

EP2: Did the Unabomber Have a Point?

on Anarcho-Primitivism & Ted Kaczynski

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Gordon Caddick

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Theodore Kaczynski

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2023/06/29

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The ultimate Academic Edgelord has died: Ted Kaczynski. This domestic terrorist was also a real scholar, with a few peer-reviewed works in mathematics. On this episode, we read his manifesto: *Industrial Society and its Future*.

Why has Kaczynski become so popular with young people? He is just one extreme proponent of an anti-civilizational political theory called anarcho-primitivism. Few call themselves anarcho-primitivists, yet the basic ideas have become widespread, thanks to worsening environmental degradation and the ongoing techlash. You probably saw some anarcho-primitive thinking on Twitter right after Kaczynski died; many people lamented his death, and praised his arguments.

What makes his thinking appealing to some? What does it get right about technology, and what does it get very wrong? We also discuss the broader anarcho-primitivist tradition, with the help of Chamsy el-Ojeili and Dylan Taylor's critical but generous review article from April, 2020, "the Future in the Past": Anarcho-primitivism and the Critique of Civilization Today," in *Rethinking Marxism*.

Introduction

Gordon: Academic Edge Lords is a scholarly podcast about scholarly provocateurs. We are hosted by Ethan Xavier, Matt McManus, Victor Bronzoni and me Gordon Caddick. If you want to learn more about why we're doing this, I recommend you check out our first episode. You can find it at academicedgelords.com. We explain ourselves there, but this week I'm going to play for you. Our second episode. It is about the ultimate academic edge, Lord Ted Cruz. Linski. Yeah, we read the Unabomber manifesto. It is called industrial society and its future. OK, a couple of disclaimers, though, before we get going. Technically, yes. I'm hearing your objections right now. The Unabomber manifesto is not a peer reviewed academic text. You're right. You'll hear me on this. Episode talk a little bit about why we made an exception. Partly it was not intended to be an early episode, but we thought of it as a special episode. Then Ted Kaczynski passed away, and we just. Knew we needed to. Run it as soon as possible, and one more note, this was a bizarre coincidence, but we recorded the episode a few days before Ted Kaczynski passed away. So if you're wondering why we talk about him like he's alive, it's because at the time he was. In addition to the manifesto, we also look at an actual peer reviewed article about Anarcho primitivism. Anarcho Primitivism is a wider body of anti civilizational thinking that you might call Unabomber esque. The article is called the Future. In the past, Anarcho primitivism and the critique of civilization today, it's by Chamsi LOG Lee and Dylan Taylor. This is a generous but critical review. Article and it was published in *Rethinking Marxism* in April 2020. If you want to read along, check the show notes both the article and the

manifesto are linked to there, and if you get tripped up with a pay. Well, well, hit me up. You can e-mail me at info@academicedgelords.com, OK. On to the show.

Preview Clip

Matt: Because while I for certainly feel stifled and many others do. In a modern context, right? Again, there's a broader range of capabilities that I enjoy doing just something like this with all of you than I would on a deserted island where, yeah, I could **** * all day and had a shark and nobody would stop me, but I wouldn't be able to podcast and talk about, you know, all this ****. And I. Would find that very stifling, personally.

Gordon: But if we weren't here, you could just rant the entire hour. Think about how free that would be.

Matt: Just fucking speak into the abyss ay?

Conversation Begins

Gordon: Well, thanks gents for indulging me in this. Supreme Edge Lord Ted Kaczynski...

Victor: AKA the Unabomber.

Gordon: Who again I think we're somewhat stretching the rule because he is not peer reviewed or actually he is peer reviewed, but about math and not about the Unabomber manifesto. Although you can check his Google Scholar page and this has many a citation, I think 400 or so, and I came up from you recently when I was talking to a cultural studies scholar who does stuff in environmental humanities, and she mentioned. That people reading it in class and discussing it because the Unabomber has had this kind of resurgence, I think in 2018 or so, New York magazine had. Had a piece profiling his new young. Accolades who you know write to him and kind of fall in love with the Unabomber and say, actually, the Unabomber was right and I. Think figuring out whether or not that's true is important because I think more and more people in the context of like the tech lash or whatever you want to call it, are turning to. Maybe not the Unabomber, per se, although clearly some are. I think this kind of thinking of sort of anti SIV antinatalist anti technology anti. You know, modernity and wanting to sort of reject it all, and that runs through a lot of leftist and pseudo leftist spaces, which is the the actual peer reviewed article does a good job of discussing. So we can we can talk about that and maybe it just thought I thought I would. We had us going share share a little story of how I how I encountered an ARCO primitivism in the 1st place. So. This is a very, very BC story. But while I was living in BC and doing my my graduate degree in journalism, I wanted to do a radio documentary about the burgeoning scene of eco villages on the West Coast. And when I got there, I quickly

discovered people that were preaching, you know, societal downfall. You know, they were still kind of concerned with peak oil that although that was somewhat on. Wayne, they talked about civilization, culture and humanity as a cancer. They seemed very conservative. I actually almost wanted to sort of draw a direct peril with the kind of right wing preppers because they were all about self-reliance, personal strength, you know, not victimhood. And they said some outlandish things about, you know, disabled people, people that weren't strong enough, people that couldn't sort of weren't weren't, didn't have the metal to survive. This really, really tough life that they. That they wanted to live, that they idealized them and then as part of that process I had an anarchist advisor on my committee and we looked at sort of some of the tensions within anarchist thought. And that's how I discovered anarcho primitivism, which is like this.

Victor: On an anarchist journalist.

Gordon: No, he was like a critical criminologist, but he was in he.

Victor: OK, OK.

Gordon: Was in a sort. Of green anarchist environmental scholar was born that Anarchosyndicalist side and and that's how I that's how I discovered this. You know, some people like, but other people in the anarchist tradition, certainly the Marxist tradition, think this is crazy. And then this is these are like Public Enemy number one or should be for the left in any kind of like rational modernist project. But anyway, so that's kind of how how I discovered this. And I've had a kind of pet. Interest in these people being, you know, a W coaster here every now and again. Ohh so and so how? You know, a ceremony on the beach where he did some sort of mystical thing to celebrate his vasectomy because he he's come to the conclusion that humanity is a cancer and we need to, like, be one with nature. That's sort of everywhere.

Victor: I mean, I actually came across it when I was writing a paper in Professor Ronald Beiner's niche class, actually because. The question I. Got really interested in visa the niche. Was narratives of recovery like narratives of of of finding some idealized past or capturing some human essence that's missing? And I was actually doing. Kind of a Lacanian psychoanalysis of this nascent desire in some political theory for for some idealized state. In the past. Or glorifying some original human essence that is being obstructed by modernity, right? And like, that's something that very much is at play in Nietzsche. He's certainly not a primitivist at all, but he certainly is someone who's very critical maternity and the distorting effects it has on. Human essence, for lack of a better term. And then I remember when I was writing the paper. Professor Beyner was like, well, you know, Russell really needs to be. A part of. The story, because Rousseau has a lot like and then in reading Rousseau and revisiting the discourse on inequality, which coincidentally I actually recently lectured on this this summer semester for the class. Teaching and there's like a huge influence there in Russo and like maybe Russell will come up at some point in this conversation because, you know, he really does make a lot of strong arguments for the distorting effect that civilization. And I don't think he uses the word technology, but it's kind of implicit technology, even

philosophy, thinking, language itself. Health like the Anarcho Primitivists Rousseau sees as the kind of initial like, just like just sowing the seeds of destruction in in human beings. And then like somehow in my searching I came across an ARCO primitivism and I was like, wow, this is an amazing.

