

David Skrbina Pen Pal of the Unabomber

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My name is David Skrbina. I'm a professor of Philosophy, University of Michigan, Dearborn.

I've been corresponding with Ted Kaczynski since 2003, so for 9 years now. Received roughly 150 letters from him. I wanted to talk to any notable critics of technology to get their views. And I realized that Ted Kaczynski was a notable critic and we had not heard from him since he was imprisoned in 1996. He's still alive. He's in jail in a supermax prison in Florence, Co. Life in prison, no possibility of parole, but he does have the the right and has been active in writing. Corresponding to people outside the prison.

So Kaczynski is actually in a line of notable critics who have said technology is taking over human society. It's a threat to human existence and the only viable option is to end the technology System.

He's portrayed as a radical, but there have been a number of radical people before him who have said essentially the same thing. And when I teach my course, I put Kaczynski in the mainstream of these technological critics. So the manifesto is actually a very clear, concise, and articulately argued piece. It's a very rational argument against technology. His solution, which is revolting against the system or undermining the system, has been suggested before and going back to Samuel Butler in the 1860s, so even that idea as extreme as it sounds, is not really original.

Technology seems to be accelerating at the present, and it's rapidly expanding into many aspects of human society. To the extent that we cannot really control the future development of the system as it becomes more powerful, the potential for disaster also increases exponentially. So whether it's ecological disaster, self replicating, nanomachines or nano robots, there are many possible scenarios which are. Completely catastrophic to human future. And we really lack any good reason to suspect that we can circumvent these problems. And if that's the case, the only rational alternative is to end the system. Now, while we still have some possibility of action against it.

The point, the reason why he sent the bombs was not so much because he thought killing people would do any good. Because it the reason was that it gave him the leverage to force the publication of the manifesto and to cause it to be read by large numbers of people in the public. In a sense, he had this larger cause, which was a noble cause if it turns out to be true that there is this vital threat to the planet or to humanity.

There'll be no doubt that Kaczynski is right that that the technological system is a kind of mortal threat and you know he was one of the few people who had the guts to stand up and say so and to say that only the most radical action against the system can protect us from these worst possible outcomes. So it may yet turn out to be true that he was a prophet and potentially a kind of savior of humanity on the planet.

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