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MBS ([00:00](#)):

There are at least two ways of failing to understand science. The first is what we're hearing in the news a lot at the moment every day, people resisting the proven power of vaccination, people "doing their own research," whatever that means. The anti-science narrative is powerful. I just looked this up, 40% of Americans don't believe in evolution. But even if you believe in science, and you can tell that I do, sometimes science is just hard to wrap your head around. These things are connected. How old the planet is is actually impossible to really grasp. The T-Rex, the Tyrannosaurus Rex, the dinosaur, is closer in time to the iPhone than it is to the Stegosaurus, one of those other known dinosaurs. 500 million years is just unimaginably vast.

MBS ([00:58](#)):



So too with exponential growth. Humans are wired to understand linear, but critical to our survival, critical to us understanding our current world is the need to wrap our heads around exponential.

MBS ([01:15](#)):

Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS. Azeem Azhar's newsletter Exponential View is one of my weekly must-reads. I love it. It's such a smart accumulation and explanation of science and technology and the environment and his new book, Exponential, or The Exponential Age in some countries, is also brilliant for the same reasons. He's an author, he's a speaker, he's an entrepreneur, he's a podcaster, but who is he really?

Azeem ([01:43](#)):

You talked about science as you did your introduction, so I'm going to give you an unscientific answer. I'm a Libra and if you know your astrology, the Libra is the scales, the balancing force. Not particularly opinionated like a Taurean, more just go with the flow like maybe one of the water signs. A Libran is balance and sits in the middle and I think that I'm somebody who tries to, not always successfully, sit in the middle. Not fence it, but perhaps recognize that there are different ways of looking at the same problem.

MBS ([02:25](#)):

In case you're wondering, I'm a Capricorn. My favorite astrology write up of a Capricorn was, "If you were a tree, dogs would pee on you." But I digress. Azeem studied PPE at Oxford University. That's philosophy, politics, and economics. But in some ways, he was actually learning how to speak different languages.

Azeem ([02:47](#)):

I'm not good enough to be an engineering leader nor am I the best marketer you'll come across, but somehow I can talk to both and even in my new book which is called Exponential, or The Exponential Age if you're in U.S. and Canada,



I think we try to find a balance between the social sciences' view of technology change and the technology and science view of that change and a balance between utopias and dystopias.

MBS ([03:16](#)):

If you couldn't tell already, Azeem is a bit of a generalist. Me too. So I really get it when he talks about some of the struggles generalists often face.

Azeem ([03:25](#)):

And then in your career, though you as a generalist, you face real moments of existential challenge because employers often want, especially their juniors, to fit a box, to hammer a nail or saw a piece of wood or milk the cow but not be able to do all of them. I'm quite old, so those are the kind of jobs available to me.

MBS ([03:48](#)):

I'm also quite old. I've never had to milk a cow, but I have had to cut goats' toenails which was traumatic, but again, I digress.

MBS ([03:59](#)):

When you can do a little bit of everything, how do you figure out what to commit to? How does Azeem figure out where to put his focus? What really draws him forward?

Azeem ([04:10](#)):

I don't know if I have. What I do know is that I seem to gravitate back to the same spot, the same class of questions, whatever organization I'm in. And whenever I've gone off and tried to specialize and really deeply specialize, I've found it really tough, really constraining that it doesn't use everything that's in my brain and in my heart. And so I did spend some time after the .com bubble collapsed, 1999, 2000 time, having been on a bit of a rocket ship thinking,



"Well, let me go and get some blocking and tackling skills, some real specialist skills." So I ran software sales teams for a year and a half and learned quite a lot. One lesson was that I don't want to run software sales teams.

Azeem ([05:08](#)):

The other was that it was kind of a waste. It was a waste of what I could bring and it was a waste because there were people who could do that job much better than me. So I think finding that idea of the true north is just a... a large part of it ends up being a confidence in yourself moment and that confidence might come either from a sense of self and identity that you have. I think a big part of it comes from, can you afford to be in the discovery process? Because the discovery process does not pay the mortgage by and large.

