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

What does it mean to be a radical? Well, Karl Marx had something to say about what it means. He says this, to be radical is to go to the root of the matter. Now I'll say I wasn't expecting that. So rather than go to the edges or go to the extremes, it means getting to the heart of it. And then Marx continues, but for man however, the root is man himself. So radical compassion, radical empathy, radical generosity, radical leadership, radical humanity. Perhaps it's time to be a radical. Welcome to Two Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book. A book that's moved them. A book that shaped them. Pascal Finette, is a founder of a boutique advisory firm, Be Radical. And he's the posse leader so called at TheHeretic. One of my favorite, very opinionated newsletters. Now Pascal has spent about three decades in the tech space, but he didn't get his start here in North America.



Pascal ([01:12](#)):

I grew up in Germany, grew up in the first tech boom, if you know some of your listeners remember the good old '90s.

MBS ([01:21](#)):

Ah, yes. The '90s. Well, I was in the UK for most of that, falling in love with [inaudible 00:01:26], trying to understand James Joyce at Oxford university and actually being in the very first years of my career running focus groups to find out more about soup, not as glamorous as it sounds. Meantime, Pascal had joined what would become known as eBay, Germany, and really helped to build that company across Europe. And then it was Mozilla that brought him to the US, where he continued his work with companies like Google. So indeed Pascal has worn many hats.

Pascal ([01:55](#)):

The short version is that I probably have a very short attention span and I get bored really quickly. And I always do the thing which I feel like gives me the biggest learning opportunity. And then, kind of rather intuitively jump from the one thing to the next and that is really my life in a nutshell.

MBS ([02:13](#)):

Now I get that because I enjoy the challenge and excitement of a new learning opportunity myself. I feel restless if I get a bit stuck in a groove, and suspect I write books when I find a new topic that I want to excavate and dig. So I asked Pascal what it was like for him to be a learner. And I really love the selflessness of the second part of what he said.

Pascal ([02:38](#)):

For me it's interest and heat. When I get something, when I see something where I get really curious about it. When I'm like, wow, this could be something interesting. It has a positive impact on us as people, society, the planet. And I



really feel like I want to learn more about it. I want to understand it better. I want to be part of it. And also the people who are in it, the other thing for me is really important is you are who the people are who around you. And so I always look for what are interesting people doing, and what could I learn from them? And you heard this adage a million times but I really mean it. It's this idea that I love being the dumbest person in the room, because if I'm in a room full of brilliant people, I just learn an insane amount. And I'm not shy... And this is probably the heretical part in me. I'm not shy asking questions. I'm not shy saying I don't understand this. Explain this to me.

MBS ([03:37](#)):

Right. So TheHeretic it's the name of your newsletter, is that right? Yeah. Which I subscribe to and I enjoy. Who was the first Heretic in your life?

Pascal ([03:51](#)):

Oh my God. That's a really good question. Outside of the obvious ones as in my dad and my mom who clearly shaped me, I think in my professional life I had this incredible opportunity to... While I was studying at the University of Cologne, I wanted to make some money. And so I joined and I was a computer geek. I grew up on home computers, you might remember Commodore 64 and all that stuff. So my dad bought one of the very first Apple Macintosh computers which was brought to Germany in 1985. And I grew up in the Apple ecosystem and decided to work for an Apple retailer. And the story goes that this is the largest Apple retailer across Europe, a company called Gravis. They had stores all over the country and I worked in a store, I sold computers.

Pascal ([04:44](#)):

And accidentally I find myself on a call, Gravis at the time they had a catalog and on this catalog was a CD with software on it. And it was unheard of, nobody has ever done that before. And they came out with the first edition, I was like this is great and it's really cool thing that we're doing this. And then the second



edition came out with the CD, which had the exact same content as the last CD. And I find myself on a call with the marketing team and the CEO, the founder of the company. And I can't help it... I think that's the other heretical part I have in me which is, I can't help just say the things. I have a weird little like no filter.

Pascal ([05:26](#)):

So on this call I blurt out like, "Yeah, I love the CD but quite frankly, it's the same as the last one and this is stupid and we shouldn't do this." And the CEO of the company, a gentleman called [inaudible 00:05:38] comes on mic and says, "Mr. Finette, do you know who made the CD?" And I'm like, "I don't know, but you should really tell him to need to spend a little bit more time on it." And then total silence, as you can imagine the next answer is, I made the CD.

MBS ([05:54](#)):

Exactly. I saw the way it was going. Yeah. Awkward moment.