Matt: View one of the things that makes Russell distinctive is the fact that he offers the. First, compulsively non reactionary critique of modernity. That's nostalgic, but it doesn't look back towards some kind of aristocratic ruralism or Christianity. And I think that comes through very forcefully in anarcho primitivism. And it's where I think, actually, sometimes the Marxists get anarcho primitivism wrong, because I know a lot of anarcho primitivists are characterized by Marxist. Was inherently or crypto reactionary, right? Because they want this return to pre modernity, not understanding that for a lot of reactionary critics of modernity, that can also have a kind of ruralist bent to them. There's usually this idea that we're gonna go back to aristocratic ruralism, right? Lords and their manners, peasants and serves, you know, in their fields. And then, you know, church that everyone go to. On Sunday, what's distinct? That anarcho primitivism is it does have this resolution quality of if we go back far enough then what we find out is that human beings are fundamentally equal in their natural state, then non alienated and people are happier then. And I also think that you can even make a connection to Michelle's meditations of a solitary Walker beyond just the discourse of inequality. Because a lot of the stuff that he points out there about coming to commune with nature and entering into himself through nature really has this kind of romantic quality to it that links back to this egalitarian desire to get back to nature and non alienated human relations that seem impossible given the kind of vulgarity that emerges. Because of private property and the emergence of inequality.

Ethan: I will say I agree that, like largely speaking, the manifesto came off as like, you know, mostly like non reactionary. But I did laugh when he was like, you know, to be fair, you know, our primitive state wasn't all wasn't all good. Like there were trans people like.

Victor: Ohh yeah, that was. An amazing moment. That was an amazing moment. I couldn't. Believe it, yeah. Did anyone else catch?

Ethan: That I did catch that. Yeah. And that constitutes like 50% of what was like most wrong with, you know, tribal societies, you.

Victor: Know. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, he mentions. Like murder, rape and trans people.

Gordon: Yeah, I mean. Just some of the some of the the main points here. I I was kind of struck and surprised. That the second major heading was what's wrong with the left and there was a lot of, you know, kind of reactionary talk of, well, what the left does it sort of valorizes its own weakness, its own dispossession and like demands? Society, a state and a technological sort of apparatus to simply provide for it because it's, you know, they essentially want to be losers that are provided for what did you,

what did you folks think about that section and and and was it odd that it was there, that it was like one of the the first points. I wonder what it was doing there.

Victor: Yeah. I mean, I think in general it seems like there is a critique of the left insofar as we understand the. Left to be. Progressive and believe in progress and like if that ends, given that anarcho primitivism. Whether we take the unabombers, I'm just going to call the Unabomber, not Kaczynski. Whether we take the unabombers view or like kind. Of this more. Survey article that we looked at, which does talk about the connections between anarcho, primitivism and. Marxism in the life which maybe we'll get into later, but it seems like insofar as progressivism and leftism is associated with progress, which includes technology, there's like a reason to be very hostile to certain dreams of. And I mean, even if you look at Marxism, right, it's. It's all about. And I think this comes up in the in the. The peer reviewed piece that we looked at, I think he talks about that like Marxist traditional Marxist see capitalism as like a positive and negative right because they see it as a positive stage in development. That then makes some future communism ultimately possible, which obviously is only going to be possible given certain technological. But the whole anarcho primitivist Unabomber line here is that the biggest problems with civilization are actually caused by technology and caused by the myth of progress. So it makes sense to be critical of the left. Insofar as you associate the left with progressivism in that sense.

Matt: Yeah, I think this survey article described Marxism and Communism broadly as modernities loyal opposition. Actually, I wouldn't even characterize it that way. I think that most Marxists are pretty vehement. Enthusiast for modernity. There's a lot of textual evidence for this as well. Mark's engaged and really quite a critical analysis of the Luddite movement for people who don't know the Luddites who gave their name to people who are. Phobic, where a group of workers who thought that they were being disadvantaged by the introduction of industrial technology, which was making it more difficult for them to acquire traditional jobs because you know you don't. Need to have spinning wheels when you have you know the spinning Jenny for example. So they want to smash the industry. And Marx was extremely critical. Well, the latter it's saying no. What we need to do is to introduce technology precisely because eventually that's going to lead to rising qualities of life once it becomes so. Realized and if we were to go back and smash it, then what we would return to is reactionary feudalism, which is also something that you shouldn't want. And what you don't seem to be understanding.

Ethan: It just seems like like anarcho, primitivism is almost like a more pessimistic Marxism and that like anarcho primitivists are like yeah, since we started the transition away from this egalitarian state of nature like everything's just going to be ***** until we go back. Whereas Marxism kind of tells the story of. We'll know we. Get away from this egalitarian state of nature and then we have to go through these various phases. You know, slave society, fetal society, capitalism. And then we can return to, like, a transcended version of that original state of nature, like a sublated version of it.

Gordon: Yeah, what one touch point? I would say it, it comes up in the peer reviewed article is that. They write that. John Zerzan or Zerzan and I don't know to pronounce it one of. The sort of chief.

Victor: I think it's I've heard it deserves.

Gordon: And whatever one of the sort of chief Anarcho Primitivists an actual academic, I think, or someone sort of a fringe. Academic does have to share the Frankfurt School as an influence, but like in particular, yeah, Marcusa and Horkheimer donor and the critique of sort of bureaucratic rationality, the spectacle that you know the the sort of cultural aspects, the the enemy producing.

Matt: Record is a.

Gordon: Ways that sort of the the the factors of relations of production like Crush the individual or something like that, it's it's a totalizing thing that we can't for the anarcho primitive. That we can't possibly like reform or escape. So in the article they write about how the anarcho primitivists constructs these conceptual totalities right, the system capital S technology, capital T, right? Like the whole apparatus is not something that's open to sort of like. Is in a dynamic system that's open to political contestation, and maybe it has these sort of like stifling rationalities that the Frankfurt School can identify. But it's open to change, but not for the anarcho primitivist anarcho primitive season as like a whole thing that needs to be utterly and completely rejected.

Matt: I wanted to say I think that I can understand why a an alchemist would be impressed by early forms of Marxism, particularly Marxist humanism, which marks himself was later critical of precisely for having this kind of reactionary quality to it, consistently emphasizing the alienation of mankind under modern technical conditions. And how the only way to return to mankind's? Is through some kind of repudiation of capitalism. I think his mature standpoint in capital volume three makes it very clear that he's moved quite a long way from that. In fact, one of the things that he consistently stresses is that technology and the development of civilization will potentially be the great emancipator of humankind. One of the problems is precisely. The fact that. Technology, rather than being used to enable human capabilities, is being used to diminish human capabilities by forcing people to become one-dimensional. When through technology we could develop many different aptitudes that we don't have. Right now.