MBS ([05:40](#)):

Right.

Azeem ([05:41](#)):

And so I think I wasn't capable in my 20s and 30s to really fund a discovery process where I'm just not earning well and I think that adds to the complexity.

MBS ([05:55](#)):

You actually said... you keep coming back to the same kind of core questions to wrestle with, which I think is a more interesting thing to talk about than the true north because the true north feels like a fixed destination and the big questions feel more like things that evolve and change because you evolve and change in your relationship to the question. What other questions that fuel at the heart of the work that you do?

Azeem ([06:23](#)):

They are now, I would characterize them and with it being the same sort of thing before I had this characterization, they really are systems questions. They



are about the interaction between technology and innovation and ideas and how those things shape the societies that we're in and the way that we live and how values and philosophies and criticality plays a part in all of that. That is where I will always repeatedly end up like Groundhog Day, I guess.

MBS ([07:04](#)):

And then tell us about the book you're going to read to us from.

Azeem ([07:07](#)):

This book is written by an academic who I think has done some of the most important work in helping us understand technology and technology as we see it in the 20th and 21st century, which is built around information systems and large scale platforms and he is an Irish economist who has been living in Stanford for many years by the name of W. Brian Arthur. And he is one of the two or three people who most helped me understand the work that I've done in my own book, and this book is called The Nature of Technology. It was published in 2009 I think, and the subtitle is... well, the full title is The Nature of Technology, What It Is, and How It Evolves, by W. Brian Arthur. And I think the key words there are "nature" and "technology" in the title and the word "evolves" in the subtitle.

MBS ([08:22](#)):

How did you come across that? Is it just part of the... your apparently voracious ability to read and take in information or did it come in some other way?

Azeem ([08:32](#)):

Arthur is quite well known for thinking about the economics of technology, and so I had come across his work perhaps in the late '90s already, and then when... I'm fascinated by figuring out what technology is, how it relates to knowledge, how it relates to science, and how it gets shaped, and so there's a kind of canon of writers who look at this. But I think what makes him particularly interesting is



that he really turned the lens on the way technology changed after the information revolution, so a lot of the writing before had looked at early instantiations of technology which I think of course are also relevant but not necessarily where I wanted to end up.

MBS ([09:27](#)):

How did you choose the two pages? Because that's always an interesting question to ask. People always wrestle with it. "Where do I go? It's such a good book."

Azeem ([09:35](#)):

I thought about other books as well, as you might imagine, and you and I talked about one and I also thought about a book that connected to the method of passion and expression. That was Rilke's book, Letters to a Young Poet.

MBS ([09:53](#)):

I love that.

Azeem ([09:55](#)):

I'm sure you do.

MBS ([09:57](#)):

Even as you were talking about true north and the like, there's this line from... not the Letters but a poem of his which is The Man Watching, and the last line is, "His goal is to be deeply defeated by ever greater things." And the hunger you've got the for the work you do just reminded me of that line. I just couldn't find a way to slip it in. [crosstalk 00:10:16]

Azeem ([10:17](#)):

Thank you. You had a chance. Then I ended up with back away from Rilke as we could use that to talk about method and back in Brian Arthur and the thing that



I found most interesting, because the book gets quite nuanced in its argument, was to just go right at the beginning where he frames the key question of the book. And the reason that's relevant is because here is a man who is an economist, he studies the economics of technology and its historical context, and he is still deeply, deeply aware of the key human questions about technology.

MBS ([11:00](#)):

Beautiful. Well Azeem, I'm excited to hear the two pages. Azeem is our author of the wonderful book *Exponential*, or *The Exponential Age* if you're listening in the U.S. and Canada, reading from W. Brian Arthur's book *The Nature of Technology*. Over to you, Azeem.