Pascal ([05:56](#)):

To this question, and this is to your point about the first heretic in my life. And I learned so much from him, he said, "And now you are going to make the CD." Right, instead of being offended or defending himself or coming up with whatever reason, or saying, fire this guy, who is this? He's like, "No, you do it." And I learned so much, later I got to work with him very closely. And I learned just so much from him and truly my first heretic in my life.

MBS ([06:25](#)):

That's a great story. Pascal, how do you keep the heretical nature alive? Because for most of us as we get older, like you and I are probably about the same age, because I remember Commodore 64 and the first Mac. And if you hit midlife and you've had success like you've had and like I've had as well, it's less interesting to disrupt things because you're pretty comfortable. You've got



status and you may have resources, whether it's money or time or whatever else. What keeps the heretical flame alive for you?

Pascal ([07:03](#)):

I just have a disdain for people and situations where we make stuff overly complex, where you have people talking, using... And this is probably the benefit I have, for me English is a second language. My first language is German and I think I'm in a decent command of the language, but still if I hear very often people using words where I know the word, but quite frankly the stringing together of the words makes no sense to me. And this makes me angry, because I'm like what are you trying to tell me? What is it you are actually asking here or telling me? And that inner fire, there's inner disdain for these things, also like just walking through life and I still get annoyed when stuff doesn't work the way it's supposed to work, or I think it's supposed to work. So I don't know. I never lost that desire regardless how arguably comfortable my life is now.

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

Sure. The other question I've got, because I know part of what you think about and also how you support other people in the world is change, and how do you make change happen. What's changed in your understanding of how individuals change? How has that shifted over the years?

Pascal ([08:25](#)):

I believe I probably started with the wrong assumption that if you just put yourself out there, if you're just energetic enough, they will see the light. They will see the thing you can see and just follow you blindly.

MBS ([08:43](#)):

Yeah.



Pascal ([08:44](#)):

Reality is most people don't like to change and for good reasons, because quite frankly, I don't like to change at the end of the day. And I think what I learned is that if you really want to get to change, it's this really intricate balancing act, this dance between showing someone the promised land, like making them see it but they need to see it for themselves. Also, making them just uncomfortable enough in their skin that they actually feel not only the desire to change, but also the necessity to change. And then most importantly, and I think that's the role people like you and I have, is to give them the tools to actually be able to change.

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

Nice.

Pascal ([09:29](#)):

Alright. So it's an interesting... I find it's a much more delicate dance than I thought it was originally. I thought originally it's like one, two, three, done.

MBS ([09:40](#)):

[inaudible 00:09:40].

Pascal ([09:40](#)):

We like it's Obvious. And in reality is you realize everybody's a little different, some people react to the promised land better. Other people need a little bit more of the burning platform feeling to move, and then other people are just defined. They just need like, just tell me what I need to do.

MBS ([10:00](#)):

Pascal, what book have you selected to read from?



Pascal ([10:03](#)):

I picked something probably rather typical for my background, but also probably something which is a little bit out of the extraordinary for a book you would typically pick. So I've recently read the arguably best biography of a German electro pop band called Kraftwerk.

MBS ([10:24](#)):

And not just German, but also global in terms of their impact and the length of their shadow.

Pascal ([10:31](#)):

Yes, that's exactly the point. So Kraftwerk clearly for those who aren't initiated into it, go on like whatever music platform you use, Google it or check it out. But they really defined an era. They really gave us a whole different new way of thinking about music and sound and et cetera. And they're what the Germans call a [inaudible 00:10:50], meaning they see themselves as a whole package artwork. So it's not just the music, it's the way they perform, the way they present themselves, et cetera. And there's a book by a German guy called Uwe Schutte, who wrote an English speaking book called Kraftwerk the Future Music from Germany. And the reason why I picked this is not because I want to talk about Kraftwerk, but there is about a page and a half in here... So not quite your two pages. But a page and a half in here, which I read and then I read again, and I read again. And I was like, holy smokes, that's exactly what's happening in the world right now and it's a good reminder. And that's the reason why I picked it.

MBS ([11:33](#)):

Oh, well you couldn't get a better setup than that. You got me intrigued, you got everybody intrigued. So Pascal, over to you. Let's hear these pages.



Pascal ([11:42](#)):

Perfect. So let me give you a tiny bit of a setup. So we are in the early part of the book and we are talking about Kraftwerk. We are just establishing essentially Kraftwerk's long term influence on the world of music and how unique they were and still are, and how much influence they had. And the passage I'm going to read to you is about a music critic. So this is a citation essentially of a work from a music critic who asked effectively the question, why hasn't there been a Kraftwerk after Kraftwerk? So kind of the age old question of why did we have this like one moment in time where everything changed, and then suddenly everything feels the same?

