

The Anti-Tech Cast

Griffin Kiegiel

July 30, 2021 - Present

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A podcast promoting anti-tech thinkers from all over the globe.

Edited Down Conversations

1. David Skrbina, PhD "on Creative Reconstruction"

July 30, 2021

Hosts Ryan Glavin and Griffin Kiegiel interview Dr. David Skrbina about his conception of technology, his understanding of the technological problem, and his proposal for remedying it-

2. Chad A. Haag "India vs. United States"

Aug. 6, 2021

Griffin and Ryan interview peak oil Philosopher Chad A. Haag about misconceptions surrounding life in India, the negative consequences of Western technological living, and the influence of social media on interpersonal relations.

3. Sean Fleming, PhD "Ellul vs. Kaczynski"

Aug. 28, 2021

Griffin rides solo in this episode, talking with Sean Fleming, a junior research fellow at the University of Cambridge, and author of "The Unabomber and the Origins of Anti-Tech Radicalism". They mainly talk about Jacques Ellul and Kaczynski.

[Watch here](#)

Introduction

Griffin: Hello everyone, welcome to the anti-tech cast, I'm Griffin and today I'm here with Sean Fleming from the university of Cambridge.

How are you doing Sean? Thanks for coming on.

Sean: Well thank you for having me griffin.

Griffin: So we are talking to you today because you recently published an article called the Unabomber and the origins of anti-tech radicalism and you know we had this recommended to us and we read it and we loved it we thought it was a really great and fair representation of these ideas and where anti-tech ideas and where they came from. Especially where Kaczynski got a lot of his ideas.

So it's a nice refreshing academic piece that gives these ideas their merit and doesn't you know talks about Kaczynski's ideas rather than his activities that got him infamous and so we like these articles and we want more of them.

So you know Sean before we kind of get into some of the things you're writing about. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about how you got into these ideas? How you maybe found out about Kaczynski and thought it important to analyze his ideas in this way?

Sean: I started working on this because I've never seen such a glaring gap in the literature so to speak this was one of the most famous manifestos of the 20th century and hardly anyone had written about it and second I discovered that there was a massive trove of material at the university of Michigan at the Labadie collection that includes copies of most of the material that the FBI confiscated from Kaczynski's cabin back in April 1996 and hardly anyone had used this for academic purposes it's one of

the most popular collections at Michigan's library but no one had used it to write this intellectual history to figure out where his ideas came from.

Early attempts to understand Kaczynski's influences

Sean: When most of the attempts to analyze the manifesto were written the archive at Michigan wasn't available so some of them can't be faulted because well they didn't have access to what I had access to. So much of the early work there well there are a few sources there's an article by Tim Luke in telos called rereading the Unabomber manifesto that's from 1996 1997. so that's really the first academic attempt to analyze the manifesto and Luke was working with no primary material whatsoever he was just reading the manifesto and trying to figure out where the ideas came from that way gotcha then there was a much better article by Scott Corey who was at the time a PhD student at Berkeley and Corey's article is better simply because he had access to a lot more material so he used a lot of the legal documents that he could get his hands on, he was one of the few people without a press pass who actually attended Kaczynski's trial so it's a pretty good article but he doesn't have access to all the correspondence and all the all the stuff that the FBI dug out of boxes and Kaczynski's cabin, his drafts and notes and all this sort of stuff. And then there's the most popular account of his intellectual influences which comes from a book called Harvard and the Unabomber by Austin Chase and there as far as I can tell Chase just wildly speculates about Kaczynski's influences with hardly any evidence whatsoever and so some of the early accounts of his influences can't be faulted some of them I think are just so stories that well make pretty sweeping claims about where his ideas came from without any evidence.

Griffin: Right this that we read the manifesto and this idea sounds like this idea so we're just going to tie this huge collection of authors to him like that that list that you mentioned of all the authors that he supposedly read or that they claimed that he was inspired from and then he hadn't even read most of them, that were on that list it's so it's it yeah it seems kind of evident that they were just kind of throwing out whoever sounded similar right?

Sean: That's right and even the similarities are pretty tenuous so you know chase says well Kaczynski sounds a bit like ef Schumacher he sounds a bit like Lewis Mumford sounds a bit like aaron there's a bit of Aristotle in there he thinks eric from the list goes on tim luke says he sounds a bit like Markus lots of people have said he sounds like Paul Goodman it turns out that he had actually read very few of them and most of these figures if he had read them he read them only after he wrote the manifesto so what's remarkable about him is actually not how similar he is to previous critics of technology but how little he knows or cares about them yeah really only one prominent

critic of technology in the 20th century that he knew or cared much about and that was Jaques Ellul.

Ellul

Griffin: Yeah so can you yeah can you tell us Ellul bit about how he was inspired by lulu's ideas and how they connect to each other?

Sean: So most of what Kaczynski borrowed from Ellul comes from Ellul's 1954 book *La technique* which was translated into English in nineteen and published as *The technological society*.

There are several ideas that Kaczynski takes from Ellul. One is that human beings are maladapted to life in a technological society I discussed that at the beginning the basic idea is that human beings evolved in a primitive Stone Age environment we're still genetically hunter-gatherers but now we've been thrust into this world of concrete and steel and we're psychologically ill-equipped to deal with that.

Griffin: Genetics don't evolve that quickly.

Sean: Well yeah that's right and so that is one idea. Now it's notable though that for Ellul the mismatch between human beings and the technological society was more social than biological and Ellul thought that the problem was that our norms and morals and social structures and communities can't evolve fast enough to keep up with technology, whereas Kaczynski wasn't concerned so much about those things he was concerned about our biology, so already there they diverge but the basic idea that we're maladapted or maladjusted to technology comes from Ellul.