Azeem ([11:18](#)):

Maybe we can simply accept technology and not concern ourselves much with the deeper questions behind it, but I believe - in fact, I believe fervently - that it is important to understand what technology is and how it comes to be. This is not just because technology creates much of our world. It is because technology at this stage in our history weighs on us, weighs on our concerns, whether we pay attention to it or not.

Azeem ([11:45](#)):

Certainly technology has enabled our children to survive where formally they might have died. It has prolonged our own lives and made them a great deal more comfortable than those of our ancestors just two or three centuries ago. It has brought us prosperity, but it has also brought us a profound unease. This unease does not just come from a fear that technology has caused new problems for every problem they solve. It wells up also from a deeper and more unconscious source. We place our hopes in technology. We hope in technology to make our lives better, to solve our problems, to get us out of predicaments, to provide the future we want for ourselves and our children, yet as human, we



are attuned not to this thing we hope in. Not to technology, but to something different. We are attuned in the deepest parts of our being to nature, to our original surroundings and our original condition as humankind.

Azeem ([12:43](#)):

We have a familiarity with nature, we reliance on it that comes from three million years of at-homeness with it. We trust nature. When we happen upon a technology such as stem cell regenerative therapy, we experience hope, but we also immediately ask how natural this technology is, and so we are caught up between two huge and unconscious forces. Our deepest hope lies in technology but our deepest trust lies in nature. These forces are like tectonic plates grinding inexorably into each other in one long, slow collision.

Azeem ([13:21](#)):

The collision is not new, but more than anything else, it is defining our era. Technology is steadily creating the dominant issues and upheavals of our time. We are moving from an era where machines enhance the natural, speeded our movements, saved our sweat, stitched our clothing, to one that brings in technologies that resemble or replace the natural; genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, medical devices implanted in our bodies. As we learn to use these technologies, we are moving from using nature to intervening directly with nature and so the story of this century will be about the clash between what technology offers and what we feel comfortable with.

Azeem ([14:04](#)):

No one claims that the nature and workings of technology are simple. There is no reason to think that they are simpler than the nature and workings of the economy or of the law, but they are determining for our future and our anxieties about it. This book is not about the benefits or evils of technology. There are other books that look at these. It is an attempt to understand this



thing that creates so much of our world and causes us so much unconscious unease.

Azeem ([14:32](#)):

And this brings us back to the same question: what is technology? What is it in the deepest sense of its nature? What are its properties and principles? Where does it come from? How does it come into being? How does it develop? And how does it evolve?

MBS ([14:53](#)):

Beautiful, Azeem. Thank you. And beautifully read as well, so... what's at the heart of it for you here? What calls to you from these pages?

Azeem ([15:01](#)):

I think that the way Arthur sets up the questions is quite important. There's something about the cadence, which I hope came across when I read it. You can almost feel him setting this up, almost like a sermon at the start of a Sunday.

MBS ([15:24](#)):

[crosstalk 00:15:24] Irish-ness. [crosstalk 00:15:25] Irish, You've just got that.

Azeem ([15:27](#)):

Yes, exactly. And so that cadence is something that I found quite powerful within this book. There are parts of it where it really gets quite technical and theoretical and abstract and it's harder to follow and it's harder to read, but for me, there is something that is a bit lyrical about the way he's presented it.

Azeem ([15:51](#)):

I also think it makes you think quite a lot. As you say, it's quite deep for what's only a few hundred words.



MBS ([15:58](#)):

Yeah.

Azeem ([15:58](#)):

And I do find myself agreeing with large parts but starting to diverge from some of his assumptions and questions, so in that context, it has a lot for me. I like the sound of it. I like the set up. There's enough to agree with but there are points where I depart.

MBS ([16:20](#)):

Do you feel that your work is centered more on prosperity or more on unease? Those are two words that he used in this passage you read to us.

Azeem ([16:32](#)):

I think I may have mentioned, I'm a Libran, so I try to weigh up the two directly, but I think the question is: who is reading the book? And if you are somebody who falls towards the issues of unease quite early on, I really want to remind you that yes, the unease matters, but the power and the potency is also really important and we shouldn't lose sight of that. And on the other side of the discussion, I want to say to people who believe fervently in the power that that sense that these technologies are powerful is quite clear. It's quite manifest. But we need to also address the questions of the friction and the unease.

