Interviewer: My first guest is the man who made electric cars a thing and is currently working on perfecting reusable rockets, space travel, connecting the human brain directly to computers, connecting cities with electromagnetic bullet trains, the Starlink satellite system that's so important to the war in Ukraine. And then on Tuesday, on traffic, he also tweets a lot. Elon Musk.

Elon Musk: Wow.

Interviewer: What did I get the full order of things that you do in a day there? When I was reading, I left out the tunnel thing at the end. Do you work on all these a lot of jobs? Do you do all these things every day?

Elon Musk: No, no, but I do have a long workday. I work a lot.

Interviewer: I'm so thrilled you're here because we do a show where we talk about what changes happen in the world, and we just talk. There's very few people who actually make change happen. You are one of those people, probably.

Elon Musk: Well, thank you. I just want to say I love this audience.

Audience: (Applause)

Interviewer: Well, you're a likable guy, I mean, they attack you a lot.

Elon Musk: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you seem to laugh it off, which I think is fantastic. I love it that you have a sense of humor because a guy as important as you

who makes changes could use your powers for evil and not good.

Elon Musk: Absolutely, you could use them for evil. No, I would never use them for evil, that's for sure.

Interviewer: No, I know, but the way I know that is because you have a sense of humor.

Elon Musk: Yeah, I actually love comedy, and, you know, like many years ago, actually, I was in the audience here and watched your show. I've been a long-time admirer of your show.

Interviewer: Oh, well, thank you.

Elon Musk: Yeah.

Interviewer: Let me get back to you being ingenious. That has always been my view, is that, as I was a history major, and when you study history, what you realize is that there's the great man theory, and they talk about kings and princes and queens and presidents. It's really the people in tech who change the world. They're the people who deal the cards, whether it's fire, electricity for good or bad, or the cotton gin, or the iPhone, or the atom bomb. Those are the cards, and the rest of us just play it. Would you agree with that assessment?

Elon Musk: I think technology is the thing that causes these big step changes in civilization. So, obviously, you've got things like the Gutenberg Press, before which, it was very difficult to get books. They were very rare, even if you had a thirst for knowledge, you really couldn't do anything about it. But the internet is something beyond the Gutenberg Press, I think. It's like when I first saw the internet coming into being in a way that the general public could use it, it felt like humanity as a whole was developing a nervous system. So previously, the way information would travel would be by osmosis, one person to another or one person

calling another. But the access to information was very limited. Now, with the internet, it's like having a nervous system. It's like any part of humanity has access to almost all the information of humanity. Like, you could be in the middle of the Amazon jungle with a Starlink terminal and have access to more information than the President did in 1980.

Interviewer: Right.

Elon Musk: Well, anything on your phone, everything is there.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you are one of these dealers, these people who deal the cards. I feel like some people thought when you bought Twitter that this is kind of an outlier. How does this fit with these other things you're doing? I never thought that because I think you're dealing with big civilizational issues and problems. I was right on your page. I think Twitter is one of them. You have talked about this woke mind virus and really in apocalyptic terms. Could you explain what the woke mind virus is, and if we don't deal with this, nothing else can get done? Tell me why you think that.

Elon Musk: Yeah. I think we need to be very cautious about anything that is anti-meritocratic and anything that results in the suppression of free speech. Those are two other aspects of the woke mind virus that I think are very dangerous. It's often anti-meritocratic. You can't question things, even the questioning is bad. Cancel culture is another way to almost anonymously censor, and obviously people try to cancel you many times.

Interviewer: Many times, yeah. I mean, every week.

Elon Musk: I've had it from both sides.

Interviewer: And it's interesting. You and I are both in that little group of people, maybe it's a bigger group now, who are called conservative, who

haven't really changed. I don't see you think of you as a conservative.

Elon Musk: Definitely.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think of myself as a moderate. I've spent a massive amount of my life energy building sustainable energy, electric vehicles, batteries, solar, and stuff to help save the environment. That's not exactly far-right.

Interviewer: Right.

Elon Musk: It's not far-right at all. It's not exactly far-right.

Interviewer: No, it's not.

Elon Musk: It's not far-right at all.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's interesting because people like you and I, who haven't really changed, people like you and I are in this group of people who are called conservative, and you haven't really changed, and I don't see you as a conservative.

Elon Musk: Definitely

Interviewer: Yeah. I think of myself as a moderate, and I've spent a massive amount of my life energy building sustainable energy, electric vehicles, batteries, solar, and stuff to help save the environment. That's not exactly far-right.

Elon Musk: Right.

Interviewer: Well, it's not far-right at all. It's not exactly far-right.

Elon Musk: No.