Victor: I think it's actually in the in the. Peer reviewed piece, the kind of a survey piece. There's there's a. Part where I think. These people, these two authors, sum up like the the anarcho primitives position pretty well. They kind of call it radicalized and expanded. Anarchistic critiques of power. So that they. Say that for the anarcho primitive is power relations. Are pervasive, entrenched within all aspects of life. Civilization is a conceptual object encompasses state. Private property. Patriarchy. War tech. Analogy and power relations generally, and it's associated with abstraction, separation, instrumental rationality, mediation, fragmentation, mastery, hierarchy, objectification, ordering, and so. Then the normative claim from this is only through dismantling civilization can humans recover unenchanted unity with nature. Yeah, meaning dignity

and harmonious community. And you know, I think the other thing that especially the Unabomber emphasizes, but so does the views in the in the survey. Article like a special, a special kind of autonomy or like a more original kind of autonomy, where, like once those structures are dismantled, then you're fully unified. And I think there's, I mean. There's a lot in. That quote, which is really interesting, which reminds me of my kind of psychoanalytic critique I made of Nietzsche. That I was alluding to or mentioning before. There, because like I think there's this fantasy that we can see here, where like all these things are separating us from some wholeness. Right. And like this is. Sort of the. The fantasy of the narco primitivist in part, it's like we can recover some human essence which will give us some sense of security, some sense of wholeness. And not to get make this about psychoanalysis, but for me I I like accept the kind of psychoanalytic view that's a fantasy that's never existed. Never did exist, never will exist a kind of sense of wholeness, but.

Matt: If I could just make it kind of small jab here. If you're being fully Freudian about it, it could be the case that we are all all as men searching for some hole. That always seems very out of distance. But you know, I've got it here.

Victor: Anyway, so I yeah, I. Don't know how helpful that is, but like that I just wanted to kind of get on the table. What I saw is like the. Position as laid out, at least in the article. Of like what?

Gordon: We're talking about, I think that's absolutely right. It's like it's it's not that it's, it's a kind of, it's not capitalist domination. That's the problem. It's like instrumental rationality, science, bureaucracy. Reason, language, civilization, anything that puts a kind of order and and sort of pumps us into the machine and and and disconnects us from our our oneness with some imagined nature ultimately.

Victor: Exactly. It's it's a much more fundamental problem in a way. It's like a lot more as Ethan was saying before. That's very pessimism. Pessimistic, because if you accept the position you're like, oh ****, the problem is actually much more fundamental then then just capitalism or something like that. Or like power. It's like, no, just like the very drive to build anything that is like based on abstraction or instrumental. Reasoning right? Like was like a lot of us. I mean, especially us interested in philosophy or you know, I mean obviously instrumental rationality is not. But just any sort of rationality in general is like the problem critical inquiry, in a way, is a problem insofar as it leads us to more separation, right?

Matt: Yeah, I think this is where I have a fundamental problem with a narco primitivism. Now, I do think there's an argument to be made for it, but I'll start with my problem, which runs along this dimension of what we would call authenticity right in the aspiration for authenticity. I'll just use that term. I tend to take, as you jackin standpoint, both in terms of the human psyche and its relationship to nature. Right. I do think that there is this yearning for a sense of wholeness or completion, even a manic desire for a sense of wholeness or completion. That is often encoded as a yearning for authenticity that I ultimately think that human beings should reject precisely because I think that authenticity or purity of heart being to will. One thing would ultimately

Frank or sorry do a disservice to our nature by making us more myopic and one-dimensional, exactly the way that Marcus is being critical. And I really, really think that ascribing sublime characteristics to nature even see it characteristics for nature is just a form of projection onto our part. I think that. Jesus is absolutely right that nature maybe is not a catastrophe as you sometimes put it, but it is just material processes occurring right without any kind of deep intrinsic reason being latent within it that one can participate in, right and projecting any kind of meaning into that, that will then back into you. Right recursively, I think is a serious mistake or fantasy. Right. So I'm just not attracted to it from that standpoint. Now the argument that I do think that Oracle primitives make that does have some way to it is the environmental argument that I was surprised the article didn't really dive into and we could talk about that later on. But I just wanted to lay my cards on the table and say that I have no aspiration to go to the. Country and folic naked in the. Unless, unless I'm drunk or on shrooms, in which case maybe for a couple of hours. But beyond that I am with marks that I think the more apt way of thinking about how to secure human flourishing is to precisely insist that we are many things and not one thing, and to try to secure a world where the development of human capabilities becomes an end in itself. Whether or not that can be compatible with environmentalism. That's a whole different question.

Gordon: To your first point, sort of play devil's advocate, or maybe not. To play Devil's advocate, but I think it's it's worth. It's worth articulating what exactly to victors earlier point that that the conception of autonomy that the Unabomber and and and are primitivists in general. What exactly is it their longing for? It's not necessarily an imagined nature. Like you could you could like in in certain instances. He does say, you know, maybe you were sort of subject to the weather or there's like, certain natural disasters that you can't control. XYZ it's not. It's not a perfect primitive that he's longing for, but what he's saying is that essentially, to run through the basics of the argument, we live in a society in which well as people, we have something, a desire for something he calls a a power process, which is essentially that we need to have goals whose attainment. Requires some effort that we have some chance of success and we do so with some degree of autonomy, both as individuals and like small, small collections of people. But in industrial society, our autonomy and our goal seeking is essentially subverted because we have as a society that sort of provides most of what we need for us. And then so long as we oblige, so long as we obey, you know, we go to work, we. Obey the edicts of the technological system and our our base. Nick's needs are met and then we essentially fill that goal seeking and achieving with a bunch of surrogate goals that actually aren't aren't particularly helpful. So so we have all these psychological problems produced by this process essentially by our. Our process being stiff. Now what's attractive to the primitivist about the primitive is not necessarily that it's a utopia, but that it's a world that's sort of built of our own making. So in modern industrial society and industrial capitalism, you know what I think is good? What, what? And our premise gets right is that they capture the sort of. Alienated

and interconnected. Complex nature. Of our society, I mean all of the sort of theorists of modernity to do this. So Habermas, Giddens and Co, they say, actually, you know, we live in a risk society. We we we're dependent upon all these expert systems, we have little to no agency or control over it. This produces this sense of like distrust and alienation. That is what the anarcho primitivist is. Talking about in fact. Even Ted Kaczynski did you know, to his manifesto, he says, you know, probably about 500 to 1000 people make real choices in this society. So if we can't make real choices, that's the problem. And in the primitive, even if that's terrible, materially or worse materially. At least we are making free and choices as individuals and as a small collective of people. So just to get the basics of the argument down.

Victor: Yeah. I mean, a lot of that stuff in there was super interesting and that was sort of where I. Started finding that. Like his account, like the Unabomber's account was. You know, there were a bunch of points where I was like, OK, I disagree. But in terms of what he's talking about, the sort of malaise of. Various ways in which modern society has functioned, and I know Ethan kind of felt the same way as far as from our earlier chatting. But yeah, I found some of that stuff appealing. But Ethan, you haven't talked in a while. So like, I'll give you the opportunity if you want to jump in.