Pascal ([12:32](#)):

Mark Fisher's question could thus be answered by pointing out that there is no need for an equivalent of Kraftwerk in today's musical landscape because Kraftwerk's sound is ubiquitous. But then that isn't what his question was aiming at. What he wanted to know is why aren't there any bands or artists around that make music which completely breaks with the rules, conventions and patterns that govern pop music as we know it. Music which by sounding utterly different would constitute proof that there exist a potential for the arrival of something genuinely new socially, politically, or culturally. Instead, what is sold to us is just the repetition, variation and regurgitation of the existing, a repackaged version of the past. The explanation is simple.

Pascal ([13:24](#)):

There exists no music of the future today because there is no longer any such thing as a future. The future, according to Fisher has been canceled. The historical struggle for a better world has always been driven by the promise of better things to come. When the Beatles promised such a prospect in their 1967 song, Getting Better, they really meant it. The song caught the optimistic mood of the rebellious generation of the late '60s. By the end of the 20th century, these high hopes had waned. Today, when thinking about tomorrow, we see



more threat than opportunity given the current climate of economic crisis, global warming, political demagoguery and the erosion of democratic values. How could we possibly imagine building a better future?

MBS ([14:16](#)):

That's quite the gauntlet being laid down, Pascal. What is so compelling about this for you?

Pascal ([14:24](#)):

Extract your position on Kraftwerk. I finally had a conversation with a friend of mine whom I read that passage in preparation of our interview and he's like, "Well, I don't know if that's true. And there's lots of good music." Whatever. That's not my point. I think the point is and I think this is why it is so important, and why I reread this passage multiple times is, I believe Fisher is right. I think that we collectively have chosen to essentially cancel our future. If you look at the media landscape today, if you open up any newspaper, I guarantee you the headlines on any newspaper front page is all negative.

MBS ([15:03](#)):

Yeah.

Pascal ([15:04](#)):

And I wonder, and this is not my Debbie Downer session here, but I take this as a rallying cry, because for me this really got me fired up thinking about, okay, so if our leaders, whatever leader you want to look at, politicians, business, spiritual leaders are not giving us a better future, a vision for a better future, then truly it is on us to create that because that's the only way we can create a better world we want to live in.



MBS ([15:38](#)):

Pascal, how does this sit with you being a heretic? Because I feel like a heretic is all about how do you overthrow the dominant philosophy, how do you resist the dominant philosophy? It feels like you're saying, look, the dominant philosophy has fallen. The rules are elusive now. It feels like a rallying cry is trying to re-establish something rather than resist the something.

Pascal ([16:11](#)):

I think you can turn that on its head and basically say, if we assume that the current way we're seeing the world in popular media or in the predominant view is one which is unfortunately negative, it's driven by fear and all kinds of stuff. Then aren't we supposed to be heretical and isn't the rallying call the call to arms for us to say, let's overthrow this, and replace it with a view of the future which is positive. Which sees us solving our problems, which sees us loving our neighbors.

Pascal ([16:55](#)):

And quite frankly, that gets me fired up because I think I want to live in that world. I really don't want to live in a world which is doom and gloom. And again for me, it's so interesting reading this passage in a book about music, because it's I look at this and I'm like, okay, so in all aspects of our lives how do we turn the message? And clearly your work equally as my work, as well as the work of many others is about that is. It's like how do we empower the individual to create a better future, what the future has called a preferable future.

MBS ([17:36](#)):

Right. I like that. I haven't heard that phrase before, but I get that immediately. So coming back to where we were talking earlier around how do individuals change? And you're like, you know what? I tried the rallying call, the inspirational talk, the come on people, I see the light, there's the light, follow me towards the light. Where do you begin in a rallying cry for a more positive future, a



preferable future, knowing what you know about what does and doesn't work in terms of rallying people?

Pascal ([18:14](#)):

I think you begin with... And quite frankly, you lay this out beautifully in your new book, just as a quick pluck here.

MBS ([18:21](#)):

I appreciate that.

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

But you begin with for the individual just laying out, what is it I actually want to see in the future? What do I desire? And here's the thing, there is not a single individual I know who wants doom and gloom for themselves. Despite the fact that they might've seen doom and gloom everywhere, and have probably resented to the fact that they believe doom and gloom is inevitable. But if you think about what do you actually want? You want a better future for your... If you have children you want to have a better future for your children. You want to have a better future for yourself, et cetera. So getting to this, connecting the individual first to what is the future they actually want to see, I think that's an important part. The second part for me is because sometimes I found it can become very overwhelming, because you can get into this world where you say, "Oh yeah, I want to see a world where everybody's treated equally and no child goes to bed starving or hungry."