Interviewer: It's not far-right at all. When I look at Twitter and I see people like Mark Zuckerberg in a position of power, I don't think it's their plan to get in there and say, "Let's shut down the President. Let's suppress this story about the New York Post, which is the oldest newspaper in America." I don't think that's their plan. I think it's in the left-leaning tech companies' plan to have this. They hire from colleges that have professors who think this way, and then they also hire employees who think this way, and then they move up, and then they hire employees who think this way, and then they also hire employees who think this way, and then they move up. And it's all the same. This is the way it is. And I don't think they see it that way. I don't think they think, "Let's do it this way." I think they don't see it that way. They think, "This is right, and it's also better for business because it's more compassionate." How do you think this is happening?

Elon Musk: I think a lot of it is rooted in purity tests, and this is the psychology of cults. So if you're in a cult, you don't see yourself as a member of a cult and you don't see your friends as members of a cult. You see your friends as, "This is an awesome group of people and we've got this great mission." And the people outside the group are the ones that are in the cult. You're just trying to help. You're like the A-team, or something, going to help other people.

Interviewer: Right.

Elon Musk: And it's, it's something that's the psychological connection that's being established. The internet is very good at drawing the connections. It's like, "Okay, what's a connection between this thing and that thing?" And it's like the AI is trying to connect the dots. So, okay, well, this person agrees with this person, and they both agree with this person. And it's like, "Oh, this is a connected cult."

Interviewer: So when I look at people in big tech and I see them say things that are unfair, that I would say are things that just aren't right, the first thing that comes to my mind is, "It's a cult," but it's actually a cult.

Elon Musk: Yes. I think people don't see it that way. They don't see it as a cult because that would mean that they're in a cult. But the psychology of a cult is that people that are in a cult often don't realize they're in a cult. You think you're in the right, and you're helping the world. And it's those who are not in the cult that are the problem. And you want to bring those people into the cult so that they can be saved, and they can be enlightened. And it's like the NPC meme. It's like, "No, we're saving the NPCs. They just don't know it." They just don't know it. We've got to save the NPCs.

Interviewer: Right. When I think about this idea that the left... because they own tech, they own a lot of tech, the left makes all the decisions. The decisions are made because they have this cult mentality. They want to save the world. So they do all these things. They do these purity tests. Then people on the right don't do it because they see the right as a cult. So you have no one at the top of these right-leaning businesses. I don't think you have anyone at the top of these right-leaning businesses that is going to influence the business the way the left does. I mean, it's a problem.

Elon Musk: Yeah, I mean, I think if you're left-leaning or right-leaning, you should always be wary of... Is this too much of a purity test? Because any ideology that's taken to an extreme can be unhealthy. And if you have the self-righteousness, which is what a cult is, that's the thing to watch out for. It's like, "Okay, well, do we have the self-righteousness where we think we're right and the other side is evil and we want to eliminate them?" That's when you know you've taken it too far.

Interviewer: Yeah. But this is a very hard issue to solve because it happens because of individual choices. If you work at the NY Times, you probably... you certainly would have to say things that are in line with the left because they're probably your views. I know people who write there, and I don't think they're writing things they don't believe, but if they did, they wouldn't work there. And if you are the boss at Twitter or one of the bosses at Twitter or one of the founders at Twitter, you can get in there and say, "Look, I am not going to suppress this story. I am not going to shut this President down." But then if you say that, you get fired because the person you've hired and the person the other person's hired has another point of view. How do you solve that problem?

Elon Musk: It's actually a very hard problem to solve because it's based on a lot of individual choices. In each individual choice, like, if you were the manager of a department, and somebody has this purity test of, "Hey, we've got to go the other way. We've got to cancel this person or whatever." And you're like, "Well, actually, no, I don't think that's right." And you say, "No, no, it's the correct thing." And it's just super hard to run a company when you have individuals that have this self-righteousness, and they can't see that they're not the holder of truth, the sole holder of truth. And I don't think people should try to be the sole holder of truth. I think we should all be seeking truth. And it's not like if you... One of the principles of say, the US or any really functioning democracy is that we have a marketplace of ideas. You can't say that this is... That's important. And we can't take that for granted. We have to have a marketplace of ideas.

Interviewer: Right.

Elon Musk: This is a very precious thing.

Interviewer: Very precious. But that's why... I'll tell you this. I don't think they're evil. I think they think this is right, and it's what's going to bring the world together. It's what's going to unify the country. It's what's going

to make everything perfect. And what's wrong with that? What's wrong with having a utopian view of the world? People have had that since the beginning of time.

Elon Musk: Well, that's probably why there's such a strong feedback from the left, saying, "This is why it's important." There's a lot of what's called high agency people that are drawn to the left because they feel like, "This is a way to fix things. We want to fix things." And there are a lot of well-meaning people on the left, a lot of well-meaning people on the right, but it's just important that there's a balance. And we don't want to go too far one way or the other, and it's not good to just be too far right or too far left. If you get too far right, you might get like a fascist state or something, and if you get too far left, you'll get communism. So you don't want either of those.