Azeem ([17:26](#)):

But I would wrap that all by saying that... when I was at my primary school, the motto of my primary school was Latin, "[foreign language 00:17:37]", which means, "Not to go forward is to go backwards." And so I believe that, I think about that phrase quite a lot. Of course, we can argue what forward actually means, and I think in that context, if I had to side with prosperity or unease, it would be around prosperity.



MBS ([18:03](#)):

Who did you write your book for? We are so... as human beings, so incapable basically of understanding exponential. I've been thinking about it for a while. I read your work and I'm still like, "I get it in theory. In practice, I'm not sure I really understand what it means to be exponential." Who do you hope is reading your book? Who did you really want to pick it up and go, "I wrote this book for you,"?

Azeem ([18:32](#)):

Well, I initially wrote it for myself. I wrote it because I needed to get the ideas out and writing is thinking and there were lots of things that I was thinking about that I hadn't been able to conclude without doing the writing and going into the art of synthesizing and critiquing your own words and other peoples' words.

Azeem ([18:56](#)):

And of course, you work with an editor and I should just name my editor because he's done a fantastic job, [Roan Borch 00:19:01] at Penguin Random House, who worked with me for nearly two years to help us understand how to we think about who the reader would be. And my endeavor was to find the reader who doesn't normally pick up books that might be in the smart-thinking shelves of your local bookstore or wouldn't pick up a book that was full of frameworks or wouldn't necessarily pick up a book that's sort of anecdotally driven like a Malcolm Gladwell because perhaps those things don't speak to them the way a history does or the way fiction does.

MBS ([19:41](#)):

Yeah.

Azeem ([19:42](#)):

And find some way of getting these really important ideas across to that person, likely a her.



MBS ([19:51](#)):

Yeah.

Azeem ([19:51](#)):

And the reason I think that was important was because I think it is important that people understand the nature of technology and the nature of the technologies that define our world, and I've tried to present complex issues and their nuances in a way that is accessible for that audience. And I felt that if you could reach that audience, and there are naturally simplifications that need to be made and there are sections and theories and analysis that has been lost in the editing process, but you will reach other constituencies of people who are more technocratic and people who think about questions of rights and governance and these issues of unease as well. The idea was to try to reach beyond it and have people who wouldn't normally pick up a black book with a silver cover that's in the smart-thinking section and have them just pick it up.

MBS ([20:49](#)):

And as an aside, I think the cover design of the book is beautiful and that's a rare thing rather than a common thing, so kudos to your book designer as well as to your editor, although I am disappointed that that merger didn't create something called Random Penguin rather than Penguin Random. [crosstalk 00:21:07] Missed a big opportunity there.

Azeem ([21:08](#)):

Brilliant. Oh yeah, you're absolutely right. I'll mention it to them, we'll see what they do.

MBS ([21:12](#)):

Exactly, have a word with them.



Azeem ([21:13](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([21:15](#)):

Azeem, what feels like the most radical idea in this new book?

Azeem ([21:22](#)):

I think the most radical spot that I ended up in was to find myself arguing that the division between the market and the state that we have lived with over the last 50 years, which I think is intimately bound with the technological and economic advances that were going on in the '50s and the '60s, is not the right balance and that we have to find some way of containing this sort of unbridled power of the market while still benefiting from its productive endeavors. And in that argument, I found myself concluding that we needed many more common or collectivist approaches to key issues.

Azeem ([22:18](#)):

The one that's easiest for people to understand is that I make the point that in order to address issues of labor unease and labor unrest, labor needs to be able to organize in order to participate in the much more complex discussions around algorithmic management or gig-working platforms and so on, and that's kind of a surprising place for someone who's an investor to perhaps end up. And then in that same vein in this idea of the commons and commonality, I make a claim that we need to have much more of a presence of commonly managed resources in our lives, and what is a commonly managed resource?

