina, Fellini's wife, is an amazing actress. Shoutout to Cameron Crowe for *Almost Famous*, which is a not-first-tier masterpiece.

### Novel?

Oh, you know I don't read. Okay, alright, that's just not true. I can't say, Apuleius, even though he was the first novelist. My favorite novel is *Anna Karenina*, for sure, far and away. Except for *Anna Karenina*, I haven't really been impressed by the novels I've read. My favorite things are the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the plays by Shakespeare — I recommend them

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcrQW8AuKMw&ab\\_channel=ehsegg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcrQW8AuKMw&ab_channel=ehsegg)

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over almost any novel. *Wuthering Heights* is also an interesting novel, even though it's not one of the best. *David Copperfield* is good. *Great Expectations*, I thought, was a great book. I think, in general, Dickens suffers from going on for way too long and having way too many subplots. In fact, I would almost recommend the PBS miniseries *David Copperfield*<sup>7</sup> – it will give you a terrific sense of the novel. I think I stopped reading as much because I encountered novels and realized that I could read these modern things, which never really satisfied me, or I could just keep reading the *Iliad*. That sounds incredibly anachronistic and weird, but it's true.

### TV Shows?

I like TV. It's a very important cultural medium. I think the best TV dramas I have seen are the first few seasons of the *West Wing*, and the first 2+ seasons of *Grey's Anatomy*. It's incredibly dramatic. It's got lines like, «Pick me! Choose me! Love me!» and they work, and you believe it! My favorite TV shows are *Gilmore Girls* and *Frasier*, which is funny as hell — in a sophisticated way. And the first season – and only the first

season — of *The Newsroom*. I really admire Aaron Sorkin as a writer. He has an ear for dialogue, which is lacking in most things. *Everybody Loves Raymond* is also incredibly funny.

**Your future plans. You've now committed to Stanford Law School. After that, in the general scope of things, what is it that you'd like to accomplish? What would you consider a life well-lived?**

There's a chance I will be just a full-time novelist or even a full-time movie writer or director, it could happen. But I also want to have a family, and if not kids immediately, I want a serious life partner, who is in many ways my equal. I'm the kind of person who has a lot to give, I'd say, but also could use a lot of help. I've always wanted that. I never wanted to be some dude traveling around the world having short-term relationships. So that's why I'm not going to be a musician, in part. There's also a part of me that would like to have work colleagues and do something concrete, go to work every day — that's why I think law school is a

<sup>7</sup>1999-2000, with Maggie Smith, Daniel Radcliffe

path I am interested in, because it gives me the possibility of doing constitutional law or international law, the two areas I'm most interested in, in an office, every day, and then going there and doing work and going back home, and hanging out with the long-term partner / wife depending on how old I am, the kids at some point, and writing books. I would definitely want to have time to write novels! But I don't want to be like Ernest Hemingway or Charles Bukowski! They lived horrible, disgusting, animal-like lives. I want to influence the court of public opinion in a positive way, I might like to have my own podcast or even a TV show, where I talk about stuff with different people and include philosophy and current events. I would like to do that while writing novels and being a law professor, or even a law and classics / philosophy professor. These are the different paths, and I'm sure some of them will pan out. And possibly have a concert series if I get hired by a think tank. Manhattan Institute, call me!

**There's a very idiotic and bloody war happening right now, inflation, polarized and polarizing poli-**

**tics, climate change — and that doesn't nearly exhaust the list of things we get to actively worry about. So, how doomed are we, exactly?**

How doomed are we? We're not doomed. We are kind of doomed if we keep doing certain things. And I'm not going to say what everyone thinks I'm going to say at this point, something like, «stop polluting.» Climate change alarmists are alarmists, and they're wrong. I am not denying climate change, because there is climate change, guys, and we have been contributing to it for years. But it may not be as bad as certain people — Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Greta Thunberg — seem to think. That's a problem, but I think it's a problem we can manage. I think a bigger problem is that we have fallen into a nihilistic view of everything, and we're not exiting the postmodernist tradition. And I am afraid the only ending of postmodernism is totalitarianism. There is a book *The Coddling of the American Mind* by Greg Lukianoff, and there's also the book *The Closing of the American Mind* by Allan Bloom. And you might read the second one, and think, «this dude is an

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idiot!» And you might be right. His diatribes against rock, pop music, rap (which he foretold) — all that sounds a little nuts. Very dramatic guy. But he's got a point — we are not cultivating our minds, we are becoming completely relativist, this idea that nothing is better than anything else is nonsense. There is objectivity. And if you don't believe in objectivity, believe in this — we need people who do things. We need people who produce things. We need people who understand that they're not God, and that they cannot determine the nature of reality. We need to accept that we are responsible, to understand that with natural rights come natural responsibilities. We need to stop being so lame, stop being so scared, and do things. That's the conservative part of me.

But look, the war in Ukraine — it's not the end of the world. I think the worst thing to do would be for the United States to get too involved because we don't want World War III. And Russia isn't our greatest foe, China is. China is the one who is outpacing the United States. You may not think that it's a problem that the United States is falling out of power

on the world stage. But this is something President Trump sort of got right, and also sort of didn't — if you want this world to look good and liberal, we are your best shot. You may have issues with the United States, and I may agree with you on many of the issues. But we are the only answer. We are the country founded on Lockean principles of natural rights and natural law.

Partisanship is a bad one. It's all the politicking greedy people who are making us so divided. The truth is — I don't want to say, we're all the same, we're all different. But we are all united by this «love thy neighbor» idea. We are all human beings, we love, and we hate, and we fear, and we take comfort, and we want kids, and we love our kids, and we love our spouses, and we fight with our spouses. And partisanship is just the opposite of this, and it's only getting worse because we live in different realities, and the fact of the matter is — certain people on the left are just denying reality. Certain people on the right are doing the same thing. And this is a sort of a Charles Larmore / John Rawls point — we are going to have different metaphysical con-

ceptions, and we will have different Gods, but we need to have the same politics. We need to understand that we are different. And the only way to embrace our differences is to have liberal tolerance. To tie this all together, we talk about making the world a better place. Two things about that. Stop with the better, let's just keep things from getting worse. Let's stop being complacent, let's stop being self-absorbed and self-involved. There is a purpose. We don't know why we're here, but we do know that we are here and we're stuck with each other. We are all we have, and we need to be outwardly turned, we need to embrace the spirit of sympathetic curiosity. And the second thing leads from this – we have it in our power to make the world a better place. We need to do more interesting things. We need to harness our potential and do things, and be productive members of society. That doesn't mean, put food on the table, or else you'll be a disgrace to your family!! This just means – follow your talents, follow your heart, don't despair and don't think that who you are right now is who you will always be.

You should not be like, «I failed Calculus, that's okay» – you shouldn't accept yourself for who you are. You should try to understand who you truly are, and that's going to take work. You shouldn't be complacent. You should do what you're capable of. You should live out your potential. You should do what your talent dictates. «We will thus live less quietly desperate lives,» per that saying by Thoreau. You should not be okay with who you are! Matthew McConaughey had a very good Oscar speech, when he said, «My hero is who I am in 10 years.»<sup>8</sup> Always be striving – not to the point where you get a heart attack or a stroke, obviously. But figure out what makes you great, what makes you tick, and follow it to the edge of the Earth. And I have a feeling a lot of this could be family and raising a kid. Don't treat yourself carelessly. And care about what happens to other people. And, I have a feeling, we might have fewer invasions of Ukraine then.



<sup>8</sup><https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/matthewmconaugheyoscaracceptance.htm>