Ethan: Yeah. I mean, I think like and what Gordon was mentioning, I also think is like part of this more meta point, which is like he has this argument that like. Well, we evolve. Solved. Under certain conditions and we evolved to be used to certain conditions and certain patterns of behavior, and then we have all this like rapid change and all of a sudden we're living in an environment that's just like completely mismatched from like the conditions we evolved to flourish and. And so I think like that's sort of like. You know, there is this idea of like, you know, there being this like ideal state where like, we're sort of in unity with nature and something in modern and something about modernity is like this fundamental mismatch. And it is almost like this religious notion. But I do think it. Like is lent some plausibility by this? Sort of like mechanistic argument about like, you know, Evo, psych or whatever, which I'm not exactly sure what the the merits of that are. But it's an interesting, like argument nonetheless. I mean, I I think I agree that. I I I I find it. I think it's a bit weird because like I almost think Ted Kaczynski on the one hand is too. Feministic and on the other hand like not pessimistic enough, which is like I think we both have pessimism, but like located in different places. We're like, he's more like optimistic about how good the state of nature was, at least like from what I read. Whereas I'm kind of like, no, I think the state of nature was ****. I think it's like horrible. I think nature is a really brutal and unpleasant. Place and then like you know, I also think it's the case that. That probably as we sort of like bettered our own position and developed society more and more, we create all these new problems and attempt to address the problems with nature. So now we have this new host of problems like he mentions, we're overcrowded, but we're still lonely because we don't have these small, tight knit communities that we used to have. And our work is non autonomous and not empowering like it used to be and so. On and so we traded in all the old problems for a set of new problems and. I think like

the. Question we should be asking is not. How can we return to the old problems, but rather like OK how can we synthesize? You know, like try and like obtain the things that were good about the state of nature and mimic them while also getting like the benefits of like technology like I think that's probably like a more productive direction to look at I.

Matt: Feel. Yeah. And this is where I also wanted to say that I think there can definitely be. Assisted quality to certain forms of anarcho primitivism. In fact, I don't think there are, you know, anarcho fascist communities and green fascist. Communities that appropriate very similar rhetoric and it's not a coincidence that the language of authenticity that is common to some flavors of narco primitivism can also be very, very easily wielded by reactionaries, because let's take Gordon's kind of description, you know, at face value, this idea that the world is not something that is my creation. Because I am invariably determined by the choices and actions of others within industrial civilization, so the only possibility is to return to a more competitive but ultimately more natural state where my strength and independence is able to assert itself against. The world that very much has a kind of fascistic quality, right? It's synthesizing this modern emphasis on the will and self creation with a more antiquarian desire for strengths, independence of capacity, almost this kind of aristocratic virtues right along with all the localism, moralism and so on. Now, that's not to suggest that. Marco Primitivism is inherently fascistic. I'm not making that claim at all, right? I'm just saying that coded in this way, it can very easily transition in that direction. And I would argue that Kosinski was leaning towards that.

Victor: I mean, I was actually about to say that I think, I think the Unabomber is. Is surprisingly like. I mean, he's very at the end. Like I I only attempt to skim like his kind of recommendations at the. End. But when he has, like, really like views that I don't want to, I obviously don't accept but. Like, I think he's pretty clear in saying, like, he doesn't have a political project in mind exactly other than just like destroying. Civilization like it's basically like it needs to be destroyed. But then we can be freed from it, right? But like, I don't think it's like a regime, right? I mean, the like, I I see what you're saying, Matt, in terms of, like, where it can be used for those elements, but I find it like it's hard because I feel like anarcho primitivism also almost doesn't fit any of these molds because. All those other traditional terms we use, like fascism like depend on a very modern idea of a regime, right, and it's like, and he almost seems to be anti regime in a certain sense. He's just like, you know, it just needs to be destroyed so that then people can freely, you know, just live off the land.

Gordon: Or whatever. I don't know if. Fish is sick is the right word. But the reason why I brought up the the question about why does he attack leftism right at the begin? Thing I think that gets to the heart of the ideology here. It is not just anti SIV, but it's like idealizing to to mess with your point. That kind of like individual action of the of the persona's ability to mold society. And so the problem with leftism, it's not just that we embrace technology progress. Modernity signs all of those things. It's that we want someone to provide for us in a certain sense. We want society to provide, but

he wants to idealize strength, the individual strength and sort of stigmatize individual weakness. Now, that's not necessarily fascistic, but I think it's monstrous. It's it's toxically masculine.

Matt: This is what I wanted to bring up, right? Alexander Reid, Ross and his really good book against Fascist creep. As pointed out, and this is what I was. To get to that, Kusinski actually has had a profound influence on eco fascism or green fascism. That's called because exactly the reasons that I kind of laid out. Right. But you could think about how this could be appropriated and very, very direct ways by contemporary fascist, not classical ones, who agree. Tend to be state. Just sometimes, hyper modernist in certain respects, right. But Eco fascism is distinct from what we might call generic or classical fascism, where it tends to emphasize things like, again, this return to nature in order to express one's will within it, an emphasis on individual strength and self creation, but also in local communities that are usually racially coded. With this idea being that we can most harmoniously live in small scale communities that will put us in touch, both within our own nature and nature. Generally if they are quite frankly right.

Victor: Yeah, yeah, for sure. Well, there's definitely like. A kind of acceleration as. Bent here, too, right? Like you gotta just. I also think it's important to like pick up again on what Gordon was talking about, like the kind of individualism at the core, which I find really interesting, right? Because like, it's true. That this self-reliance idealization seems to be really important for Kaczynski, the Unabomber, like it's and you know, that's the thing, that leftism, I guess, is getting wrong and interesting. And I think. You know to to link back to Russo. I remember one of the things that I found the most puzzling about Rousseau's vision of the state of nature. Yes, it's egalitarian. It's equal. But it's also individualistic. They're like all alone. They're all like, alone, roaming, like, that's so puzzling. So I think it's.

Matt: I mean reveries of a. Solitary Walker, right?

Victor: Yeah. And it's it's just puzzling because, you know, you would think that like the kind of collective energy that small kind of indigenous communities have would be the kind of desirable thing that would even, even the things that Kaczynski is talking about in terms of like the psychological ills of people, it's kind of interesting to me that he sees the cure to that. As I mean, maybe he alludes to it a little bit, but his vision seems so individualistic in terms of being able to go and and and use your own effort to get the things that you want right in his power process, right. The things that are satisfying require effort, and there's a kind of individualist bent to the way he frames it. Well, it seems to me that. You know, a lot of the things that are bad about modernity are the ways that they disconnect us from. Each other.

Ethan: It's interesting, like I was going to say something similar about like it seems like sort of the right wing and prims kind of get wrong. Like I'm kind of in agreement that there is something desirable about, like, primitivist society that was lost when we sort of transitioned to modernity. But I think like a lot of the more right wing anarcho primitivist. Kind of misdiagnosed what was desirable about that state. And there's an

interesting set of anecdotes I read a book called the Dawn of Everything, by David Graeber. And when grow and they talked about some anecdotes, I think towards the beginning of that book, where, like, you know, we have examples where people who lived in these very tribal primitivists. Kinds of societies went over and lived for like a couple of years or so. And like a modern society. Unity and when you gave them the opportunity to either stay or go back, they always goes to go back and then in the other direction we have people who lived in modern societies, who then.

Gordon: Lived for a.

Ethan: Little bit and like one of these more primitivist, you know, sort of tribal societies and when asked, OK do you want to go back to modernity or stay here? They always chose to stay. And so it seems like when people are given both options, they usually prefer primitivist sort of forms of organization. But when you ask them why, like what was desirable about that sort of primitivist organization, the two main reasons that they give is that one, there is much more community. And two, there was much more equality between people.