Interviewer: It's hard because if you get too far right, it's easy to see. If you get too far left, you're not going to see it because the left believes in tolerance. So we're going to be tolerant of everything. We're going to be so open-minded that our brains fall out. So it's tough. It's tough to reel it in when you're on that side.

Elon Musk: Yeah, absolutely. I think it's important to just have a balance and not to go to... There's this quote that I like. "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man." So if everybody's always adapting themselves to the world and then... Yeah, you'll just get this steady state. You have to have a few people who are trying to adapt the world to themselves. But it can't be too many. It can't be everybody because then it's just not efficient. It's just chaos. So I think, I like that quote. It's like most people should be adapting themselves to the world, but some people should be saying, "Okay, well, I want to change the world in a good way." And that's where you have to have the right balance of, you know... If you're too unreasonable, it's not good for society. If you're too reasonable, then you

don't improve. You don't make progress.

Interviewer: And when you get to a place like where we are right now where you're banning, censoring, de-platforming, doing all those things to somebody you don't agree with, you're not improving society. It's gotten out of hand. It's gotten so out of hand.

Elon Musk: Yeah, it's like this sort of bad local maximum. And so you think, "Okay, well, what's the best way to improve society?" And you're like, "Well, if we get rid of all these people that we disagree with, maybe society will improve." And it's like, no, actually, it won't. Because those people will then go somewhere else. They'll find their own social media network. They'll find their own thing. And then you'll have no visibility into what they're saying or doing. And then you're just, it's worse. It's not that you're removing the problem. You're removing your ability to see the problem.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's not working. It's not working.

Elon Musk: And then you're making that, in some cases, people are, I would say, further radicalized. They'll find other people that feel the same way and get even more extreme in their views. It's just like, you don't want that.

Interviewer: I agree with that. The problem is when they do find another platform, and that's when they find another platform. The other platform gets cancelled. I've never seen anything like this. They get a platform, and then they get cancelled.

Elon Musk: It's sort of like a game of "whack-a-mole." You're just smashing the mole, and it just pops up somewhere else.

Interviewer: I guess that's a... I guess what I'm hoping for is that we find a middle ground because we're trying to find people right now to build the

other platform that's not going to get cancelled.

Elon Musk: Yeah, I mean, it's important to have moderation and also not too much censorship, and you want to be somewhere in the middle, I think.

Interviewer: And what would happen if... if you went to a place like... Did you see this report that PayPal has teamed up with the Southern Poverty Law Center, so that now the Southern Poverty Law Center is going to be able to police hate and extremism on PayPal?

Elon Musk: Yeah, I mean, I think the Southern Poverty Law Center has some reasonable views and then they have some views that are not so reasonable, and if they are the arbiter of free speech on a payment platform, then that could be quite dangerous.

Interviewer: Do you think... So if we say, "Okay, I want to go to a place that believes in freedom, believes in the Bill of Rights," do you think that if we create that and create a huge place for that, do you think we win?

Elon Musk: I think, certainly, there's a big audience for that. There's a lot of people who do believe in free speech and do not want a handful of people at the center deciding what is free speech. And then you want to be able to make money online. You don't want to be censored. You want to be able to use your credit card, and it's... Yeah, I think there's definitely a big audience for that.

Interviewer: So, to go back to your earlier point, what's going to pull it back? If you're at the top of a company and you know you can't do this because this person's going to do it and this person's going to do it, and it's going to be done by the people in the company who are making decisions, it's going to be done by the people in the company who are making the decisions that are going to be done because the people who

are in the company are making the decisions.

Elon Musk: Well, I think a few things that would be helpful would be if there were a... If you had sort of a jury system for censorship, where you take, say, randomly selected people. It's like, "Okay, this is the group of randomly selected people that we're going to get opinions from." And then you look at the... You kind of take a vote. It's like, "Okay, is this person de-platformed or not?" And I think that would be a more democratic process. Right now, a lot of the decisions are made by very few people. And when you have a concentration of power, it's, you know... I don't think that's great. I think that's the same thing for any organization. I think it's bad if too few people have too much power. And it's, you know... I don't think it's healthy.

Interviewer: I'm going to ask you this question, but I think you're going to say the jury system, but what do you think would be the best way to fix the problem of people getting their speech taken away?

Elon Musk: I think a jury system would be probably the best way to do it, where it's randomly selected people. And then you have to take a... Have a majority vote.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Elon Musk, we will talk again, I'm sure.

Elon Musk: Yeah, you're welcome.