The second idea is the idea that technology is autonomous that it is a force beyond human control it can't be subject to rational human control that technology constitutes a self-perpetuating system this also comes from Ellul this is probably a rules most famous idea and it's papered all over Kaczynski's writings.

There are also lots of little bits and pieces, so there's the idea that technology is the opposite of nature, that also comes from Ellul. In part the idea of revolution comes from Ellul though Kaczynski takes it in his own direction.

The least obvious thing that comes from Ellul is the idea that leftism is a form of pseudo-revolution so this is one of the big arguments in *Industrial society and its future* and the one I think that has puzzled readers the most so you open up *Industrial society in its future* and he starts talking about technology and what it's done to us and then in the very first main section he talks about leftism he talks about how the left is psychologically perverted and he says that the left essentially co-opts the revolutionary impulse and channels it into benign outlets outlets that are harmless to the system so he sees social activism as in little's terms a form of useless revolt it makes us feel better but it doesn't really do anything.

Griffin: It's a surrogate activity.

Sean: That's right, so the surrogate activity that idea comes from elsewhere but the basic idea that the left pulls the teeth of revolutionary impulses domesticates them creates a a kind of surrogate revolution that it it hijacks the revolutionary impulse and well distracts attention from the problem of technology that comes from the end of the technological society by lulu so from Ellul just to recap we have the idea that human beings are maladapted to a technological society the idea that technology is autonomous and the idea that that social activism that the social movements of our time are pseudo-revolutionary that's mainly what Kaczynski takes from Ellul

Griffin: Gotcha and I guess I would ask then how does he diverge from Ellul a little bit maybe the biggest deepest difference of all before we get on to the specific difference specific set of differences is that Ellul is a fundamentally continental thinker so he's very French his dialectical approach his kind of meandering free-flowing style is quintessentially French and heavily influenced by marx so whenever lula is saying something there's always an antithesis to whatever he's saying so the you know the thesis that technology is hemming us in on all sides that it's depriving us completely of freedom is one side of a dialectic so the other side he gives you in a later book called the ethics of freedom which basically says that although technology has deprived us almost entirely of freedom we can still find freedom in Jesus Christ he's a fundamentally Christian thinker he's a dialectical theologian is one way of putting it and that is not at all what Kaczynski.

Kaczynski essentially lopped off the theological part and the dialectical part so Kaczynski writes like an analytic philosopher he well numbered paragraphs that says it all yeah first his style is radically different because his method and his worldview are radically different so Ellul is trying to mount a kind of theological critique of technology and Kaczynski although he abhors what science has created he accepts the scientific worldview so he understands human beings and technology alike as products of evolutionary processes and he speaks the language of behavioral and cognitive psychology even even his bombs you know he documented the results in you know an extensive set of lab notes so although he although he detests science and technology at one level he accepts the world view of the scientist or the technician.

Griffin: Do you find that to be do you find that to be a bit ironic considering his stance on those things?

Sean: Well you can you can read it in two ways you can read it as blatant hypocrisy which is how some have read it you know ron arnold is one who wrote this book eco-terror back in the and I guess it was 1977 he tried to associate Kaczynski with the radical environmental movement and one of his claims is that Kaczynski is blatantly hypocritical using technology to attack technology and using technology to propagate anti-tech ideas is inherently hypocritical you know others who've criticized them along these lines are people like kevin kelly the co-founder of wired who's well aware of Kaczynski's ideas and actually accepts quite a lot of them especially the idea that technology is a self-organizing system but diverges from him on the obvious point of

whether technology is good yeah and so kelly says the same he says look kasinsky was living off the fat of the technological system he was a blatant hypocrite.

Now the other way of reading Kaczynski is that his critique of technology was an internal criticism and he understands himself as a product of the technological system he's trying to attack it from the inside and so whereas tries to set up an alternative vantage point an external vantage point a non-technical vantage point from which to criticize the technological society Kaczynski tries to mount his critique from the inside from inside the world view of the technician and so Kaczynski might return to the charge of hypocrisy he might say well if my critiques succeeds it's all the more damning because I've shown that even from the scientists or the technicians own premises the technological system is fundamentally flawed and beyond redemption, so this is what he's trying to do he's trying to mount an internal critique of modern technology.

Griffin: I guess on the other side of that coin would you say or do you think that maybe Ellul was I don't I don't want to say naive but like that he was missing something when he was trying to take that external stance do you think he was failing to recognize how he was a product of the technical system or I don't know do you think there's another side of the coin there?

Sean: I think he recognized that he was a product of the technological system one of one of the things that he takes from Hegel and repeats endlessly is the idea that the first act of freedom is a recognition of necessity you have to recognize that you are constrained and under the power of the system in order to have any possibility of resisting it Ellul is not someone who has any illusions there but you might think that his critique of technology is less persuasive because it comes from the outside.

Now Ellul would retort that it's actually Kaczynski who is well off the rails here so one of the things he says in his 1988 book the technological bluff is that the technical thinking is incapable of thinking about technique it's not possible in Ellul's view to mount a critique of techno science from within the technological world view, so the argument here is something like this; as soon as you try to use techno science as soon as you adopt the calculating strategic language of techno science, you are reinforcing it, so for Ellul technique is a mindset, it's not just a system that's external to us, the reason that the technological system persists is that we all think in technical terms. So Marcuse makes a similar point later on he says well what sustains this this system well one-dimensional modes of discourse modes of discourse that give priority to a certain kind of rationality and efficiency over everything else.

