

A text dump on Counter-Currents

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Introduction

Greg Johnson

Source: Rational Wiki

If White Nationalists who claim not to hate other races are honest, then they are living refutations of their own claim that multiracial societies breed hatred. *I am living proof that multiracial societies cause racial hatred.*

–Greg Johnson as T. C. Lynch as Mike Meehan¹

Gregory R. Johnson² (1971–) (pseudonyms: The Cat Lady, Dr. R. G. Fowler, T. C. Lynch, Trevor Lynch, Mike Meehan³⁴ is an American white nationalist notable for his support of holocaust denier and "esoteric Hitlerist" Savitri Devi. Johnson runs The Savitri Devi Archive under the pseudonym "Dr. R.G. Fowler".⁵ He also runs the Neo-Nazi website **Counter-Currents** under his own name.⁶ About his youth, Johnson stated, "I was a bit of a boy Objectivist, a bit of an asshole, for a couple of years because of that watching Milton Friedman's *Free to Choose* program on PBS." and "somewhat pro-Zionist".⁷ He's no longer a libertarian and he's now anti-semitic,⁸ but he's become 100% asshole. He received a Ph.D. in philosophy from The Catholic University of America in 2001 ("A commentary on Kant's Dreams of a spirit-seer").⁹¹⁰ He taught at colleges for a few years, specializing in Swedenborgian Studies, (Morehouse College, Spelman College, Georgia State University, Pacific School of Religion) before leaving academia permanently.¹¹

¹ About Greg Johnson *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

² Gregory R. Johnson *Pacific School of Religion*.

³ About Greg Johnson *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

⁴ T.C. Lynch (The Racist Formerly known as "The Cat Lady") *Vanguard News Network* (archived from December 13, 2020.)

⁵ Contact *The Savitri Devi Archive* (archived from February 16, 2020).

⁶ About *Counter-Currents* (archived from April 26, 2021).

⁷ Between Two Lampshades: Michael Enoch Interviews Greg Johnson, Part 1 (June 15, 2015) *Counter-Currents* (archived from 5 Jul 2021 17:55:48 UTC)

⁸ "Greg Johnson and Counter-Currents" by Graham Macklin (2019) In: *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*, edited by Mark Sedgwick. Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780190877590. Pages 204-223.

⁹ Gregory R. Johnson *Pacific School of Religion*.

¹⁰ A commentary on Kant's Dreams of a spirit-seer *Worldcat*.

¹¹ "Greg Johnson and Counter-Currents" by Graham Macklin (2019) In: *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*, edited by Mark Sedgwick. Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780190877590. Pages 204-223.

Johnson was arrested in 2019 in Norway under the country's immigration act. Norway's intelligence service told CNN that he was arrested because they considered him "to be a threat, not because of what he could do but because of his hate speech and his previously expressed support for Anders Breivik."¹² Following his arrest, the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Pacific School of Religion issued a statement that they were unaware of his extremist views during his term of employment (2002-2005) and that the Center condemned his views in no uncertain terms.¹³

Content of Counter-Currents

The guiding principles of Counter-Currents are based on writings of crank metaphysician René Guénon's book, *The Crisis of the Modern World*.¹⁴ The specific principles are pseudohistorical, specifically cyclical theory and the idea that there was a golden age.¹⁵

- History is cyclical, and Good old days its prevailing current is downward, declining from a Golden Age through Silver and Bronze Ages to a Dark Age.
- We live in a Dark Age, in which decadence reigns and all natural and healthy values are inverted.
- Even in the depths of the Dark Age, there are hidden Golden Age counter-currents: survivals of the past Golden Age that sustain the world and serve as seeds of the Golden Age to come.
- It is not futile to think and live according to Golden Age principles in the depths of the Dark Age. Indeed, those who do so play an important role in the passage of the Ages.

Johnson's training is strictly speaking in philosophy, not history, although he has claimed illegitimately to have expertise in the history of philosophy.¹⁶ This is a case of ultracrepidarianism.

¹² Norway arrests US white supremacist ahead of far-right conference by Vasco Cotovio (1:36 PM EST, Sun November 3, 2019) *CNN*.

¹³ Statement about Gregory R. Johnson by James F. Lawrence (November 5, 2019) *Center for Swedenborgian Studies*.

¹⁴ About Counter-Currents Publishing & North American New Right *Counter-Currents* (archived from March 31, 2020).

¹⁵ About Counter-Currents Publishing & North American New Right *Counter-Currents* (archived from March 31, 2020).

¹⁶ Gregory R. Johnson *Pacific School of Religion*.

The idea of living according to "Golden Age principles in the depths of the Dark Age", is reminiscent of Ignatius Reilly, the protagonist of *Confederacy of Dunces*¹⁷ that is even more pronounced in the neoreactionary movement.

The Counter-Currents was banned from Paypal and Patreon following the aftermath of Unite the Right, and it was also banned from the Amazon Affiliates Program.¹⁸

White genocide

Johnson is a promoter in the crank white genocide conspiracy theory.¹⁹²⁰ Although Johnson has eschewed overt calls for violence, such as from William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries* (a.k.a. "Day of the Rope"),²¹⁽¹⁾ he advocates "a well-planned, orderly, and humane process of ethnic cleansing."²²²³ This is duplicitous on the part of Johnson, who is effectively advocating violence by this statement because people do not willingly accede to being ethnically cleansed from their natal homelands and give up their citizenship. The United Nations defines ethnic cleansing as, "a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas."²⁴

Hegemony of the white races

Johnson is a fan of the Italian fascist philosopher and rape promoter Julius Evola.²⁵ He approvingly republished Evola's article "The Hegemony of the White Races". Evola wrote in this article that:²⁶

¹⁷ *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole (1980) Louisiana State University Press. ISBN 0807106577.

¹⁸ About Greg Johnson *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

¹⁹ White Genocide by Greg Johnson (September 15, 2015) *Counter-Currents* (archived from May 21, 2021).

²⁰ Counter-Currents Radio Podcast No. 138: "Set Aside Your Humility & Lead". Ruuben Kaalep Interviews Greg Johnson (2015) *Counter-Currents* (archived from October 25, 2015).

²¹ "Greg Johnson and Counter-Currents" by Graham Macklin (2019) In: *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*, edited by Mark Sedgwick. Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780190877590. Pages 204-223.

²² William Pierce *Counter-Currents* (archived from April 20, 2021).

²³ Restoring White Homelands by Greg Johnson (June 24, 2014) *Counter-Currents* (archived from January 28, 2021).

²⁴ Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 780 (27 May 1994) *United Nations Security Council*.

²⁵ Steve Bannon's interest in a thinker who inspired fascism exposes the misogyny of the alt-right by Annalisa Merelli (Published February 22, 2017; Last updated on October 6, 2017) *Quartz*.

²⁶ The Hegemony of the White Races by Julius Evola. Originally published in *Corriere Padano* on January 6, 1937. Reprinted in *Counter-Currents* (archived from January 27, 2021).

(1) Johnson hasn't entirely dissociated himself from Pierce because Pierce is featured on the Counter-Culture website.<ref> William Pierce *Counter-Currents* (archived from April 20, 2021).

The spirit of adventure, the love of risk and the unknown, the sheer pleasure of domination and predation, the desire for great distances were, more than any rational, mercantile, and utilitarian motive, at the origins of white expansion, and were inseparably bound to specific character traits: to a hard will, to coldness, to tenacity, to contempt for life and for death, to an unshakable feeling of superiority. ...

Only a return to origins, i.e., to the original attitude that brought whites to world domination — after the elimination of all the detritus of a soulless civilization devoid of ideals, a civilization that worships the idol of mere economy and is founded on the principle of leveling democracy — will allow us to maintain our supremacy. And that means reviving the oceanic symbol, reawakening the will to the infinite and limitless, fueled – so to speak – by the ocean wind, the freedom of enormous distances. This spirit, however, must be mastered by firm discipline and translated into strength hardened like steel. ...

Fascist Italy is now a symbol, and has defined the terms of a European alternative. Those nations that will be incapable of following her in accomplishing the miracle of a renewal and a revival in the sense just indicated, are destined to be swept away by the tide that is gradually swelling among the races they once dominated. Whatever the power of those nations may still appear to be today, it is merely the legacy of a spirit that is now dead. Only the other nations, who will answer the call of fascist "youthfulness" and bring back the deep forces of their race to new epic heights, and to a new spirituality permeated with the drive towards limitless, will be part of the new front called upon to defend and reaffirm Western world supremacy.

Johnson also believes that people who discuss past crimes against humanity committed by white people should be punished, essentially advocating for a memory hole:²⁷

I believe in giving complete blanket pardons to the white people of the past who did bad things. I also believe that a healthy society should not dwell on past injustices. So we should draw a veil over such history and punish people who try to reopen old historical wounds.

Bait-and-switch

Johnson has engaged in bait-and-switch tactics by hiding his most odious views with pseudonyms. For example in 2003 under the pseudonym T.C. Lynch, he expressed

²⁷ "Indigenous" Isn't Our Term by Robert Hampton (September 29, 2021) *Counter-Currents*. Greg Johnson comment from September 29, 2021 at 12:37 pm.

support for ethnic cleansing of Jews on racist and anti-semitic website Vanguard News Network:

As for the Jews: There would have to be an entirely different policy. At the very least, all their property should be confiscated. At the very least. There are two reasons for this. First, we should consider it reparations. Second, if they were allowed to keep their wealth, they would immediately use it to stir up trouble against us. Just look at what happened when Adolf Hitler, with the typical excess of kindness that was his greatest flaw, allowed the Jews of Germany to emigrate with their fortunes.

—Greg Johnson as T. C. Lynch²⁸²⁹

In an article with the same title ("To Cleanse America: Some Practical Proposals") by Johnson published on Counter-Currents in 2010, that paragraph was excised; there was no acknowledgement of the previous publication.³⁰

External links

- Greg Johnson — Southern Poverty Law Center
- Greg Johnson (02/02/2019 - 20:07) *FOIA Research*

²⁸ About Greg Johnson *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

²⁹ To Cleanse America: Some Practical Proposals by T. C. Lynch (2003) *Vanguard News Network* (archived from November 27, 2003).

³⁰ To Cleanse America: Some Practical Proposals by Greg Johnson (October 27, 2010) *Counter-Currents* (archived from November 8, 2010).

Primary Sources

Counter-Currents Radio Podcast

No. 338: Ted Talk

Ted Talk: An Analysis of Ted Kaczynski's Manifesto, Part 1

The following is an edited transcript of the conversation between Greg Johnson and Richard Houck on the subject of Ted Kaczynski's manifesto, *Industrial Society and Its Future*, that was broadcast on *Counter-Currents Radio* in April 2021. You can listen to the recording here. <https://counter-currents.com/2021/04/ccr-ted-talk/>

Greg Johnson: I'm Greg Johnson. Welcome to Ted Talk. I am joined here today by Rich Houck, and we're going to be talking about Ted Kaczynski's *Industrial Society and Its Future*. Rich, welcome to the show.

Rich Houck: Thanks for having me on again.

GJ: It's great to talk again. The first thing I want to say about the subject matter of tonight's stream is that Ted Kaczynski is somebody whom I actually corresponded with more than 20 years ago. I think I sent him only two letters. It was very brief. I don't have them handy, unfortunately. They are now tucked away in storage.

I read his *Industrial Society and Its Future* when it was first published in the 1990s in the *New York Times* and other outlets because of his bombing campaign. I followed his trial, followed his incarceration. I read books about him. And I thought he was a really fascinating person, obviously a highly intelligent man. He went to Harvard, got a Ph.D. in mathematics at the University of Michigan, and was a Professor at Berkeley at a fairly young age. Then he dropped out of teaching at Berkeley. He packed up and moved to Montana, and lived off the grid in a little cabin that he built himself, where he penned his manifesto and started sending bombs to people. It's a fascinating story of a Professor, an intellectual, gone rogue. He's now been in prison for more than 20 years in the Supermax penitentiary, and he's continued to write and correspond widely with people.

He's had all kinds of ups and downs with various federal authorities trying to steal his writings, prevent him from publishing, prevent him from contacting people, prevent him from reading books — but he still soldiers on. He's got a message that he wants to get out there, and that he wanted to get out there badly enough to kill people.

I was thinking back on this today as I was rereading his book. I hadn't actually reread it in full in 20 years. I had pulled it out and added it to my stack when I was working on *The White Nationalist Manifesto*, because I wanted to look at different manifestos as far as literary forms go. But I just glanced at it. I didn't really read it.

It's a remarkable piece of writing. It's very deep in some ways. I think it's wrong in other ways. I think it's worth talking about, though.

So, Rich, how did you first come across this work, and how did it impact you initially, before we actually get into it?

RH: One thing I wanted to add to your brief introduction to Kaczynski is that he had lived out in Montana for some years before there was ever any bombing campaign. I think it had been almost a decade where he was peacefully living out in the woods. He dropped off the grid and did his own thing. I thought it was very interesting that he tried to come to grips with society by just dropping out.

I came across Ted Kaczynski's work, interestingly enough — it almost had to be this way, I think — when I was 18 or 19. I had a job working for a large tech company. I was actually doing network support for this company, and it was a job where I worked in a cubicle, was very bored, and had tons of free time. I could take books or magazines to read while I was sitting in the cubicle. I had been feeling a lot of angst, and more and more dissatisfaction with my life and society. And really, there was no reason for it. Everything looked like it was going just swimmingly.

I came across this passage on a website — it was from paragraph 145 of Kaczynski's manifesto, alongside a picture of people on their way to work, looking totally depressed as they were waiting for the subway to come. It read: "Imagine a society that subjects people to conditions that make them terribly unhappy and gives them drugs to take away their unhappiness." Kaczynski goes on in this paragraph to talk about how rates of clinical depression have been increasing over the years, and the people managing society understand this and think that the solution is to give people distractions and drugs. I think we're seeing that now with the movement to decriminalize or legalize marijuana, and other things like that. People might disagree with that particular point, but some believe that people are miserable, so they are being allowed to have drugs to make life tolerable. When I read that I thought, "Yeah, that's exactly what's going on." And then I read the rest of it and really enjoyed most of it. I've gone back to it over the years.

I think the forum where I first saw that was one where people who worked for Fortune 500 companies in cubicles, and who were dissatisfied with their lives, would post. It turned out that the same thing I was thinking about was being thought about by other people who were living similar lives. Somebody there related it to Kaczynski's work, and that was how I found it

GJ: I want to talk about some of the central ideas in the Unabomber's manifesto. The first thing that struck me is that it begins with a critique of Leftism. I thought, "This is interesting, given that it was written by a radical environmentalist who was sending bombs to people to get his ideas publicized." Imagine if he had just waited a couple of more years and started a blog. That was one of the things that was going through my mind when I was rereading this. Gee, if he had just waited a couple more years, he could have gotten a WordPress blog and put all this out there. He could have been a livestreamer. He could have eventually had a YouTube channel. He could have

been huge. He could have been merchandising, selling T-shirts and coffee mugs, and getting his ideas out there instead of being in Supermax penitentiary. But for whatever reason, he chose this path.

So he begins with a critique of the Left. I thought that was fascinating, because you'd assume that a radical environmentalist would be a Leftist. Most of the radical environmentalists today who we think of are Leftists. But at the time, I was doing research into a counter-tradition in environmentalism: environmentalism on the Right. "Eco-fascism," for want of a better word. That's a term that Left-wing environmentalists use to describe this. They call them eco-fascists — and there's nothing worse than a fascist, right?

I was reading Savitri Devi. I was reading Martin Heidegger. I was looking at policy in the Third Reich having to do with animals, trees, and agriculture, looking at some of the roots of those ideas in nineteenth-century thinkers, people such as Schopenhauer and Wagner. So when I read Kaczynski's manifesto, I was thinking, "Wait a second here, this guy fits in — loosely — with what I was going to be calling eco-fascism, a Rightist approach to radical environmentalism." I suppose this is fallacious, but my reasoning at the time was, "If he's not on the Left, he's got to be on the Right." That was my initial reaction.

There are certain things about his approach that I would consider to be Rightist beyond merely that false dichotomy. But the big thing that he does against the Left that I found fascinating is that, without mentioning Nietzsche's name, he gives a Nietzschean critique of them. He talks about two ideas that are associated with the Left. One is inferiority. Leftists have inferiority complexes. They are filled with resentment, as Nietzsche said, and they create their values and their political ideologies and their activities as a way of overcoming or avenging their feelings of inferiority.

Rich, what was your reaction to his take on that?

RH: Yes, I had a similar one. Immediately upon reading that, I thought of slave morality. Then he goes on to talk in paragraph 15 about all the things that are — I guess he doesn't use these exact words — great and heroic, and those things and people that represent success and triumph, and how the Left lashes out against all of that. One of the things he lists that was very interesting, particularly for 1995, was the Leftist hatred of the white man. He was catching on to that. Many of the things he wrote about were ahead of their time: the liberal feelings of inferiority, how they don't themselves, how they dislike their in-group, and how they say derogatory things about their own in-group.

To circle back to your discussion of how Kaczynski's anti-Leftist views made you think that maybe he was a Rightist or eco-fascist, I wouldn't say he gets into that subject, but there are a few places where he talks about his disdain for mass movements. He mentions National Socialism a couple of times. But for Kaczynski, his idea comes before any mass movement. His idea is that if you don't have an industrial society, and you don't have these people using modern technology and mass technology to encroach upon your rights and your views and who try control you, you wouldn't need to belong

to a mass movement. If there were no technology, and there were no Great War, and there weren't people putting pressure on the Germans, they wouldn't have then felt the need to join a mass movement to oppose it.

GJ: Yeah, but he does talk about the need to create some sort of mass movement against technology, and he's somewhat concerned about that. The whole meat of the manifesto is bookended between discussions of Leftism. He begins by talking about the psychology of Leftism, and then one of the last sections is about "The Danger of Leftism." In paragraph 222 he writes:

Leftists, especially those of the over-socialized type, are true believers in the sense of Eric Hoffer's book *The True Believer*. But not all true believers are the same psychological type as Leftists. Presumably a true believing Nazi, for instance, is very different psychologically from a true believing Leftist.

I thought that was fascinating, because he does think that he's going to need true believers if he's going to create a mass movement that is anti-technological. But he says that no true believer will make a safe recruit for the revolution unless his commitment is exclusively to the destruction of technology. So he is looking around for true believers with the right kind of psychology and the right kind of goals. It is interesting that he says that there can be true believers who are not Leftist types, which would be people motivated by inferiority complexes and also what he calls over-socialization. I love this.

You mentioned paragraph 15. It almost sounds like Ayn Rand:

Leftists tend to hate anything that has an image of being strong, good, and successful. They hate America. They hate Western civilization. They hate white males. They hate rationality. The reasons that Leftists give for hating the West, etc., clearly do not correspond with their real motives. They say that they hate the West because it is warlike, imperialistic, sexist, ethnocentric, and so forth. But where these same faults appear in socialist countries or in primitive cultures, the Leftist finds excuses for them, or at best, he grudgingly admits that they exist, whereas he enthusiastically points out and often greatly exaggerates these faults where they appear in Western civilization. Thus, it is clear that these faults are not the Leftist's real motive for hating America and the West. He hates America and the West because they are strong and successful.

I thought that was quite Nietzschean in its spirit.

RH: Yeah, I did also. He's saying that industrial and technological society puts us in these confines and restricts us from what he calls the power cycle, which is basically self-actualization, achieving things for yourself, having goals, meeting those goals — that sort of thing. You're in this big structure that does a lot of this for you. And the

Leftists, due to their inferiority complexes and their over-socialization, like being in a structure where things are taken care of for them. He talks about autonomy a few times, self-determination and doing things for yourself, almost harkening back to early American rugged individualism in the sense that your destiny is in your own hands and you don't expect people to do things for you. You go out and take the initiative and do them, and you're high agency and high functioning.

What he seems to be saying is that Leftists don't have this desire, they are fine with sitting around and being entertained, and having their food delivered to them. Even if they seem to be on board with some of the ideas of destroying industrial and technological society, they really can't ever be completely, because they can't see themselves going back to a society where they have to take some initiative and do things for themselves. That's not what drives them psychologically. Whereas other people are driven by that, and are suffering psychologically by being placed in a society where there's no way to achieve those things for themselves. Later he talks about surrogate activities, where if you don't have these basic psychological needs met, you find other things to spend your time doing.

It is obviously an outlet, a catharsis — a way of dealing with this modern society that Leftists don't have, so they would make bad revolutionaries. You see that come out in some of their surrogate activities, as Kaczynski talks about. So maybe more Right-wing people would take up woodworking or bodybuilding or something like that, while Leftists collect Funko Pops.

GJ: Yeah, the inferiority complex is half of Leftist psychology, and the other half is what he calls over-socialization. And I think this is an interesting concept, so I want to try out my interpretation and see what you think about it. When he talks about socialization, he is talking about having society's values taught to you.

An over-socialized person refers to one who is psychologically dependent on other people and other people's thinking. They tend to be conformist. They tend to be worried if their thoughts stray from society's dominant values. They feel anxiety.

Over-socialized people often claim that they don't ever experience any censorship or repression of their ideas. And it's a laugh. Camille Paglia pointed this out: Academics who claim that they've never been censored often say this because they've never had a single thought in their lives that strays from the consensus. They've never had an opportunity to be censored at all. They've never strayed. They're conformist types. They're highly motivated by other people's opinions. They're extremely attuned to other people's opinions. They're very other-focused and outward-focused, and are psychologically dependent people. I think that's part of it. I don't know if that's the whole of it. What are your thoughts on this?

RH: I definitely think that's part of it. I wanted to note that he talks about that in the very first paragraph under the over-socialization heading, paragraph 24. Its last line is, "Many leftists are not such rebels as they seem." He was very ahead of his time. There's a meme of a radical-looking Leftist with a goofy haircut and wearing a Black Lives Matter pin who is screaming, "We're the resistance!", while behind them is a sea

of corporate logos and heads of state. On the other side there's a guy with only the MyPillow logo above him who is saying, "Okay." These people think they are something they are not. How can you even think that you are fighting against anything when you have every major academic institution, major political organization, and major company on your side? He's saying that there is a group of people who are likely to become over-socialized and enjoy it. That's the psychology of the Leftist, and that's what makes them get along with the system so well.

There's another point I wanted to bring up. It's slightly off the over-socialization topic, but it's an overarching theme in the background. All of these things that people like us are against — mass censorship, the offshoring of jobs, the importing of non-white migrants, globalism, all of that — it fits under the umbrella of industrial and technological society for Ted Kaczynski. That's the top level. And under that are things such as globalism or the environmental problems that are caused by large companies. All of that falls away when you attack the industrial system as a whole.

Another theme throughout is that people who want a decent amount of autonomy and who aren't over-socialized by this system will feel a lot of frustration, because things are now so far out of their hands. If you have more taxes imposed on you, if your job gets offshored, it's really far out of your hands. Some would say, "Hey, that's the consequences of globalism, and it sucks." Or, "That's the consequences of NAFTA, and it sucks." But Kaczynski would say, "Yeah, you're right, but that only happens because the industrial society exists."

GJ: Yeah, that's another element of over-socialization which I think boils down to a lack of vitality as well. And this touches on the Nietzschean themes in his writing, although I don't think he actually refers to Nietzsche in this book.

In paragraph 26, which is the third paragraph on over-socialization, he begins:

Oversocialization can lead to low self-esteem, a sense of powerlessness, defeatism, guilt, etc. One of the most important means by which our society socializes children is by making them feel ashamed of behavior or speech that is contrary to society's expectations. If this is overdone, or if a particular child is especially susceptible to such feelings, he ends by feeling ashamed of HIMSELF.

Over-socialized people are so psychologically intimidated and bullied by society that they internalize all of its norms. The trouble is that the norms of our society — and really the norms of any society, when you get right down to it — can't be wholly and consistently practiced. It's just not possible — especially in our society, where we're supposed to like and do things that are impossible, such as believe that all people are equal, not laugh at Helen Keller jokes and things like that. We simply can't do that. It's just not human.

Kaczynski writes:

The majority of people engage in a significant amount of naughty behavior. They lie, they commit petty thefts, they break traffic laws, they goof off at work, they hate someone, they say spiteful things or they use some underhanded trick to get ahead of the other guy.

This is just life. This is just the way human beings are. And the more vital you are, the more likely you're going to do these things. The more likely you are to say things that you shouldn't say, or notice things you shouldn't notice. And there are all kinds of speech taboos and noticing taboos that are at the core of our society today. He goes on: "The oversocialized person cannot do these things, or if he does do them he generates in himself a sense of shame and self-hatred." Over-socialized people basically experience a constant state of shame and self-hatred due to their natural human vitality, which basically contravenes all the rules of society, especially the rules of political correctness. So they're unhappy people. They're self-loathing, because they don't have the ability to push back against all these "oughts" that society is telling them to follow, that their school teachers and the media and so on are all putting on them. They don't have the ability to push back against those oughts. They're like the camel that's loaded down with all these oughts, staggering under the weight of social expectations. To the extent that they have any sense that this isn't a good fit and that it is constricting, and that they don't like it, they hate themselves for it.

RH: Yeah, you just hit on the crux of the problem of the over-socialized types. They really care a lot about what these societal prescriptions are. When they violate them, they feel like they're bad people. They have cognitive dissonance, and they don't have the ability to get outside of it.

As you said, there are these various taboos about saying certain things, not laughing at certain things, not noticing certain things. And when they do these things, they immediately police themselves. They thought-police themselves through this over-socialization. This is one of the harder sections to really understand. This has consequences that ripple throughout society, and when you realize that, you see why Kaczynski included the problem of over-socialization in his manifesto. He said he does not like the over-socialized person; he doesn't have much respect for him. They are treated as the victims of this society as well. Did you get any sense of that?