Azeem ([23:03](#)):

They've been washed out of our traditional behaviors over the last 100 years, 150 years of modern capitalism, but they were resources that were managed by and for the benefit of the people who used them and stewarded them, and



something like the internet actually is a bit of a commons resource. So is Wikipedia. So are open-source projects. So, they are reviving. The thing that's really nice about them is that they have a mission and an ambition that is different to the profit motive of private enterprise, which we still need, and they have a governance and an accountability that is very different to what you see within the state and the government.

Azeem ([23:48](#)):

So, I think that ends up being quite radical for me, this market-state analysis and then the importance of collectivist and commons approaches to be a balance to those other two forces.

MBS ([24:02](#)):

You know, I read recently a report [Shell 00:24:06] put out almost 10 years ago now, part of their work on future thinking and imagining different futures, and they talk about three essential paradoxes that we as society need to manage. One of them, and I can't remember the exact label, is at a time when we need collectivist approaches more than ever, the call to be more individualistic is stronger than ever.

MBS ([24:34](#)):

I'm wondering if you've got any thoughts around what it takes to actually organize in a way that allows this kind of collective commonality to emerge and to become real?

Azeem ([24:53](#)):

Yeah. There are some trivial elements, one of which is, does one have the technology tools to be able to do that and do you have the space, the time and the space? In other words, we've got these tools now whether it's discord servers and WhatsApp groups and so on, to be able to communicate and find people of similar interests. The million niches of the internet is one aspect.



Azeem ([25:25](#)):

But I think there's a more prevalent cultural layer that we have to punch through. It's like a layer of clouds that are preventing us from seeing the sun. We have to get through this. And that is that we've constructed narratives of individualism and they are really that. They're just narratives. Whether it's Margaret Thatcher saying there's no such thing as society, there's just people on their own going about and so forth, whether it is the Chicago Consensus in Economics talking about Homo economicus, whether it is a fetishization of individual entrepreneurs and inventors or sports people or fashion influencers on social media, we've constructed narratives that are less about the collective approach to moving things forward, to participating in society to be effective, and much more about the superstar modality.

Azeem ([26:27](#)):

And I think it's quite a wide spread malaise that we're discussing. It's very easy to say we put Mark Zuckerberg or Elon Musk on a pedestal, or we used to, but that was happening because we were pedestalizing, if that's indeed a word, [crosstalk 00:26:41] people right across the board.

MBS ([26:42](#)):

Yeah.

Azeem ([26:43](#)):

The thing is that's really just a narrative because when you dig beneath the surface and when you look at where researchers are taking us, researchers are identifying, for example, that the notion that society is just individuals requires you to have a very weak, analytic lens because groups and group behavior does emerge from the behavior of individuals. It's called complex systems [inaudible 00:27:11] theory and it's why we get structures appearing within societies and our economies from the ground up.



Azeem ([27:18](#)):

And the same is true when look at breakthrough products and projects and scientific innovations. They are... evolutionarily, they stand on the shoulders of giants in many ways and there may be cases where there is a paradigmatic shift, but that paradigmatic shift, which is often associated with a single person, that person themselves is sitting there and thinking this through and looking at all the questions that are unanswered by the people who went before them. So, I think that we are... we need to construct slightly different narratives about how progress occurs and that would help us sort of temper the individualistic impulse a little bit.

MBS ([28:09](#)):

That's so interesting. I love what you said about, look, society is complex and so the actions of individuals emerge into a statement about what society actually is and what collectively we are. The challenge is, it's complex, so there's no obvious lever to pull to say, "Here's the thing that happens," and we'll get a kind of linear reaction to what happens. We don't really know what the intervention is because it's an emergent experience, so we try and do something and we'll see what happens. I am curious to know what the seeds are that might allow a different narrative to start emerging, a more collective, common narrative.