So for Ellul it's necessary to break the habits of mind that sustained technology in order to really defeat it and so he would argue against Kaczynski that Kaczynski is simply reinforcing the technological mindset, he's not fundamentally challenging anything in Ellul's view. I think his view is that when you use technology you're making a sort of deal with the devil right he doesn't think power can be turned against power his fundamental commitment here is that no one can really control power at any fundamental level, so just as he thinks you know that violence cannot overthrow

a power structure and replace violence with non-violence. Just as violence can't be overturned violently he doesn't think technology can be overturned technologically.

Revolution

Griffin: Can you say a bit about what Ellul's perspective on how to revolt against the system like or maybe the differences between Ellul and Kaczynski's approach to how to you know either weaken the system or take it down or revolt against it in some way how do their approaches differ?

Sean: All right so Kaczynski's approach is I suppose an empirical approach to revolution so Kaczynski thinks that you can look back through the history of revolution and distill lessons for an anti-tech revolution in the present so he says we can look at the French revolution and the Russian revolution and the Irish revolution and a whole host of other revolutions and we can discern some rough guidelines and some pitfalls to avoid for the anti-tech revolution. So fundamentally for him the anti-tech revolution is modeled on historical revolution and despite what he says in industrial society and its future he's pretty confident that it's going to be a violent revolution. He doesn't think the technological system can be overthrown without force and although he's ambivalent about violence in the manifesto, he says in this unpublished essay called in defense of violence which is in the labity archive that the revolution he envisions is almost certainly going to be violent. He says he downplayed the role of violence in the manifesto simply because he didn't think the media would publish anything that explicitly advocated violence.

So that is Kaczynski's revolution, it's a violent overthrow of the established power structure, it's a destruction not only of the state, but of the broader infrastructure that sustains the technological system and you can get a better idea of what he means here what the beginnings of this revolution might look like which is really large-scale industrial sabotage from his essay "Hit Where It Hurts". So that's Kaczynski's revolution it's violent and it's based on historical examples revolution.

Ellul's is exactly the opposite, so Kaczynski read Ellul's book autopsy of revolution when he was I suppose when he was in Montana but completely ignored or missed the point so one of the little central points in this book is that an anti-tech revolution can't possibly be modeled on historical revolutions and there are a few reasons for that but one of the main ones is that technology is too global and too pervasive to be overthrown like a government he thinks it's a huge mistake to extrapolate from historical examples of revolution and he thinks that the kind of strategic calculating thought about revolution which you'll find in Kaczynski's book anti-tech revolution is exactly the kind of thought that will simply reinforce technique as a mindset.

So Ellul's doesn't give a handbook for revolution here and he's using revolution in a pretty odd sounding way, but there's one little snippet from the autopsy revolution

near the very end that I think captures what he means by revolution so he says it I'll paraphrase here he says it would represent a fundamental breach in the technological society a truly revolutionary attitude if contemplation could replace frantic activity.

So Ellul's revolution doesn't involve overthrowing anything by force it involves deliberately slowing down and rejecting the arms race in which we find ourselves in modern society.

Griffin: So just kind of not engaging with it just backing off?

Sean: Right and well it's not total divestment from it either it you know I don't think Ellul thinks we can run to the woods and and escape from it in any fundamental way but what he thinks is that we can deliberately slow down in defiance of the system and if enough people do that if enough if enough people refuse to think and live in a technical way concerned with means over ends with efficiency over all else then the system will inevitably break down.

Griffin: Do you find that to be a bit ideological or do you think that's actually like practically realistic in in some future or uh ideally?

Sean: I'm not optimistic about the possibility of doing that, but it sounds to me like what Gandhi says about how the Indians should deliberately withdraw consent from the British empire so for Gandhi the way of getting rid of the British was not to drive them out with force but to refuse to participate in their industrial civilization to put the mind over the body and that is essentially Ellul's idea of what resistance against technology looks like slow down is really the message.

Human Nature

Sean: I don't think Ellul has any fixed concept of human nature this is one fundamental difference between Kaczynski. So again for Ellul the problem with technology is that it has outstripped the evolution of our social structures and communities and norms. The mismatch between us and technology is sociological rather than biological right it's not based on human nature and I think judging by the first part of the technological society Ellul thinks that in the past we were perfectly capable of resisting the pull of technique. So, he talks about several different societies that resisted the urge to prioritize means over ends. First he says look at the ancient Greeks, the ancient Greeks were incredibly sophisticated philosophically and scientifically, but he claims they had contempt for practical application, they could have used their knowledge to manipulate the world, but they didn't, they wanted to understand it, so he says for the Greeks there was a stark division between science/understanding of the world and technique/application.

And then he says you can see this later on in in Christian societies you know from the roman empire to the I don't remember whether he says the early Christian society or even up through the middle ages Christianity posed a difficult barrier to the expansion

of technique so Christianity was the sort of sound in the gears of the machine nothing could be developed without moral criticism, so early Christianity created this kind of external vantage point from which to criticize technique, so it was a constant source of judgment that technique couldn't overcome.

So for Ellul it's not human nature that's decisive, it's culture that's decisive.

Griffin: That's interesting especially considering like you know I think a lot about how the tech society that we live in today, at least the way I experience it through the internet, it's very behemoth vehemently secular that it there's like a rise in atheism with an embrace of that comes with an embrace of science and technology because I think you know there's that recognition that it halts progress so to speak and so I guess yeah is is that is that what we're kind of missing today we're missing a moral barrier between that should be there for progress.