GJ: Yeah, well, he clearly thinks that they are unnatural in some sense. The opposite of the social, the conventional, is nature, and that's the side he wants to stand on. He upholds the idea of nature, and he thinks that nature includes being naughty by the standards of society, laughing at things you shouldn't laugh at, and noticing things you shouldn't notice. Those are natural things that we're not supposed to do.

Another word for the over-socialized is the denaturalized or denatured, the uprooted — those people who lack any form of roots in nature. And I think that there's a lot of truth to that. He has a lot of contempt for these sorts of people, because one of the things that he is battling against is convention. He's battling against dogma. He's battling against the reigning follies of our time. Over-socialized people are the ones who

cling to what “one thinks,” “what people say,” what we’re supposed to think and do, and that means they are refusing to consider alternatives. He’s trying to get alternatives out there; he’s got some very important alternatives he’s trying to reach us with.

RH: Yeah, the over-socialized people are the cog in the machine that he talks about: the sheep, those people just going through life asleep, like drones and zombies who just do what they’re told and don’t really question it. And as you said, it creates a real problem. These types are definitely a problem for anybody trying to effectuate any change.

On the other hand, he later talks about — and this is another place where I could see the eco-fascist label being applied — how it doesn’t matter what those people say, and that these things are not dealt with in a democratic process. It is a small minority of people who lead society and change history. But these people go wherever they are told to go.

GJ: Yeah, yeah. One thing that I also think is somewhat Nietzschean about this analysis is his concept of the power process. When he explains over-socialization, he’s hinting that over-socialized people are alienated from something. Well, they’re alienated from nature. But how does nature manifest itself in human life? How do human beings live naturally and healthily? And that leads us to the section that follows over-socialization, which is called “The Power Process.” The beginning of paragraph 33 reads:

Human beings have a need (probably based in biology) for something that we will call the “power process.” This is closely related to the need for power (which is widely recognized) but is not quite the same thing. The power process has four elements. The three most clear-cut of these we call goal, effort and attainment of goal. (Everyone needs to have goals whose attainment requires effort, and needs to succeed in attaining at least some of his goals.) The fourth element is more difficult to define and may not be necessary for everyone. We call it autonomy and will discuss it later.

I think this is very interesting because it’s central to Nietzsche’s psychology. His metaphysics is this notion of will to power. How do human beings thrive? They have goals that they strive to achieve, and once they achieve them, they posit new goals. Nietzsche doesn’t talk about resting. He basically talks about endless striving.

It strikes me that Kaczynski is in fact somewhat opposed to this idea of endless striving, because he talks about three different kinds of needs, as I recall. The first kind of need is easy to meet. The second is a hard-to-meet need. And the third kind are those needs that you can never meet.

In a way, what Nietzsche is talking about with will to power is that it’s more important to be perpetually pursuing goals, and setting new goals and pursuing them, and feeling that there must be striving to actually achieve anything. And so when you achieve something, you never rest on your laurels — you set new goals for yourself.

That's what engages you as an organism: this constant struggle. And if you don't have a constant struggle, you create things to struggle over.

RH: I agree with that. The only thing I want to add to the discussion of the power process is to point out that it's a small section of the manifesto, five paragraphs in total. But it's one of the most important concepts in Kaczynski's entire philosophy, because what he's saying is that human beings need to go through this power process of having a goal, striving towards that goal, exerting effort, and then attaining the goal. Without that, people are basically miserable. It messes them up psychologically and causes them to be depressed and anxious, which leads to many of the ails of modern society. Modern society deprives people of this power process. This is very critical. This is why Kaczynski wants to see an end to mass industrial and technological society: because it strips people of being able to participate in this power process.

GJ: I agree. When he talks about the basic sort of needs, the easy-to-meet needs, what he's talking about are those human needs that are natural. It's not necessarily easy to meet your basic human needs if you live in a primitive society. Sometimes you starve. Sometimes you get caught in the rain. But the point that he's making is that the struggle to satisfy these basic needs is at the core of human health. In advanced industrial societies, where there's a great deal of productivity and plenty, it becomes quite easy to satisfy those basic human needs. This seems to be at the root of a lot of people's problems. The natural basic needs are easy to satisfy, so a lot of what made life meaningful for earlier man is just gone.

What Kaczynski then talks about is how modern society — and really, past societies where there was a leisure class, such as the aristocracies — will *create* needs. Instead of just *having* natural needs, we *create* artificial needs. We create other goals to pursue. And he calls these “surrogate” goals or surrogate values. And he seems to be somewhat dismissive of them. It seems to be fake in his analysis. But when you look at what he's talking about as surrogate goals, he's talking about all the values that human beings pursue over and above the basic necessities of life.

This would include science. He mentions scientists again and again. It would include art. It would include technology. It really includes the whole realm of culture, the whole realm of high culture. And he wants to treat all of this as essentially frivolous and fake. Do you get that sense? That's how I see it.

RH: I got two different ideas from his discussion of surrogate activity. One was, I thought, very keen and relatable, because I used to run a lot, and I went to charity races and 5Ks and marathons and triathlons and whatnot. It has been said that people who are long-distance runners aren't ever happy just running; they are always looking to go further. And when they get further, they go faster, and so on. And I thought, “Yeah, that's exactly right.” That's why I really got into it when I had the crappy cubicle job with the flickering fluorescent lights that I really disliked. I was looking for surrogate activities that were essentially a waste of time.

But then he talked about a Japanese Emperor who devoted his life to marine biology, and made all these interesting discoveries and became an expert in the field. And he

mentioned art and high culture. And I thought, “That can’t be the same.” There’s something here that feels off to me as well. A person who spends all his time playing video games as a surrogate activity: Is that the same as somebody making advances in marine biology? It seems as if the answer is no, but then he goes on to say that if somebody classifies some bug, who cares? Why would you be excited about that? What did you really add?

GJ: You can say that about art and math. Yeah.

RH: Mozart just wrote symphonies, but so what? Someone else added to philosophy, but so what? That was odd to me, and I don’t quite understand how all of it is surrogate activities. A lot of what I do might be considered as surrogate activities, because I don’t have these basic needs going unmet where I have to spend all day scavenging for food or gardening or hunting. But I tend to rank them. If I’m reading Kaczynski and talking about that, isn’t that a higher-level activity than if I was just playing video games all day, or watching pornography, or something else that was a waste of time?

GJ: Absolutely. What is a game? When you get right down to it, a game is a microcosm of the world. It’s a little world with a set of rules where you can “act” and achieve goals. It really is a surrogate for life in a sense, or an escape from life. It’s simplified in some ways and far more exotic in others. It’s far more engaging to the imagination than ordinary life often is, but it’s also simplified, so that it’s an appealing alternative to real life. That’s clearly problematic. That’s a distraction.

But the realm of culture is not. Another thing that he seems to dismiss — and he’s very clear about this when he talks about science — he seems willing to dismiss the entire realm of theory, the entire realm of pursuing knowledge for its own sake, the entire realm of high culture, which consists of things that you pursue for their own sakes. Any pursuit where you’re trying to be excellent is not necessarily something you do for any extrinsic reward, but simply because it’s intrinsically rewarding to be healthy, to be beautiful, to be accomplished, to read interesting books, to appreciate beautiful things, to make music, or whatever. All of these are ends in themselves. And he doesn’t seem to think that any of that is to be taken seriously, whereas I do.

But you see, he’s really criticizing all of civilization here, not just industrial and technological civilization. At this point, he’s laying the groundwork for a sweeping critique of civilization as such.

RH: Yeah, there are a couple of places where I thought that even in the absence of industrial and technological society, some of this would still exist. Obviously in the pre-industrial area, there were people who simply focused on art and such activities. He mentioned aristocrats who would go on these large hunts or build magnificent castles or whatnot, and he does seem dismissive of them. Well, that’s going to exist in any society.

As soon as a society — even a small society — that exists without the aid of modern technology gets to a point where only a fraction of the total population needs to be involved in farming and animal husbandry, for example, the others are then free to go do other things. Every single person doesn’t need to be involved in farming, and it

hasn't that been that way in societies for a long time. When one accumulates money or time, one is then free to go pursue other activities.

and I don't know if here with the surrogate activities is writing as in general the average person and creates these surrogate activities because they have other desires that are not being filled because of modern society, or if it, if he just goes all, all the way as all attacking all of society and any of these activities at any period in history, if they seem to be useless. But his use of aristocrats and the higher classes as an example led me to believe that it was a total critique of anybody doing these things, whether you see the need for it or not, which I thought was odd, too.

GJ: Yeah, yeah. What this reminds me of in some ways is Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, which is a radical critique of civilization. Rousseau basically argues that civilization is alienating as such. The more complex a society, the more artificial its needs, the more we are alienated from our true selves and our natural needs. But he has two ways of looking at it. One is the critique of society, the critique of civilization, based on a kind of materialism where he basically understands human beings as organisms that are very simple. We have simple desires that are given to us by nature, and when we create civilizations, we make the ghastly mistake of pursuing these things that aren't really natural, and becoming concerned about other people's opinions of us. And so we get lost in this world of artifice and psychological dependency that alienates us from ourselves. Our heart really isn't in civilization, and so maybe it would be best just to get rid of it.

But that's only one part of his account. He makes it very clear that it's premised on a materialistic, reductionistic understanding of human nature. But then in other works he introduces a different idea of human nature whereby he wants to offer a justification of civilization. Civilization may be alienating to a man who only has basic animal desires, but civilization is also absolutely essential for the actualization of man, who's more complicated than just an animal. If we have the capacity for reason and imagination, for creating culture, for creating essentially non-natural worlds — historical worlds, and non-natural ideas and ideals — then civilization is the actualization of that aspect of our character, of our nature. Whereas somebody like Kaczynski really wants to stay in Rousseau's first model, where man is simply a natural animal with basic, easy-to-meet needs, and anything more complicated than a primitive hunter-gatherer society looks like a recipe for alienation and disaster to him.

He also thinks that man can be perfectly satisfied, and he talks constantly about primitive societies. He seems to think that mankind could be fully satisfied simply by existing in a primitive hunter-gatherer form of life and without giving rise to anything more complicated: realms of high culture, and things like that.

I think this is a fundamental issue here, because if man is more complicated than simply being an organism like any other hominid, then it might be the case that our hearts just aren't in civilization, according to Kaczynski. Whereas somebody like Rousseau really wants to give a justification of civilization and show that, no, indeed, our hearts really are in it, and that there's something about human nature that abso-

lutely demands that we create civilization. That's how we actualize ourselves. We're not self-actualized in a state of nature or a state of primitive society.

RH: That is one of places where you and I seem to have the same issue with this manifesto. There are places we agree and places we disagree. At a certain point he seems to go way beyond just wanting to get rid of modern industrial society and beyond the ills of modern technology. It makes you wonder: Does he believe that any society, anything beyond the small family unit, is problematic? He mentions the fall of Rome and how there were people who still had some localized technology. I got the idea that maybe he thought the fall of Rome was a good thing because of that. And if there was some technology then, was it too much technology? It was one of the things I really wondered about and find a problem with.

Rich Houck: There's also other parts I find a small problem with. Ted Kaczynski seems to think that without these modern technologies, people cannot be controlled or subverted or treated poorly, but it seems to me that throughout history that's not been the case. He talked about some of these movements. He mentioned Communism and Nazism in in the same line, as mass movements, but it seems to me that even if we can imagine a society where there's no modern technology, you could still have a group of people come that is hostile to your interests for various reasons. And you'd want to come together with other people of like mind to stop them.

Greg Johnson: Yeah, absolutely. Another thing is that we know that the primitive societies that he seems to lionize are also societies where there's what he would call a massive amount of over-socialization. There's a massive amount of conformity, and the way that is enforced doesn't need technology. When there are 40 people in your village, and you're all basically related to one another, it's hard for any of your transgressions to go unnoticed. They don't need to spy on you with closed-circuit TV; they're just spying on you with their own eyes.

Whereas one of the things that happens with modernity and larger-scale society is that people get more privacy, and they get spaces where they can go off. As one of my students years ago said — and she made me laugh the way she put it — she said she had grown up in this little town full of censorious, prying Baptists in the state of Georgia. And she said that she could hardly wait to grow up and go to Atlanta so she could “sin.” I thought that was hilarious.

But that is one of the things that larger-scale societies allow people to do. They allow people to be more private and somewhat more anonymous, which allows them to be less over-socialized, to kick back against over-socialization. And that allows people to create new things, to go against the current.

And of course, that gives rise to all this hated innovation that Kaczynski's worried about. It gives rise to a lot of stuff, but it does give rise to the technological civilization that he wants to basically pull the plug on.

RH: Yeah, there was a passage where he talks about the fact that people who lived under a monarchy had more freedom than people do in this so-called democratic

society, because the monarchy did not have the ability — the police or the technology — to monitor everyone. And I thought that was an interesting point.

But then, you contrast that the example of your student, and you think, I'm just not so sure about that. I don't know if people had less or more privacy then, depending on the level of control.

It does seem like he's lionizing a lot of these societies of the past without realizing that they also shared some of the same problems. Take farming. There's this idea that if you need to spend a lot of time getting your food, then you don't have time for these surrogate activities. But it seems to me that if there were cave paintings, those were surrogate activities. They obviously had some time to paint on the cave. If they were starving, they would have gone to get food, right?

GJ: Right. Another thing about primitive society that's interesting: People who live in hunter-gatherer societies and primitive agricultural societies have a lot of free time, a whole lot of leisure time. And what are they doing in that leisure time? They're doing folk dances and games and things like that. They're doing non-purposeful, playful activity — which is, in a way, the core of civilization, the core of culture. The core of culture is the stuff that you do that doesn't necessarily aim at anything beyond itself. It doesn't bake bread. It doesn't fix holes in the roof. You just do it as an end in itself because it's fun. Primitive peoples had a lot more leisure time than modern people do, sad to say. What did they fill their leisure time with? They filled it up with games. And I don't think that's to be disdained as frivolous.

RH: I don't, either. I guess if there's an internal contradiction in the manifesto, it's that he's saying these technologies of the modern era was supposed to make our lives better, and give us more freedom and free time. And they've done neither. But then if you do have the free time, that is a waste of time, too.

Maybe there's something I'm overlooking. Maybe he's saying that if you were in one of these earlier societies, the free time was of a higher quality, or something of that nature. But I'm not quite able to square those two thoughts at this juncture.

GJ: Yeah, I think he's overlooking certain important distinctions. Rereading it yesterday and today, something really strongly made an impression on me, and I didn't realize this when I read it in the past. I've read it twice before: the importance of freedom and autonomy in his analysis. He's very, very concerned with freedom or autonomy as an essential part of a good life. He wouldn't use the word "bourgeois." In fact, he disdains that word. But it sounds very classical liberal to me. It smacks of classical liberalism. Although the way he talks about freedom, he thinks that classical liberalism in technological society is insufficiently free.

But the freedom of primitive man for him is that he's not dependent on as many other people as civilized man. If you live in a small community of 30 or 40 or 50 people, and you live by hunting and gathering and have simple architecture, you have simple tools and things like that, you really don't depend on that many other people.

You and I, however, depend on tens of thousands of people. We depend on people scratching heavy metals out of the ground in Africa and shipping them to China and

turning them into computer parts that are shipped to us in the United States and put in smartphones and our desktop computers. We are utterly dependent on a vast network of other people to do the things that we do. And for Kaczynski, that is a reduction in autonomy.

The first thing that comes to mind about that, though, is that, yeah, it's a reduction in autonomy in some sense of the word. We are dependent on more people than people in primitive societies are. The flip side of that, though, is that we can also do more things than people in primitive societies. You and I are separated by thousands of miles, and our audience is all around the globe, and we're having this conversation. We can do things because of modern technology that more primitive men couldn't do. Yes, we're dependent upon more people to do it, but it also frees us up to do things that were inconceivable in primitive societies.

I don't see it as a complete loss. There are costs, but there are also benefits.

RH: Two things that he mentions in the manifesto regarding this is, first, that when you have more people who you're depending on in complex systems that are far away, if something goes wrong, it's usually totally out of your control and you have no way to fix it. That is very frustrating and leads to a lot of psychological stress for modern man. And the other thing is a small analysis where he says you can't pick only the good things in society without getting the bad things, and he believes the bad completely outweighs the good. It's in paragraph 120, and at the bottom of the paragraph — it's in bold letters — it says that the bad parts of technology cannot be separated from the good parts.

GJ: Yeah, but you could also say that the bad parts of the good parts of non-technological society cannot be separated from the bad parts of society, either.

RH: Yeah, you could. When I was reading this, I got the feeling that Kaczynski thought most people were more like him than not. He talks about the indignities of working for somebody, and then he says there's the option to be your own boss. You can be an entrepreneur. But the market will only allow for so many small businesses and entrepreneurs, and the rest have to go work for somebody. And then I thought back to over-socialization. I thought, maybe he's the guy who doesn't want to be in society working for somebody and gets frustrated. He also talked about the frustrations of small business owners with government regulations and taxes. So there's no escape, right? But I thought, maybe people like him who participate on the fringes of society, do their own thing in a lot of ways, maybe that's the extreme minority. Maybe most people don't find working for somebody to be so horrible and undignified. But then I go back to thinking, "Well, yeah, but if that was the case, why are so many of them unhappy and why is the rate of antidepressant use going up?"

But he also says that even the ones who aren't aware of the indignities of working for somebody will choose industrial society over the alternative. If they're given the option democratically, they will always choose to stay in their captivity. It's definitely something I've wrestled with. How many people want to break away, and is there room for enough people to break away or not? He seems to think that there's not, that

there's more people end up stuck in these jobs than who can go be entrepreneurs or do something else.

GJ: Right. One of the things that strikes me as a problem with this analysis is to say that the alienation that people are suffering from today is endemic to technological society when, even a generation ago, we still had a technological society, we still had people working in offices and doing things like that, but people weren't as desperately unhappy as they are today in a lot of areas. So there have been changes in social life aside from industrial society.

It strikes me that it might be more productive to look for the causes of, say, why huge percentages of young women today are on antidepressants. They weren't on antidepressants in the 1930s or '40s or '50s. So, what's changed? It's not the fact of working in an office or industrial society, although a lot more women work today. There are things that are inside technology and the workforce and the industrial system, and there are things outside it. Everything's touched by it, of course.

But it strikes me that, for instance, a lot of people are desperately unhappy today not because they work for somebody, but because they don't have anybody to go home to at the end of the day. They're desperately lonely. They can't form families. They can't form partnerships. They don't have children. Things like that.

That's not technological *per se*. That is a manifestation of changes in social values. More than a quarter of a century has gone by since this first appeared, and it's only gotten worse. I think this has to do with values rather than, specifically, just technological civilization.

RH: Yeah, I agree in some ways, and I'll tell you what I think Kaczynski thinks. For me, a big decline in the quality of day-to-day life has been the increase in racial diversity. And there's so much literature to back this up. It's obviously not just some crackpot racist conspiracy theory. It's published everywhere. Everybody knows, even though they won't say it, that increased diversity destroys social capital. It makes it harder for people to find friends, as I wrote about in the friendship and diversity article.

It destroys the fabric of society to have racial diversity. I look at society and see more people miserable, without kids, unable to find a mate or partner or any romantic interest of value, that sort of thing. People unhappy at work. And I see everything getting more and more diverse, and I think, "Well, there you go," right?

GJ: Diversity is definitely part of the destruction of social capital. I also think that an ethos of selfishness and hedonism is destructive of relationships. People just don't have the ability to delay gratification or treat other people as ends in themselves, things like that. They are very oriented towards quick, immediate gratification. It's very difficult to build relationships with people when you have that kind of mentality. So there are a lot of factors that are causing this social breakdown and the fact that a lot of people are desperately unhappy.

People who don't suffer from families where that breakdown has taken place, a lot of them are flourishing. But overall, there is this decline, and I don't think it's a decline simply intrinsic to industrial society or capitalism.

RH: Yeah, elements of decline such as hedonism, selfishness, and materialism are actually part of a piece I'm reading right now in *Beautiful Losers* by Sam Francis. He brings that up in a couple different places about where things are heading. He identified that as well.

Ted Kaczynski, I believe, would say that globalism is only possible with industrial society. You never had this huge migration of people before industrial society. He talks a bit about things such as propaganda and how there's places where propaganda works so well that you don't even know it's propaganda. He talks a bit about sitcoms and TV shows and prevailing culture.

So, it seems to me if I was to bring this issue of social capital being destroyed by ethnic diversity and the mass movements of people, Kaczynski would say, "Well, yeah, maybe, but that is itself a symptom of the industrial society, which allows for things such as offshoring to China and importing people from Somalia into the middle of Minnesota," and then so on. He would see it as downstream.

GJ: Yeah, well, he also says that maybe to promote a technological revolution we should want *more* globalization, so that every part of technological civilization is interdependent on every other part, so that when one part goes down, the whole thing goes down. So he's actually rooting for globalization in a way, because once we have all of our eggs in that basket, then maybe the lights will go out.

One of the things that's ironic, though, is that by laying so much of his case on the foundation of individualism and human autonomy, he's very human-centered. That's one of the things that's very interesting about this. He's not really opposed to anthropocentrism. His entire normative focus is anthropocentric. Near the end, he says that we can promote the idea of nature, but it's nature as the opposite of technology. It's not nature as something greater than man, really, or a locus of value that transcends man.

If he's going to be so anthropocentric and humanistic in his basic moral system, then at a certain point people are going to say, "Well, wait a second here. You're actually talking about crashing global civilization and returning to a primitive form of life which will entail the death of the vast majority of the population of the globe." I don't see how you can really get people to that conclusion with this anthropocentric and humanistic concern with freedom and individualism and rugged, individualist language and so forth. It just strikes me that a lot of people are going to say, "No, I can't, I can't follow you there, Ted." And, and I think that maybe something doesn't quite follow there.

RH: I think some of that reminds me of [Pentti] Linkola's lifeboat ethics, where you can have some suffering now or a lot of suffering later. And Ted makes a note at some point about how the longer the technological system goes on, when it does collapse, the more suffering there's going to be. And that, I think, is how it is squared. Some people — and I'm one of them — believe you can hit a limit of your caring

capacity for an environment at some point. There are populations — maybe all the populations — doing irreparable harm to ecosystems that will never be undone. If you have the option of seeing this to its bitter end, cutting all aid and deindustrializing some continents, even though there'll be mass starvations of people and populations would be decimated, in a terrible way —

GJ: More than decimated. Decimated just means one out of ten.

RH: Yeah, one out of ten might survive. So you think about these really hard questions, such as would people ever vote to stop aid to Africa knowing that maybe 5% will survive the famine that entails? No, but if you just keep giving aid, more and more in each successive generation, you hit carrying capacities. Everyone's going to starve to death, anyway.

So are these people trying to draw that old medical distinction of the difference between killing and letting someone die? They seem to say, "Well, we just keep on this same trail, and eventually we'll hit a carrying capacity, or something will be disrupted, and there'll be some droughts and people will just starve to death, anyway. But at least I wasn't the one who pulled the plug."

GJ: Yeah, exactly. I can keep my hands clean.

RH: Yeah. So even though the total devastation downstream may be far worse, they will be able to justify it, as this was the natural conclusion. Right. And I guess it's a civilizational form of the trolley problem.

I think that's how some of these people, myself included, think: You can do something ugly now, or you can end up living through something way uglier later. And that's where we are. And I think that's where Ted would probably be, too. From his writings, it seems like it.

GJ: Carson writes: "Industrial society is doomed because it's consuming the very people who created and maintained it."

This is true. One of the things that is very alarming are the dysgenic trends in industrial society, specifically amongst intelligent, far-sighted, responsible people. Those are the people who are pursuing their careers and their educations, are getting their M.A. and then their Ph.D., and then they're in their 30s and they still haven't had kids. And then they think, "Oh, the planet's overtaxed — carrying capacity, carbon footprints — so I'll just settle for my fur baby," right? Never thinking that their fur baby has a carbon footprint, too, or four carbon paw prints.

This is just catastrophic. This is dysgenics at its worst. And we simply can't allow that to happen. I actually wrote a piece — and reading the manifesto, I was surprised, because Ted makes this point, and maybe I got it from him and forgot about it — but I wrote a piece called "Why Environmentalists Should Have Large Families." And he actually says that revolutionaries should have large families. Why? Because they will influence their children's values. And if they don't have children, they just cede the Earth to the people who don't care about the Earth. And we can't do that. I think that's a valid point.

RH: We talked about anthropomorphism.

GJ: Yeah, you made a good point. And he does say that. He says, “We’re not going to get anywhere close to the ability to overthrow the system until it’s already on its way down of its own accord. The suffering that’s going to happen is intrinsic to the system itself, and the sooner that we can bring the system to the end, the sooner we can bring the suffering to an end.” So that is his argument for washing his hands of a lot of the really horrific implications of bringing an end to industrial society as such. He just wants to go back to a pre-industrial, pre-technological form of civilization which would have a pre-industrial, pre-technological population that it could support, and no more. That is a stark and radical goal.

I guess my own feeling about this is that I can’t really follow him there. My sense — and maybe he thinks this is just naïve — is that there are different kinds of modernity. There are different kinds of technological society. If you look at the history of Western political philosophy, the first wave of modernity was the liberal modernity of people such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Francis Bacon and René Descartes laid the foundation for this, where the goal of society is basically the satisfaction of basic human needs. What are the fruits of philosophy? Health. Long life. Obviously, that’s applied philosophy. It’s all about the economy of desire. It’s all about organizing society for the industrious and the rational. And that produced an enormous increase in wealth and productivity and enterprise. There’s no question about it. It set off the Enlightenment. It set off modernity.