Azeem ([28:56](#)):

There are two more books that I'm going to have to introduce at this point. One is Huxley's *Brave New World*, which I really recommend people go back and read, or read it for the first time if they haven't. I read it again while I was writing my book and it is just a remarkable piece of work, and it talks a lot about post-Fordism and Henry Ford features. Maybe not as fully in the final edit of the book as in the first versions of it, and essentially, rough and ready what you're doing there is you're saying, society is complex and if you fundamentally stratify people and put them into these... what we would now call filter bubbles, and



you dose them up with what he called "Soma" but we might call Tinder and Instagram likes and fast fashion...

MBS ([29:58](#)):

Take them to the feelies.

Azeem ([29:59](#)):

Right. And take them to the feelies... you can control and maintain harmony in a society.

MBS ([30:06](#)):

The other book I will just get for you is... it's an academic book.

Azeem ([30:10](#)):

I love that you can reach up and get books that you love. [crosstalk 00:30:14]

MBS ([30:13](#)):

You're a man after my own heart.

Azeem ([30:16](#)):

Yes, I need to do an edit on that, but this is a book called *The Challenge of Affluence: Self Control and Well-Being in the United States and Britain since 1950*. This book was written in 2002 and if you read the introduction, you would think that this book was written by a four-sighted academic six or seven years after Facebook had been launched. And it's actually published in 2003, so Mark Zuckerberg was, I think, still at high school at the time.

MBS ([30:58](#)):

Yeah.



Azeem ([30:58](#)):

Essentially, the argument that Avner Offer makes is that ultimately, as we get more affluent, we eliminate the controls of our temperance and that successful societies historically had always established commitment devices, whether those commitment devices were only drink on a Sunday or don't drink at all or get married and make marriage a lifetime commitment, because they reinforced the tools of self control.

MBS ([31:39](#)):

Right.

Azeem ([31:40](#)):

There are other arguments for each of those that are to do with the people... the group identity when it comes to food restrictions or the economic imperative, when it comes to marriage, or the survival imperative when it comes to mating, but his argument is that societies that do well end up having some form of collectivist component that constructs self control around the behavior of individuals. And so we are at a moment where we don't necessarily value that self control, and we're all party to it.

Azeem ([32:19](#)):

I remember about two years ago, I had a slipped disc and then I wanted to do some recuperative yoga alongside the osteopathy that I was doing, so I was on YouTube looking for yoga that would help cervical slipped disc... spine slipped discs, and I was looking at video after video and none of them were exactly perfectly right and some of them had intros that were too long and there was I aggressively hunting for the most perfect piece of yoga because I wouldn't have had the self control to sit through a 15 minute practice with imperfections or however I saw them.



MBS ([33:00](#)):

Right.

Azeem ([33:01](#)):

So, we have to find some way of, I think, managing and maintaining those impulses and it's not that straightforward because I think there is a full vernacular and a full onslaught from aspects of business to ultimately defeat our self control. And so when I watch Netflix shows or shows on TV, mostly on Netflix and other streaming channels, I start to get very wary if I'm given a deep cliffhanger that forces me to think I need to watch the next episode, because I feel like I'm being played, and so I'll often watch 25 minute shows. Sometimes I will watch three back to back. Sometimes it'll take me five days to watch them because I'm reflecting back in on what journey am I now being taken? Because we used to watch films and we would go on a journey with them, and we would read books to go on a journey with them. And today we are taken on a journey to an end state because there's a deep understanding of the science of what makes us tick.

MBS ([34:08](#)):

Yeah.

Azeem ([34:09](#)):

And I think that really challenges the desire to find grassroots collectivist thinking. Sorry, I packed so much into that answer, [Michael 00:34:22]. You can [crosstalk 00:34:22]

MBS ([34:21](#)):

It was a great answer.



Azeem ([34:23](#)):

We can try again if it was too much.

MBS ([34:25](#)):

No, no. It's so lovely. I'm thinking of the Churchill quote, "We shape our buildings and afterwards they shape us," and just how much of a... how influential the structures around us are in terms of determining our behavior, and this idea of who's building? Who's building the buildings here?