Sean: Well Ellul would say actually we don't live in a secular age we have simply abandoned the old religions doctor and created a new one we've created well Kaczynski calls it technicality analogous to Christianity and Ellul calls it I think technolatry as in idolatry and so he says first we abandoned religions of nature we abandoned spiritual views of nature in favor of you know Abrahamic religions and then we chased religious significance out of all the things we used to attach it to and projected it onto the objects that we now revere, so the computer is a religious symbol in our time, it's almost sacrilegious, blasphemous even to smash one or even have contempt for one. And so Ellul thinks that it's not that we lack religion it's that we've abandoned the old religions that grew up organically and now adhere to a kind of industrial technological religion which essentially deifies means and has contempt for ends.

The Vanguard Party

Griffin: I guess you're talking about this monistic quality of technology and tying it together to weaken it I guess it does kind of bring to light for me this possibly an issue with Kaczynski's taking his revolutionary ideas from history because you know I think about it like the you know the French revolution and the uh all the historical revolutions that he's drawing from you know these were revolutions against human systems that I guess I don't think there is a case of a global network that is trying to be revolted against, like it seems that in order to fight against a global system like Kaczynski wants to you need to have a global revolution, but I don't know how would that gel with his idea that the revolution has to be like a small minority group right that that is strongly focused and able to efficiently like get things done have you thought about this earlier like I don't know do you did you side with Ellul or Kaczynski on that idea of like drawing from history in order to figure out what to do now.

Sean: Well let me let me take the second point first so I think what Kaczynski has in mind is a set of attacks on central pieces of infrastructure where breaking down one

part will inevitably inevitably break down the rest so think about the global payment system if you can take out some a particular node in some networks that happens to be located in you know the united states or europe you could potentially cause havoc globally so he thinks that the system is coupled together enough that if you attack one part of it the dominoes will fall and and this is I think how he reconciles his claim that the revolution has to be led by a small group of people with his claim that it has to be global he thinks that hit where it hurts again is the decisive essay here this helps to explain what he's on about so on the question of whether the anti-tech revolution can be modeled on history well I think Ellul completely preempted Kaczynski's argument here so Ellul seemed to anticipate that someone like Kaczynski would eventually come along and read the technological society and then think that a violent revolution was the answer and the purpose of autopsy revolution is exactly to say that this kind of revolution is dead it doesn't work anymore and he says you know whether you're talking about the French or the russian revolution or any of the later revolutions these are all essentially the same kind of revolution these are these all follow the same model of revolution which is based on Marx's extrapolation from the French revolution this is a historically specific idea of revolution that just doesn't travel is what he's trying to say and so whether you're talking about a revolution against technology or a revolution against a government Ellul just doesn't think it works the same way anymore.

Griffin: Why specifically does it not work anymore?

Sean: Well let's take why doesn't it work against technology first and then why doesn't it work against a particular government so it doesn't work against technology because technology it depends on modes of thought a mindset this is the point I mentioned before that you can overthrow a group of people violently on the model of the French or Russian revolutions but you can't overthrow a system of thought no violence can change governments but it can't change minds yeah that's essentially what he has in mind and he thinks that even for overthrowing governments the old model doesn't really apply at that point is admittedly Ellul more opaque but the idea seems to be that a true revolution has to cut against the tide of history so history has a certain direction to it you can predict what with some accuracy what you know all of the things being equal the first or the next 20 or 30 years will bring you can imagine what it would be like for our society to develop in this direction over another 20 years and he says a real revolution cuts against the tide of history so this is what makes it revolutionary rather than just reformist or an acceleration toward the same and he says what's peculiar about the French revolution is that it pushes with the tide of history so it was pushing in the direction of power so the the monarchy and the aristocracy were losing ground economically to you know new land holders and new economic interests in france and all the revolution did was push in the direction that the economic forces were already pushing which was against the monarchy against the old feudal power structures so Marx's mistake Ellul thinks is to is to think first of all that revolutions have to be class-based and second of all that they push in the direction of history, so you know in Marxist thought revolutions are well the locomotive of history is the

kind of catchphrase so Ellul doesn't think any true revolution in our world can take the model of the French or Russian revolutions because a true revolution has to cut against the probable course of history that seems to be what makes a revolution in the first place the way to cut against it is certainly not to be strategic and calculating, the way to cut against it is not to develop a revolutionary doctrine and refine revolutionary tactics, that's just to reinforce technique for Ellul the way to cut against it the way to defy the course of history, the way to have any real freedom is to reject the habits of thought and of action that have been instilled in us, to act in a deliberately non-technical inefficient contemplative way.

Ellul is the antidote to Kaczynski

Griffin: One closing question that I like to ask people is what you know for someone that is new to these ideas that maybe just discovered Kaczynski via a Netflix documentary or something and is like looking around for more information or rather that they you know see some of the truth in his arguments as we have, do you have any kind of advice that you would give someone as to like how they can go about either supporting this movement or just bettering their own life or trying to better their community? Are there any steps that you've taken in your own life or things that you would recommend for other people to do in order to try to bring about a better future for us?

Sean: Well I'm just going to recommend that anyone who reads Kaczynski and is persuaded by some of the arguments, go and read Ellul read Ellul's book *The Technological Society*, it's much more demanding than Kaczynski.

Griffin: Yes, a bit thicker

Sean: Yeah so it's what, 450 or 460 pages?

Griffin: Including the endnotes yeah about that.