But there was a second wave of modernity that came after that which basically said, “Wait a second here. These people are leaving out a whole lot, because man is more than just a clever animal. We are more than just animals with basic needs and rationality that allows us to satisfy those needs in cleverer ways than, say, hominids and birds or whatever. We have a spiritual nature, a cultural nature.” There’s a whole realm of human culture that doesn’t seem to make any sense in terms of the sort of mechanistic, liberal psychology that early modern philosophy had. And so they came up with a different foundation for modernity that was based on the idea of the cultivation of the human being as a whole, including the human soul and human culture: the development of human capacities, self-actualization, actualizing our potentiality for virtue and for civilization.

That, I think, is a fundamentally different modernity than the kind of modernity that we’ve fallen into, which is just a materialist rat race where you’ve got this race to the bottom with this ever more debased popular culture, this ever more hedonistic and selfish and petty form of life. And it strikes me that if we can put modernity on a more edifying moral foundation, that might be the revolution that we need rather than just pulling the plug on it altogether. That’s why I look to the German idealist tradition in philosophy. And I look to attempts to create a holistic, aristocratic political order in the context of modernity in the twentieth century. That was a valid project.

I think it’s a valid alternative to just saying, “All right, let’s pack it in and go back to nuts and berries, friends.” So, in the end, I can’t be an ecological revolutionary in quite the same way that Ted is. Although I share a lot of his concerns, I think that

human beings are more complicated than he thinks they are, because he's overlooking certain aspects of human nature, and he's also overlooking certain alternatives to the modern Hobbesian rat race that he's so rightly disgusted with.

RH: I agree with your assessment and conclusion. There are a couple of things I thought about while rereading the manifesto, and to be perfectly candid, one of the things that I thought about was that certain groups have been really subversive and harassing to Europeans for over 2,000 years, since way before there was an industrial or technological society. And some of the problems that we've had that have been going on for a very long time would still exist. And I think some of these mechanisms for control and harassment that existed in pre-industrial society would still exist in a post-industrial society. That kept popping into my head about different nations and different eras and different groups that we've always had conflicts with.

There are some interesting things that Ted Kaczynski did say. Again, like you, I agree with a lot of things, but I'm not on board for everything. In paragraph 100, he talked about how things are heading on the trajectory they're going on, political corruption being one of them. If you reform political corruption, you might have a small downturn historically, but then it goes back to the average, and because of that, you can't just make slight modifications. You have to restructure a lot of things. I think I agree with him there.

GJ: Yeah, I agree there. My sense is that I would rather radically restructure different things. But I do think that, yes, we do need revolutionary change. I think that it lies in a different direction for me. I think there's slightly different things that are important for me.

RH: Yeah, I think it does for me, too. I think I want to see a very strong and healthy European race that can actualize itself without all of these various groups of parasites, both above and below us. And I don't know that with this problem in mind, as you said, that pulling the plug on industrial society will fix it or not. So that that's my big hesitation.

GJ: Yeah, yeah. The opponents of industrial society in the current context include people such as the global warming cult. I think a lot of that's just a cult. I think that's nuts. There's a lot that I agree with about environmentalism, but the anthropocentric climate change or anthropogenetic climate change dogma is craziness. I think it's mostly lies. So, but what do we do in the West, based on these lies? We cripple our economies. Do we cripple the economy of China? No. India? No. So all that we do is make European society more vulnerable to predatory, reckless, non-white societies. We don't actually improve the environment this way. In fact, we make it worse, because we create disadvantages for the only race on the planet that really cares about this stuff.

It's the same thing as whites who are enlightened and responsible having fewer children. We just ensure that the world is inherited by the reckless and the stupid and the irresponsible. We can't do that. If there's no way of saying, the plug has to be pulled on technological civilization all at once across the globe — and I don't see any

way of doing that — all this kind of Kaczynski talk that circulates in the West basically only produces policy where we cripple ourselves and give advantages to people who care less about these sorts of things than we do. That's not good stewardship for the planet, as far as I am concerned.

RH: Yeah, I agree. And that is really the crux of it. I often thought — and I know Ted Kaczynski would disagree with this — that certain people produce different effects, and if certain people are in control of technology and others are not, you'd have things look a different way. I know he doesn't think that. It might be idealistic. I don't know. We'll see. I guess let's just see how stuff continues to unfold in the future, right?

GJ: Yeah. I do recommend this manifesto highly. I think what's most valuable about it is its discussion of Leftism as a problem — the danger of Leftism, the psychology of Leftism. I do think that the problems creep in with his discussion of the power process and specifically the kinds of goals that he thinks are healthy, where I think he basically just reverts to the idea that the only serious goals are those that primitive people can meet. Basic human needs. And that allows the whole realm of culture and science to drop out. That seems invisible and unimportant to him. And I think that that's very sad, because there's so much beauty and greatness that is lost to this analysis.

But I do think it's a brilliant work. He's obviously a brilliant man. Unlike 90% or 99.99% of Berkeley professors, he actually believed the stuff that he advocates so strongly that he was willing to kill over it, and he was willing to risk his life to put these ideas out. And although he hasn't been executed, he's going to spend the rest of his life in prison because he thought it was so important to get this manifesto published that he was willing to basically go on a bombing spree to do it.

There's a little bit of autism, although that's an overused term these days. But his brutal frankness in some places strikes me as that quality that we associate with autists. So in paragraph 96 at the end, he talks about the difficulty of getting one's ideas circulating in mass society. Even though you're nominally free to speak your mind, it's very difficult for dissenting ideas to get published. So at the end of this he says, "In order to get our message before the public with some chance of making a lasting impression, we've had to kill people."

RH: I got a bit of a laugh at that!

GJ: Yeah, I got a chuckle out of that. Just the autistic ingenuousness of it was quite entertaining. But he's an extraordinary character. The guy literally killed for his ideas. He was literally willing to die for his ideas. And he certainly lost the rest of his free life. And it's very clear that he values freedom — freedom in a frontiersman style, a very old-fashioned, individualistic, living in a cabin in Montana style of freedom. He gave that up because of these ideas, and I think that's remarkable. There are very few people you can say that about these days, and certainly very few college professors you can say that about these days.

RH: In wrapping this up, it's very rare to see anybody who will sacrifice even a small amount of comfort for his sincerely-held beliefs. And Ted Kaczynski was willing to do that in a very extreme way, more than once throughout his life. He's a very

interesting guy. One of the more interesting people who's ever been in prison. One of the more interesting people who's alive today. And I think his work is worth reading.

I think every time I've read it, I've taken some different things from it. This most recent time was probably the most critical, too, whereas the first couple times it was very relatable to me, such as where he talks about people being unhappy with society. I thought, "Yeah, that's exactly me." Another time I read it in undergrad, when I was surrounded by hysterical Leftists, the part about Leftism really resonated. And I thought, "Yeah, I'm seeing a lot of this now, these over-socialized, inferior types. Yes, absolutely."

I would take things that I liked and reread them slowly. But there was also a bit of skepticism in that. Is this really going to move society forward and obtain human happiness and freedom or realization or whatever? And I saw some of our values diverge that time. I maybe value duty more than freedom in certain ways. At least I do in my own life. I don't know how that would translate into a public policy or the whole of society, but there were places where I thought, "It's cool that I'm free, but I have a lot of things I can't personally do that I want to do because of these obligations." So I'm putting these duties over what I would like to go do when I wake up.

GJ: Absolutely. I felt the same way about this. I really think that freedom is a value, but there are higher values in society. And oddly enough, it doesn't seem to be the case that he grants that there are higher values in society than freedom, especially understood in his very rugged, individualist frontiersman kind of way, where people have maximal self-sufficiency or they basically depend on only small groups of people.

RH: Yeah. That was definitely something I thought about. Then I thought, "Maybe it does, because I had the freedom to pursue the duties over personal stuff." Does that still fit into this? I guess it's going to remain unanswered for at least the time being. And then there is also the framework of being a White Nationalist and deeply caring about the future of European people. I don't know about going into a pre-industrial society at this stage. I think there's definitely been benefits to it, but I have to work that into the framework of what's best for white people. And I think there are places where that intersects and places where it maybe diverges. It runs parallel, right?

It's all over for me. Yes. A lot of miserable European people, white people in these stupid jobs working for stupid corporations, not having kids because they want a little more money next year.

GJ: Yeah. That is totally something that's a plague on our people. Absolutely.

RH: But other things I'm not so sure about. I definitely recommend reading it.

I made a couple of notes here that I just think are fun. If you read paragraph 34, Kaczynski talks about a hypothetical where a man has anything he wants just by wishing for it, and he develops serious boredom and psychological problems. He'll have a lot of fun in the beginning, but then become bored and demoralized. There's a *Twilight Zone* episode, episode 28, which is called "A Nice Place to Visit." It's about a bank robber who gets killed in a shootout with the police, and he goes to what he thinks is heaven. He gets everything he wants, but he gets so bored and miserable, he

just wants to leave. But he can't leave, because he's in hell. And that passage, like his hypothetical, was pretty much the plot of a *Twilight Zone* episode.

In paragraph 48, he talks a bit about cities, density, and behavioral sink. There's a really famous paper in the 1962 edition of *Scientific American* by John Calhoun where he did a behavioral sink study with mice that basically confirms what Kaczynski is saying: that when you put all these people together, even when they have abundant resources, they end up being petty and fighting and have a miserable time. So these mice were in a little house and they had as much food and water as they could eat, but they ended up being miserable and didn't breed as much and neglected their kids, even though they had abundant resources. So that's an interesting parallel.

And then the other one was paragraph 63. Kaczynski talks about how advertisements make people want things, make them feel like they need things that their grandparents never even knew about, desired, or even dreamt of. And that reminded me of the famous *Fight Club* line about "Fuck working more to buy stuff that you don't need to impress people you don't like."

Those are just a few things that I made note of while reading through it that reminded me of something else. Neat. It was cool to see how these ideas are not always tied down only to this manifesto. You might see them in other places, and you might read the manifesto and find things that are in other places — in pop culture or in a scientific magazine that you came across.

There's a lot of value to these ideas. And it's a short read: 35,000 words. You can read it in an afternoon. I recommend it. You'll find some things that are maybe relevant to your current life. It might even make you reevaluate and change some things about your job or your surrogate activities.

Oh, yeah. There was one more, a part about noise. Ted Kaczynski hated noise.

GJ: I pray that the man never had to listen to leaf blowers.

RH: He hated noise. And he talked about how people who want to make noise bother those who don't want to hear the noise. And then they end up in a conflict that never would have happened if these machines were never invented.

And it actually reminded me of a *Counter-Currents* article that you wrote called "Rules for Writers." Section two is "Work Without Distractions." And you note how Kant, Goethe, and Schopenhauer went to great lengths at different points in their writings to talk about how much they hated noise. Ted Kaczynski is among them. He wrote in his manifesto that he hates these distractions and noise.

GJ: Yeah, he has probably a lot of peace and quiet in Supermax today. He's going to be 80 years old next year. He turns 79 on May 22nd.

Counter-Currents Radio Podcast No. 536: David Skrbina on Ted Kaczynski

Source

June 21, 2023

Greg Johnson welcomed **David Skrbina, Ph.D.** to the latest broadcast of *Counter-Currents Radio* to talk about the life and ideas of Ted Kaczynski, a.k.a. the Unabomber. Dr. Skrbina is the editor of Kaczynski's book *Technological Slavery*, which includes excerpts from their correspondence, and recently penned an obituary and memoir about their relationship that was published here at *Counter-Currents*, "A Great Passing: Reflections on 20 Years with the Unabomber."

Topics discussed include:

00:01:33 Dr. Skrbina's background

00:08:44 When did Dr. Skrbina start corresponding with Ted?

00:12:55 What does Dr. Skrbina think of Ted's manifesto, *Industrial Society and Its Future*?

00:16:46 Limitations of the manifesto

00:18:07 Ted's anthropocentrism

24:08 Ted was concerned with human happiness, but wouldn't crashing the system

create unhappiness?

27:53 Can technology be harnessed in a good way?

39:01 How regulating tech would require a global government

44:58 What level of tech did Ted accepting?

46:37 Do people want to destroy tech to conquer white people?

49:58 What about the experiments performed on Ted at Harvard?

56:26 On uploading your brain and living forever

1:00:50 Ted's critique of nationalism

1:07:59 Can our solution to tech be a sophisticated, mixed approach?

1:15:05 Did you ever talk to Ted about Savitri Devi?

1:16:05 Which thinkers on tech influenced Ted?

1:17:39 Was Ted influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche?

1:19:12 Did Ted ever read Frank Herbert's *Dune*?

1:21:34 Will Ted be thought of as a prophet?

1:28:47 Did Dr. Skrbina maintain contact with Ted?

1:30:18 Will Dr. Skrbina ever publish his correspondence with Ted?

1:35:11 How can we follow Dr. Skrbina's work?

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Introduction

Greg Johnson: I'm Greg Johnson. Welcome to counter Currency radio. We are back with another Saturday live stream. I have a very special guest today. Doctor David Scherbina. Scherbina is the author and editor of a number of books on topics in philosophy and religion, including an anthology and pound psychism. Volume on technology. Actually, multiple volumes in technology and he is the editor of the 1st edition of Ted Kaczynski's technological slavery. That's where I first heard of him. The second time I heard of him, he and he popped up on my radar. Was he did an an addition of one of Savitri Davies books. Son of God. Her book on akhnaten. And I have gotten to know him a little bit in recent years, he contributed a response to countercurrents to a review of his book on Saint Paul, for instance. So David, welcome to the show.

David Skrbina: Thanks, Greg. Glad to be here.

Dr. Skrbina's background

Greg: So can you tell us a little bit about yourself, your background, your education and your interests, and then how you got to know Ted Kaczynski, who died just to basically a week ago at the age of 81?

David: Yeah, sure. that's a long, long. A long story, but I'll just compress it down here. For you. Yeah, my initial background in in college was as an undergraduate student was. In technical fields. I was interested in math and science and physics and so forth. So I started studying those here at the University of Michigan. Far from where I was born, near Detroit. Studied the fields. Moved along was always interested in philosophy, philosophical issues. Came across a really, really fabulous philosopher there at Michigan's name was Henrik Skull Mileski. Who was both an environmental philosopher and a philosopher of technology in particularly skeptical philosopher of technology, he was an early. Critic of technology and he and I got to be good friends, we. Worked together for many years. Was kind of a mentor for me. And in many ways. And so I just, plod along and. Got a technical degree? And getting a masters degree in mathematics. In, in retrospect, term to be quite helpful because it gives me a good background in in technical issues. So I because I studied math, science and physics and computer programming and some other things. So I had a really good grasp of technology, certainly even better than like Scala Mosky had, who did not really have that background. So in a sense, I felt like I really understood technology. I knew how things worked. I know electronics worked. I know how computers work. and I was worried because I could kind of see even this. Is back in the all around 19. 80 that things were not heading in a good direction. It was problematic for people. That was, a root cause of problems with the environment and so forth. In particular, Scott Muskie put me under this book by Jacque Lull, called the Technological Society. Which is really a classic work of technology critique, Elul wrote it in 1954 and French. It was published in English in 1964. Really a monumental milestone kind of work and just really, really a crushing critique, basically laying out technology as a kind of an autonomous deterministic force in the world. And that kind of I think was one of the stimulus stimulus points for for Scala, Moleski and then later for me. As well. So I was early. I was really a skeptic technology critic in a sense, I wasn't really writing at that point, but still. And then you know, into the 90s, late 80s, early 90s. So we get this mail bombing string that's going on, mysterious person or group or. Sending these. Sporadic mail bombs, and they're first. They're injuring people. They're killing one or two people. Ultimately, 3 people died. You know, at first you don't think much about it, just think it's kind of some. Kind of crazy, you know. Lunatic group who's sending bombs? But then? It turns out. That there's actually kind of an ideology behind this. I was really surprised when some of the newspaper reports started showing up in the early. 90s with this. Critique of technology that was behind. This string of bombings and I thought, well, this is really interesting. So this bomber is clearly not. Just a nut case he's got. He's got some motive. He knows what he's doing and he's got some ideas behind him that are from. The little snippets look pretty solid. So I continued to file the case and then it was the Unabomber case and got a lot of attention, a lot of publicity. Those of you who were around in the mid 90s in the US certainly know all. About that did did not get much coverage in Europe as far. I know, but then that you know the man was to publish this manifesto. The famous Technology Manifesto Industrial

Society. And its future. The unknown bomber wanted it published in the high visibility venue, and he promised to stop the bombings. So it was. Basically, blackmail trying to blackmail the federal government. Usually that doesn't go very well, but this time it worked. And the FBI, after spending many years, decided they could not stop this guy. They could not catch him and they recommended to Bill Clinton that he. Yield to the blackmail and published the manifesto, which he did in September of 1995. So I remember I was just really. Really shocked, I mean. I couldn't believe that they actually caved. In you know. You got to believe there's a lot of gnashing of teeth before they agreed to publish that thing, but they did it. They put it in the Washington Post the entire manifesto. 30,000 words. Sort of a smallish book, almost. And yeah, I was. Shocked, I ran out and bought 2 copies. Of the paper that day. One copy I threw in my little archive. File where it still is. Today the other one. I used to kind of cut and paste because my wife and I were immediately starting to type this thing into our computer so that we had a word version digital version that we could work with and edit and do things with. So you know, that went on for a few months. It was about six months after the publication that. So there's another story behind that, right? So the bombers brother David Kaczynski, recognizes the text, thinks it's his brother. Ted tells the FBI the FBI arrest him in Montana. This was in April of 96. And that's how they. About him. And again, I was shocked. I remember the day. You know, you kind of wake up in the morning. And here's the Morning News on the radio. You know, they captured the Unabomber, like, wow, this is surprising. And here's the guy's name. You know, Ted Kaczynski never. Heard of him? And turns out he. Was a PhD math. Professor from the University of Michigan and I just about fell out. Of my bed at that point because. I was a you. Know Masters student in mathematics at the University of Michigan. Same campus. I had some of the same professors that he did. Just I was really, really astonished that there was such a. High level academic fellow who was. Allegedly behind the bombings. So that you know. That led to a year long trial won't go. Into the details. Of that end up doing a plea bargain for life in prison. With no possibility of parole. And then that went, a number of months, a number of years, actually. After that, I've completed my PhD in philosophy, started teaching, got a teaching job at a campus at the University of Michigan. I was teaching, among other things, last year, technology and that. Sort of led me full circle. Back back to Ted and the manifesto.

When did Dr. Skrbina start corresponding with Ted?

Greg: So when did you start corresponding with the matter?

David: Yeah. So right, I started. Guess it was late 2003 and I was starting to compile material for this new course in philosophy of. Technology that I was creating. And I

was going to include the manifesto, which was already out there and available, but it had been, what, four or five years at that point since six years, something like that, since we'd heard from Ted. He was locked away. Nobody said anything about him. We didn't know what he was doing, what he was thinking. Was he alive or dead? I mean. I obviously we would have. Heard that but. But no one was really saying anything. Was kind of. A media blackout, kind of a total censorship as far as I could tell. So I figured the only way to find out for sure was. To write directly to him. So I got an address for the supermax prison in Colorado, wrote him a letter. University letterhead and. Just said, hey, I'm a professor at Junior University and I'm teaching a course in technology and I have some questions for you. So I reeled off a list of questions, you know. Just basic things like you know, any thoughts on manifesto in the recent years and what are your new ideas and have you written anything else new and so forth? And yeah, I never expected a response. I'd never written to a prisoner before, didn't know how that was going to work. But about a month later, got along handwritten letter from from Ted, giving Nice, lengthy, detailed answers to all my questions.

Speaker

You can.

David: And that was kind of the kickoff of a little back and forth process questions and answers and queries and challenges and eventually leading to the production of a book. And yeah, many letters over several years, I think I've got about 150 letters from him in total. So yeah, it was. Really a remarkable and very fruitful interaction.

Greg: I believe I wrote to him in 2000. I started doing research towards a book on environmentalism from the right, and I recalled having read his manifesto when it was first published. And made notes on it that was critical of the left. It was critical of the left, and it was also somewhat Nietzschean and vitalist in its analysis of human nature. And I thought, OK, well, this fellow. Broadly fits into this rightist anti technological radical environmental paradigm that I was working out that included people I thought like Martin Heidegger and Savitri Devi. And so I wrote a couple of letters to him. He was kind of crabby. With me in the in the first letter, I recall that he was very annoyed that I was implying that he was actually the author of Technological society and his future. Apparently he hadn't admitted to that fact yet or didn't want to say anything that would. Sort of officially admitted that he sort of unwound a little bit in the second letter, but I don't have the letters handy unfortunately, but I recently glanced at them and I thought, gosh, what a missed opportunity. I should have persevered with this, but what happened? Is I finished my? I was finishing my doctorate at the time and I had to prepare for basically getting a job, and so I sort of set all of this aside and I never returned to it. I still want to write this this book on eco fast. Chism, which is the title I've chosen for it, but I'll have to wait till I retire, I suppose, before I get back to that and I missed my opportunity, but I was very interested to note that other people have been querying him about this and that he wrote a little rejoinder to it, which I LinkedIn the post at counter currents and we could talk about that a little later. Let

me ask you, what were the things that you thought were most profound about his manifesto? And what are some of the limits in your view of his thinking?

What does Dr. Skrbina think of Ted's manifesto, *Industrial Society and Its Future*?

David: Right. Well, I thought when I read it the first time through. A couple of things struck me. Initially, it was basically the first thing was the lengthy lead in against leftism. So there's a large chunk of the beginning of the manifesto that doesn't even talk about technology at all. He's really critiquing leftists and leftist ideology and how dangerous it is and how hazardous to any sort of revolutionary movement for various reasons, because leftists or socialized and so forth. And then he's going into the power process and the sort of the psychological issues. And I remember reading, like, wow, I'm several 1000 words into this thing. And like you didn't even mention technology yet. So so clearly that was important for him and that he thought he had to put that up front. I think at some point I asked him about that. He said basically he wanted to drive off and he left. Before they even got to the meat of the manifesto. So that's why he put that stuff up front. But when I got to the arguments about technology, I could see a lot of similarity to a little to Jack, Jack, Paul. So the arguments were very familiar. I mean, he's bringing it familiar. Arguments and points. He was putting them in a relatively recent context of the early 90s. But they were similar arguments that we would see in a lull. In fact, I remember thinking I was surprised because he quotes some experts in the manifesto, but he does not even mention a lull. And I think I asked him about that later as well, and he said something like. You know, Alou was just. Kind of the overarching force for this whole thing. And it he would have quoted him too much or. Something like that. He gave a little bit of a sideways excuse about why I didn't mention Alul. But so the arguments were familiar to me. The I was impressed by the manifesto's clarity. So it's very straightforward, very, very bland. And matter of fact, I mean, he got criticized by some for for being too, too bland. But I mean, this is not a, it's not a bomb throwing lunatic here. He's trying to make a. Reasoned argument. He does it. In a very clear and straightforward in a dispassionate way. So I gave him credit for that, and the other striking thing was the forcefulness of the revolutionary conclusion. So he's of course one of the key points is that technology cannot be reformed. You can't fix it. You can't just keep the good stuff that you like and get rid of the bad. Stuff that just doesn't work for theoretical and practical reasons, and therefore his conclusion. Basically, we have to revolt against the system which is undermining it or or destroying it in some sense, or large portions of it. As the only hope of really saving human dignity and saving planetary destruction. So that was a pretty striking conclusion. Again, that was not. Totally unique. There were other earlier thinkers

who had talked about the need for revolution. Herbert Mark Hughes and Ivan Illich, even Lewis Mumford, in a couple of different ways, talked about sort of destroying the mega machine so. So those ideas had kind of been out there for a while. I mean, it's a very old goes back to Samuel Butler in the 1850s. And he talks about destroying machines back then. So there's actually kind of a long history, certainly within the Luddite movement. They're destroying machines. So there's a long history of. Even of thinkers calling for destruction of technology. But you know, again, Ted, Ted does it in a very forceful, direct way. There's no apology, there's no, no punches or pulled. He just he just goes straight at it. And that was a pretty impressive thing as well.

Limitations of the manifesto

David: If there's some limitations or let's say problems or shortcomings with the manifesto. I mean it's hard to criticize because it's, I mean, he says a lot in his 30,000 words. Obviously you can't say everything, even in a book length treatment, you can't really address every issue in detail. But I mean there are a couple of things that sort of bothered me he talks about. The system. The technological system, and it's never really defined in any meaningful sense. It's just sort of understood, but it's a pretty important concept and I think. He should have elaborated on that. And then sort of something about. Process by which your revolution is going to happen. He mentions a few little things at the end about general strategic suggestions, but doesn't really seem to grapple in a detailed or precise way with what exactly that would mean, what that entails, how one would go about doing it, and so forth. So there were some. Some sort of things that we're lacking, obviously points of elaboration. That we might have liked to see, but. But All in all I. Mean he. Did a spectacular job. I mean really laid out the case against technology and very blunt and clear terms and drove everyone the reader to the logical conclusion. So it was overall really an impressive effort.

Ted's anthropocentrism

Greg: So one thing that struck me about this book. Upon rereading it, I did a podcast, a live stream with Richard Howe about it a couple of years ago, and I was rereading it for that. And it struck me that he's actually rather anthropocentric in his approach, or humanistic in his approach. he's really arguing against technology from the point of view of how it undermines human happiness, which I thought was interesting. He doesn't take a non-anthropocentric, or ecocentric, or deep ecological approach to values in his argument. I thought that was that was quite interesting.

Another thing though about it is that; he seems to have a pretty much naturalistic understanding of man. It's almost an Epicurean analysis of human desires and human happiness that reminded me of Rousseau. Actually reminds me of Rousseau's discourse

and the origin of inequality. Which is a critique of civilization. It's not just a critique of technological civilization, it's a critique of all forms of civilization, really, because anything that gets too far away from easily satisfied naturally given needs becomes a source of alienation. For human beings, and ultimately for Rousseau, it drives the creation of... drives oppression.