Gordon: And I think that's what what a lot of this misses. I mean, it's sort of critique of modernity. I think a lot we we share a lot of those those sort of precepts. I think what it it doesn't recognize is the beauty of like a social body like doing things that are great and wonderful and beautiful. Like the goal seeking here is just an individual like on the plane or in the forest doing whatever. I mean where where is the greater heights that humanity sort of can strive for and achieve? It's just like all of culture is wiped out. There is no culture here. There is no progress here. There is no science. There is no technology. I think that really sort of degrades all of humanity and what I want. To say is like. I've been somewhat generous here, but but I think that ultimately like this is an ideology of, like, genocidal proportions, like of mass suffering like the the people in.

Matt: Ohh yeah.

Gordon: The eco villages.

Matt: I mean, I completely agree. I call the Fishstick or Professor stick for a reason, and I would even take away the proto if I wasn't trying to like, go up the argument.

Gordon: People I I met on the eco villages that shared these kind of ideologies, they would talk about the necessity for civilization will collapse and how billions of people would have to die and that's. OK, right. And like, we don't have the space or the time or the capacity to deal with these weak people, they're like a cancer and they're holding us back from this oneness and wholeness and and all of that. Right. And so the the critique and in the piece it talks about like what one of the one of the people I ran into had the best critique of anarchy. Miss Murray Bookchin, who's a social ecologist. He's a left eco anarchist who has a little bit more of a modernist vision, or at least did I mean it was it? It evolves. But basically. Like one of his critiques of the Anarcho primitivist is like tell the single mother she can't have a washing machine like very simple like what you're taking away is producing a whole lot of suffering. And then just the last point I'll make, I think my biggest sort of like my biggest gripe with the

argument as a whole, not just it's sort of political. Implications and consequences and the suffering. But what the actual are. Point is, is this point I made earlier about how things are perceived of in sort of conceptual totality, there is nature, there is culture, there is technology, there is people right and and what the primitivist doesn't seem to understand that I think any good leftist should is that all of these things are open to political social. Contestation. These are dynamic forces, dynamic institutions, dynamic technologies. There, there is no such thing as capital T technology. It is always socially and politically constructed and negotiated, and that seems to be. I don't know. Why they can never seem to to. To articulate that that that, that there can't be a different kind of technology.

Matt: No, I think that's a sorry, I think that's a great point, Gordon. And I think that's why people like Terry Eagleton very rightly chastised leftist for not being capable sometimes of thinking dialectically. Although thinking dialectically and turns of unstable totalities is the kind of hallmark he thinks at least of being a kind of.

Victor: Leftist. Materialist. Yeah. But I I mean, so I don't know. I don't know if someone else wants to jump in and, like, cause, but I think it would be like worth just exploring specifically like some of the things that he talks about. And like, why? Because I think what Kosinski does, which kind of surprised me that. I mean, I don't want to say good, but like in a way I. I guess I came in with super low expectations. Right. But. Like what he. Does is kind of go through a bunch of different possible answers for why civilization might be able to solve certain kinds of these social problems, and then gives kind of responses for why he doesn't think those things are going to work right, like you know. We have to give people. Opportunities. And then he kind of thinks well, that's not going to work. Because in a society. The way that it's structured, it's like kind of robbing people actually of the opportunity to be the best version of themselves, which I guess in his vision is, you know, this kind of self reliant natural creature that can like hunt and fish. And it's like, you know, society and insofar as it can't give people like that outlet to exert those efforts. It's just not gonna be enough. And I'm one of the things I kind of found funny is like the way he's so dismissive of, like, the effort required to, like, be a laborer, yes.

Gordon: That was funny.

Victor: Like he's just like he's just. Like barely any effort and. I was like, oh, I mean, I guess.

Ethan: But like I thought about that as. Well, and I think I think that's kind of like telling because. You know, I think like that thought is what kind of led me to think that he might just have like, the wrong diagnosis of, like, what exactly is wrong with modernity because like, when he says like, Oh well, the problem is we don't have to exert enough effort to, you know, acquire our basic necessities. It's like, I don't think that's true. I don't think, like most people are sitting at their job. Thinking like, oh, I ***** hate this nine to five job because it's not difficult enough. I think like the more common sort of like reason that people hate their jobs is just because you know, it's like very disempowering. You know, everything they do, they're, like, lorded over

by a capitalist who commands them to do everything that they do. They don't really have any real stake in the business that they're working for. Like we used to have a stake in the communities that we would like directly hunt and fish. For so it's like the labor process is just less autonomous, it's less meaningful. And I think like, there are certainly ways of remedying that. You know, like, for example, like Michael Albert has this idea of, like, balanced job complexes where, like, you know, if a lot of people don't find their jobs meaningful, we can mix up the jobs so that everybody has some mixture of more empowering. And less empowering tasks that they do. You know, there's all kinds. Of like institutional kind of like changes that we can make. I feel to make labor like more empowering and to make it more like communal and like less soul crushing. And I think that the reason Ted Kaczynski kind of misses that point is just because he has this, like, bizarre impression that the problem with work is like. It's too easy.

Matt: Well, he entered academia like 16 and spent all his time as a mathematician, right? So it's not you. Just. Surprising, I just. Want to say one thing that I think? Really gets to the point of what you're talking about. I would actually argue that in our murder and workplaces, we're more alienated than we would have been in primitive societies. And I think this is a point that many Socialists have emphasized down to the present day with the writings of people like Liz Anderson, which is to say that we should want to go back, right, because one of the things that is characteristic about, say, feudal society. Is that you didn't really have a boss, right? You had a lawyer that would come by once every year. And said give me your resources and could enlist you to fight to the death in his army so he could. And next the Dutch. You have energy, right. Which is pretty bad. But for the most part you were left on your own to your own devices as long as you're able to pay up at the end of the year. Right. Whereas now in a contemporary workplace we all know, right, how regulated and overdetermined we are. We don't even have to read our. So to know that right, I mean, we have evidence that you know. Amazon workers are told when they can go pee, for God's sakes, right. I've read stories about employers who. Will try to assess what it is that their employees are spending their time on social media doing. There was a study that oh, sorry, a case that I just heard about recently in Serbia, Mars booked tyranny where employers would actually hack into their employees computers to read their personal messages to try to figure out if they were making fun of the bosses in any way, shape or form. That's all extremely invasive and extremely humiliating, and it's not the kind of thing you would experience working on a farm growing your crops, you know, taking a **** when it is that you want to take a **** and just waiting for the Lord to show up at the end of the month demanding you know his pound of flesh or whatever it happens to be.

Victor: I also think what's funny about it is like his the connection he makes from like the social. So when he's describing all the social ills, I think it's like. Yeah, it's, you know, he talks about the way modern society disrupts the power process, which Gordon described earlier. And I think, like, you know, he goes through a bunch of things and, like, some of them actually hit a bit hit home, you know, like talking

about, you know, people who indefinitely postpone everything, right. They indefinitely postpone having children because they're trying to seek some kind of fulfillment. Right. And it's like. You know, like all these things in modern society that. Like, you know, a midlife crisis, you know, it's just a symptom of, like. But but what's funny is like all these things for him are not a symptom necessarily of, like, some of the things that Matt and Ethan and you were just describing. But it's really a symptom of, like, the fact that we aren't able to do our natural or have authentic freedom, which at one point. Like non ironically describes as. Is like, you know, the ability to take care of ourselves. And he says primitive man threatened by a fierce animal or by hunger can fight in self-defense. So like literally he's saying like your life doesn't have real meaning and you're going to feel a midlife crisis until you're in an environment where, like your life might be threatened.