Sean: Okay well it's a thick tome for sure, but it will give you some insight into where Kaczynski got his ideas, it will also give you some interesting counterpoints to Kaczynski. Lots of people who've read Kaczynski project him back onto Ellul far too much, but if you read him as a different thinker, if you read him as an interlocutor Kaczynski I think he's in he's as much an antidote to Kaczynski as he is and an influence on him. So I'd recommend that you read them alongside each other don't just read everything Kaczynski has written, branch out, read someone else, Kaczynski is tempting because he's so easy to read yes he's incredibly clear he's incredibly precise and concise you know he's you he gives you the analytic philosopher's version of anti-tech but don't just stop with Kaczynski and also read some of the stuff that you don't think you'll like like know your enemy is a good motto here read the accelerationist manifesto ray Kurzweil the futurist read Kevin Kelly. I think it was John Stewart Mill who said, paraphrasing, he who knows only one side of the argument knows nothing

of that or he who knows only his own side of the argument. So read widely about tech. It's tempting when you find a text that resonates with you to just read everything by that author, but don't read Kaczynski in isolation is my best advice.

I will eventually hopefully in the not too distant future have a book about anti-tech ideas that centers on Ellul and Kaczynski so stay tuned for that, the article is one part of a larger project and there will be a book hopefully in the not too distant future.

Griffin: Awesome looking forward to that. Once again your article is the Unabomber and the origins of anti-tech radicalism published in the journal of political ideologies and I'll put a link to it in the description to this video and recommend everyone go read it and check it out and cite it and start writing your own stuff and let's get this discussion going and the movement moving further along, but yeah Sean thank you again for agreeing to come out and talk with us and talk about these connections with Kaczynski and Ellul and where a lot of these ideas come from and kind of the intellectual history and development of these ideas. I think it's really refreshing to talk about and hear about other thinkers besides Kaczynski because he's such a huge name right now and he's you know the one that most people are aware of but not a lot of people know where he got his ideas from and or even know that he wasn't the originator of a lot of his ideas and that there's a whole slew of literature and things to look at and study out there so thank you again for coming on Sean and talking with us.

4. West Northwest "Humanity First"

Oct. 27, 2021

In this episode of The Anti-Tech Cast, Ryan and Griffin talk with anti-tech philosopher West Northwest about her essay entitled, "The Conservation of Man and Wild Nature in Light of 21st-Century Post-Industrial Technologies." When we fight for nature, we must remember that humanity and nature are t...

5. Charlie Clendening "Avoiding Checkmate"

Jan. 26, 2022

In this episode of The Anti-Tech Cast, Ryan and Griffin talk with local anti-tech thinker, Charlie Clendening. They discuss Covid, anti-technique, low-tech forms of entertainment, and a lot more. For more visit antitechcollective.com

6. Nayla Agameya and Mai Mokhtar "Egyptian Roof Garden"

June 20, 2022

Griffin talks with ATC member Nayla Agameya and her mother, Mai Mokhtar about the roof garden they care for in Alexandria, Egypt. For more visit antitechcollective.com

7. Jesse Dustin "From Silicon to Serenity"

July 11, 2022

Griffin is joined by Jesse Dustin, the founder of Heartland Goats and author of *The History of Nicholas and the Oracle of Knowledge*. They discuss Jesse's journey of leaving the tech industry to start a goat farm and lead a more fulfilling life.

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July 30, 2021

Hosts Ryan Glavin and Griffin Kiegiel interview Dr. David Skrbina about his conception of technology, his understanding of the technological problem, and his proposal for remedying it-

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[Watch here](#)

Introduction

Griffin: Hello everyone, welcome to the anti-tech cast. I'm Griffin and today I'm here with Sean Fleming from the University of Cambridge.

How you doing, Shawn? Thanks for coming on.

Sean: Well thank you for having me, Griffin.

Griffin: So we are talking to you today because you recently. Published an article called the Unabomber and the origins of anti Tech radicalism. And you know, we had this recommended to us and we read it and we loved it. We thought it was a really great and fair representation of these ideas and where anti tech ideas and where they came from, especially where Kaczynski. That a lot of his ideas.

So it's a nice, refreshing academic piece that gives these ideas their merit and doesn't talks about Kaczynski's ideas rather than his activities that got him infamous. And so we like these articles and we want more of them.

So you know, Sean, before we kind of get into some of the things you're writing about, I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about how you got into these ideas, how you maybe found out? About Kaczynski and. It's important to analyze his ideas in this way.

Sean: OK, well, I first read Industrial Society and Its Future, Kaczynski's manifesto in late 2018. So for background here, I'm not American, I'm from a remote part of Canada. And so the Unabomber doesn't loom as large culturally for us. So I had heard of him, of course, as. Most people have but. I knew absolutely nothing about him. So I was going in blind. I actually came across Industrial Society and Its Future on a reading list for a law and technology discussion group. Was just starting.

Griffin: So did you even know that it was like the guy that sent the bombs that wrote this piece? Or you just found.

Sean: The piece on its own, I associated Theodore Kaczynski with the Unabomber. I knew that.

Griffin: Much OK, yeah.

Sean: But I came across it on a reading list and I at the time was working on, you know, issues having to do with responsibility for harms caused by autonomous weapons. So I was interested in what the lawyers were saying about the issues of responsibility that are posed by new technologies. So what I was working on wasn't very radical, to say the least. And so I came across the manifesto and decided to put it aside for some weekend reading. And I thought it was going to be an insane, conspiratorial rant.

Griffin: Right.