And so I thought that was an interesting limit to his outlook, because even Rousseau in his other writings wants to give us a defense of civilization by saying that yes, it does alienate us from our simple animal needs, but it also provides an opportunity for us to actualize our higher capacities. Including the capacity to create culture, including the capacity to philosophize, things like... Yeah, and it just didn't strike me that he has understanding of man that could treat things like philosophy or art or science as really valid expressions of human nature. Just I think he treats them sort of as fake surrogates for more easily satisfied material demands or material needs.

David: Yeah, I think that's right. I mean on the anthropocentrism. I mean, Ted is very pragmatic. He... that was his driving focus, right. He he's a practical guy, he wants to get things done. Wants to achieve a revolution of some kind. So he's taking the most practical approach I suspect. That he thinks most people are anthropocentric. Probably they are. They're thinking in terms of human interest or their own interest, and so for... So I suspect that he's crafting arguments to appeal to most readers who are thinking in terms of human well-being and human suffering.

It's a relatively small group who will put preeminently environmental concerns or, concerns of nature or animal rights or so forth, or put that above their own.

I think, I mean, he does seem to have some sympathies that way. He... there's a couple of points in the manifesto where he says, I think it's highly important that technology is damaging the environment, but I'm not going to talk a lot about that here. So he kind of just puts it off to the side. He doesn't dispute it, but he doesn't really elaborate on it.

I think he feels he has a stronger point, stronger case to make when he focuses on the harms to humans, to human beings.

But you're right. I mean, in terms of these other sort of cultural activities and so forth, right, surrogate activities and what not. So you're right, I mean a lot of things, I mean almost everything could count for Ted is a kind of a surrogate activity, which is problematic. I mean almost anything you do right, academically, your job, unless it's directly aimed at ordering food, shelter or clothing, almost anything you know has a surrogate aspect to it if you will. So, so that was maybe another problematic issue.

You know, like you said, he doesn't really value those things very much. He never really put much weight in philosophy. I mean, he knew I was a philosopher, but he didn't seem to give much credence to that. You know, later when I wrote my book, the *Metaphysics of technology*. You know, he really had no real interest in anything like metaphysics because that's sort of abstract and obscure and has no bearing on a practical revolution. So I mean, that's just kind of how he was thinking. To me, it was

necessary to complete the picture because you don't know what you're dealing with until you understand the metaphysical basis of this phenomenon that you're grappling with. So I thought it was essential, but Ted, his pragmatic side always won one out in that case.

Greg: Did you share this book with him? Did you get his impressions of your work?

David: I sent him a paper copy of the my work, the metaphysics of technology, when it was just nearing publication in 2015, so I sent him a full copy. You know, he kind of said thanks but don't send me tons of paper because I have nowhere to keep it. I mean he was kind of more worried again about the pragmatic stuff. Like I... you know, I sent him... Like you know, a 300 page stack of paper. And he's like, Oh my God, I have nowhere to put this stuff, and I've got to get rid of things and don't send me that much again please. And I don't know if he actually read it or not, I was kind of hoping he would, but yeah... I never really got the impression that he did.

Ted was concerned with human happiness, but wouldn't crashing the system create unhappiness?

Greg: One question that I have to follow up. If Kaczynski's arguments are basically criticizing the technological system because it has a negative impact on human happiness that really invites the question well. If we're really concerned with human happiness, how is the Earth's current population going to fare? If we crash, the technological system, won't that create a great deal of unhappiness, especially among the people, the billions of people who are alive today? How many people can earth sustain? At a much more primitive level of technology. And what are you going to do with the surplus? And don't doesn't their happiness matter at all?

David: Right. So that's those are really good questions. I've long been worried about the population. Question and I and I ran that by Ted a couple of times. In the manifesto, he said a couple of things like, well, there's one passage I forget exactly where it was, but he says something like is it cruel? Someone could say it's cruel to work for the destruction of the system. Because it will cause human suffering. And he says. Well, look, there's suffering going on right now because. Is causing people to suffer. It's going to get worse in the future. So the suffering is going to increase and with more people suffering more, there's more total suffering. That was one of his points. Secondly, he says. You know, if you. There's a good likelihood the system is going to collapse anyway just because of the intrinsic instabilities of the system. If it collapses down the road when we have, 10 billion people, that's going to be worse than if it collapses with there's 8 billion people or 6 billion people, which would. Be better. So the point was the sooner that a collapse occurs, the better because it affects fewer people, which is also true. And probably the Third Point is you got to look in the very long run, right? Yes, so. Short term suffering. Yeah, I mean, if there's a rapid collapse.

Which is not a. Necessary condition of this sort of collapse scenario. He Ted says it could be a gradual process. But if it was rapid collapse, then lots of people would die pretty, pretty quickly. But it's not. Clear that in the long run, that's going to lead to more suffering and. More short term. But you know long term could be clear net on net gain depending on how far into the future we look. Even a lot smaller number of people on the planet, but if they're living a very satisfactory existence. Could quickly outweigh the cost to some millions or billions who might die or suffer in the short run. So I think there's some pretty good arguments against that. I know I was. I was sort of worried about overpopulation in general. And I raised the question to Ted. I said, I've, I've argued myself against population and argued for population decrease and for, lower population totals on the Earth. Ted's like, well, that's a waste of time because nobody wants to talk about, getting rid of people. Nobody wants to go around blaming pregnant women. Because they, because they're the source of all these babies that are coming along, he's so he's like, well, that's a loser argument. So don't waste your time. That was his view. So it's kind of interesting. I mean I understood his. Point but but he you know, he he seemed to acknowledge. And any revolutionary collapse. And there'd be a lot fewer people. And that's the way it. That's the way it has to go. And there's no ifs, ands or buts about it.

Can technology be harnessed in a good way?

Greg: Can you explain to the audience and to me what it means to say that technology has become an autonomous system? Most people think that we control technology. We are the ones who. Buy our cell phones and talk on it. We're the ones who use hammers to hammer. We're the ones who use frying pans to fry. We're using technology and it seems odd to say that well, technology is not something that we ultimately control it. It is an autonomous self reinforcing. System that has escaped our control. That's something that I first took from Ellul. I first actually, not first from Allure. I first encountered this in Aaron's junk. And then I encountered this in a rule and I think it's a hard idea for a lot of people to grasp and to accept.

David: Yes, it's true because. It looks like people do all the work. Of technology, we do the inventing, we do the building, we do the planning, we do the implementing. So on one level. Yes, the technology is dependent on people. I mean, if something you know there's some weird solar flare of fantastic proportions and it killed every human being on earth, then the technological system would collapse. So there's no two ways about that. The point, though, is that no one person or no group of people can. Exert a kind of control over the process because the process is diffused among so many millions and billions of people. Different motives and different driving forces and different resources at their disposal and so forth. Aspects of the system just kind of ratchet upwards. And any one person, anyone group you know any any individual scientist can die and another scientist steps in and carries forward that work. Right. Any corporate

leader, any military leader. Any one person, there is nobody who's indispensable. Well, because aspects of the technological development go on. In a million. Parallel paths because it has so many different it's like the Internet itself, right? It's diffused through a million different parallel structures and you can't really chop off any one of them and stop the thing so. The technology for multiple reasons for you know, financial reasons, power reasons, pure interest, military reasons. Many people from many different sides are all pressing ahead in various aspects of technology, which means that. The all parts of the system are kind of inching forward in many. Different ways all at the same time. There's no overarching control, there's no directing process. It's a million people doing a million different little things every day. And you know. In scientific labs and in papers and research, in garages and wherever, wherever they're tinkering and doing their stuff, laboratories. And so forth. Everybody's inching this whole process forward and so short of obliterating all the obliterating all the. People getting rid of all of them, which would seem to be impossible or some kind of massive war. I mean, there's a point. At the beginning of the Lowe's book, where he says, total nuclear war might actually collapse the system, if you could really. Really sort of devastate the industrial societies of the world. That might cause things to sort of collapse. But it's just this diverse, paralleled structure of technological advance that the system as a whole, because it has so many diffused parallel paths of a development. Moves ahead, sort of, no matter what, there's nothing we can do. Any one person can do any. 10 people can do. There's nothing the. President can do. It's a really a troubling scenario and I think we're we're starting at the feel for that with this AI stuff. And that's sort of been in the news lately. This advanced AI people sort of. You know, stupidly or just finally figuring out, like, oh, shoot, this could be a problem which, we've been saying for decades. And they're realizing that there's actually not. Much we can do to stop. This stuff which is going to. Be going to be bad news in itself so. So it really is kind of striking how the whole technological evolution, the whole system as a whole moves ahead regardless of what anyone wants, regardless of what we think, regardless of what we might like. And in that sense, it is an autonomous process.

Greg: It strikes me that technology. Is somewhat like language. We think that we use language. But when we think about. When did we begin using language? Language is already there, sort of sort of. One of the things that's in the background all around us. That conditions how we think and how we act. and therefore it's hard. To say that we control it, we don't actually have. Sort of an external viewpoint on it, we are thrown into a world, we learn a language. We're surrounded by technology. Technology is constantly developing. There are so many things going on in technology that no one mind can comprehend at all and yet we have this feeling that well. I know I choose to use the smartphone or not. Already there, it's sort of like the weather. It's sort of like the boundaries of our world. It's something that we don't really have a position to comprehend or understand it. It's sort of, it's sort of like the outer horizon of experience of in in some ways, and that that's interesting, but. There's this. Idea that, well, can't we use this wisely? People say that, OK, well, medicine medicine can be used to cure

or to kill. We have ethics, therefore, to guide doctors in their activities, so to make sure that their technical expertise. Is used for good. And we have other professions which have technical skills and to guide them they have ethical codes. Isn't it possible for human beings to wisely guide and take control of technology and use it for the greater good or not use it? Discard certain forms of technology. Why is that not possible? Why would Kaczynski disregard that? And I know he disregards it or dismisses that.

David: Well, right. So some people will point to specific technologies. Let's say, for example, nuclear weapons. And I said, well, look, we saw how hard us that was. We used them once the US did on civilian populations in the World War Two decide that was terrible and don't want to use those again. So we kind of have global agreements and. We try to limit their spread. And so far it seems like it's worked. Right. There's been. No, no, no second use of nuclear weapons since since the war. But in a sense it hasn't worked because the nuclear proliferation continues. More countries are on the verge of getting nuclear weapons right? We know about Iran and the their process to acquire nuclear weapons. They'll probably have it at some point. And of course, there's a constant threat of. of use so. Even though the nuclear weapons so far have not been detonated, they've been used countless times, most recently with Russia. Right, Putin obviously has lots of nuclear weapons. And he can play the. Nuclear card anytime he wants and he's moving. Weapons in the Belarus and so. 4th so they become used in that sense, they don't become used as a as a tool of physical destruction, but they become used as tools of coercion, and it's almost certain at some point somebody will do something stupid and they'll actually be used. So then there goes that argument down the drain. But in any case, even if we had a perfect solution to nuclear weapons. You know or completely ban them. That's just one tiny slice of the technological monstrosity that we're dealing with. And there's so many angles and so many, potent weapons and so many disaster scenarios that you can't really even begin to tackle. All of those all at once. You're human beings. Just can't do that. We are. We are able and capable. Haven't got the bandwidth. Tackle multiple complex problems all at the same time, let alone coming to agreement and enforcing agreements and so forth. I mean, even benign things, you. So you mentioned like medical technologies and it seems like, well that's a good thing, right? That we have. New medical technologies and we could treat cancer. We can, cure. Things and keep people alive. And you know, keep, solve childhood illnesses. And, all those nice little things, but. Even the good stuff isn't isn't an unambiguous good with technology. So, for example, we know that medical technologies have been a large reason why the total population on the Earth is now 8 billion people. That and alone is in ecological disaster. There's no future scenario in which the planet can handle 8 billion people. And of course, it's increasing. We're heading towards 9 and 10 billion rapidly. So the good of technology, the medicine allowed us to go from 4 billion to 6 billion to 8 billion soon to be 10. Billion people, which is destructive. So we would have been actually far better off and the planet would have been vastly better off if we didn't have our medical technologies. If people died younger and of more common things, and if you know, infant mortality was more

of its natural level that it used to be for the human species, and you know you, you don't. You kind of. Hate to sort of glorify these kind of, tougher conditions, but nature puts these conditions on us. For a reason, and that keeps every species in balance. There's always a balance between food supplies. Right, predator, prey relationships and abilities of the environment to supply the needs of different species. So you know we've usurped those bounds of nature with our technologies. And it's leading us to a disaster. So there's almost no unalloyed goods that come from technology. They're short-term goods. Some people profit immensely, so I guess it's good for them, but larger picture, high level view long-term, there's almost nothing good. That comes from advanced technology.

How regulating tech would require a global government

Greg: Well, it strikes me that one can make the argument yes, that everything can be used for good or ill, and that's why we need to use things wisely for the good. However, the weakness of that when it comes to global technology is that it really seems to presuppose that we'd have to have some sort of. Global government. That could basically regulate technology, because if you have multiple competing jurisdictions, these groups will say yes. Of course we should limit nuclear weapons and then they'll quietly be working as quickly as possible to build them anyway. Because that's advantageous, they won't pay lip service to global interests, and you know the common good of the planet. And because they are particular entities with competing interests, with other particular entities, they're going to. Be furiously working on dangerous technologies. Things like artificial intelligence, things like nuclear weapons, biological weapons and so forth and so. If your solution to any problem is first have global government, it's not really a solution because I don't think we're going to get there anytime soon. And once we have global government, what does that mean? The whole globe is going to be controlled by politicians. That doesn't seem like a recipe for wisdom. Either so. Strikes me as problematic just because because of the fact that we're we have all these competing entities on the planet that will definitely use technology to gain an edge over one another, even though they know, even though they know better, even though they think this could be a total disaster. They'll think well, the other guys are doing it, so we can't. Fall behind we can't. Can't give up this this potential destructive force because other people won't.

David: That's exactly right. And that's another argument why technology is an unstoppable process. When you read the works of even the pro tech people like Ray Kurzweil. And he talks about all the wonderful benefits of technology. And then you get him. You press him into a corner. You say? What about all those bad things? And he's like, yeah, but you know, and then he uses this. Nice little phrase. We have no

choice. And I can't tell you how many times I came across this phrase in tech writers. We have no choice for exactly what you said, right? Well, we can't do it because then the Russians and the Chinese will do it or, company A can't do this because then Company B and company C will eat our lunch. Because they'll advance. Those things, there's a million reasons, but. You know, profits. Power competitive reasons, prestige, and so forth, that the argument comes down to, well, you know. We have no choice. We have to do. This, and that's technological determinism. I mean it could hardly be blunter than that in very brute terms, we have no choice, we.

Greg: Right.

David: To do. It you know, some guys will say it's good and we have no choice. Some people will say it's bad and we have no choice, but everybody agrees we have no choice. OK. So so there's your technological determinants. It's being driven forward. It will be driven forward and there's almost nothing that we can do about it. You are right. I mean right if it's like any arms agreement or something, you need high level agreement. If you're going to try to disrupt that process, or. Slow it down or. Pause it. Ted Kaczynski himself was not optimistic, right? He said the system is too strong. It's too robust. Too much of this, we have no choice kind of thinking, going on, technologies developing too many parallel paths. He said, right. Now, no, we can't do anything. We can't do anything to disrupt. That process, but he says. The process is sort of spinning out of control. It's driving populations, like I said, through the roof. It's threatening global ecological collapse, threatening a number of serve other disaster scenarios which might in themselves threaten the process of. Development of the system. So he, Ted says, any revolutionary actions should try to increase the instability in the system to bring us closer to this sort of spontaneous breakdown, which is really the best that we can probably. Hope for at. This point because of all these reasons that we. Just talked about. So so. You know, right now it's just a matter of watching, looking for the weak points, heightening this instability. You know, trying to bring that day when it collapses sooner rather than later because conceivably there are thresholds that we might cross. You know, we've talked to some some thinkers have talked about this singularity. Kurzweil and others sort of, where they sort. Of get Super AI combined with ability of it. to build. Itself and create its own computers, and then The thing is really running autonomously and then sort of like literally lose complete physical control, the process, and then that's almost certainly a catastrophe. So we have this little window of time between now and this singularity. Point, which Kurzweil has been saying is coming at 2045. So maybe we have, yeah, 20 years maybe in which the system could still collapse. We might hope it still collapses and we might actually work for its collapse in whatever little ways we can, because that. Might be the. Only saving grace because once it hits true autonomy. And then it's a whole new ball game and it may be sort of literally impossible to stop at that point.

Greg: Yeah, that's very disturbing.

What level of tech did Ted accept?

Greg: We have a question here from maybe next time he sends \$3. Thank you. He says hello, Greg and Dave, what level of tech was Ted accepting of? That's an interesting question.

David: That's a good that's a good question. I myself put that question to him. I know he he started the beginning of the manifesto with the words that the industrial revolution has been a disaster for the human race. When I read that, he said Ohh well, he wants us to go back in time to simpler technology prior to the Industrial revolution, right? So maybe technology of the year 1700, right? Or maybe 16. 100 just to be safe. And I put that to him. He's like, oh, no, no, we can't control that. We can't choose a point in time. We have to just sort. Of you. Know just blow up the whole system, watch it all collapse and that will basically take us back to hunter gatherers or something very close to that, maybe very small scale. Farming and that's where we need to go. So when I pressed him, he was a proponent of this sort of nomadic hunter gatherer existence, really kind of the core mode of human existence for yeah, 99% of human human history. Right. If you go back, say almost 3,000,000 years to the to the genus. **** yeah, 90. 9% of the time we were hunter gatherers. And that was sustainable. And the and the species survived, and the planet flourished. So basically, Ted says, we just need to blow up the system, drive us back to hunter gatherers and just sort of take what comes.

Do people want to destroy tech to conquer white people? And how good a mathematician was Ted?

Greg: We also have a question from ABC who sends 10 U.S. dollars. Thank you, deindustrialization and D technologized action of the West, perceived as white, is a long sought goal of the non whites in the global left with the sole purpose of dominating white race unilateral deindustrialization. Suicide Ted was not our guy, was he?

How good a mathematician. Was he?

OK, those are two questions, I guess.

Well, this question speaks to the issue of that we already discussed which is you can't deindustrialized unilaterally because other people will just take advantage of it. And therefore it has to be Global, there has to be global step back a global stepping back from technological civilization, it can't be just done by one group of people, because yeah, if one group of people surrenders the technological advantages, they'll just they'll just be taken advantage of by other people who will press their advantage in in those circumstances.

So I guess the other question is how good a mathematician was he? Or maybe that's just a flippant question. Did you ever talk about mathematics in your correspondence?

David: Very passing. I published one or two little articles on mathematics. I think I sent out a copy early on just to say, hey, look, I can do this too. Of course, I was not. Not nearly. He was a brilliant mathematician. I mean, his PhD thesis was really remarkable. There's some some quotes from his advisors at the time. Like, only 10 people. In the in the country probably understood his dissertation. So yeah, Ted, Ted was brilliant. He was a brilliant. Mathematician and then. But when he stopped, he was done. And you know, I asked him some questions about, technical. I think I was doing research on sequences and series. He's like, yeah, I don't even want to talk. About that. So when he was done. He he was just finished. So I. Mean he didn't lose the ability, but he. Just had zero interest in talking about math.

But sort of the ethnic racial issue is a good question, right? He says in the manifesto that it needs to. Be a global. Revolution, as you say, because you can't do bits and pieces if you know we. If we sort of revolt here and the Chinese don't, then they're going to come and just mow us down or something. So he wants the different peoples of the world, the different races and ethnic groups. At least they're revolutionary wings to work together to make it a global anti tech revolution. So if you're looking out for your own ethnic or racial group, you're not likely to work a work very well with others. Be you're likely to sort of have additional conflicts that will be racial or ethnic conflicts that will distract you from the main task, which is getting rid of technology.

So that's why Ted was sort of against any sort of focus on, white interest, white nationalism or any nationalism, any special interest. He was in a sense, he was against racism. And in that sense. Even though he did say some sort of detrimental things about blacks. But you know, we won't go into those, but I think he, you know he's...

Greg: Well, we could. But let's set that aside for now. We actually have a question from Reed Johnson. David what do you believe was the nature he sends ten U.S. Thank you, David. What do you believe was the nature of the three-year long experiments Ted participated in at Harvard as an undergrad with psychologist Henry Murray, who was Henry Murray? And what were his motivations? And did this curious experience have any effect on the ultimate trajectory of Ted's?

What about the experiments performed on Ted at Harvard?

David: I think the short answer is no. I mean, Ted was involved in some of these early campus experiments, not really even experiments. I mean, people think, like they wired his head with electrodes and they, put him in some deprivation room for, days on end or something. It was nothing like that. They were studying effects of. Stress psychological stress on undergraduate students. So, and I've seen transcripts of these things. So, so Murray would bring undergraduates in and he would have them talk about their ideas or their own particular views of the world. And then he would start

attacking. Then and he would say well that's a stupid idea. And what? What are you, an idiot? You know he's like insulting them, showing them that they can't really justify because they're undergraduate students. You know, they're not. Do you guys yet so and just shooting holes trying to demean them, trying to shoot them down and then? He was gauging their response. Right. How how were these students reacting to this? Personal assault on on them and their ideas, where they taking it personally, where they giving intellectual responses, where they just clamming up, right.

As far as I can tell, this seemed to be. The extent of the experiments that were going on at the time. It was hardly anything nefarious. It was hardly scarring or whatever people want to say. Yeah, anything that I've seen that had basically zero impact on Ted, except maybe to cause them to. Further dislike authorities and further distrust the system. As if you didn't. Have reasons already.

But you know people play that up. What's troubling is people play up these sort of, little experiments that he underwent at Harvard because they want to find an excuse why he went so extreme in his anti tech, why he sent bombs, why he killed three people. They just can't believe that it's because this danger of technology was so great that someone might actually use that as a driving force. People had to have some other excuse, you know? Well, it must have been these MK ultra experiments. There must have been, abuse. He was tortured. As a kid or you know his. Mother dropped him. On his head when he was two or, he had some kind of. Encephalitis, which causes a mental. Less than they're really seeking these excuses rather than saying no actually, he was completely lucid and rational and he understood that technology was a mortal threat to the planet. And that was a good. Enough reason, people. Just don't want to hear that. So they're always hunting around for these other crazy excuses.

Greg: Yeah, I think that's really true. It's very unusual for people to believe in their ideas so strongly that they're willing to kill or die for them, and we live in a society where when you encounter a person like that, they want to come up with some kind of medical explanation for that because, frankly, the truth is just too frightening, that people take ideas so seriously. They're willing to kill or die over them. Maybe we should think more seriously about these things, too. People flinch at that. I understand. I understand the the. the the desire to do that. I do think it's tremendously important. To contemplate what a I. Promises the AI boosters are talking about, a point where technology does become completely autonomous it completely. Slips control and at that point we are completely at its mercy and it becomes not just technology as a kind of blind and stupid process, but technology having its own intelligence, its own guiding intelligence that's different from human intelligence. And can evolve so rapidly. Usually that within minutes it could be as different from us as we are from one celled organisms. The idea that human beings are eagerly pursuing this point just strikes me as complete sheer, utter madness. We're talking about creating successor life form to control the Earth. I don't think that can ever end well unless we think that we're creating a benevolent God. I hardly think that that's within the capacity of human beings to. So my thoughts about Kaczynski and his bombing campaign as I've been

reading more about AI, I just wonder, could he have? Could he have postponed the singularity for a few days or hours? Couldn't that be a justification for what he did? I'm sure in his own mind he would think absolutely yes.

David: I mean he again very, very pragmatic guy. Anything that can put off a disaster in, in that sense, in the long term. He's willing to sort of. Sort of buy time if that's what it. Would take. So, he didn't. I don't know that I'm trying to remember if any of the letters that he really talked about. Kind of this AI takeover thing because it's an interesting scenario specific. Really that we're facing now that. I don't know if that he really. Grappled with that one, but. But yeah, it does seem like madness. I mean, had talked about people like Kurzweil. And so forth. Who? Are pushing forward on the technology. Like these people are are criminals. I mean, they're either criminally insane or they're rationally criminal. but they're pushing ahead. Technologies and promoting technologies that could you. Know obliterate all life on the planet. And you know, what's their excuse like, oh, we're, are they so arrogant to think, oh, we'll just put in safeguards and we'll have kill switches and we'll be able to stop this. Thing and. You know, they just think that they're. Just so you know, like I want to. Upload my mind into the computer so I can live forever like you know.

On uploading your brain and living forever

Greg: That is, that seems to be one of the things that really drives us forward. And on the surface, I think we should be alarmed simply about that. The people who want to become immortal. They're de facto, they will become tyrants. Already. Old people have a huge, disproportionate amount of power. Imagine old people that never die. Imagine being, a child of 14 in a society ruled by people who are 2000. Years old and counting, we basically like being ruled by. You know, capricious Olympian deities or something like that. It would be a form of tyranny that you could never overthrow. I think any desire to prolong human life extraordinarily is, ipso facto, a declared desire to be a tyrant over all the rest of humanity. Who would be younger than you? Because one of the things that happens when people die is that power and wealth shift, right? And then the next generation has some space. But if the if the wealthy and powerful and they're going to be the ones who would take advantage of this first, if the wealthy and powerful never die. That is a that is going to be a profound form of tyranny, and people should react against that like they would any other proposal to establish some kind of profound tyranny, they should rebel.