Pascal ([19:18](#)):

And then you very quickly collapse into, oh my God, these problems are insurmountable. How do I as an individual change any of these things? And I think the important thing for me is... And I learned this myself through work with a coach, someone helping me see this for myself, is I think we need to figure out which of those particularities is important to us and which one do we



want to focus on? And then being okay saying like, I only have so much energy. I can only give so much, but where do I want to funnel this? And being okay that other people will take off the other stuff. And if we do this as a collective, we're in a good shape.

MBS ([19:59](#)):

Yes. Who do you look to as role models in this space? Who's doing this world do you think?

Pascal ([20:07](#)):

One of the most shining examples is a dear friend of mine, a gentleman called Mark Moore. And what Mark does, he started and founded an organization called MANA Nutrition. And what they're doing is deceptively simple and absolutely incredible. They found that Doctors Without Borders decades ago when looking at early child malnutrition found that if you feed literally a starving child a concoction of peanut butter fortified with infant formula. Which is as you can imagine, high in calories like peanut butter, very dense-

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

Yeah. Good stuff.

Pascal ([20:50](#)):

Right. And then the infant formula gives you all the vitamins and the minerals you need, and you give a child these little packets and you give them like three packets, about 1500 calories a day. The child's survival rate is north of 90%. which is absolutely incredible. And the simple thing, it's not like high tech complicated like vaccine or something, it's peanut butter. So Mark started this organization and single handedly with his company which manufactures this, basically, he said like, "we're going to manufacture this. And we are going to apply modern day manufacturing technology to this." And he brought down the prize of these sachets down to 20% of what it was before. And single handedly



as a relatively small company is literally saving millions of lives every single year. And I look at Mark and I'm like, if-

MBS ([21:53](#)):

I love that story.

Pascal ([21:54](#)):

If a person can just do this and say, I'm going to make a peanut butter manufacturing facility and help, it just gives me incredible amount of hope.

MBS ([22:09](#)):

Do you have any insight around how to navigate the... I'm going to call it the white savior complex? This is somebody like me coming in and going, look, there's a poor part of the world of outside my neighborhood, but I'm moved to help them because I'm a human and I have compassion. Let me come in and try and fix it for them. And I don't have an answer to this. I'm trying to figure it out. I'm wondering what you've learned or what you've noticed around how you show up. Particularly if you're used to taking the position of leadership, which is kind of where my default goes to.

Pascal ([22:55](#)):

Yeah. I think there's much to say about this. So one is just generally speaking, I would say, I'd rather have you help even if the help is somewhat misdirected than not help. Let's start there. So I'd rather have you like actually do something rather than not. I think the second part really comes to the heart of your question of how do you actually do this better. I think it comes to a part around the humbleness and admitting to not knowing. And I think this opens up an interesting conversation around overall leadership skills quite frankly in today's world, because here's an interesting thing and we find this a lot in my professional work is we are increasingly what we like to call called forward to lead into and in the unknown.



Pascal ([23:47](#)):

As a leader today, you're living and leading into a world where you just don't know. You don't know what the future will hold, there's so many variables at play, et cetera. And then the question becomes, how do you actually step up as a leader to lead into this and then inside of this unknown? And it's in many ways diametrically opposed to what we have been taught in school, because unfortunately in school and for good reasons, you get an A for knowing the answer. It's like, Michael, what is one plus one? You're like two. And you're like, yeah, you get a little star. The world we are living in isn't that anymore. So the world we're living in is-

MBS ([24:23](#)):

I'm still chasing the star, and that's the problem. Yeah.

Pascal ([24:27](#)):

Yes, exactly. And the world we're living in is really about asking the right question and then having the tools to actually suss out the answer to lean back and say, let the people on the front lines that come up with this. And I give you a simple example. When I used to work @google.org, which is their philanthropic arm and we funded amongst many other organizations, an organization which had a really interesting kind of baseline approach to help. So they went into regions like Africa and they said, instead of deploying capital, as in we are going to build wealth or we are going to build a school or something. They said what we are going to do is we are going to give them the money, believing that they will figure out like what to do with that money regardless. And what's interesting, they kind of set the baseline because that then becomes the baseline against every other invention.

MBS ([25:22](#)):

Invention. Yeah.