Azeem ([34:48](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([34:49](#)):

Because if you're not aware of that, you're not aware of how your behavior is being shaped as a result of it.

Azeem ([34:55](#)):

Someone who's ideas I revisited after the book was sent off to press, and I only revisited them then because I just felt that it would be one thing too many to jam in, was Hannah Arendt when she was thinking about the question of politics and the question of politics in the context of the Enlightenment and the arrival of economics and the idea that we could... which started hundreds of years ago, we could replace the kind of process of politics, of questioning, of struggle, with satisfying these immediate needs through economic activity. And that, I think, is a really interesting lens to bring back to all of this, but we have to go back then also to W. Brian Arthur where he has this sentence that I read out earlier which was, "Certainly technology has enabled our children to survive where formally they might have died."



Azeem ([36:06](#)):

And so I think the question that is the real balance for us to find is, how do you maintain a sense of political participation in the face of one-click satisfaction without throwing out what we might consider to be real, meaningful, life-changing benefits of innovation?

MBS ([36:29](#)):

Azeem, this has been such a rich conversation. Thank you. As a final question perhaps, is there anything that needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation?

Azeem ([36:42](#)):

There's always more to be said because we will always find more to say and more to investigate. I think we have to be very careful about finding simple answers to complicated problems and we face lots of complicated problems... maybe more than previous generations, maybe not. But the notion that there can be simple answers is one that we should dispense with and the outcomes we get will only be as good as the work that we put in.

MBS ([37:20](#)):

There's a quote that's made me... not laugh, exactly, but maybe nod appreciatively for years. "For every problem, there's a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong." It might be from H.R. Mencken. It might be Umberto Eco. It might be Mark Twain. Ironically, peoples' attempts to attribute this correctly have also been simple and neat and wrong. What struck me in this conversation was not just Azeem sounding the alarm as he did around simplistic solutions, but also, and I do think this is connected, the number of times he referenced literature beyond the obvious science literature in his conversation to bring insights into this chat with me. There's Rilke, there was Huxley and Brave New



World. It's part of the purpose of this podcast, to help me and you to discover great books, great wisdom, that bring nuance and understanding to our world.

MBS ([38:18](#)):

And I think that understanding and nuance is developed through the complexity of what good literature is because good literature is very rarely simplistic. But I also think literature is one of the ways this sense of commonality can be nourished, a way of understanding others and also being invited into new worlds.

MBS ([38:40](#)):

If you enjoyed this conversation, I hope you did, let me point you to a couple of others that I think you might enjoy. Sandra Sucher's chat with me is called "How To Be a Moral Leader." She reads from a book called *The Making of the Atom Bomb*, and it really is a conversation very much about what it means in the moment as a leader to resist simplistic answers. In my conversation with Tom Vanderbilt, which is called "How to be a Beginner," that's a sideways view of the power of the generalist.

MBS ([39:11](#)):

To learn more about Azeem, and I hope you do, exponentialview.co, so .co, C-O, that's where you can sign up for his newsletter and kind of connect to his world. Like I say, I think he's a brilliant writer and a brilliant man, very helpful. He's on Twitter [@azeem](#), A-Z-E-E-M, and his new book is available wherever books are sold. I'm sure it's on some bestseller lists.

MBS ([39:38](#)):

Thanks for listening, of course. The usual. I request to write a blurb or give the podcast a rating or request to pass the interview along, just one person. If there's one person you can think of that you can Ping and just go, "Hey, take a listen to this, I think you might enjoy it." Slowly, slowly I'm growing the listeners



to this podcast. I'd love more people to listen in. And if you'd like a little more, we do have a free membership site called [The Two Comfrees 00:40:05], named after a cool library at Oxford University. Maybe Azeem hung out there. It's where the good stuff is, so additional interviews, transcripts, downloads and the like.

MBS ([40:17](#)):

Thank you. You're awesome and you're doing great.