David: Well, you're you're right. I mean you. Know Ted actually talked about that he had. Even a more fundamental issue. And he basically said it's not going to work. I don't care how much money and power you have now and how how nifty your thing is, he says. You know, even if you could sort of, upload some some macular, entity. That's, you know. Some kind of parallel structure to your brain or something. Whatever AI system is running at the time, it's, it's not going to care about you, right? Whatever

your folder that you're, your mind is in, the A that's running the operating systems is just going to go delete because I need that space and click. You're gone. I mean, you know. The AI would be so powerful at that point. It would have zero interest. And keeping you know you alive as you or you know, Kurzweil alive as kurtzweil. You know it might you. Know might take. Aspects of people for study or something. I have historical you don't even know. I mean, we're we're so out of the ballpark at that point that there's no reason to believe that, a person. With a, you know like you want to live like you are now. You as you with your memories and you just kind of live forever. And I'm just going to build up lots. Of great memories. And have lots of knowledge apart, I mean the. Odds are basically. Zero percent that could even happen even in the best scenario. So so, Ted is like, this is a fool's fool's mission to even try to do this, let alone like you. Say even if. You could do it, you know. Think about the horrible imbalances and inequities that would that would follow from that. So it it's a double, triple loser to even think about doing that.

Greg: The madness of the COVID it epidemic, I think, had to do with the fact that in the West, power is in the hands of increasingly old and frail people. Who were scared to death of this bug and were willing to engage in all kinds of tyranny and expensive follies just to keep these plebs and their germs away from them? Imagine being ruled by people who are. Imagine if Chuck Schumer were 1000 years. Old and Amy, you know all these gerontocracy, we would have a 1000 year old Joe Biden shambling around. That's a that's a truly dystopian prospect. Yeah, but you know there would be there would be robots that would. Be there to catch.

David: There you go, robot. Well, robot would trip and. Fall for it. There you go.

Ted's critique of nationalism

Greg: Yeah, exactly. There's a contradiction in this. Critique of nationalism or eco fascism that Kaczynski wrote in 2000 with some of his writings earlier, especially a piece on the systems greatest trick. I think that's the name of it is, is critique of leftism, basically, and I just want to run this by you. I had a sort of brainstorm about this today. It's a piece called the Systems Neatest Trick, which is, well, you edited it. It's in technological slavery, but this piece, eco fascism and aberrant branch of leftism.

I'd like to take partial credit, at least for people asking him about Eco fascism because, well, it was part of my agenda for corresponding with him. I knew it would be inevitable. This is Kaczynski:

The "ecofascists," as I understand that term, share, at a minimum, two traits:

- I. They do not advocate total rejection of modern technology; instead, they want to create a society in which technology will be "limited and

“wisely” used in such a way as to ensure the ecological health of our planet.

- II. They support, if not white supremacism, then at least white separatism.

He basically goes on to say that. OK, there's a paragraph here:

Any movement that aims to limit technology has to be *worldwide* because if technological progress is cut back in one part of the world while another part of the world continues to follow the path of unrestrained technological development, then the fully technological part of the world will have a vast preponderance of power over the less technological part. Sooner or later (probably sooner) the fully technological part of the world will take control of the other part in order to exploit its resources.

Then he goes on:

For obvious reasons, a white-supremacist movement cannot be worldwide. Even if a movement does not claim superiority for any one race or culture, but merely insists on keeping the world's various races or cultures separate and distinct, it will not be able to bring technology under control, because its separatist attitude will inevitably promote rivalry and/or suspicion among the various races or ethnic groups. Each race or ethnic group,

and then he goes on to say that therefore he believes that for there to be a global revolt against technology, the anti tech revolution has to be anti nationalist. And anti racist. So he says:

[Every] movement that seeks to limit technology must make every effort to minimize divisions or differences among races or ethnic groups. Purely as a matter of strategy, racial and cultural *blending* must be promoted.

‘So take that, you eco fascist’. OK, that's a clear statement and I can understand his rationale. But in this essay he wrote on the system's greatest trick, which it's just sort of a continuation of his critique of leftism. And in there, he argues that. Political correctness and leftist crusades against things like, well, masculinity against things like. Ethnocentrism against racism and things like that. These are all part of the system. The system, just like Kaczynski, wants to blend away differences amongst people

and therefore. I would, I would conclude that anything that agitates against these attitudes, that everything must be blended, we must break down barriers, we must break down ethnocentrism. We must break down barriers to racial intermarriage and cultural mingling and. Homogenization, anything that would promote those boundaries? Being strong would be contrary to the global dominance of technological society. So if that's his analysis in his piece on the system's greatest trick, wouldn't people who are agitating for ethnocentrism actually be impeding globalization and the global technological system. Now they are not necessarily part of the movement that he envisions against technology. What right which he says, has to be global and. as global and homogeneous as the global technological system. Apparently these people aren't part of that movement as he envisions it. But what? They are are. Forces that work against the completion of this global homogeneous technological system, and therefore wouldn't Kaczynski have to applaud these retrograde forces, like sexism and ethnocentrism and the desire to marry one's own kind and things like that. What are your thoughts on that?

David: Well, right, so that that's raises some good points. I think there's a kind of basic. Distinction strategic distinction between. An accelerationist type approach and a. Let's say hitting the brakes kind of approach right? So Ted Ted seems to be an acceleration as he wants to knit the whole global system together through international agreements and common global currencies. And you know NAFTA type agreements that go global just interlink the whole system because he wants it all together. Then it goes. Then the whole sucker goes in, right? So that's kind of so. And he says this in the manifesto. Promoting these global linkages. To foster total collapse. But you're right, I mean, at a local level, if people are sort of resisting the system locally. Resisting globalization, out of their. Own interests. Whatever self-interest, ethnic interest, racial interest, in a sense, that's also resisting the system at a local a more local level or something below the global level? and it's not really clear. There's balance between, acceleration this large scale and deceleration this you know smaller scale activities. You know what's the right mix of strategies, you know can. We do both. At the same time, can we try to knit the system together while we're chopping down its roots at the bottom, so to speak, right? Can we? Can we, plant little bombs along the way, even though we sort of, paper over the big star and try to make

everything look like it's all working together nicely. I mean it's really a complicated matter which I don't think Ted ever really completely spelled it out. And I don't think anybody has. How these different aspects, different strategic aspects play into one another.

Can our solution to tech be a sophisticated, mixed approach?

David: Because it seems to be that you could work at multiple levels if you just want to get rid of the system, you could sort of chop at it. Below you could plant little bombs here and there. You could sort of, dissuade people from joining the system. And you could work at a high level. To try to link things all together. So it could really get to sort of a complicated multi level Strat. See, I think at the worst case to really sort of try to attack this monster at multiple levels at the same time. And I kind of think that's maybe what you're alluding to here, Greg. You know at. One level we serve opposing technology, but another level maybe we're, we're not doing the highest level things that Ted might be calling for.

Greg: Right.

David: You know, you really kind of made a systematic top to bottom analysis of how how best to tackle this monstrosity. And then then. Maybe we could bring some clarity of these issues because it's it really is a complicated situation.

Greg: Right. One thing I would say is that. Don't need to urge the system along in its globalizing Tilos. It's built in. It's baked in, and it's moving forward. Anyway, and therefore we can say that as they love to say, there is no alternative, there's no alternative to this on on the global level. And therefore, I don't think we need to worry about that. One thing that strikes me about Kaczynski's attitude here is it's very much like marks marks. Really wanted capitalism and colonialism to seize and control the entire globe. So that the revolution would happen all at once. and he sort of has the same view. My view is that that's going to happen anyway and that. We should resist everywhere that we can. You know Heidegger has this this notion of earth, the earth element. He talks about it in the origin of the work of art, and the Earth is just basically everything that resists presence and availability and presence and availability are the things that technology is supposed to secure for us. And so. Everything has this earthy dimension and the Earth's dimension for him is just sort of like a symbol of the resistance of the world to technological domination. If technology wants to make everything plastic, then Earth is the thing that resists everything. Becoming plastic and present and available. And consumable and there are 1,000,000 little ways that we can in our daily life affirm the earthly over the plastic and anything in any little act of resistance I think. Whether it's slow food rather than

fast food, or, declining to get on board, the latest technologies declining to get swept up on the latest current thing, whatever we do, I think. Is admirable, and it certainly can't hurt. And so I would think that promoting every form of difference, every form of. Of how to put it everything, everything that's romantic. Everything that is non utilitarian. The beautiful over the useful, the charming and quaint over the convenient and practical. Any any, any tendencies to do that is. Is a form of resistance to the to the technological system, and I think it needs to be applauded. And I think nationalism and romanticism and you know, sort of mystical and religious attitudes towards nature, all of these things are countervailing forces to technological domination.

David: There's a difference between what you do and your personal life, and your public face. I think is what Ted would say. So sure, if you've got your personal you didn't maintain your personal sanity, then you probably better limit your technology. If you're worried about your kids growing up and don't want. Them to be fanatics or whatever. You know, you better clamp down on the screen time and don't give them cell phones and. So forth. So in your private life and. Your family life. Yeah, totally agree. Right. You want to kind of maintain your own sanity. You want to protect your. Family protect your kids. but Ted would issue a warning. Like, that's not a good model for the world, because if we relieve people stress. If we get them out on. Weekends out in nature. And they feel a little bit. Better, they may decide that it's OK to keep the system going, right? Ted is Ted is. All about increasing. Stress, right? He's. Like we need to make people feel really uncomfortable. About how the system is going because they don't even really Don they. They just think it's a good stuff. Oh, it's fun to have a cell phone. It's nice to have, cars. And what would I do without my computer? And I like having airplanes because I can fly around the nice vacations. You know, people don't even understand the total catastrophe of these of these things. So Ted's like, people may need to feel the stress, if you want to destress them, you're only prolonging the system from, from, from, from continuing. You're you're not making people feel the pain that they need to feel. You know what I'm saying? I used an example I used to talk about this in my class all the time. I talked to the students like, you know what? Why doesn't relieving the. Pain health is a good thing and I said, pretend you have lung cancer and you got chest pain and you go to the doctor and you tell them about your pain. And he says here, take take some extra strength Tylenol. And you're doing. It goes away. OK, cool. Right. And then you go back a few weeks later, like, hey, this pain is still here. I'm going to give you some super Oxycontin, and that'll do it. And it goes away. Right. OK. So I'm relieving the stress. I feel good for a while, right? but you know, is the doctor helping me know he's. Killing me, right? Because he's not addressing. The root. Cause so as. Long as we allow people to continue on without addressing the root cause, even if we make things sort of easier or more tolerable for people. In a in a public sense, we may actually be doing a bad thing. We may be prolonging this system when we need to have people feel the pain people need to, whatever. I don't know what Ted would say you. Know join the resistance movement radically. Crash out, you know. Starts to. I don't know, striking

out in their own ways. Whatever it might be. Only if they feel the pain while they do that because. If they're comfortable and you know, relatively blind to these problems. They're just going to continue on as they have. Been and then the system will continue to grow in strength. So it's again, it's a really I think it's a complicated question about you know. Public versus private. What you do for yourself versus, strategies that you might recommend for larger populations, there's just a lot of aspects to this.

Did you ever talk to Ted about Savitri Devi?

Greg: Let me ask you, you edited volume of Savitri Devi, her book on Akhnaten son of God. Did you ever ask Kaczynski about her, or did you ever send a copy of Impeachment of man? Or get his thoughts on that particular individual? She was definitely radical ecologist.

David: Yeah. No, never. Never mentioned her. I don't think I was really even understood much about her at the time when we were doing most of our correspondence. You know the most I would have done is I would have passed along to Ted Anti explicitly anti tech philosophers which I thought was interesting throughout history just to show the trends and how things have developed. You know, maybe I mean, she was a kind of a primitivist, I think, but I don't know that she was in any sense an. Anti tech maybe she was a kind of an anti sieve. Person, I don't really know, but yeah, no, I there there was no discussion between him and. Myself about about her.

Which thinkers on tech influenced Ted?

Greg: So can you name any other thinkers on technology that influence Kaczynski besides Ellul?

David: That's a good question. I think Alou was the. Big one. You know, I threw some quotes. At him by people. Like Illich and Mumford and. He tended to poo poo those things. I know. I sent him some stuff illitch and he's like. This guy's a terrible writer. I don't even understand what he's talking about, you know? Let's just write a little bit of obscure way. I didn't even bother with hiding her because that's kind of you. Know real jibberish? She the way Heidegger writes. You know, I don't know. Ted was like, I mean, he wasn't really interested in the history. I thought that was really kind of fascinating. These developing ideas, these parallel structures.

Short of Elull. I mean, Alou is really kind of A1. Of a kind in what he did. And Ted was interested in research that supported his idea. So he talked about, scholars and primitive societies and ideas like learned helplessness, psychological things that related to power, process and so forth. Those were the kind of people that he wanted to hear about, you know. Not philosophers, not tech thinkers. Because Ted's got it figured out. I mean, you know Ted knows what he knows and he doesn't need anybody else's ideas.

He's got it all figured out, so he was very confident. If I could just put it that way in his own view. So, he didn't need to hear. That he needed to hear about psychology. And maybe anthropology thinks he didn't really know about he was. Interested to see that as. It supported his thesis and that was really all that he wanted to hear about.

Was Ted influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche?

Greg: Was he at all influenced by Nietzsche? Because his analysis of the power process and his analysis of the psychology of leftism strikes me as very consistent with a lot of central ideas that Nietzsche had about the will to power and about slave morality. Resentment and so forth, as motives for both Christianity and also the left.

David: Yeah, we brought up Nietzsche a couple of times. I'm a big niche fan. I taught niche for a while at Michigan. And you're right, a lot of interesting parallel structures or some nice anti tech passages by Nietzsche. And I think Ted, Ted found little inspirational quotes. If that was maybe one person that Ted. Would quote once in a while. And it was pretty rare, but. He would quote like need you on freedom. Need to sort of like you know. For you, there's a what? A passage for a. Freeman is a warrior. You know you don't just get freedom. You have to fight for it and Ted. Like that. So he. He grabbed a couple of. These passages that he liked from from niche about, the need for a. I don't know if you even talked about master morality, but things that were consistent with the need for exerting one's will. I mean, in the sense of will to power. That it takes forceful action to earn one's freedom, and I think I think, there was a couple bits in each of that Ted liked, but again, that was very, very rare that he would do that.

Did Ted ever read Frank Herbert's *Dune*?

Greg: Thomas Toibin has written in, and he asked about 'the Butlerian jihad'.

This is from the back story of David Lynch's not David Lynches, of course. David Lynch did the first movie. Frank Herbert's dune. Dune is set in very distant future and in the back story civilization had been basically and human beings have been enslaved by artificial intelligences, and that the human race had risen up against that and had reverted to a kind of. The earlier form of civilization that was quasi feudal, they had a religious ban against thinking machines and artificial. And had instead developed human capacities to a very high degree. I think it's a fascinating. Back story to a fascinating sci-fi universe. I guess the first question is, did Kaczynski ever read Frank Herbert?

David: Again, not to my knowledge. I'm trying to think if there were any fiction even you know, sort of relevant science fiction, my God, offhand, I can't think of any cases where we talked about that.

Greg: Yes, science fiction is for me one of the sources for my anxiety and about technology, and it's all of its dystopian potential. And so I wonder more broadly if he had any inspiration from sci-fi, but apparently not, at least not to your...

David: Why was it a Butlerian jihad. Is that going back to...

Greg: Well, well, no it was...

David: Samuel Butler.

Greg: It's a good question. That's what I would have thought initially. Now the name of a particular character. I think the name was Serena Butler or something like that, but maybe he chose the name Butler thinking of Samuel Butler, which is...

David: Because Samuel Butler did advocate, he was the first to Advocate Revolution against the machines. Right? This is like an 1856 or something so, Darwin against the machines was one of his essays, so. That might. That's a little too coincidental. I'm suspecting you know Frank Herbert maybe knew what he was doing when he putting character Butler in there.

Greg: I think you're absolutely right. I think that makes a lot of sense. I do feel that we are coming to a point where humanity is going to have to have a jihad, a holy war against thinking machines. If we're going to have a future at all, and when I've been was recently doing a lot of reading because all of my friends were saying, Oh my God, look at ChatGPT and look, it wrote a poem and it's actually a good poem and look what? It says about you. And it's programmed to tell lies and engage in pretzel logic about certain hot button issues that, as programmers, don't want it to think about. It's just, it's just fascinating. And I said, I've really got to start thinking about this more. And so I started reading about the worst case scenarios for AI. And it rapidly became extremely agitating and I started thinking Ted was right. I need to pick up Ted Kaczynski again. Ted was right. Maybe it will be the Kaczynskian Jihad someday that will be the thing that overthrows the machines.

Will Ted be thought of as a prophet?

David: Yeah, absolutely. Exactly that, I. I said that fact. I wrote that in the introduction to the his book that came out back in 2010. I said basically, there's a good chance Ted's going to seem like a prophet. That may be a safer if we do something because, he called for the explicit action against. Against the machine, against the system, and that is probably what it's going to take. You know, I keep wondering myself what it's going to take to get. People to do something. I guess my most hopeful scenario is we have a near Miss catastrophe, right? Like we had like COVID, right? So COVID was kind of this big global disaster. But you know how many people in total? Aside from COVID, what was a few million or something? I mean, that's. Just a blip on the radar compared to how many you. Know we're adding every. Year I think we need a. Near catastrophe that maybe kills a billion people. And then we survived that one. And people think, oh. My God, that could have been like you. Know all billion of

us. And we're lucky where there's only 1 billion. Maybe we should do something now before the next disaster comes around. I mean, I. I hate kind of says I kind of hate to think about it that way, but it to me it. Almost takes it's going. To take a real slap in the face, a major catastrophic but recoverable disaster. You know, we collectively get shocked into our senses and think, well, that's never going to happen again. And there's only one way to stop that and that's to bring the system down so. But I think.

Greg: That's the optimistic scenario.

David: that's my optimistic talk, right where we lose a billion people, then we save the other. 7 or whatever you know. but again, I mean that's such a fine line between a, a disaster that kills a billion and kills all. All of us. I mean, that's such a fine line. And they hit just that right now, just that right level of disaster. You know, I'd have the chances are dwindling, so I'm not terribly optimistic.

Greg: Yeah, well, people don't listen to reason. They don't listen to warnings. They generally only learn from suffering. And so it's not rational based on. Historical induction to be very optimistic about these sorts of things. I'm afraid.

David: And I wonder why more. People, I'm talking about it. I mean, that's the thing. even it's worth having the discussion. In any case, no matter what side you come down on, it's worth having the discussion, but nobody is willing to have this discussion. I mean, you and I are but. But you know, nobody wants to talk about this if they don't want to contemplate, extreme action. They don't want to talk about revolution. Don't want to weigh the pros and cons. Nobody wants to do this. Know you hear your critics pipe up the. News about AI. I sent a note to Max Tech. Mark, who was a prominent critic. Maybe you saw he had some pieces. Against AI recently. I sent an e-mail to them and I said, hey Max, we need to put a put together. A group of people who are like serious anti tech critics and take the strongest possible views and debate these things. No answer Max can't be bothered to respond to me. You know, so I mean, like, what the hell, you can't even get these people to engage in a discussion. That's how bad it is. it's a bad situation. Yeah, I don't know. Hard to know how to even respond. To that blinds.

Greg: I like. To end on a positive note, when? I do these. Streams, but I'm I'm sort of drawing a blank here because we are confronting some terrible possibilities. We're confronting the possibility of human extinction through human hubris and folly. We're the most of us are just along for the ride. While there are incredibly arrogant people in positions of power and in scientific institutions, authoritative institutions that are pushing forward AI and they're pushing forward, a lot of other data, potentially very dangerous. Technologies there doesn't seem to be any oversight. One of the most laughable things that I read. But it was it. I laughed lest I cry about it, because one of the things I read is that one of the people that are pushing forward AI development thought that maybe once the AI was sufficiently developed then. They could use the AI to come up with protocols to control for any AI created disasters. I just thought the sheer stupidity of highly intelligent people. Could be could be the end of the human race. So anyway, let me just say this. Well, I would. Love to at least have

more conversations like this with you? We should. We should definitely explore this some more because I think it's extremely important. I'm getting your your book on technology. I'm going to read it and maybe we could do another live stream where we talk about your particular work on technology.

David: If I could just for the benefit of the readers, there are actually two books that I put up that are maybe relevant. One is called confronting technology and it's a reader. It's a collection of historical, basically historical critiques of technology going back to Ancient Greece. So I think it's a really fascinating study. Almost nobody knows about it, big name thinkers through history that have criticized technology. So this is not a recent idea. It's not like we just dreamed this up the other day, it's been. Around for you know. 2500 years at least. So that's one book concerning technology. The other book is I wrote myself a monograph called the Metaphysics of Technology. That's more of a philosophical book. Published by Routledge 2015 and that really lays out kind of the strong metaphysical. Basis for technological determinism and how we might grapple with it. And I really think that again, that's really sort. Of something that. No one has really done. They really haven't wanna talked about talk about technology is. As a philosophical or metaphysical entity, so I mean, it's interesting reading certainly would agree a great thing to talk about, Greg in the future. You're going to. Look at either of those aspects. We could do some historical takes so we could kind. Of tackle my. Own philosophical views and see what people think. About that as well.

Did Dr. Skrbina maintain contact with Ted?

Greg: For that to end, let's wrap up by talking about Ted Kaczynski again. You started corresponding with him. You said in 2003 or was about that time. Did you continue to be in contact with him till the end of his life?

David: Not until the end I. Mean we got. Through, the 2004, 2005, 2006 into the publication of the 1st edition of his book, which came out 2009, 2010. That was our heavy correspondence. What's the book? Was out then. Things kind of tailed off. We little had less. Less frequent contact. I was going off in sort of my. Own different directions. Had to started working with his publisher directly. So we had less occasion to interact. So actually it's been a few years. I mean, I'm trying to think the last letter I got from him has probably been five or six years at this point. It's been it's been a few years since we had. We had our last correspondence. I've kept tabs through people. The few people that he did talk through, mostly through his publisher and. Fitch and Madison, who's done the latest edition of his book, so I've kept had indirectly helped him out indirectly because there was some need for indirect help for quite a while. but yeah, no, we kind of just stopped corresponding a few years ago.

Will Dr. Skrbina ever publish his correspondence with Ted?

Greg: Will you publish your complete correspondence with him someday?

David: A good question, I'm hoping to. We've got several. Like I said, dozens. Well over 100 letters, the book technological slavery by Kaczynski has many of his letters to me. So you've read it. Some people have read it about 1/4 of that book is letters to David Scherbina. So he's responding to my challenges and. Queries in his letters. What you don't see is my letters to him. So what? I'm what's the case that I'm making? Am I pressing him on? To me it would be really interesting and this has been done in histories to have the actual correspondence back and forth between himself and my. Myself and I've already raised that possibility with the publisher. We're going to take some initial steps now that Ted's gone to, to see if we can publish large sections of our correspondence, if it makes sense. If it's helpful, I think it is helpful. Really kind of shows the development of ideas. It really helps to humanize Ted. Shows how kind of rational and careful of a thinker he was and. Most times, how kind of, common sense and even courteous he was, I mean. He was sort of a polite and respectful fellow virtually all the time. So yeah, I do hope at some point to. To publish. Those at least a portion of those letters from both myself and him.

Greg: I think it would be wonderful if somebody, perhaps you, perhaps his publishers, would come up with a. A listing of all the correspondents that he had and try and collect. A lot of the letters that he sent out, he was in prison. For more than 20 years and corresponded extensively with people. I think that his correspondence should be kept and published someday because I think it's quite interesting just from the history of ideas point of view.

This also brings me to another question. Now that his life has come to an end, there really should be a biography of Ted Kaczynski and collecting his correspondence would, I think, be one of the first things. That anyone would do to do a really adequate biography, especially an intellectual biography. You know it. It's easy enough to do a kind of Wikipedia biography of facts and times and dates and things like that. But this guy, after he went to jail. He led the life of the mind to the extent that he led any life at all and somebody really needs to write an intellectual biography of this man. And I hope that somebody does him justice someday. That would be a fascinating book to read.

David: Well, there's tons of stuff, right, because we have a archive at the University of Michigan. There's an anarchist library, basically, and there's a giant file on Ted Kaczynski, and for years he's been sending to the library his mail, his correspondents, some of his old essays, early book manuscripts. I mean, there are dozens of boxes of material. That are in this archive, so there's no shortage of stuff to draw from. If somebody wanted to go through and had permission, the other problem is permission

to use these things and to reproduce them in book form, I don't know exactly what the rules are going to be going forward on those.

It depends on who owns the copyrights to all the stuff and it's not really clear to me who does at this point. But the material is there. It's publicly available because that's the nature of the library. So the Hatcher Graduate Library at University of Michigan has tons of material for those who are motivated and want to do exactly what you're saying. That the stuff is there and it needs just needs to be pulled and read through and I'm sure someone or some people. Will do it at some point.

Greg: Well, that's very encouraging. I'm glad there's already a substantial, publicly available collection of his of his writings. That's a that's a very good start. That'll save somebody a lot of time. I've done biographical research that's ongoing about Savitri Devi and it's extremely frustrating when somebody dies and generally within 20 years of a thinker's death. If you haven't gathered together surviving correspondence, it starts disappearing rapidly. Correspondents die, their children are in a hurry, things get dumped because people don't know the value of it and on and on and on, a history disappears very rapidly, unless somebody takes responsibility to preserve it.

How can we follow Dr. Skrbina's work?

So, David, I'd like to wrap up. Can you tell people how they can learn more about your work and follow your work?

David: Well, right, so I mean a lot of my books are available readily available on Amazon and whatnot. I've got a personal website, davidscherbina.com, and I try to keep that up. To date. So people can track things there as well. Yeah, I think that's probably the best source right now. I mean, there's various essays and articles that I've published out there and probably just. Generic Internet searches will find them, but yeah, predicting the problem of technology and Ted, that's pretty well documented. I think I've got most of that listed in my website, so that's the best source.