Pascal ([25:24](#)):

And the question we regularly got asked about this company or this organization was, well, if you give the money to a family, what keeps them from just buying a bunch of beer and having a good time? And you're like, quite frankly-

MBS ([25:39](#)):

Nothing.

Pascal ([25:40](#)):

Nothing. But the reality of it is-

MBS ([25:43](#)):

[inaudible 00:25:43] in practice reality, which is like they're trying to build a better life.

Pascal ([25:46](#)):

That's exactly it. And yes, they will buy a couple of beers. And so be it that's great. Let them buy a couple of beers, but they also buy say for example, a little motorbike and then open up a transportation company where they drive people from village to village, because they want to have a better life. And they're not to just going to blow it on beer. So I think there's a piece in there which is... And Michael, you might have heard this at the coaches training I received, which is coming from a place which used to be called The Coaches Training Institute.

Pascal ([26:18](#)):

They have this idea where they talk about the other person and they say, you hold the other person naturally creative, resourceful and whole. And I absolutely love this because it's this idea that you say the other person is natural and creative. They can come up with any solution they need to come up with.



They're resourceful, they can figure out how to do it. And their whole, as in they're not broken so there's nothing I need to fix. And once you adapt this I think as a life style, as a mantra, your whole perspective shifts.

MBS ([26:51](#)):

Yeah. I love that. I did my training with CTI 20 years ago as well. So I know that phrase, I've sat in the room with that. I suspect that if we ever end up in the same country, in the same city, in the same bar together, we'll spend hours chatting about this. But for now, let me ask a final question which is this, what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation between you and me?

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

That's always the trick question. I always hate that question because it puts the honors on me to come up with a really good question right now.

MBS ([27:25](#)):

One of your replies can be, we've said all that needs to be said, and you can drop a mic and walk off.

Pascal ([27:30](#)):

That is a beautiful response. No, let me just point thing out, because I believe that the two pages I brought to you when you read them and take them at face value, they can sound incredibly depressing. And I just want to make sure that people understand that I take this and I invite people to take these things, regardless what it is like my two pages or whatever you like read, encounter or see, and see it as a yin to yang. As a source of energy to figure out, okay, that's happening, if that's like the negative energy here, what is the positive energy I can bring to counter this out? And for me, at least for my life is always this driving force for me to say, okay, so I see this happening. I see the suffering happening or the problems, how can you fix them? It gives me energy to use



what you perceive as negative energy just as energy and turn it into something positive.

MBS ([28:34](#)):

Let me underline Pascal's optimistic finish by mentioning one of my favorite books, Kevin Kelly's, *The Inevitable*. The book points to 12 technological trends that Kelly says we'll shape our future. And one of them is remix. I've actually just been reading it because it really challenges what format content comes in. And I'm trying to reimagine what books might be in the future. Now, Kelly is definitely a future optimist and he says, we'll keep evolving and growing and solving problems by our ability to remix what's there. Now that might be entertainment. It might be music. And if you want the other side, you can Google Daft punk plus Eddie Johns plus more spell on you. And you can see where that fantastic iconic riff from one more time comes from, it's a piece of magic. But remix might also mean, for instance combining peanut butter and infant formula to save lives.

MBS ([29:37](#)):

I definitely feel pessimistic at times about what we're doing with our world, but I'm going to keep looking for the ways we figure stuff out. The ways we take on our worthy goals, the ways we mix up and find creative solutions. Two more interviews for you. If you enjoyed this one I'd point to Seth Levine, and that interview is called *How to Build Something*. Seth is a tech venture capitalist, and then Sarah Stein Greenberg had a lovely unknown, she's part of the Desco at Stanford. So a really interesting conversation about what does it take to design a better world? And if you want to contact Pascal, well, apparently and this is what Pascal told me, there are only two people named Pascal Finette in the world. And now Pascal isn't really on the internet. So and Google will take you a long way, Finette is F-I-N-E-T-T-E.



MBS ([30:32](#)):

I'd encourage you to sign up for his news at TheHeretic, I thoroughly enjoy that. And as a bonus, we'll put a link to a classic Kraftwerk song in the line of notes as well. Thank you for listening. Thank you for passing the interview on and we grow best by word of mouth. So if you have a chance to go, yap, this person should listen to this interview. That helps a lot. Thank you for giving me the love you've given me on reviews, some stars or some nice words. If you haven't done that yet, a simple, powerful thing for me, a real way of helping the algorithm say this is a good podcast is to give us a quick review. And I think that's it. So let me just finish by saying you're awesome and you're doing great.