Sean: Like I was expecting something like Charles Manson. And when I read it, I was pretty floored by it. I thought to myself well. First of all, this isn't that all conspiratorial. It's incredibly radical, but it is radically anti conspiracy. The whole logic of *Industrial Society and Its Future* is evolutionary. He sees human beings as products of evolution. He thinks we're maladapted to life in a world of concrete and steel, thinks we're biologically and psychologically maladjusted to this kind of life. And he doesn't see. Technology as the product of a conspiracy, he doesn't think there's an evil cabal of technocrats. Plotting to enslave humanity right? He thinks that we're seduced by technology because of its benefits. So we're sleepwalking into a world where we're dominated by technology. There's no one plotting against us. And so it struck me as pretty interesting. And at the time, I hadn't read much about theories of technology. I hadn't read much in the philosophy of technology. I hadn't read Jacques Louis. By Lewis Mumford or any of those figures. So I wasn't sure how original it was. But it was pretty intriguing it. Well, I discovered that it was one of the most read political manifestos of the 20th century. And I did a quick library search. To see what had been written about it. And I was shocked that hardly. Anything had been written about it? There's hardly any secondary. Literature on *Industrial Society and Its Future* and so. I was pretty appalled by this, actually, it seemed like my profession of political theory had abdicated its. Of analyzing the salient political manifestos and documents, and. Ideologies of our time.

Griffin: Why would you say that people were so hesitant to write about it for the for the why, what, what account do you think for this absence of secondary literature?

Sean: Maybe I should piggyback on someone else so. At Michael Mello, who is the former law professor at Vermont, had corresponded quite a lot with Kaczynski giving him legal advice. He's probably the well. Or was he died a few years ago, but he was the undisputed expert on Kaczynski's legal case, and he always said that. That Kaczynski was ignored and portrayed as insane. At his trial. Because he profaned everything that modern society holds divine. He was too radical for us to contemplate. So we had no choice but to dismiss him as a madman. So maybe that it can't be that. He used violence. The violence alone doesn't explain why people are so terrified of Kaczynski.

At if you. If you look at other figures, who are, you know, violent radicals, think of, you know, we teach Lenin in political theory courses we teach Antonio Negri. Who did time in prison, in Italy. And yeah, who's still a darling? Of the left. The academics detest Kaczynski precisely because he hates the. Left, I think that's part of it. But you know, I could.

Griffin: There's like a lot of left leftists in academia, so they're kind of immediately take in or they don't wanna engage with it that we.

Sean: I think that's I think that's it. And I also think there's a deep pathology in the discipline of. Political theory at work here. So political theorists tend to latch on to figures. That they like. For the most part, if you see someone working on the thought of someone, whether it's. Hannah errands or Thomas Hobbes or John Locke or Friedrich Hayek or Rousseau, or whoever it is you can be. Pretty sure that. That person is sympathetic to the thinker that they're analyzing, right? So it often seems like a game where people are using historical political thinkers, as you know, as puppets in their own little intellectual battles. And I think that's what's really unhealthy about the discipline of political theory. Why are people so unwilling, unwilling to engage? With thinkers that they detest. Or things that they find trouble.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, that seems like antithetical to getting to the truth of matters of political matters and otherwise.

Sean: So in in short, the answer to the original question, I started working on this because I've never seen such a glaring gap in the literature. So to speak. This was one of the most famous manifestos of the 20th century, and hardly anyone had written about it. And 2nd I discovered that there was a massive probe of material. At the University of Michigan at the Liberty Collection. That includes copies of most of the material that the FBI confiscated from Kaczynski's cabin back in April 1996. And hardly anyone had. Used this for academic purposes. It's one of the most popular collections at Michigan's library, but. No one had used it to write this intellectual history to figure out where his ideas.

Griffin: Did you say even would you say that even because in the first part of your article you talked about some academics that have attempted to provide some kind of intellectual history for cause inski? And do you think these people as well were also somehow they didn't access that? Trevor Trove in Ann Arbor. Either they they weren't accessing it properly. Do you think that that that's the case?

Early attempts to understand Kaczynski's influences

Sean: Well, when most of the attempts to analyze the manifesto were written, the archive at Michigan wasn't available. So some of them can't be faulted because, well, they they didn't have access to what I had access to, right? So much of the early work

there, well, there are there are a few sources. There's an article by Tim, Luke and Tilos called rereading the Unabomber manifesto. That's from 1996 nineteen 97. So that's really the first academic attempt to analyze the manifesto and Luke was working with no primary material whatsoever. He was just. Reading the manifesto and trying to figure out where the ideas came from that way got you. Then there was a much better article by Scott Corey. Who was at the time a PhD student at Berkeley? And Corey's article is better. Simply because he had access.

Griffin: To a lot more material.

Sean: So he used a lot. Of the legal documents that he could get his hands on. He was one. Of the few people without a press. Pass who actually attended Kaczynski's. So it's a pretty good article. But he doesn't have access to all the correspondence and all the. All the stuff that the FBI dug out of boxes in Kaczynski's cabin, his drafts and notes, and all this sort of stuff. And then there's the most popular account of his intellectual influences, which comes from a book called Harvard and the Unabomber, by Alston Chase. And there, as far as I can tell, Chase just wildly speculates about Kaczynski's influences. With hardly any evidence whatsoever. And so some of the early accounts of his influences can't be faulted. Some of them I think are just so stories. Well, make pretty sweeping claims about where his ideas came from without any evidence.

Griffin: Right, this that we read the manifesto and this idea sounds like this idea. So we're just going to tie this huge collection of authors to him. Like that list. That you mentioned of all the authors that he supposedly read, or that they claimed that he was inspired from, and then he hadn't even read. A lot like most of them that were on that list. It's so it's it it? Yeah, it seems kind of evident that they were just kind of. Throwing out whoever sounded similar.