Greg: Well, thank you so much. I want to thank. Listeners out there, I want to thank the donors who sent in super chats. I want to thank our moderators. We will be back next week with another episode of Countercurrents Radio. We're going to do another live stream and I'm going to be getting be beginning A5 live stream series where I'm going to take people through Plato's dialogue, the gorgeous. This is something that I have been meaning to do for a long time and I was reviewing an old lecture course that it did on the gorgeous back in the 90s, and I started thinking, this is actually really good. And beyond that, it's also quite relevant the theme of it is going to be mid versus right. The gorgeous I think is one of the best introductions to Plato. And I would like to lead you through it very, very carefully in five sessions. So there's more information about this, but counter currents about how we're going to go about this. So if you would like to take part in this, anybody can take part. It's just going to be free out there on the web. But if you could. Read the opening of the of the dialogue.

Read Socrates's initial. Conversation with the great sofas. We will be discussing that in the first lecture a week from today. So David, again, thank you so much. And I would love to have you back when I have a chance to read your. Well, both of your books, the anthology and also the metaphysics, metaphysics of technology, because there's a lot, obviously. To be said about these issues, and it's nothing, could be more timely because we're talking about the dwindling future prospects of the human race.

David: Yeah, it's, it's not going away. It's only going to get worse. So we're going to have plenty of chance to talk so. I'm happy to do it anytime, Greg.

Greg: Thank you so much.

Counter-Currents Radio Podcast No. 537 David Skrbina on Ted Kaczynski, Part 2

Source

June 26, 2023

Here is the second part of **Greg Johnson's** interview with **David Skrbina, Ph.D.** on last week's broadcast of *Counter-Currents Radio* concerning the life and ideas of Ted Kaczynski, a.k.a. the Unabomber. The first part is here. Dr. Skrbina is the editor of Kaczynski's book *Technological Slavery*, which includes excerpts from their correspondence, and recently penned an obituary and memoir about their relationship that was published here at *Counter-Currents*, "A Great Passing: Reflections on 20 Years with the Unabomber."

Topics discussed include:

01:03 Was Ted a moral utilitarian?

08:52 Was Ted a nihilist?

10:20 Was Ted's untechnological vision utopian?

14:17 What are your thoughts about the media's reaction to his death?

17:59 Couldn't Ted have just started a blog?

To listen in a player, click here. To download, right-click the link and click "save as."

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Greg: I'm Greg Johnson. I am joined again by David Scherbina. Last week we did a live stream about the late Ted Kaczynski and at the very end of the stream there were several questions that came in that I didn't notice and I apologize. To the questioners who sent in their super chats, and I would. I asked him if he would have a little sort of afterthoughts stream or show so we could cover these. There are two main questions that came in. One is from our friend Gadeirus, who's a very good friend of the show, and he noted that. Some sort of dissident right commentators online, for instance, had characterized Kaczynski as a moral utilitarian. And I thought, well, we could ask the expert about this. So David, would you characterize Kaczynski as a some sort of utilitarian?

Was Ted a moral utilitarian?

David: Yeah, I think I would, I mean. I don't hadn't. Really thought about it in traditional ethical categories within philosophy, you you typically have three major schools of ethics, if you will. Utilitarianism is one of them comes out of. Bentham and Mill in the British tradition. Then you have content ethics. Which is a traditionally a duty based. Ethical system called deontological like based on duties and obligations

that people have. And then you have sort of the original ethical scheme from the ancient Greeks called virtue. And that's sort of based around the ideas of Plato and Aristotle in particular. So yeah, I mean, it's kind of an interesting question, where Kaczynski's actions fall in terms of the ethical spectrum. Right utilitarianism, at least traditionally, is focused around this greatest happiness principle, right, as much happiness for as many people as possible. And that. Could necessarily entail some sacrifice of some smaller number for greater satisfaction for a larger number, including long term satisfaction or happiness. So I guess I would say on the one hand. Kaczynski's bombing campaign, in a sense, was sacrificing a few people for the larger cause. That is a utilitarian approach. It's also very pragmatic. I mean, utilitarianism tends to be sort of very analytic, very practical, very pragmatic. And I guess that would also fit with Kaczynski. In the sense that, he wants a particular outcome, he wants to get the word out, he wants to build a revolutionary movement, he wants to. Undermine the technological. System and so these. Were the pragmatic means to that end. So that also. Would fit in. In a utilitarian scheme, I guess you could say you know there's a kind of a duty based content component. If you could say, well look, we really have an obligation to the planet, we have an obligation to future generations who are going to suffer horribly if we do nothing. So arguably there is a kind of a deontological component. Here a content component which you could argue for. And I suppose even sort of. A virtue ethics aspect, right? If this is sort of the nobler cause to adopt, even though it's difficult to undertake some kind of technological revolution. Could be argued on the basis of long-term values and values of the of the planet intrinsic values in nature, and so forth. So I guess just sort of. Off the top of. My head I could really. Kind of make an argument for any of. Those three major schools. Of thought, I think it fits well with utilitarianism, but you know there's arguments for the others as.

Greg: Well, too well. He certainly didn't make himself happy in any conventional sense. It's by pursuing his life, including the bombing campaign, and ending up in jail for a very long time. Can you really say that what he was doing was motivated by essentially and ethics of hedonism? Because utilitarianism is famous for? Being hedonistic, it calculates the good in terms of pleasure. It is collectivistic, so you can, I suppose, say that other people's happiness matters, perhaps more than your own in some ways, but he didn't seem to be particularly concerned with creature comforts and happiness. You know, understood it in any kind of conventional way, except maybe, I suppose, a very sort of austere epicurean. Greek Epicurean kind of understanding of well, there are certain basic natural needs that are to be met and going beyond that as a source of unhappiness.

David: Yeah, that's exactly what I was going. To say right that the traditional Epicurean notion of hedonism had a much more positive spin than the later and the modern. The notion of hedonism, which sort of got critiqued by Catholicism. And became a negative. Thing, but yeah, certainly. Kaczynski himself. I mean, he lived a very austere life. He was living very, very bare bones. I mean very close to the Earth. I mean, he had to know, right? Just conducting the bombing campaign and being just

building bombs is dangerous. I mean, there's a fair chance. Just kill yourself right by your bombs going off. You know unexpectedly, I mean, he had to know those reasonable chance he would get caught a reasonable chance he might get killed. Clearly, he was willing to sacrifice those things. In the name. Of the larger cause. So it was certainly not his own personal, hedonistic or superficial pleasures, I guess you could say, well, look, he's getting a larger pleasure out of, saving. Saving humanity or destroying technology, I suppose. Well, OK, maybe there's an argument for that.

Greg: If you look at John Stuart Mills, utilitarianism mills, utilitarianism, by making distinctions between qualities of pleasure. Becomes almost a kind of virtue ethics in the end. Because he's willing to say that. Well, you might enjoy playing pinball as much as you enjoy reading poetry, or even more, but say, great literature, great poetry, or things that elevate the mind are still superior to that and. Again, it sort of moves in the direction of an ethics of cultivating virtues of virtues understood as excellences as potentialities for excellence, and and. So I could see. Saying that what Kaczynski is up to is something like that. it's almost a kind of virtue ethics or even at deontological ethics, because he seems to have this very, very high sense of duty and obligation, and he seems to be unconcerned with the personal consequences of his actions. For himself, and that seems like a very content view, but you also find this in Aristotle. Aristotle would make the claim that the morally mature person does what's right because it's right and isn't particularly concerned with consequences anymore. and that's really what a noble man does. So it is interesting. Maybe this is just an indication that if you start out with one ethical theory, you'll sort of dialectically be forced to embrace features of other ethical theories. I don't know.

David: Well, yeah, I mean and it's, it's not surprising. That there's overlap. Right. Because I mean, all these guys are aiming at something a higher, better life, right, a noble or existence. I mean, those sort of have universal sort of sort of characteristics. So you know, nobody's arguing. And to, praise the thieves and. The murderers and you? Know drag people down to the mud, I mean. So everybody's got sort of the same goals. So it's not surprising that there's overlap, you know and how they approach? Things that just maybe different sorts of emphasis. Right. Do you emphasize the virtues of themselves? Do you emphasize the concept of duty? Do you emphasize sort of consequentialist or? Pragmatic outcomes like the utilitarians. So that that's kind of. How I've always viewed it sort of tending towards. The general commonality. Towards a better life, but just different sort of tactical approaches to that.

Was Ted a nihilist?

Greg: Yeah, that makes sense. The other claim was that Kaczynski was a nihilist, a moral nihilist. And I couldn't find the source of that. But I thought, well, if it's a meme floating around, it certainly needs discussion, do you think? He's plausibly interpreted

as a nihilist to basically deny. I guess the question then becomes, well, what is nihilism? Is it the? Denial that there are. Or is it denial that value is objective?

David: Well, exactly. that's a kind of a nifty little term. That gets thrown out a lot and people don't know what they're talking about, right? It's the negation of something. Right. It's like, under something or non something, right. But you have to know what you're talking about. You just say nihilist. You got to be a. Your nihilist about values. Or religion or God or something, I mean. It's got to. Relate to something.

Right so. I suppose maybe you know, like like a pure. Anarchist, who sort of, just is kind of you. Know bent on. Destroying, existing structures in a sense, could be nihilistic. And maybe that's the sense of people thinking about Kaczynski.

I've never really seen that pertain. Or apply to. I don't see him as a nihilist. I mean, he has. He has a cause. He has a rationale, he has goals, he's aiming towards, and they're arguably are noble and sustainable goals. So you know, I would argue against any. Any kind of? Nihilistic characterization of him or his action.

Was Ted's untechnological vision utopian?

Greg: Yeah, I think that makes a lot of sense, one questioner who wrote in said that there's evidence that primitive hunter gatherer type societies really aren't that happy. In fact, that they're rife with conflict and violence that many people die violent deaths and so forth. And the question basically was, did Kaczynski have an overly rosy picture of pre technological society?

David: No, he didn't. In fact, if you read his book, technological slavery, one of the longest essays. Is the truth about primitive life? And he spends a long time there, deep bunking, this romantic notion, like everything's wonderful and hunky Dory, and everybody's great and happy, I mean, he's like he, he's just kind of saying no, that's not how it is. He's admitting the reality. He understands something of the reality of, of a primitive. Kind of existence. He knows it will be hard and they'll be sort. Of you know, sort of suffering in certain ways and inequalities and things that you know would have existed in very primitive hunter gatherer societies. I mean, yes, of course there was conflict between bands at the time, but those were relatively as far as we know, relatively limited. Relatively benign, I mean, you had people, people were broadly spread, and unless it was a very localized situation, you're a rare watering hole or some particularly productive land or something. You know people, people are vastly spread. You're living in a small band of people, say 30 to 50 people and you're roaming pretty much amongst the vast wilderness. So it's not like you're bumping into an angry mob every other day and you get the brawls, over over. Food or something? You know, I'm sure they were raiding. Parties going on. Right. So the you know. The men were always looking. For women and mates and so forth and I, you can imagine there was a competition struggle over that. You know, we have some documentation of various sort of, fights I mean. They weren't really. I guess the point is they weren't technological.

Battles with sophisticated nifty. High killing machines, right? It was basically. Hand on hand. You know, or maybe with, sticks or? Crude, weapons of. Some kind it was, it was pretty. Much a straight. Up even fight. And it was, like I say. Hand to hand. It's you could do a lot less damage, right when you know, five guys are in a brawl with no real weapons other than sticks and stones. I mean, you can kill somebody, obviously, but it takes a lot of effort. And it's pretty risky. It's not like. Firing a gun from a distance and you can just mow people down. So I mean there was there was sort of violence and suffering, but it was a vastly different than it is today. It was much more sort. Of comprehensible. I guess this is sort of the point we we, the primitive people, understood the risk, we understood what could happen. Right, you run into another band and there's a potential risk of some conflict or some. Some sort of struggle. You understood how to defend yourself. Everything was completely. Understood. And it. Was really all adapted to in your genetics. So people, the human species, had adapted over 2,000,000 years of this kind of existence to know how to understand these threats, to deal with them and to survive them. And obviously we did because we went, we survived. 2,000,000 years. And we, made it to the modern. So it's not like it was going to. Be a happy, carefree you. Know walk in the park all the time, but. But there seems to have been some level of satisfaction involved with that existence. It fit well with our. Genetic history, unlike today's existence, which is utterly at odds with our genetic history, we face dangers today that we can barely comprehend and back then we totally understood all the dangers. And we. Knew how to respond to the. So it was just a very different situation. I think we need to take the whole picture into account and I think. Kaczynski did. He did a good job of that, and again I would refer people to that essay if they're curious of his specific views about that.

What are your thoughts about the media's reaction to his death?

Greg: Well, that's very interesting. What are some of your thoughts about the general reaction in the media to his death? I've been looking at some of the obituaries in places like the New York Times and others. And it's interesting how much information is put out there and how a lot of these riders sort of tiptoe, tiptoe around the issues and really the motives that this guy had. I've seen a number of people speculate that he was somehow insane, et cetera. I'm just wondering is there really an attempt to grapple with him now that he's dead, or are there or is there more of an attempt to just dismiss him and go on to the next page.

David: Yeah, so, so far it's not looking good, right? So the accounts of his death were pretty much just you know sticking to the facts as best they could. You know, he's mentioned as a terrorist and they talk about the bombing and he. Killed 3 people and. You know, there's typically, one or two sentences, oh, we had some views about

technology. He wanted to kind of undermine or destroy the technological system and then that's it. I mean. It was really kind of revolting. I was. Particularly that were like on in network. News I was. Watching Evening News coverage and it, you would go with that, they would. Spend you know. Of or whatever long segment 5 or 8 minutes or whatever it would be in 1/2 hour show talking about him in the background. But it was all sort of the crimes and the terrorism in his history. And then there would be like one sentence at the very end. Oh, you know. And he really wanted to destroy the technological system. And then that's it. Thanks back to you. You know kind. Of kind of story. It was. It was really, really appalling. I mean, I looked at, I looked at the obituaries in. The New York Times as well. Same thing. I mean it was, the story about, how the manifesto got published in the debates going on and, would he stopped killing people and all these kind of circumstances and really nothing nothing about about the technology itself.

I can't remember if we mentioned it when I was talking when we were talking earlier, right how I got contacted right away by the both the AP and the New York Times, and they wanted a statement. This was within like an hour of the news getting out that Ted had died. And I gave him basically a. Statement that said you know. You know? Yeah, it's focusing a lot on the motives and the and the problems with technology and that's what we need to talk about. And if you want to talk about that more, just let me know and. Then I heard nothing. I mean, they didn't want to talk about it at all. So I think I have yet to see any serious engagement with the motives with the problems with the ideas of the manifesto, with the pros and cons. Really nothing at all and you? Know we had hoped for. For a long time that maybe when Ted was gone that they would sort of back off and sort of actually have a kind of a discussion or at least have some space for a discussion of the actual ideas. Whether even if. It was a debate I. Don't care, put. Put us in a debate. I mean, I'm happy to defend the Ted's. Views and put me in a. Debate with anybody you want willing to talk to anybody take. Take them on. I don't. I don't really care. I can I. Can more than defend the. View, But so far nobody seems to be interested in him. Having that having that debate.

So it's not short term, not encouraging longer term. You know we can always hope that as the technology catastrophes sort of grow and multiply and the risks increase, maybe we get a little distance from Ted's background. Maybe you get some sort of new. You know Netflix directors or younger guys who are kind of more interested in what's the real story and they don't care so much about the 30 year old bombing campaign. Maybe at some point here in the future we'll get a better, more substantive discussion about the technology.

Couldn't Ted have just started a blog?

Greg: A third question that I overlooked came in from a friend of mine who was basically just wanting me to repeat a point that I had made in a in a live stream with

Rich hawk about this in a way it was sort of a joke and kind of a vulgar. Vulgar outlook, but there is a point to it. Which is. Gee, if Kaczynski only could have waited like five years, he could have had a blog. He he didn't have to do this bombing campaign to get his ideas out. The point is, is that at a certain point, shortly after the year 2000, really when the Internet started becoming a bigger thing and people had ways of communicating outside of the mainstream, getting around the gatekeepers. That these sorts of ideas could have gotten out there without him having to reduce to blackmail and sending bombs, and could have had a lot more impact. I think now one thing. That does give me some hope is that there are alternative media outlets enabled by technology. Definitely that. Now allow these sorts of more substantive discussions to take place. Outside the mainstream, yes, but still it's happening. Whereas before it was almost unheard of. It was very, very difficult for you to have alternative viewpoints and discussions before the Internet came along. And so I guess the question that I could pose to you. Based on this, is simply. Do you think that discussions of this in alternative media platforms have been more substantive and more interesting? And do you have some hope in in that direction that some of these issues will actually be seriously treated and make a greater impact on society, right?

David: Well, a couple. Couple of things. I guess you. Know I guess I would disagree with the. Premise that even if Ted had waited 5. Years he could have, gone online or something, I mean, he had no standing. Prior to the...

Greg: Right.

David: He was just he was just a dropout, Berkeley Prof Math Prof, who was, living in. The woods...

Greg: Right.

David: You know the comparison, I think would. Be to Bill Joy. Who wrote his piece in 2000, right? Why the future doesn't need us? And that caused a big a big. Fuss at the time. Name Joy was critiquing the GNR technologies, genetics, nanotech, and robotics, and sort of sympathizing with Kaczynski, which he did, and then saying that we needed to kind of relinquish at least those 3 dangerous technologies caused. The big discussion was a huge piece. Huge, hugely circulated at the time. Do you recall that? But that worked only because of Bill Joy standing right. He was a major figure in the tech. And so when he came out as anti. Tech in a. That was, that was the ground for that. Discussion, and therefore it carried a lot of. Weight and therefore it got a lot of. Better a lot of discussion and so forth. You know Kaczynski as an unknown, even if he puts out the exact same manifesto, five years later, he maybe gets it published. Maybe he gets his own little show, running a blog out of his cabin in Montana. Or, podcast or something. I mean, he would be like, any of 1,000,000. Other sort of people, maybe a little better. Standing OK, he's a. PhD guy and he's obviously smarter than most people. But you know, still he's in. He's in there fighting among. A crowd of you know. A million a. Million guys, which is how it is now, right? There's a million, just little podcasts out there. Yeah, sure. Some of them are talking about it. I've been invited to a handful of podcasts to talk about Ted and technology. So some of. They are

willing to do that, but I mean these guys are, really marginal. Very, small audiences and so forth and there's. A huge. Wall, media wall that you kind? Of need to break through if you want. To get any kind of. Real traction. So I think Ted never had the standing he would have never had the standing. I mean, unless he had. Some brilliant new. Inconceivably, mind blowing argument against technology that really made him stand up but he didn't have that, I. Mean he was just kind of. Taking existing ideas, mostly from alul, as we talked about putting them in very clear explicit form, drawing logical consequences, but they weren't popular consequences. So right gotta destroy technology. Sort of go back to a primitive kind of. Life, you know? I think the same thing. His argument still holds if he if he done that. If you can wait five years or 10 years, you know at best he would have been one of thousands of podcasters out there trying to get a word. Out and nothing. Would have happened really.

Greg: Well, I think that's a that's a very. Good answer to that. Thank you so much. David, any other final thoughts?

David: No, I just you know, we want to hope that the discussion about the technology stays alive, right? that's kind of really what we're putting our fingers here. Because we need to move beyond Ted. And his crimes and. Maybe we can do that now. If he's gone and. We don't worry about giving him any satisfaction and any platform and all those silly little stupid things that people have. Been saying for a. Long time. So we can hope that. People you know, people like yourself or your listeners or whatever are willing. To engage in these questions. These are very serious questions. The arguments against technology are very strong. and if we don't. Have them relatively soon you. Yeah, we may not, may not. Be around to have them. So let's just hope that the focus comes around to technology and maybe uses the unabombers starting point and then we could. Go from there.

Greg: All right. Well, thank you so much. I very much appreciate this and I definitely want to continue this conversation.

David: Sure, very good. Thanks, Greg Q.

Leftward Drift & Radical Ecology: The Tragedy of Earth First!

Source

By William de Vere

EF1.jpg

3,464 words

Part 1 of 2; part 2 [here](#)

While its current champions would have us believe that political ecology is the exclusive domain of the Left, and often fret about the specter of entryism by racists and crypto-fascists into their struggle for world liberation, a cursory glance at the history of ecological thought reveals the opposite to be true. Indeed, the story of environmental politics in the United States provides a textbook example of the phenomenon of leftward drift.

As many on the Right have already observed, any organization in contemporary America that does not explicitly reject the liberal pieties of our society — globalism, egalitarianism, hedonistic individualism, democratic rule — will soon find itself undone by them, neutralized by a few well-timed appeals to “equality” and “diversity.” This is commonly referred to as “Sullivan’s Law,” which posits that “All organizations that are not actually right-wing will over time become left-wing.”

These groups often begin, sincerely enough, as a collection of like-minded individuals engaged in a project of mutual interest. However, as seemingly innocent and apolitical as their cause might seem (playing video games, saving old-growth forests, drinking Scotch), once the group achieves a certain mass and visibility it is only a matter of time before the Left takes notice. Mortified that a group of people could be going about their lives unfettered by his neurotic obsession with righting historical wrongs and destroying the last vestiges of traditional culture, the leftist will begin by critiquing the organization from outside, drawing fellow-travelers to his cause, demanding to know why the organization isn’t more diverse or active in campaigning for social justice.

Those possessing a vague familiarity with the group in question will insinuate themselves into the membership and ultimately the inner circle, exacerbating tensions in the organization that had previously been minimized by their common cause, throwing a little petty personal rivalry into the mix, and thereby sabotage the group’s ability to accomplish anything without taking a “hard look” at their inherited privilege first. They will browbeat a few of the weaker and more insecure members of the group, cultivating a small but substantial fifth column within the organization. They will call for

greater democracy and transparency and inclusivity in the group's leadership, using their newfound power to subtly undermine some of the more uncompromising earlier positions.

Once the group cohesion has weakened, the floodgates are opened to other entryists. With the aid of the original moles and fifth-columnists, these infiltrators spare little time in ousting the recalcitrant founders and members unwilling to be re-educated. Before long the original character and mission of the group will have been wholly lost, and the organization transformed into yet another appendage of the radical Left.

This is, with no exaggeration, precisely what happened to Earth First! around 1990.

Some readers will doubtless wonder why the fate of an obscure radical environmentalist group, best known for chaining themselves to trees and disabling bulldozers, should be of interest to the True Right. However, EF! in its early years was decidedly more right-leaning than is typically realized. The generally leftist connotations of environmentalism in the United States, as well as the implacable EF! it earned from corporate oligarchs and conservative state politicians, has resulted in this group being classified, wrongly, as a creature of the radical Left.

Moreover, unlike many other failed rightist organizations, the early EF! was genuinely not interested in advancing any political agenda beyond defending the wilderness against corporate greed and bourgeois complacency. To this end, in their early years they cultivated a kind of ecological *Männerbund* with their own myths and heroes. For these reasons alone, and because their variant of rightist ecology is one that is congenial to the Restoration, their tale — the rise and fall of one of the few genuinely anti-modern political associations in late-20th century America — should be of interest. Additionally, their takeover by hostile leftists illustrates some of the dangers of their approach.

In order to understand how this leftward drift came about, a little theoretical foregrounding is necessary. As I outlined in a previous article, the worldview of ecology, in its metaphysical, scientific, and political manifestations, is a contemporary iteration of the perennial doctrine of holism. This tradition of thought regards the cosmos as an interconnected whole whose integrity takes precedence over narrow human concerns, and entails a concomitant rejection of narrow anthropocentrism in the service of the natural order. In other words, rightly understood ecology shares the transcendent and hierarchical ethos that the Left has been rebelling against since the days of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

In addition to the danger it poses to their philosophical individualism and egalitarianism, the Left has also been historically opposed to metaphysical holism because it prioritizes the health and functioning of the whole over the parts. In politics, this tends to be rather anti-democratic, anti-individualistic and, well, totalitarian — giving rise to such glorious epochs as ancient Sparta, the Roman Empire, feudal Europe, and 19th-century Prussia (not to mention certain poorly regarded mid-century regimes). While Men of the Right might view such states as among mankind's highest achieve-

ments, eddies of order in the historical river of chaos, for the Left they represent the ultimate evil of institutionalized hierarchy and oppression.

Though this tradition of holistic philosophical and political thought received its highest expression in Europe, there was a time when it had its devotees among the American upper classes. Nowadays the United States is often depicted as a propositional nation, a mere assemblage of atomistic economic units dedicated to liberty, equality, and unfettered greed divorced from any cultural or ethnic moorings, but this corrupt interpretation of our national character would have been unrecognizable to the WASP elites of yesteryear.

This includes the earliest defenders of American wilderness, who were square-jawed, noble-browed, broad-chested *Übermenschen* to a man.

John Muir, sage of Yosemite and godfather of the preservationist movement, believed the wilderness ought to be preserved for those of sufficient spiritual stuff to adequately appreciate it, and despised the influx of fat bourgeois tourists encroaching upon his holy temple.

Sigurd Olson wanted to preserve the wilds as an arena for testing the mettle of American man, growing soft and decadent with the rise of industrialism.

Madison Grant was even more explicit in his desire to preserve the wilderness as a spiritual and physical outlet for European Americans to escape from the spiritually deadening environs of the cities.

Theodore Roosevelt, bloodthirsty imperialist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, similarly preached the virtues of the strenuous life and big game hunting, and would no doubt hold the limp-wristed yuppie environmentalists of today in utter contempt.

John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt: WASPs in the wild.