Gordon: Sure. And like.

Victor: And that you're self-sufficient and that your self-sufficiency is tested every day to like the point of it being life for and like on the one hand, I gotta say there's like something. Like there's a grain of this that I understand in the sense that like when we push ourselves to overcome things that are really challenging, those are like those are like the most satisfying moments in our life. This is something that niche kind of pointed out in, too when he's kind of mocking the utilitarians is like just trying to get as much pleasure as possible, that, like, actually, there's this tremendous amounting meaningfulness. That comes from pushing ourselves in situations where objectively we're suffering. But like we overcome it and it leads to the greatest meaning in life. But it's also kind of crazy to me that like, he makes such a broad general. General connection between not being able to fight against wild animals and, you know, having a midlife crisis.

Ethan: Now I feel like this conversation has inspired me to finally challenge that raccoon that's been digging through my trash at night, and I'll finally. Make a go at it.

Matt: Yeah, **** him. **** him up, Ethan. **** him apart.

Gordon: There's something there like this is one of the things that surprised me. And like, yeah, Ethan, when when? When he said like, Oh my God, life is so easy. Now I I did chuckle as well. And it it seems like a post scarcity vision more than it is like an environmental demonism vision. Ironically, it's like the problem actually is that, like industrial capitalism, like provides for us, sedates us amuses us, provides us outlets that don't. Actually help us sort of self actualize. Now his his kind of expression of that as like fighting a lion. I think again just degrades the human race. But I do think that there is a point there that like there is maybe like strands of a kind of. Like juvenile online leftism, where it's just like all I just want, like, Ubi, and not to, like, work hard. And I just want to like, chill and like smoke weed. That, to me, seems so alienating and so, like, so. Like it would be it. Would be benefit from reading this in a in? A certain level. Right, because like I do think there is something. But like actualizing our goals. That's important. There should be higher goals than fretting the line, and

there should be collective goals to like human and societal flourishing. But just being provided for in a post scarcity society, I do think that that would never quite quite satisfy.

Matt: I think there's been a long standing. Cheek of that going all the way back to people. Like Dostoyevsky, right. And notes on the underground where? I talked about the Crystal Palace and how even if you could design A utopia, one of the first things that people would want to do would be to smash it, just to assert that they were smashing it as an act of will, right? But I wanna go back to this point about fighting the lion and violence, because again, I think it reflects well on his influence. Well, it reflects on the influence you can have on things like Eco fascism right now. One of the things that I wanna point out. Is I do? Think that there is a edifying quality to struggle. And you can talk to some soldiers and they'll tell you that there is a sense in which life obtains A thickness of meaning in situations where life is risk, that can very rarely be found in any other instances. Maybe at birth, maybe in certain kind of transcendent moments. But it's very hard to emulate, right? Because everything comes into focus and is at stake. In these kind of contexts, I think that the problem is this idea. The idea that. This can be generalized to any kind of social context, or even that would be beneficent to generalize this to broad social context, because while it might be the case that in some circumstances engaging in right life, risking activities can be edifying, you know climbing a mountain or whatever it happens to be. Or, you know, trying to save the, you know, someone's life by riding into traffic. I don't think it would be conducive to human flourishing, to encourage people to do that day in and day out. In fact it. Think that if you had a society where that became the generalized rule which you'd wind up with is a Society of psychopaths rather than one where people push themselves to become the best that they possibly can be. And I think that we can see that because every attempt to generalize this ethic of the edification of violence has failed catastrophically and produced just the kind of result that. I'm talking about.

Victor: And like one one of the senses I got from reading the Unabomber is like, he clearly has, like, intellectual chops. But he just hasn't read anything like it. Like, I felt like he was making, like, interesting arguments, and I was like, wow. Like if only you'd engaged with Russell or Hagel or like, all these other people, you'd have something more interesting to say because, like, the account of freedom or, like, you're free to fend for yourself. You. Know fight off. A bear and like exert yourself and then like how society kind of is structured in a way where. We don't have that freedom anymore. Right? Where? Like that. That is taken from us because there's this new infrastructure that sort of determines a certain number of choices for us. And the way also technology, maybe we can talk about to in a. Little bit like how that's a mesh like I was sympathetic to it all to some extent. But on the other hand, I was like he's describing, you know, like if you would have read Hagel, for example, right, like Hagel has this whole like, evolution of freedom where he talks about how in the state of nature like, you have this kind of individualist freedom where yeah, you can nominally you can do anything you want because there's no overarching. Structure to tell you

not. Too, but on the other end, it's actually like you're not free at all because you're kind of stuck in this situation where, like, you're in this natural corner with these trees living off the land, and there's a bunch of things that are out of your control, right, like being hunted by an animal, like being able to farm, for example, like, can have, like, there's a bunch of things that aren't free. And like he makes. This argument that, like civil society. You know, is actually this evolution of freedom where it's like you give up that natural freedom, but there's actually a new A kind of freedom that has transcended that is like the social freedom. I just kept wishing I was like, wow would have been interesting to hear him respond to Hagel.

Gordon: Right or like or other anarchists? I mean, I think he at one point refers to himself as an anarchist. And, you know, the anarchist tradition has, like, the richest tradition of theorizing. What exactly, like the individual freedom and creative flourishing is supposed to look like. So you could read someone like. Emma Goldman, who would call this a sort of crass individualism, and you could look at the social anarchist tradition, which has actual. Really like our ourselves are realized in community that the kind of freedom that we have fighting align on the Savannah is a very, very, like, impoverished type of freedom.

Matt: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, one of the examples that I sometimes give in my class to talk about that is to say imagine that you are on a deserted island, right where there was no. Realization. Would you consider yourself more free than if you were living in a big city like Toronto? Right. I think that most. People would regard. That very quickly as a prison, right, because even though they were unconstrained in the way that Victor was talking about, and if you wanted, you can go and try to, like spear a shark and test your manliness in that way. Not being able to form. Meaningful relations with other people and not being able to realize your full range of human capacities would very quickly come to be seen as extraordinarily stifling, even to the point where I think that most people would probably not want to live very long in such a context, right? And I think. This is to the Hegelian point that both Victor and Gordon are making, which is that the proper way of understanding freedom. Is not as. A lack of constraint on your individuality to use Gordon's term, but as a form of social determination or sorry self determination that necessarily requires another to interact with. Because while I certainly feel stifled that many. Would do in a modern context, right? Again, there's a broader range of capabilities that I enjoy doing just something like this with all of you than I would on a deserted island where, yeah, I could **** all day and had to shark and nobody would stop me. But I wouldn't be able to podcast and talk about, you know, all this **** and. I would find that very stifling, personally.

Gordon: But if we weren't here, you could just rent the entire hour. Think about how sweet that would be.

Matt: Just **** speak into the.