Sean: Right. And even the similarities are pretty. Tenuous. So you know. Chase says well. Kaczynski sounds a bit like EF Schumacher. He sounds a bit like Lewis Mumford sounds a bit like aren't. There's a bit of Aristotle in there, he thinks. Eric from the list goes on, though Tim Luke says he sounds a bit like Marcusa. Lots of people have said he sounds like Paul Goodman. It turns out that he had actually read very few of them, and most of these figures, if he had read them, he read them only after he wrote the manifesto. So what's remarkable about him is actually not how similar he is to previous critics of technology, but how little he knows or cares about them. Yeah, really only one prominent critic of technology in the 20th century that he knew or cared much about. And that was Jackal.

Ellul

Griffin: Yeah. So can you. Yeah. Can you tell us a little bit about how he was inspired by Alex's ideas and how they connect to each other?

Sean: So most of what Kaczynski borrowed from Ellul comes from Ellul's 1954 book *LA Technique*. Which was translated into English in 1964, published as the *Technological Society*, there are several ideas that Kaczynski takes from. Rule 1 is that. Human beings are maladapted to life in a technological society. I discussed that at the beginning. The basic idea is that human beings evolved in a primitive Stone Age environment. We're still genetically hunter gatherers. But now we've been thrust into this world of concrete and steel. And we're psychologically ill equipped to deal with that.

Griffin: Genetics doesn't evolve that quickly. Well, yeah, that's.

Sean: Right. And so. That is one idea. Now it's notable, though, that for a Ellul, the mismatch between human beings and the technological society was more social than biological. And you thought that? The problem was that our norms and morals and social structures and communities can't evolve fast enough to keep up with technology. Whereas Kaczynski wasn't concerned so much about those things, he was concerned about our biology. So already there they diverge. But the basic idea that. We're maladapted or maladjusted. The technology comes from a little. The second idea is the idea that. Technology is autonomous. That it is a force beyond human control. It can't be subject to rational human control. That technology constitutes a self perpetuating system. This also comes from Ellul. This is probably a Ellul's most famous idea, and it's it's papered all over. Kaczynski's writings. There are also lots of little bits and pieces. So there's the idea that technology is the. Opposite of nature. That also comes from the. The idea that. Well, in part the idea. Of revolution comes from Ellul. Though Kaczynski takes it in his own direction and the least obvious thing that comes from a Ellul is the idea that leftism is a form of pseudo revolution. So this is one of the big, big arguments and. In *Industrial Society and Its Future*, and the one I think that is. Puzzled readers the. So you open up *Industrial Society and Its Future*, and he starts talking about technology and what it's done to us. And then in the very first main section, he talks about leftism. He talks about how the left is psychologically perverted. And and he says that the left essentially. That co-ops, the revolutionary impulse. And channels it into benign outlets, outlets that are harmless to the system. So he sees social activism as in Lewis terms, a form of useless revolt. It makes us feel better, but it doesn't. Really do anything.

Griffin: It's a surrogate activity, right?

Sean: So the surrogate activity that idea comes from elsewhere, but the basic idea that. The left pulls the teeth of revolutionary impulses. Creates a kind of surrogate revolution. That it it. Hijacks the revolutionary impulse and. Well, distracts attention from the problem of technology that comes from the end of the. Technological society by a little. So from Alul, just to recap, we have the idea. That human beings are. Maladapted to a technological society, the idea that technology is autonomous and the idea that. That social activism that the social movements of our time are pseudo revolutionary. That that's mainly what Izinski takes from the little.

Griffin: And and I guess I would ask then how, how does he diverge from a little a little bit like I guess specifically I guess first I guess we could specifically talk about like more of those nuanced differences between like his evolutionary and biological focus versus cellules? Social economic focus, like how how do these approaches differ? In your eyes.

Sean: OK. Well, yeah. Uh, maybe the biggest, deepest difference of all before we get on to the specific difference. Specific set of differences is that the Ellul is a fundamentally continental thinker. So he he's very French. His dialectical approach, his and a meandering free flowing style, is quintessentially French and heavily influenced by Marx. So whenever Lula is saying something, there's always an antithesis to whatever he's saying. The thesis that technology is Hemming us in on all sides, that it's depriving us completely of freedom is one side of a dialectic. the other side he gives you in a later book called *The Ethics of Freedom*, which basically says that although. Technology has deprived us almost entirely of freedom. We can still find freedom in Jesus Christ. He's a fundamentally Christian thinker. But he's a dialectical theologian. Is one way of putting it. And that is not at all what Kaczynski is Kaczynski essentially locked off the theological part and the dialectical part. So Kaczynski writes like an analytic philosopher. He well numbered paragraphs that says it all.

Griffin: Yeah, very structured, yeah.

Sean: His style is radically different because his method and his worldview are radically different. So Ellul is trying to mount a kind of theological critique of technology. And Kaczynski, although he abhors what science has created, he accepts the scientific worldview. So he understands human beings and technology alike as products of evolutionary processes, and he speaks the language of behavioral and cognitive psychology. Even even his bombs, you know, he documented the results in, you know, an extensive set of lab notes. So although he. Although he detests science and technology at 1:00. Level he accepts the worldview. Of the scientist or the technician. And it really doesn't.

Griffin: Do you find that to be a? Do you find that to be a bit ironic considering his stance on those things?