Even their proto-ecological Transcendentalist forebears, despite the sanctimoniousness of their abolitionism and armchair radicalism, rarely ventured outside the pristine mountains and forests of New England or the lily-white village of Concord, and spent their leisure time meditating upon Indo-European masters such as Plotinus, Coleridge, Goethe, and the Vedic scribes. Historian Stephen Fox thus describes these early years of American conservation as focused towards rural areas and wilderness, strongly religious, aesthetic and spiritual in values, middle- and upper-class in sympathy, and informed by a view of history as decline and regression¹.

Despite the selective appropriation of these figures and their legacy by the contemporary environmental Left, all of the above-mentioned heroes of 19th-century conservation were in fact Men of the Right, or at least of a highly spiritualized apolitical bent. Indeed, the historical Left has never really given a damn about nature in the *Right* sense of the word, meaning the totality of evolutionary processes and iron laws that gave rise to an inhumanly beautiful and sublime Creation, indifferent to modernist pieties; the outer garment of God, a living symbol of imperceptible order beneath the

¹ Stephen Fox, *John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1981), 354-5.

seeming chaos of the cosmos; a world of symbiosis but also of ruthless competition, interdependent but also hierarchical, in which death and suffering are the necessary purgative processes that cleanse the Earth of its decadence and make way for new life.

A world, in other words, that can be summed up by a well-known expression of the New Right: “Nature is the ultimate fascist.” It also corresponds to the reactionary concept of “Gnon,” which regards Nature itself — whether consciously or not — as an implacable order that mankind contravenes at its peril.

No, the Left never had much use for that kind of nature. Karl “the idiocy of rural life” Marx, whiling away most of his hours within the monumental walls of the British Library, surrounded by one of the most polluted industrial cesspools the world has ever known, certainly didn’t care much for it. His utterly deracinated heirs in the Frankfurt School, while voicing some half-hearted concern about modernity’s oppression of man and nature, were clearly only interested in the former — and that only to the extent that Nazis and their “authoritarian personalities” could be blamed. And it is a well-concealed fact that when the contemporary ecology movement began in earnest in the 1970s, the Old Left joined voices with civil rights leaders and Students for a Democratic Society in order to vigorously denounce it for drawing attention away from the race/class/culture struggle toward such frivolities as species extinction and wilderness destruction.

However, the more astute among the left-wing organizers knew a good thing when they saw it. They soon realized that environmental concern was an easy way to buy a few votes and in short order swept in to appropriate it for themselves. This wasn’t very difficult, seeing that the purported “conservatives” of this country haven’t really been interested in conserving anything other than neoliberal capitalism for at least sixty years.

The more elitist variant of environmentalism had formerly been criticized for its doom-and-gloom politics and misanthropy, but even that proved more bearable for the majority of Americans than the self-abnegation preached by the saints of the New Left. Once the environmental movement was in its clutches, the Left could combine the best of both worlds, making middle-class Amerikaners feel guilty for both the color of their skin *and* for the burden their existence imposed upon the Earth. This strategy required getting rid of some of the ecological movement’s earlier, more “reactionary” positions on immigration and overpopulation, but in all honestly the Left never really had much use for those anyways.

One group stands against this tide of leftist entryism. While their glory days only lasted about ten years, until they were duly assimilated into the Borg Cube of Social Justice, Earth First! was the first activist group to reject the technocratic incrementalism of the mid-century environmental movement and embrace an uncompromising *ecocentrism*, which they understood as a moral and religious commitment to uphold the natural order against human greed and hubris.

The earliest Earth First! insignia, designating its commitment to fight without compromise in defense of the Earth.

Rather than focusing on mundane human concerns, ecocentrism is interested in the totality, the *oikos*, man's dwelling place on Earth, both in its transcendent and immanent dimensions. Indeed, since traditional panentheistic emanationism holds that God both is *in* all and *transcends* all, ecocentrism is therefore essentially *theocentrism*, which is the fundamental orientation of traditional metaphysics and therefore of the True Right.

Thus, unlike most other "new social movements" that sprung up around that time, EF! received little impetus from the New Left: it was a resurgence of the elite wilderness conservation movement, deeply rooted in the mountains and forests of the Western states, and embracing a philosophy that prioritized not human welfare or socioeconomic equality but a defense of ecological integrity and the natural order².

Its founders were also unique among contemporary environmentalists in their demeanor. They were more "macho" in outlook and behavior (dubbed the "rednecks for wilderness" due to their southwestern roots and inordinate fondness for beer, hunting, and chicken fried steak), more libertarian in the classic American tradition of Jefferson and Thoreau, more open to clandestine activities such as monkeywrenching, more concerned with preserving wilderness and biodiversity, and generally less interested in issues of social justice. Their influence and outlook ensured that EF! would be, in spite of its current associations, an implicitly rightist group during its first ten years.

Paragons of masculine virtue.

Unlike both the contemporary environmental Left and the traditional wilderness preservation movement, EF! sought to preserve the wilderness not solely for recreational or aesthetic reasons but as an arena of natural evolution and continued speciation. Despite the New Age associations of radical environmentalism in the popular mind, these early radical ecologists upheld the laws of nature and of Gnon in all of their violence and brutality. While the workings of the natural world might seem positively hostile to its various individual organisms, the thinkers of Earth First! emphasized how these harsh realities — predation, disease, even the occasional asteroid — conduce to the beauty and health of the whole. Nature's apparent "cruelty" is merely a product of humanitarian morality.

In addition, rather than trying to preserve ecosystems in a static state, the rightist ecology upheld by Earth First! was more attuned to the laws of nature and maintaining a civilization in harmony with those laws. As co-founder Dave Foreman said in an interview, "The idea is not to protect ecosystems frozen in time . . . but [rather] the grand process . . . of evolution . . . And so I guess what is sacred is what's in harmony with that flow"³.

Since humanity is uniquely capable of disregarding the laws of nature, in this rightist ecology wild, undomesticated landscapes and species are upheld as the purest and most

² The following is indebted to Kyle W. Beam, "Future Primitive: The Politics of Militant Ecology," Ph.D. diss. (University of Notre Dame, 2016).

³ Bron Taylor, "The Tributaries of Radical Environmentalism," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 2, no. 1 (2008), 43.

authentic expressions of the natural order. The early EF! accordingly deemphasized the struggle for more egalitarian social arrangements, and indeed the whole emancipatory heritage of the Enlightenment, believing these to be secondary to the preservation of wild nature and evolutionary processes.

The ecowarriors of Earth First!, in fact, tended to have a rather more pessimistic view of the human species than the environmental Left, viewing ecological devastation as the work not of a few particularly destructive groups or socio-economic systems (which allows the blame to be conveniently placed at the feet of the Left's traditional enemies), but rather as a consequence of the ideologies of modernity. They were thus deeply suspicious of progress, considering modern society "a fleeting, unpleasant mirage on the landscape rather than a vision of the future to be emulated"⁴.

Accordingly, the founding principles of Earth First! included "a deep questioning of, and even an antipathy to, 'progress' and 'technology'. . . For every material 'achievement' of progress, there are a dozen losses of things of profound and ineffable value"⁵. While their resistance towards technology could sometimes veer towards a kind of brutal anarcho-primitivism, they were generally more nuanced in their appraisals, believing that a "future primitive" society combining the best of both worlds was the ideal (reminiscent in some ways of the archeofuturism espoused by Guillaume Faye).

Of course, many leftist observers criticized the totalitarian or "ecofascist" potential of Earth First! stances, which prioritized the good of the ecosystem over that of individual humans. Their support for population control and immigration restrictions, apparent indifference to social justice, preference for pre-modern social orders, nature mysticism, distaste for cities, and critical attitudes toward the Enlightenment only added fuel to the fire for leftist critics⁶.

Their social policies could be positively reactionary. Regarding population, for instance, Foreman argued against the leftist position that the maldistribution of resources was the problem, stating that "even if inequitable distribution could be solved, six billion human beings converting the natural world to material goods and human food would devastate natural diversity"⁷.

Others argued that foreign aid to the Third World would only make humanitarian problems worse in the long run, since it artificially supports an unsustainably high population. Thus, the ecowarrior solution to global population growth outside the United States was a counsel of non-interference, letting nature "take its course" whenever disaster struck.

Leftist environmentalists also chided the ecowarriors of EF! for their anti-immigration stance. In addition to the ecological costs of our historically high

⁴ Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 32.

⁵ Dave Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1991), 28.

⁶ Michael E. Zimmerman, "Rethinking the Heidegger-Deep Ecology Relationship," *Environmental Ethics* 15 (Fall 1993), 205.

⁷ Foreman, *Confessions*, 28.

immigration rate, many ecowarriors believed that massive immigration, particularly illegal immigration, serves “as an overflow safety valve to get rid of dissidents in Latin America and to provide a source of cheap, nonunion labor for corporations here at home”⁸. The ever-controversial Edward Abbey also voiced concern about the demographic impacts of mass Latin American immigration. In one particularly ill-received statement, he opined that “it might be wise for us as American citizens to consider calling a halt to the mass influx of even more millions of hungry, ignorant, unskilled, and culturally-morally-genetically impoverished people. At least until we have brought our own affairs into order”⁹.

Edward Abbey, politically incorrect godfather of radical environmentalism.

Politically, the founders of Earth First! sometimes described themselves as anarchists; however, they do not appear to have been motivated by a celebration of chaos or lifestyle anarchism associated with the “circle-A” anarchists of the punk underground. A number of early ecowarriors strongly admired the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal, believing that the triumph of the Federalists and the centralized state was a tragic misstep in American history. This agrarian civic republicanism, with its emphasis on self-sacrifice in furtherance of the common good, might in fact be the only homegrown American political expression of the holistic metaphysical ideal — especially in comparison to the more atomistic and mechanistic model of classical liberalism that came to prevail after the Revolutionary era.

Accordingly, these ecowarriors embraced certain aspects of the historical American nation, frequently employing the American and Gadsden flags as symbols of their love for the land, singing patriotic songs at rallies, and holding their annual meeting on the Fourth of July. Like its 19th-century Romantic defenders, they spoke of wilderness as a particularly American heritage, with Foreman once claiming that “wilderness is America. What can be more patriotic than love of the land? We will be Americans only as long as there is wilderness. Wilderness is our true Bill of Rights, the true repository of our freedoms, the true home of liberty”¹⁰.

In addition to betraying their more traditionalist and conservative leanings (Foreman himself was an ex-Marine and former Goldwater supporter), this flag-waving was above all an attempt to wrest the historic American nation away from the corporations and land-destroying elites, to affirm that true patriotism was inseparable from love of the land.

The founders of EF! originally hoped to spark some kind of greater social transformation; but quickly realizing that the current was against them, they evolved into a kind of ecological militia, defending the last vestiges of wild nature until the inevitable collapse of the modern world. Regarding modern civilization as wholly corrupt and

⁸ Murray Bookchin and Dave Foreman, *Defending the Earth: A Debate* (New York: Black Rose Books, 1991), 27.

⁹ Edward Abbey, “Immigration and Liberal Taboos,” in *One Life at a Time, Please* (New York: Holt, 1988), 43.

¹⁰ *EF! Journal* 1, no. 7 (August 1, 1981), 1.

beyond saving, ecowarriors saw no point in devoting much energy to movement building or working for social reforms. As co-founder Howie Wolke explained, “Thoughtful radicalism will save some biotic diversity in the short term, and allow more to be saved and restored for the longer run. Then, when the floundering beast finally, mercifully chokes in its own dung pile, there’ll at least be *some* wilderness remaining as a seedbed for planet-wide recovery”¹¹. Foreman insisted that “we never envisioned Earth First! as being a huge mass movement” and that “for a group more committed to Gila Monsters and Mountain Lions than to people, there will not be a total alliance with other social movements”¹².

In their strong early group cohesion, right-wing anarchism, and avoidance of electoral politics in favor of directly acting to defend the sacred (by illegal means if necessary), the early Earth First! might be envisioned as a kind of anti-modern ecological *Männerbund*. However, along with their great affinity for the historic American nation, agrarianism, and civic republicanism came one fatal flaw. Given their understandable contempt for the bureaucratic federal government, the minds of these men were captured by a persistent strain of philosophical anarchism. They therefore combined a reactionary metaphysics and political ethos with a regrettably egalitarian, non-hierarchical organization. This served to make them more popular but, unsurprisingly, would ultimately lead to their downfall.

With the early successes of Earth First! came the envious spite typical of the doctrinaire Left — who, despite their constant denunciations of ugly noxious screeds are themselves often quite guilty on that score. The opening salvo was fired by Murray Bookchin, a bloviating Hegelian from Vermont (by way of New York City). This was a man whose vituperative style and all-around prickliness eventually led even his own *disciples* to concede that he set back the cause of the American ecology movement for decades. He had been laboring for years on a turgid, vaguely Hegelian theory known as “social ecology,” which traced all of the world’s ecological ills to the existence of hierarchy, rank, and differentiation.

Bookchin accused the founders of Earth First! of being “eco-brutalists,” Malthusian racists, New Age irrationalists, misanthropic purveyors of race war, closet Heideggerians, Woody Guthrie fans, and all-around bad guys. He insisted that EF! needed to drop its stance on population, immigration, and wilderness preservation and pay more attention to human welfare concerns. Otherwise, he warned darkly, Auschwitz was just around the corner.

Bookchin’s polemic was met with indignation and ridicule from the Earth First! old guard, and had little immediate effect. It would take a few more years before another, far more successful form of leftist entryism fully engulfed Earth First!, marking an end to its brief glory days as a truly ecocentric *Männerbund*.

¹¹ Howie Wolke, “Grizzly Den: Thoughtful Radicalism,” *EF! Journal* 10, no. 2 (December 1989), 29.

¹² Foreman, *Confessions*, 20; Martha F. Lee, *Earth First! Environmental Apocalypse* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 86.

Towards the end of the eighties, signs of strain began showing. Dissident voices appeared in the *Earth First! Journal*, expressing discontent with the old guard's indifference to leftist social justice, opposition to immigration, and draconian approach to population control. The California EF! group was effectively taken over by Judi Bari, a labor organizer who cut her teeth in anti-war and anti-capitalist activism before seeing the potential manpower to be gained from the limp-wristed acolytes of radical ecology. She was later elevated to the communion of leftist saints after a botched car-bombing — likely the work of anti-environmentalists or FBI agents provocateurs — almost led to her death.

Bari oversaw a complete transformation within California Earth First! that involved a growing emphasis on social justice, women's issues, alliances with timber workers, a denunciation of tree-spiking, and an attempt to turn what had formerly been a tight-knit radical vanguard into a mass political movement. "Dave Foreman wants Earth First! to remain small, pure and radical," she was quoted as saying; "I want it to be big, impure and radical"¹³. And that about sums it up.

The crowd that gathered around Bari was what one would expect: long-haired dope-smoking hippies, black-clad urban anarchist vegans, budding social justice warriors, and POCs eager to accuse another predominantly white group of implicit racism. The old guard, with their ecofascist, racist, sexist, Neanderthal ways, were minimized within their own movement, leading critics to dub them the "Arizona Junta" and the "Foremanistas." And since Earth First! was a democratic movement, devoted to anarchic principles and democratic decision-making, there wasn't a damn thing they could do to stop it. In a short time, the remainder of the old guard had left to found wilderness-preservation organizations of their own.

Despite its founders' hopes, today EF! is truly nothing more than a handmaiden of the anti-capitalist, anti-oppression Left, its adherents indistinguishable from others of their ilk that can be found in fair trade coffee shops and gender studies departments across the nation. They say that the revolution eats its own children, and this is proving to be the case for the EF! social justice warriors of the 90s, who are now shocked to find themselves accused of "oppressive behaviors" and cisnormativity by the next wave of transgressives. Of course, this is the same treatment they gave Foreman and his Death Squads back in the 80s.

These days the organization is constantly on the verge of civil war. "Male-identifying whit cis hetero" activists are perpetually "called out" by POCs for failing to make EF! a safe space for entryists. Ecofeminists rabidly accuse the submissive manlets in Earth First! of sexism and patriarchal privilege. The most recent kerfuffle centered around the purported discrimination against transgendered activists, who must be swarming into Earth First! in droves judging by the amount of journal space devoted to their plight.

¹³ Lee, *Earth First!*, 128.

It is almost a microcosm of the New Left as a whole, really: homosexuals attack transgenders, transgenders attack feminists, feminists attack indigenous traditionalists, indigenous traditionalists attack the animal rights crowd, and the animal rights crowd attacks kosher Jews. Their sole adhesive is a hatred for the historic American nation and everything it stands for.

Then

Now

Needless to say, whatever potential Earth First! once had as a revolt against the modern world is gone. It has now been utterly defanged and submerged beneath the usual maelstrom of leftist contradictions and petty infighting. The great irony of this outlook on the part of the leftist environmentalist is that, while he thinks he of himself as a rebel against the evil empire — against the capitalist, the totalitarian, the Nazi forever lurking at the edges of his frenzied imagination — he is in fact nothing more than a useful idiot serving those very forces. In his universalism, secularism, and obsession with a poorly-conceived social justice, he sets himself against the last vestiges of traditional society, thereby destroying the remaining bastions of communitarian values and one of the few things standing against the onslaught of dehumanizing technology and a globalized corporate capitalism.

What are the lessons to be learned from this failure?

The first is that, whatever its historical roots, in the United States the environmental cause is now squarely in the hands of the Left, indelibly tainted by its commitment to diversity, replacement-rate immigration, cultural degeneracy, feigned opposition to global capitalism, and all-around tolerance indistinguishable from nihilism. This is hardly surprising. While the contemporary American Left is only nominally indebted to the land-raping ethos of classical liberalism, the so-called “Right” in America is simply a more orthodox manifestation of this same Enlightenment creed. Both groups regard ecosystemic health, wilderness preservation, and the vestiges of traditional society as a luxury that can be subordinated to short-term material comfort, and many Americans are happy to agree with them.

So one lesson is that, if one should undertake to establish an independent environmental organization in the US, no matter how “beyond left nor right” it claims to be, we can expect it to be inundated by howling leftists in a matter of years. *Unless, of course, it is tied to an explicitly rightist social vision from the very beginning.*

A related lesson to be learned from the Earth First! travesty is this: inclusiveness and democratic governance will bring death to any group wishing to maintain ideological purity without being subsumed by the leftist juggernaut. Foreman, Wolke, Koehler, and the other knights of that original noble *Männerbund* believed there was sufficient agreement among themselves to permit a relatively consensual and egalitarian functioning for their organization, and that people would only seek to join the group if they agreed with its basic premises. In this they were mistaken.

Democracy and egalitarianism may very well work in situations of high cohesion and shared worldview, but as the group grew, so did its beautiful diversity of values. In

time, the motley assortment that made up Earth First! could barely agree on how to roll a proper spliff, let alone a strategy for saving the old growth forests. The founders were sorely deluded if they believed they would be left alone by those who did not share their fundamental premises. The leftist, given his totalitarian nature, cannot abide the existence of people who are not wholly under his sway, especially those with the gall to encroach upon *his* territory, who try to “co-opt” the cause of the environment.

One might imagine a different story for Earth First!, in which it retained its initial elitism and opposition to movement building. One of the earliest aims of Earth First! was, in fact, not to become a movement in its own right but to “subvert” the mainstream wilderness conservation movement, carrying out “a friendly infiltration in an effort to strengthen and return an organization to its original principles — a revival, house-cleaning, de-bureaucratization if you will”¹⁴. In addition to wilderness preservation groups that might be open to such influence, one might include anti-pollution, animal welfare, urban renewal, historical preservation, renewable energy, and religious organizations. Had they pursued this more passivist strategy, and aimed to take over specific territories while building their own power, the organization might have been more successful in its aims and less prone to subversion (both by the Left and by the FBI).

There is the question, of course, as to whether this rightist entryism is even viable in today’s climate. Leftist entryism succeeds because the Left is in power, and its core values of inclusivity, equality, individualism, and democracy cannot be questioned without severe consequences. What corresponding values does the Right have that can possibly serve as an effective counter? Hierarchy, purity, elitism, communitarianism; these are unlikely to have much traction among today’s mainstream liberals or conservatives.

For the reactionary entryist (if one should choose to accept such a mission), the rightist values that still seem to have some power in American culture are *religion* and *patriotism*. The Left, of course, has made some inroads in commandeering both to its cause, but many people still seem to suspect the disingenuousness of their proclamations. Making wilderness preservation a religious duty and an expression of love for the land may be the most effective approach to appeal to Americans without committing oneself to the dogmas of the Left and opening one’s group to subversion.

Earth First!, needless to say, has become wholly compromised. The purpose of this essay is not to criticize those truly dedicated ecowarriors, both past and present, whose commitment and purpose (if not their strategic bent) is unquestioned. However, this organization now lacks the one quality most essential for any revolt against the modern world: iron.

Perhaps a genuine concern with ecological integrity can become a key component of the American Restoration, as my previous article suggested. This would entail a retention of radical ecology’s counter-modernism, its holistic metaphysics and commit-

¹⁴ Dave Foreman, “Earth First! and Subversion,” *EF! Journal* 4, no. 2 (December 22, 1983), 3.

ment to wilderness preservation and rejection of sentimental humanitarianism, while jettisoning its counter-productive attachment to anarchism and simplistic views on technology and economics.

Those of a *truly* ecological bent, who love the wild places of the world, who believe that the good of the whole is primary to the needs of the individual, and who are willing to do whatever is necessary in order to preserve the integrity and beauty of the Earth, must adopt a politics that is as hierarchical and transcendent as their ideals. Their natural home lies on the Right.

[Archivists note: Footnote¹⁵ is missing]

¹⁵ Dave Foreman, "Reinhabitation, Biocentrism and Self Defense," *EF! Journal* 7, no. 7 (August 1, 1987), 22.

A Great Passing: Reflections on 20 Years with the Unabomber by David Skrbina

June 12, 2023

Ted Kaczynski

1,916 words

Theodore J. Kaczynski died at the Federal Medical Center in Butner, North Carolina on June 10, 2023. He had been serving multiple life sentences, without parole, in a “Super-Max” facility in Colorado for his role in the Unabomber crimes between the late 1970s and 1995, in which he killed three people and injured 23 with mail bombs. He was 81 years old.

I won’t elaborate here on his crimes; such material can easily be found online — and indeed, this is virtually all that the mainstream media want to discuss about Kaczynski: his bombings, his murders, his mental health, his “terrorism.” The last thing they want to discuss is the *reason* why he conducted his bombings: because of the mortal threat posed by industrial technology, and the need to destroy it.

Ted understood the dangers of modern technology better than most, and he eventually constructed a solid and compelling argument against it and against the ability to “reform” or fix it. He outlined his case in a lengthy essay, *Industrial Society and Its Future* (ISAIF), which he felt had to reach many people in order to have an effect. He therefore determined that only by acquiring sufficient notoriety and leverage could he ensure a high-visibility publication. For him, a campaign of mail-bombings did the trick. In September 1995, he — one man, working alone — effectively defeated the entire United States government, including the FBI, and forced them to print his entire manifesto in the *Washington Post*. It is an astonishing story.

Sadly, his own brother recognized the text as Ted’s work, and turned him in to the FBI. Six months later, they arrested him at a small cabin in rural Montana. After a year of comical legal proceedings, the government negotiated a plea deal: life in prison without parole. This was 26 years ago. After 24 years in Colorado, he developed cancer, was sent to the facility in North Carolina for extended treatment, and died there last week.

I have a special interest and special connection to this man. I have a Ph.D. in philosophy, but my earlier degree work in mathematics and science gave me an excellent

grounding in technology, and I was blessed to have a great philosopher of technology, Henryk Skolimowski, as my friend and mentor for many years. I met Henryk when I was an undergrad student at the University of Michigan — incredibly, Ted’s own alma mater, where he earned his doctorate in math in 1967. Henryk was an early and prominent critic of modern, industrial technology, and he put me on to the substantial and compelling writings of the French theologian Jacques Ellul, whose own book, *The Technological Society* (1964; French original 1954), was a landmark work. It was this very book that also prompted Kaczynski to his initial skeptical ideas. Eventually, I became Ted’s most famous “pen pal” — more on that below.

I should note that I was a technology critic from around 1980, well before anyone had heard of a “Unabomber.” I knew there were solid, well-grounded arguments against advanced technology. I knew about the thesis of ‘technological determinism,’ in which technology is seen as a primary driver behind social and political change. And I knew that only radical solutions were likely to have any effect. Ted knew these things, too, and he had already concluded that rebellion, in some form, might be able turn the tide, before the system was able to utterly crush human dignity and destroy the natural world — as it evidently was doing.

Thus, I was highly intrigued when stories began emerging in the early 1990s that a person or group with an “anti-tech ideology” was behind a string of mailbombs. I awaited each new little snippet of Unabomber text that was teasingly leaked out by the media. I could quickly see that this person was intelligent and serious, and had a real driving motive for what he was doing. The government could see it, too, and that’s why they were so worried.

Then came the bombshell release of the manifesto, in full and unedited, on September 19, 1995. “He won,” was my immediate reaction; “he beat the US government.” No matter what happened after that, the manifesto was out in the world, for millions to read. Ted had won.

I purchased two copies of the *Post* that day: one went into my personal files (where it stands today), and the other was to use as a cut-up for my wife and I to type the entire thing into my PC. It seems weird now, but there was functionally no real Internet at that time, no online source to copy-and-paste from. So we typed the whole thing, by hand, into our simple home computer, just to put it into a form that could be worked with, drawn from, and shared. (Yes, there was irony in digitizing an anti-tech manifesto, but such is the nature of a technological society; it forces us all into compromises and ‘hypocrisies’ in order to function as members of society.)