Victor: Yeah, it's funny. I think also what struck me too is like. Going back a little bit to the diagnosis. Because of the way that these things cause. These crises, and these

psychological you know, ills that he identifies as being connected to these modern conditions. Technological conditions like I'm some as I was saying, I'm somewhat sympathetic to those things, but like I also. Kind of have like my own. Speculative theory about this stuff about like about what is like the the and certainly like modern conditions are connected to it. But you know, whenever I read something and then obviously knowing what happened with Ted Kaczynski and, you know, becoming the Unabomber, it's like, I mean, I haven't. Actually looked this. Up I did watch the Netflix documentary. About him, but I haven't actually looked this up, but like I always just think, OK, like parents like like how like what happened to you? Like like what? You know, like what? What, and and and like I do personally think that a lot of maternities ills. Yeah, they're connected to capitalism, technology. But I think that. My sort of psychological theory is that, like the reason that those things have an effect is because it doesn't put parents and family. Was in like the in a strong enough position actually put the time in. That's necessary to like give their children, you know, the the kinds of attention that they need to become, you know, confident, self motivated members of society who like don't start to get anxious and depressed all the time right. And like and like that's kind of my like totally speculative. Unsubstantiated bro science theory, but like that's kind of.

Ethan: What I think Speaking of speculative science, I think we someone had mentioned this before but like 1 issue that I had with the Unabomber manifesto. It really was just. Like I can't count the amount of like empirical claims that he made without really having any empirical evidence for them. It was kind of just like, Oh well, this empirical claim seems like intuitive to me, which you know, like it's fine to do sometimes. But like, if I were going to bomb people, for instance, I would want a more solid sort of empirical basis for my views than sort of intuition.

Victor: Yeah, totally. I mean, there's.

Gordon: A lot, yeah.

Victor: And they're like.

Gordon: I mean, I don't know. Like I. He does strike me as. Someone who's super intelligent but not to victors point, really not particularly well read.

Matt: It's apparently a a prodigy, right? Yeah.

Ethan: Random factoid. Apparently, his IQ is like 160.

Victor: And he went and he when he went. To where you. Are at the University of Michigan, where his PhD.

Matt: Yeah. Proudest alma mater. Yeah, I have a different, somewhat psychological take on him. This is just armchair psychologizing, though. Although I do want to say I think it's funny that Victor finds you to affirm the wisdom of Helen Lovejoy that, you know, we just need to think more about the children. Right. In order to get everything right. It, it seems to me that. There's a kind of neurotic quality to his writing that conforms to what Freud talked about when he described neurosis as almost this kind of hyper logical sensibility. Really, where a neurotic will have one big idea, extrapolate a huge number of conclusions from that, and then see the world as effectively reflecting

that big idea back to them. And conforming to the patterns that he extrapolated everywhere because it seems to me that. Kaczynski at some point got this idea into his head that modernity in the modern world was radically falling and radically deficient. And while Mouthy's comment about a lack of empirical evidence, he just seemed to extrapolate from that thesis that anything that he looked at conformed to this belief that society was radically fallen. So while he's definitely crazy, let's be clear about that right there is a kind of hyper logicism to his insanity where he just takes this idea and runs with it to its maximal extent. And I think that really again shows the danger to. Gordon's point about thinking undialectical about things and adopting this totalizing, hyper logical sensibility without being attentive to nuanced context and all the other things that, as academics at least or, you know, prodigies in the case of Ethan's case, you know, we. Need to be sensitive.

Gordon: Can I just share 22 tidbits here from his Wikipedia page? I should have done this earlier, but just to sort of armchair psychoanalyze him a little bit. So one of the the the main things that comes up here is while he was studying at Harvard, he was part of a psychological experiment that he described as a brute. Rising. I'm not going to go through all the the various psychological and personal abuse that he went through, but some people, you know, he was humiliated. He was demoralized. Some people thought that it might have actually been part of MK Ultra that this person was sort of doing mind control techniques. I don't know all the particulars of this. People can look it up later, but I think it's probably fair to surmise, although here it says. That Ted Kaczynski denied that this had any significant impact in his life. I think it's it's probably fair to surmise that his sort of like, total disregard for the scientific enterprise and like instrumental and technical rationality might be somewhat shaped by this period of, like, intense abuse that he was put in. Through by a A preeminent psychological scholar, scholar at Harvard and then and then later on, it says here that at one point he was deciding to undergo gender transition. So which is funny because of that sort of anti trans comment that he made in the manifesto.

Ethan: Big transitioning have saved her is the question.

Victor: I like that you've already switched the genders there. Yeah, I mean, it was funny, like the way he. Yeah, he did. He just mentions that, like, I actually found the quote where he's like. You know it is true. Not all with sweetness and light in primitive societies, abuse of women was common among Australian Aborigines. Transsexuality was fairly common among. Young, the American Indian tribes, and it does appear. Generally speaking, the kinds of problems that we have listed. Yeah. So like I mean, that's another thing. I mean, yeah, I remember when I originally read this through that obviously I was like, wow, that's kind of weird that that's like a mention of a of a social ill.

Ethan: Like it's just clear to me that like. You know, even if we were like, he points to important features of our ancestral environment that, like the lack of those features is really, like distressing to us or really harmful to us. And like, that's pretty plausible to me. I think that's like, probably true that there are things like that. And

you know, I'm even open to the idea that the ancestral environment is better than what we have right now. But then it's like, OK, well, stepping back from that, there are like these additional questions, which is like one is our ancestral environment like optimal, or is there some like better like alternative way of going about handling? Technology that would be better than what we have. Now and what we used to have. And like in addition to that, like from where we sit right now like from our current practical standpoint, what's like the best, most practical direction to be moving in? And I would say that I think there probably are ways of handling technology societally that would be optimal and better than our ancestral environment and better than what we have right now. And I also think from our current practical standpoint, the most like practical option in terms of like expected value probably is. Not trying to abolish technology? I don't think many people will go for that, and I don't think that movement will have better success. We'll have much success. So it's like, OK, well, we should probably be trying to more think about how we can fine tune our current society such that we get more of the benefits of what we used to have without giving up the costs like. You know, having more community without giving up antibiotics, for instance.

Victor: You know, you know and. And and it also just occurred to me that maybe the reason he emphasizes individualism is because. If he admits. That you know that we would have. Been collective at the. Time then, like I think that it's very plausible to assume, based on anthropological evidence that like in these tribes in these more tribal societies, it's not like there's not these, like coercive kind of traditional structures that emerge, that do constrain right, like. Insiders and outsiders, right, like like these things exist in in, like tribal societies where, like, you're part of the tribe, you're not like, are you deviating from our traditions or are you not that kind of constrain your behavior? Those things seem to emerge spontaneously. Right. Like it's just seems to be the case that for whenever human beings gather, they end up building some kind of course of structure of either traditions or, you know, oral traditions that do talk about, like, right ways of living in wrong ways of living. Right. And those can be extremely constrained. And I could imagine myself. You know, growing up there like you know, assuming that my curiosity and like obsession with asking annoying gadfly questions is not just a result of my socialization. I could imagine being in that scenario and being feeling extremely constrained as I think maybe Matt was talking about earlier. But like, it's not obvious that everyone's going to be satisfied. That's what I'm trying.

Matt: To say right? Yeah, I agree. I mean, I often point out that anthropological evidence doesn't really benefit anyone's political narrative, since the most recent account that I've read accounts, I should say suggests that in this state of nature, we lived in communist polyamorous societies that were highly tribalistic. And deeply patriarchal. So everybody gets to lose something. We look at, you know, anthropology, right. And I don't think anybody would.

Gordon: Exactly, yeah.