There followed Ted’s capture, the yearlong trial process, and the years of incarceration. For a while, the media loved to talk about Ted: his upbringing, his genius IQ, his troubles at Harvard, his alleged run-in with “MKUltra,” his mental health, his homemade bombs, and so on — everything *except* the manifesto. Odd, I thought; his anti-tech philosophy was what drove him to his actions, and it addressed a global threat to all humanity, and yet no one — I mean, no one — wanted to talk about that. Wow. That was a major eye-opener for me, into media deceit: They would talk about

trivial issues galore, but real and substantive things that threatened the very system that they were a part of, forget it. Never think that the media is about truth-telling, or “shining a light,” or holding the powerful accountable. No — they are about profits, self-preservation, and defense of their chosen ideology, nothing more.

I went on to complete, firstly, my Master’s degree in mathematics (at Michigan), and then my Ph.D. in philosophy, in 2001. By 2003 I was an adjunct faculty in philosophy at the Dearborn campus of the University of Michigan, teaching, among other things, the Philosophy of Technology. Since I created this course from scratch, I was free to compile new reading material for the students, including parts of the manifesto. This was paired with a pro-tech piece by Ray Kurzweil, for contrast. But since it had been six years since his incarceration, and the media had dutifully said nothing about Ted in that time, I decided to write to him directly: to get his latest thoughts, both on the manifesto and on any new ideas he might have. I expected no reply, but sure enough, some four weeks later a hand-written letter appeared in my university mailbox. The return addressee: Theodore Kaczynski, Super-max prison, Colorado.

Thus began a long, detailed, interactive dialogue with Ted that spanned some 12 years, resulting in around 150 letters from him to me, and leading to his first book, *Technological Slavery* (first published in the US in 2010). It seems that I was the only person with any academic credentials willing to carry on a serious discussion with him. This was shocking to me; it really showed the complacency of American academics; their unwillingness to tackle serious, controversial issues; and frankly, their cowardice. And even though I was a fellow “Luddite,” it’s not like I was mindlessly buying every argument by Ted. Much of our correspondence consisted of my challenges and push-back: “what about this . . .,” “did you think about that . . .,” “a critic might say this . . .” One can see this in *Technological Slavery*, where about a quarter of the book is “Letters to David Skrbina,” in which Ted defends himself against my critiques. It was a fascinating and fruitful dialogue.

Over time, I published my own anti-tech books. First, the reader *Confronting Technology* (the latest edition of which was published in 2020), giving a look at anti-tech views throughout history. And most importantly, my own monograph, *The Metaphysics of Technology* (Routledge, 2015), in which I lay out a metaphysical basis for technological determinism, and where I analyze the long history of technology skepticism in Western thought. From the mass media, one would think that the only stout anti-techies in history were the original Luddites, and then Kaczynski himself. This is far from the truth. There has been ample warning — *dire* warning — by many of our most brilliant thinkers. If we don’t know that, the blame falls to ignorance, censorship, and cowardice.

Since the publication of *Technological Slavery*, events have proven Ted right. Things are as bad, or worse, than he forecast. The Internet and social media have imposed a terrible psychological cost on people, especially children and teens. We have killer drones buzzing around the planet, in the hands of militaries and individuals alike. Most of the industrial West is saturated with electromagnetic radiation (think 5G), danger-

ous chemicals, and toxic wastes. The moral and cultural quality of society continues its long decay. We have “lab-leaked,” and maybe lab-created, pandemics such as Covid, which is nothing if not a high-tech construction — let alone those clever, high-tech “cures,” the mRNA vaccines. Super-AI creations such as ChatGPT threaten to run amok with our social infrastructure, leading, in the worst scenarios, to literal human extinction. And people spend hours and hours per day, every day, on office computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

Lest we think that technology is under our control and works for us, consider this: If technology is getting ‘better’ everyday, as it surely is, and if it is intended to promote human wellbeing (how could it be otherwise), then why aren’t people doing better? Are we getting stronger, healthier, and happier as technology progresses? No — in fact, precisely the opposite: People are worse off, year by year, in nearly every way. And yet technology is supposedly under our control, and serves us. How can that be?

If technology is getting better every year, why isn’t the health of the planet improving? With better technology, species should be thriving, waters and forests regenerating, the skies becoming cleaner and clearer. And yet, precisely the opposite is happening — by nearly every measure, the planet is getting worse. How can that be, if technology is under our control?

The answer is this: Technology is *not* under our control; it is *not* a “neutral tool” to be used for good or ill; it is *not* something that we correct or reform as we like. Technology drives itself. It is an autonomous process, something like a law of nature. It needs us, for now, but soon it will not. And then all bets are off.

In my Introduction to Ted’s *Technological Slavery*, I explained that he was being badly maligned, woefully misunderstood, and that one day he would seem prophetic — perhaps even a kind of savior. But this would occur only if we grasped and acted on the implications of his ideas . . . ideas that belonged to the likes of Ellul, and Mumford, and Illich, and Orwell, and Whitehead, long before they were “the Unabomber’s” ideas.

For years, we didn’t want to “give a terrorist a platform.” For years, we didn’t want to grant Ted any “satisfaction.” Now those excuses are gone. Will we now, in our own self-defense, reexamine those issues that he raised years ago? Or will we continue to thrust our heads in the sand, as the timebomb ticks away?

David Skrbina, Ph.D. is the author or editor of 11 books and over two dozen academic articles and chapters, on a variety of topics. All his work can be found at www.davidskrbina.com.

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The Worst Week Yet: June 4-10, 2023

Jim Goad
UNCLE-TED.jpg
2,820 words

Ted Kaczynski: 1942-2023

Theodore John Kaczynski, the Bedraggled Genius Prophet of Techno-Doom, was found dead in his North Carolina prison cell in the early morning hours this past Saturday. He was 81 years old. The cause of death is currently unknown, and I wouldn't trust the federal prison officials to be honest about it, anyway. *The New York Times* is already spreading rumors that he committed suicide.

According to a handwritten letter Kaczynski had sent to a correspondent in 2022:

I'm not going to "get well soon" — or ever — because I have terminal cancer. I can't expect to live more than two years at the outside, and I may well be dead in less than a year. . . .

The Washington Post — which in 1995 agreed to print Kaczynski's 35,000-word *Industrial Society and Its Future* in its entirety in exchange for a promise from Kaczynski, who at the time was only known as the "Unabomber" and was the target of one of the longest federal manhunts in history — wasted no time in slandering his memory. In an article/hit piece titled "Ted Kaczynski, who planted fear and death as the Unabomber, dies at 81," the *Post* wrote:

Living in isolation, he acted on his hatred of technology and science, killing three people and injuring two dozen others. . . . For 17 years, he picked his victims with cold deliberation, leaving a grisly trail of nail- and razor blade-packed pipe bombs across the nation that killed three people and injured 23 others, several maimed for life.

For most, if not all, modern mainstream journalists, "hatred" apparently explains *everything*.

To its credit, the *Post* did note that while at Harvard in the late 1950s, Kaczynski was a mind-control guinea pig and MKULTRA victim. The psychological experiments left Kaczynski permanently embittered and may have played a role in forming the central thesis of both his writing and his bombing careers — namely, that technology’s expansion is inversely proportional to human freedom and personal agency.

Industrial Society and Its Future not only predicted the mind-swallowing rapaciousness of technology, it was also groundbreaking in how it psychoanalyzed Leftism and warned about modern psychiatry’s excesses.

Industrial Society and its Future on how technology robs human beings of personal agency:

Scientists work mainly for the fulfillment they get out of the work itself. . . . Thus science marches on blindly, without regard to the real welfare of the human race or to any other standard, obedient only to the psychological needs of the scientists and of the government officials and corporation executives who provide the funds for research. . . . Electricity, indoor plumbing, rapid long-distance communications . . . how could one argue against any of these things? . . . [Yet] all these technical advances taken together have created a world in which the average man’s fate is no longer in his own hands . . . but in those of politicians, corporate executives and remote, anonymous technicians and bureaucrats whom he as an individual has no power to influence.

On Leftist psychology:

Leftists may claim that their activism is motivated by compassion or by moral principles, and moral principle does play a role for the leftist of the oversocialized type. But compassion and moral principle cannot be the main motives for leftist activism. Hostility is too prominent a component of leftist behavior; so is the drive for power. Moreover, much leftist behavior is not rationally calculated to be of benefit to the people whom the leftists claim to be trying to help. For example, if one believes that affirmative action is good for black people, does it make sense to demand affirmative action in hostile or dogmatic terms? Obviously it would be more productive to take a diplomatic and conciliatory approach that would make at least verbal and symbolic concessions to white people who think that affirmative action discriminates against them. But leftist activists do not take such an approach because it would not satisfy their emotional needs. Helping black people is not their real goal. Instead, race problems serve as an excuse for them to express their own hostility and frustrated need for power. In doing so they actually harm black people, because the activists’ hostile attitude toward the white majority tends to intensify race hatred.

On antidepressants:

Imagine a society that subjects people to conditions that make them terribly unhappy, then gives them drugs to take away their unhappiness. Science fiction? It is already happening to some extent in our own society. It is well known that the rate of clinical depression has been greatly increasing in recent decades. We believe that this is due to disruption of the power process, as explained in paragraphs 59-76. But even if we are wrong, the increasing rate of depression is certainly the result of SOME conditions that exist in today's society. Instead of removing the conditions that make people depressed, modern society gives them antidepressant drugs. In effect, antidepressants are a means of modifying an individual's internal state in such a way as to enable him to tolerate social conditions that he would otherwise find intolerable.

Kaczynski's 1999 short story "Ship of Fools," written while he was imprisoned, predicted how the empty intersectional squabbles that plague us in 2023 were perhaps a purposeful distraction from far more ominous, and irreversibly apocalyptic, trends. Its last lines read:

And all of the passengers and crew chimed in one after another, calling the cabin boy a fascist and a counterrevolutionary. They pushed him away and went back to grumbling about wages, and about blankets for women, and about the right to suck cocks, and about how the dog was treated. The ship kept sailing north, and after a while it was crushed between two icebergs and everyone drowned.

Kaczynski leaves behind a society of overmedicated smart-phone addicts who are just as obsessed with cultural trivialities as the crew of "Ship of Fools" and who seem blind to the titanic dangers that threaten us all, regardless of political persuasion.

And a frightening new poll from the Cato Institute finds that younger people — you know, the "digitally raised" types who never lived in a world without the Internet — are far more likely to approve of the government placing surveillance cameras in their homes so long as it makes them feel a tiny bit more secure.

Uncle Ted will be missed. Sadly, he will probably not be replaced.

“Portland’s Premier Anne Frank Impersonator” Arrested for Stabbing His Father to Death

Police have arrested 34-year-old drag queen Michael Horwitz on suspicion of stabbing his 68-year-old father to death inside daddy's "multimillion-dollar Virginia Beach mansion" during a dispute last weekend.

The nature of the father/drag-queen-son argument is unclear, but this much is known: The victim, Dr. Abbey Horwitz — I don't name 'em, I just report their names — was a male dentist on the cusp of retirement. His son Michael was one of three children. At some point Michael had relocated to Portland, Oregon. He used the *nom de plume* “Menorah Horwitz” in a series of articles for freebie alt-rag *The Portland Mercury*. In a 2017 story for the *Mercury*, Horwitz referred to his mother as his “first favorite superhero” who “taught me how to disappear”:

I'm learning to turn invisible to live as a woman. It's a talent I have for being transparent. I let you see right through me, and act like I don't see you at all. I'm half here and half hidden, a trick I learned from the smartest woman I know.

In one of his stories on the site from 2017, Horwitz, who in 2015 was named “A Queer to Watch” by *The Advocate*, says his mom is his “first favorite superhero” and “taught me how to disappear.”

He also wrote a softcover book called *The Diary of Menorah Horwitz*. The book's description contains what is perhaps an ominous portent of what may have become an act of patricide:

Michael Horwitz, a shy 29-year-old gay illustrator, combines Judaism and a love of drag in all the wrong ways when he becomes Menorah, Portland's premiere Anne Frank impersonator. Dressed in a puke colored school-girl's uniform, stripper heels, and nails made from burning candles taped to his fingers, Michael explores Portland's queer and punk party scene, one bad lip synch at a time. He falls in with drug happy club kids, hot tempered local divas, and some of the world's most famous drag queens (sometimes disastrously) — all while waking up at 6 am the next morning to bag groceries. But not everyone is happy with Michael's new alter ego, specifically his very supportive family.

According to the Post-Millennial:

The book's artwork shows Horwitz with candles taped to his fingers, surrounded by a number of objects including female hormones, a baby having its umbilical cord cut but the cord has been replaced with a hot dog, and a bottle labeled “Jew Wine.”

Holy Moly Surgical Cannoli, with all of those factors, what could possibly have gone wrong, besides possibly stabbing his dad to death?

Horwitz was booked on charges of second-degree murder and is being held on suicide watch at the Virginia Beach Jail. Apparently there's not a lot of money to be made, even in Portland, as an Anne Frank-impersonating drag queen, so even though the

mentally discombobulated child of wealth, who allegedly stabbed his father to death in a mansion valued at over \$2 million, has pled indigence and requested a public defender.

Poop Swastika Found in Vermont High School's Gender-Neutral Bathroom

Apropos of themes raised in Spencer J. Quinn's recent feature about how the Third Reich burned books encouraging transgenderism, as well as keeping in line with the Nazis-vs.-trannies narrative about Menorah Horwitz, CNN reports that "[a] high school in Vermont is working with police to investigate after a swastika was painted with feces in a gender-neutral bathroom."

As of this writing, it is unclear whether the fecal hate symbol, which was found at Vermont's Montpelier High School, was painted by a tranny-hating Nazi or a Nazi-hating tranny. In a statement issued last week to students and families, school principal Jason Gingold wrote:

It is a purposeful act that targets specific people in our community to instill fear and send the message that they don't belong. . . . This is not an isolated incident. Drawing a swastika in feces in a gender-neutral bathroom is a very deliberate act that has been mirrored in schools, college campuses, and elsewhere across the country. . . . In recent years, it has been directly used on school campuses to threaten queer and Jewish people.

Apparently the Vermont high school is packed with queer, disabled, and non-white pupils. The *Montpelier Bridge* quoted one student, who apparently has a Third Eye that allows him to distinguish between hate hoaxes and "genuine" hate crimes:

It said someone made a swastika with feces in the gender-neutral bathroom. . . . At first everyone thought it was a dumb kid just being stupid. But this is a genuine act of hate. One of my teachers said it being in a gender-neutral bathroom wasn't a coincidence.

The fecal swastika was allegedly smeared on Friday, June 2. By Monday, it had caused such a collective schoolwide consternation that a general assembly was hastily summoned to deal with the trauma. According to another student:

I am a queer person with disabilities and I am affected. . . . I said to my community [at Monday's assembly] that we can be better than this and that we are better than this and we need to be there for one another. I spoke to my classmates, shaking with anger and anxiety. I was met with a

multitude of reactions; agreement, fear, hurt, tears, but also people laughing and snickering at me. . . . With the image being drawn in feces, it adds another layer of hate and negativity. . . . That message is meant to make people feel as if they don't belong and spread fascist ideas into our most vulnerable and beautiful communities.

I hope you'll pardon me for snickering.

These Shaniquas Are Outta Control!

During a recent discussion about the Karen Question on *White Rabbit Radio*, host Tim Murdock suggested that the generic name for black women who cause a ruckus should be "Shaniqua," and I have no problem with that.

I should clarify that these terms are not directly analogous, because a "Shaniqua" as I define it doesn't merely call the cops on people for crimes, whether real or imagined. Quite the opposite, in fact: A "Shaniqua" is more likely to be *committing* crimes. I also believe that the following cases should establish beyond a reasonable doubt that Shaniquas are far more of a public menace than Karens could ever hope to be.

Our first Shaniqua this week — or should that be spelled "this *wiq*"? — reminds me of a drunken black woman with whom I had the misfortune of sharing a plane from Las Vegas back to Atlanta a few years ago. Visibly tipsy upon boarding, she proceeded to shout so loudly and intemperately, especially after takeoff, that flight attendants were forced to bind her hands and feet with plastic zip ties, at which point they locked her in a rear bathroom, whereupon she continued to shout and bang her head against the bathroom door.

Cynthia McKnight's mug shot shows her with two metal nose piercings, which may be an unconscious homage to her African forebears' famed practice of shoving bones through their noses. The incident that landed her in trouble with the po-po happened last April on an American Airlines flight that was scheduled to fly from Buffalo to Chicago. According to court documents, Ms. McKnight became "irate" when a flight attendant told her to put away her phone before takeoff. McKnight then "engaged in a verbal altercation with one passenger, then spat on another" before opening the emergency door and jumping down the inflatable slide. According to a tweet by Buffalo Bills offensive tackle Spencer Brown, who was aboard the plane and witnessed the woman in all her primate rage:

Sitting on a plane. A lady is pissed. Lady pulls the emergency inflatable slide to escape the plane. Lady is running wild through the tarmac currently. Cops have arrived. Flight ruined. Memories made. Noice.

Due to McKnight's freakout, the plane never took off, and American Airlines estimated that the cost of replacing the emergency slide and rebooking passengers was

around \$50,000. McKnight, who pleaded guilty to two counts of simple assault, recently agreed to pay \$42,128 in restitution.

Our second Shaniqua caused a giant to-do in Manhattan's Tompkins Square Park last Sunday by yanking one woman by the hair, terrorizing the woman's baby, grabbing a newspaper from a man's hands and tearing it to pieces, overturning outside tables at a nearby bistro, smashing people's drinks, and making a general massive pain in the ass of herself during a "violent rampage" estimated to have lasted about a half-hour before police finally arrived. The woman, whose nappy hair was swaddled in a sassy red "Rosie the Riveter"-style scarf, has been identified so far only as "Pop Star." Police loaded her into an ambulance and shuffled her off to Bellevue Hospital, because she is clearly mentally ill rather than a criminal, right? Witnesses say she was spotted freely walking in the same area the very next day.

The day after that, yet *another* unhinged Shaniqua was spotted in Tompkins Square Park harassing the mostly white-looking and clearly intimidated locals. One of her male targets told the *New York Post*:

She was saying creepy-ass shit. She said, "You guys are lizards." She was calling me a faggot. It was super intrusive. She's obviously unwell.

Rrrrrright — just like the last one, she's "unwell" rather than a criminal. But you're obviously a faggot for trying to excuse her behavior.

Our final pair of alleged Shaniquas — or should that be Shaniquim? — is by far the grisliest case. According to the *New York Post* — which I was told in journalism school was a trash newspaper compared to *The New York Times*, although these days I find the *Post* hews to journalism's rules far more faithfully than the *Times* does:

A twisted Maryland mom and daughter are charged with dismembering the family's matriarch with a chainsaw — then grilling the body parts to get rid of them — following a fight about a credit card, cops said.

According to the Prince George's County Police Department, when they made a welfare check at the home of 71-year-old Margaret Craig, her 44-year-old daughter Candace showed no reservations about inviting them in to snoop around. They say that when they went down to the basement, "they immediately smelled the odor of decomposition" and "observed blood and tissue," as well as "what appeared to be brain matter."

Investigators later concluded that the elder Ms. Craig had been dead for more than a week and that the day after she was allegedly murdered, Candace Craig enlisted her 19-year-old daughter, Salia Hardy, in helping to sloppily hide the corpse. Both mom and daughter are being held without bond in connection with the slaying.

If anyone reading this *still* maintains that white Karens are worse than black Shaniquas, you'll need to speak with me after class.

Ah, Look at All the Useless People

Jim Goad

Yuval Noah Harari

1,399 words

Czech version [here](#)

The squirrely Israeli named Yuval Noah Harari is a racist in the purest sense: He sees the elimination of the *entire human race* as a sign of progress.

While many of us busy ourselves fretting about the Great Replacement, Harari speaks quite fondly of an even Greater Replacement — that of *Homo sapiens* with machines and the algorithms that drive them.

In 2017, Harari — a big-eared, balding, bespectacled Space Jew who is a distinguished member of Klaus Schwab’s World Economic Forum — wrote an essay called “The rise of the useless class” in which he predicted that AI-driven automation would create an “unworking class” with nothing to do but twiddle their thumbs and nowhere to go except to be tossed into the dustbin of history:

The most important question in 21st-century economics may well be: What should we do with all the superfluous people, once we have highly intelligent non-conscious algorithms that can do almost everything better than humans? . . . 99 percent of human qualities and abilities are simply redundant for the performance of most modern jobs. . . . In the 21st century we might witness the creation of a massive new unworking class: people devoid of any economic, political or even artistic value, who contribute nothing to the prosperity, power and glory of society. This “useless class” will not merely be unemployed — it will be unemployable.

What is to be done with a sudden and unprecedented surplus of useless and unemployable people? Using language not too far removed from Nazi rhetoric about “useless eaters” and “life unworthy of life,” Harari concluded his essay by saying that although it would be possible to feed them, it would be impossible not to despise them:

The coming technological bonanza will probably make it feasible to feed and support people even without any effort from their side. But what will keep them occupied and content? One answer might be drugs and computer games. Unnecessary people might spend increasing amounts of time within 3D virtual-reality worlds that would provide them with far more excitement and emotional engagement than the drab reality outside. Yet such a development would deal a mortal blow to the liberal belief in the sacredness of human life and of human experiences. What’s so sacred about useless bums who pass their days devouring artificial experiences?

Human history is cyclical in the sense that civilizations rise, fall, and then rise again. But it's hard to view technological history as anything but linear. And it's even more difficult to view the steady rise of technology as anything but a death knell for human history.

In 1995's *Industrial Society and its Future*, Ted Kaczynski made many of the same points that Harari is currently making. With every new technological development, human freedom will shrink proportionately until we are the helpless slaves of an ever-expanding technocratic nightmare.

The difference between Kaczynski and Harari is that Kaczynski saw this as a problem. For Kaczynski, the only solution was to toss a spanner in the works, halt the advancement of technology, and revert to some anarcho-primitivist dreamland where we subsist on roots and tree bark, build fires, and live short, brutal lives — but as self-actualized freemen rather than obsolete cogs in an archaic machine.

For better or worse, Kaczynski was an idealist, while Harari is a realist. Harari doesn't seem to be troubled by the technological singularity or the imminent extinction of humanity as we know it, because he seems to think there'll still be a place for both him and his loving husband in the bold new order.

Last week in a podcast interview with Chris Anderson of the TED Audio Collective, Harari offered his diagnosis on why there seems to be so much global tumult and unrest among the soon-to-be useless class:

They are no longer part of the story of the future, and I think that — again, this is a hypothesis — if I try to understand and to connect to the deep resentment of people, in many places around the world, part of what might be going there is people realize — and they're correct in thinking that — that, "The future doesn't need me. You have all these smart people in California and in New York and in Beijing, and they are planning this amazing future with artificial intelligence and bio-engineering and in global connectivity and whatnot, and they don't need me. Maybe if they are nice, they will throw some crumbs my way like universal basic income," but it's much worse psychologically to feel that you are useless than to feel that you are exploited.

I agree wholeheartedly with that last sentence. In fact, five years ago in an essay on the looming and all-consuming Gorgon of automation, I wrote, "For many humans, feeling dependent is even more demoralizing than feeling exploited."

Tipping his hand with his use of the word "we," Harari emphasized his belief that he will be a member of the Cognitive Elect who emerge from the Greater Replacement unscathed:

We just don't need the vast majority of the population because the future is about developing more and more sophisticated technology like artificial intelligence, bioengineering, most people don't contribute anything to that except perhaps for their data. And whatever people are doing that is useful, these technologies will increasingly make redundant and will make it possible to replace the people.

Who is this "we" of which Harari speaks? His cronies such as Klaus Schwab, Bill Gates, and George Soros at the World Economic Forum, what with their shamelessly

triumphalist chitter-chatter about a “Great Reset” and their sadistic declaration that “You’ll own nothing. And you’ll be happy”?

If they wind up getting the sort of technology they seem to want, what’s to stop it from turning on them HAL 9000-style and deciding that they, too, are long past their expiration date?

There are some who will argue that new technology will create as many jobs as it eliminates. After all, it’s happened before, and everything that happened before is bound to happen again, right?

Others will say that although AI may manage traffic better than a crossing guard and predict weather better than a meteorologist, it will never create great works of art like humans can. But we already live in a world where a machine can finish Schubert’s unfinished symphony, create paintings, and write novels, and such technology is still in its embryonic stages. We already inhabit a society where people don’t seem to mind that most of their reality comes through a glass screen and they can’t tell the difference between movies and real life. While the eternal optimists strain to assure us that artificial intelligence has yet to show signs of sentience, what exactly is sentient about a mass of humanoid zombies who don’t seem aware of what’s happening to them and, even if informed of what’s happening, would seemingly rather keep drooling all over themselves and smashing “Like” buttons than muster the courage to stop the process?

Harari is at his creepiest when he speaks of humans as nothing more than elaborate datasets that are vulnerable to “hacking” and can be transformed into whatever the hacker wants like “zombie bugs” being driven around by parasitic fungi.

One of the most disturbing things I’ve ever witnessed was a black-and-white 8mm film reel they showed us in grade school where, in the course of performing brain surgery, a physician used a scalpel-like device to poke at different regions of the patient’s brain. Each poked region resulted in the patient speaking in a different voice, almost as if it was an entirely different person speaking each time. Even back then, the idea that we are little more than automatons, with no free will and no emotions that are anything grander than simple biological processes, filled me with waves of revulsion.

As much as I mock most humans’ flailing attempts to depict themselves as ennobled and highly spiritual creatures, there’s a stubbornness in me that insists there’s a “self” inside this body that is immutable and eternal. But perhaps the idea that we are somethin’ mighty special is part of our genetic code, a code that is on the verge of being hacked, exploited, and then discarded.

I suppose time will tell whether there’s a ghost in the machine after all.

As insulting as Stalin’s comments about “useful idiots” were, at least they were useful. I can’t imagine a fate worse than being a useless idiot.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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