Matt: Want to go? Back there, right. But the other thing. That I think. Is problematic. That speaks to victors point. As I tend to think that if people were truly happy in these circumstances, then we'd see something emerge like what emerges and go to spouse, right where Mephistopheles says. If you're truly happy and you settle for a minute, then you're not going to want to leave, right? And this is kind of part of the trick that's played. Clearly. There were serious problems with the state of nature since we constantly. Prior to exercise or giving capabilities to exit or improve upon that, and a wide variety of ways. And I'm not sure that that purely. Has to do with. Psychoanalytic reasons related to lack, desire and curiosity. I think that's definitely a part of it, but I think it really is also. Just the materially bad circumstances that one sees in the state of nature. I mean, one of the things that we constantly have to emphasize is take something like child mortality, right? Imagine having 7-8 children just 200 years ago and knowing that there's a pretty good chance that five of them will be dead before you hit the grave. Right. I mean, there are people nowadays who are devastated by the loss of one child. This would be a regular thing. Right. The fact that that is no longer something that people expect and it becomes an exceptional moment is the kind of material progress that I think has contributed to human happiness and human flourishing. And that is just one example of the way that technology has really had a benign influence on people for all the alienating qualities that emerge from it. And I think that that's probably one of the reasons why we chose to technologically innovate, because it makes us materially better off. Now. Again, I think that the key question is whether we can continue to improve that way create a non alienating society empowered by technology and not cause irreparable damage to the environment. And like I said, that's the one thing about primitivism that I really think it has going for it, which. That are even fully automated luxury communism, which I'd be all for if it was possible, might cause irreparable damage to the environment. And I'm not. Sure. How to. Avoid that. But if we can empower ourselves without destroying the planet, then do so in a socially responsible way. That's not alienating I would. Say do it.

Gordon: Are there just sort of some wrapping thoughts? Like what lessons do we take from anarcho permits and what do we want to keep? What do we want to disregard?

Matt: Back to polyamorous communist societies today.

Victor: I mean, I think it's, I think the insight about things that make us unhappy and feel alienated in society, it's like worth thinking about those things, and it's worth asking the ways in which society and technology could be contributing to that. I mean you. Know, I mean, Ted Kaczynski is actually still alive, so he's probably aware of all the technological advancements, but I wonder he must just be like. Really, **** things have just gotten so much worse. You know, a lot of the things he identifies is worthwhile, but obviously, like, I think his solution is horrifying. You know, we didn't really like go into, I I only skimmed it at the end when he talks about tactics, right? But he, you know, he at this point at least he's like, well, I'm not saying it's good. It's

got to be violent. But like, ultimately the goal has to be clear. And it is like destroying civilization. And I think he might even admit that people will obviously die initially as a result of that. Right. I think he, you know, he when you if you collapse. You know, if you have a political revolution and you collapse the government, a lot of people. Are going to. Die and be really unhappy and there's going to be a lot of suffering and he's kind of like, that's the price we need to pay, right. And that's very much the accelerationist view and that part, I obviously completely disagree. But I would say. It's surprisingly worth reading like in in a way I would recommend it in a way that. I was surprised. That I'm surprised that I would actually recommend it to people who are interested, like I think it's. It's interesting not only just as a historical like cause. I think before, just historical curiosity to be like what was this mass murderer, you know? But there's stuff in there that makes you think, right? There's stuff in there that makes you be like, I wonder how much this is affecting my happiness. I wonder, you know, is that plausible? And also, he makes a lot of leaps, a lot of speculative leaps where I'm just like, I don't think that's true. But it's still interesting.

Gordon: I'll jump in. Yeah. I mean, I think to, to Victoria's point, it's sort of goes without saying, but maybe we should say it just so people don't, don't misunderstand us. I mean, yes, I think this is a violent and potentially sort of genocidal ideology and it and and what he's proposing in terms of like, you know, not just political. Violence but sit like tearing down civilization. Period. Is not something that I want to advocate for at all. I do agree that I think I would recommend this as a read though, because I think sort of strains of this like an Archer of this thought are all over the left. You know, there's different. You know, there's there's parts of it that aren't quite as extreme, but you can look at sort of deep ecology. Sort of like weird pseudo spiritualism, maybe even some of the sort of degrowth people, the oneness of nature. The kind of lifestyle leftism, that sort of just rejects modernity, science, reason in its entirety, that's sort of. This is the ethos of that. So if you can sort of grapple with this and come up with, like, a good critique of it, and I hope we've sort of offered you one, which is to think. A little bit more dialectically not with these sort of conceptual totalities, but think actually this is open to political contestation and there is a greater world and there is a greater freedom that is realized socially rather than, you know, fighting a lion that I think you're sort of in a good spot.

Victor: You know the sources of our unhappiness. I just don't find it plausible that it's because I can't be at risk of certain death in nature all the time. I just don't see that as being plausible.

Matt: Well, I don't know. Matthew might be really happy if he. ***** that raccoon up.

Ethan: Yeah. No. Yeah, that's true. I'll. I'll report back on like, you know, how much meaning I felt after.

Victor: I don't know if your life is at risk of death from Iraq.

Unknown Speaker: There we go.

Ethan: I was going to. Say about, you know his remarks about. Like oh we. Should be willing to accept, you know, billions of people dying. I mean, billions of people dying is a bit intense. I will say, you know, I will say I think like, you know, I would.

Unknown Speaker: That's no good.

Ethan: It's nuanced, but I'll say in terms of like full on, like revolutionary political violence. I oppose it because I don't think that's like an effective way to bring about a good society. I mean, I'm not sort of like deontic rally against political violence in the. That if I were 100% convinced that political violence was needed to bring about, like, permanently bring about a world which is just much better than the world that we have right now, I would think, you know, I sort of have to some extent, like a consequentialist then. And I would think like, yeah, you know, that's that's probably worth it. But, like, you know, if you're gonna come to me. And telling me like, OK, we're doing a revolution. Billions are gonna die, but we're gonna, you know, we're gonna get a lot. And I'm like, OK, what are we gonna get? And then you're like, oh, well, you're gonna get to, like, fight lions and die of 26 from, like, you know, a scratch on your arm. And it's like, OK well. I'll just. I'll stay in my room watching TV. Thanks.

Matt: That was beautifully, but I I can't improve upon that, so I'm just going to say always down for a good critique of technology. I think that we've been doing that since we're, so let's continue to do it, but yeah. This is just. Wacko. So it's not something that I'm not going to. Be signing off on.

Victor: It's a non starter. Yeah, I think the most generous way of of of saying it's not that you're just. Meaning you know. Risk of death but. You're gaining the vital essence of what it means. To be a human being would probably. Be the way that he would want to put. It, but I don't think that's very plausible.

Matt: Well, there's always ***** Alaska. He's welcome to go there.

Victor: Well, he's in jail, he.

Unknown Speaker: No, he's prime. Probably would if he could.

Matt: Well, anybody who wants to follow in his footsteps, you know, just go there. There are a lot of ***** grizzly bears go to Churchill. Manitoba, for ***** sake. You know, and wrestle with the polar bear. Their problem in the town. They might even welcome in ***** go there that.

Gordon: That was academic Edge Lords, if you haven't already hit that subscribe button and rate and review while you're there, you can also follow us at our new Twitter feed, which is at edgelord. Scott, we are hosted by Ethan Xavier, Matt McManus, Victor Pizzoni and me, Gordon Tadlock, Mark Apolonio and I do the audio editing and Dakota Coupe is our graphic designer. Academic Edgelords is a production of site media. Check back in every second Tuesday for new episodes.

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