Sean: Well, you can you can read. It in two ways. You can read it as blatant hypocrisy, which is how some have read it. You know Ron Arnold is one who wrote this book *Eco Terror* back in the. And I guess it was 1977. He tried to associate Kaczynski with the radical environmental movement, and one of his claims is that Kaczynski is blatantly hypocritical using technology to attack technology and using technology to propagate anti tech ideas is inherently hypocritical. You know others who've criticized them along these lines. There are people like Kevin Kelly, the cofounder of *Wired*, who's well aware of Kaczynski's ideas and. Actually accepts quite a lot. Of them, especially the idea. Technology is a self organizing system, but diverges from him on the obvious point of whether technology is good. And so Kelly says the same. He says, look, Kaczynski was living off the fat of the technological system. And he was. A blatant hypocrite. Now the other way of reading. Kaczynski is that? His critique of technology

was an internal criticism. And he understands himself as a product of the technological system he's trying to attack it from the inside. And so whereas Ellul tries to set up an alternative vantage point, an external vantage point, a non-technical vantage point from which to criticize the technological society. Kaczynski tries to mount his critique from the inside, from inside the world view of the technician, and so Kaczynski might retort to the. The charge of hypocrisy, he might say. If my critique succeeds, it's all the more damning because I've shown that even from the scientists or the technicians own premises. The technological system is fundamentally flawed and beyond redemption, so this is what he's trying to do. He's trying to mount an internal critique of money.

Griffin: That that makes sense. I think that's kind of something similar to what we're doing, we get a lot of charges of like, oh, you guys are anti tech, but you have a website and a podcast and you're like doing all those things with. The idea is to take it from the inside and that we have to recognize that we're a product of it. In the same way. And hopefully that will make the argument even stronger. I guess on the other side of that coin, would you say or do you think that maybe Ellul was? I don't want. I don't want to say naive, but like. That he was missing something when he was trying to take that external stance. Do you think he was failing to recognize how he was a product of the technical system or, I don't know, do you think there's another side of the coin there?

Sean: I think he recognized that he was a product of the technological system. One of one of the things that he takes from Hegel and repeats endlessly is the idea that the first act of freedom is or recognition of necessity. You have to recognize that you are constrained and under the power of the system. In order to have. The impossibility of resisting it illegal is not someone who has any illusions there. But you might. Think that his critique of technology is less persuasive. Because it comes. From the outside. Now, Lula would retort that it's actually Kaczynski who is. Well off the rails here. So one of the things he says in his. 19/19/88 book *The Technological bluff* is that that technical thinking is incapable of thinking about technique. It's not possible in a Lowe's view. To mount a critique of Technoscience. From within, uh, the technological worldview. So the argument here is. Something like this? As soon as you. Try to use techno science as soon as you adopt the calculating strategic language of technoscience. You are reinforcing it. So for a little technique is a mindset. It's not just a system that's external to us. The reason that the technological system persists is. That we all. Think in technical terms, so Marcusa makes similar point later on, he says. What sustains this this system? Well, one-dimensional modes of discourse. Modes of discourse that. Give priority to a certain. Kind of rationality and efficiency over everything else. So for a little it's necessary to. Break the habits of mind. That sustain technology in order to really defeat it. And so he would argue against Kaczynski, that. That Kaczynski is simply reinforcing the technological mindset. He's not fundamentally challenging anything in a little bit.

Griffin: Would you say a little? Then also would disagree with the idea of using technology in any way there. That that's the same thing for him, right? Is like using

technology and having that technical mindset like is there? Do you think there's any way for a little to agree with the idea that you could use technology in a way that takes down the system a little bit as Kaczynski? Seems to think we can do or does he think that as soon as you start using it you're you're supporting it like you have to be completely external from it is that is that kind of where he's coming from, do you think?

Sean: I don't think he thinks you can. Use technology against itself. I think his view is that when you use technology, you're making a sort. Of deal with the devil.

Griffin: Right.

Sean: He doesn't think power can be turned against power. His fundamental commitment here is that. No one can really control power at any fundamental level, so just as he thinks no that violence cannot overthrow a power structure. And replace violence with non violence just as. No, violence can't be overturned violently. He doesn't think technology can be overturned technologically.

Revolution

Griffin: So I guess that's a good segue into like what do you... Can you say a bit about what Ellul's perspective on how to revolt against the system like or maybe the differences between Ellul and Kaczynski's approach to how to you know either weaken the system or take it down or revolt against it in some way how do their approaches differ?

Sean: Alright, so Kaczynski's approach is, I suppose, an empirical approach to revolution. So Kaczynski thinks that you can look back through the history of revolution. And distill lessons. For an anti tech revolution in the. So he says. We can look at. The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution and the Irish Revolution. And a whole host of other revolutions. And we can discern some rough guidelines. And some pitfalls to avoid. For the anti tech revolution. So fundamentally for him, the anti tech revolution is modeled on historical revolution and despite what he says in *Industrial Society and Its Future*, he's pretty confident that it's going to. Be a violent revolution. he doesn't think the technological system can be overthrown without force and, although he's. Ambivalent about violence in the manifesto, he says in this unpublished essay. Called in defence of violence, which is in. The Lavity archive. That the revolution he envisions is almost. Certainly going to be violent. He says he downplayed the role of violence in the manifesto simply because he didn't think the media would publish anything that explicitly advocated violence. So that is Kaczynski's revolution. It's a violent overthrow of the established power structure. It's a destruction not only of the state. But of the broader infrastructure. That sustains the technological system and you can get a better idea. Of what? He. Means here what the beginnings of this revolution might look like, which is really large scale industrial sabotage from his essay hit where it hurts. So that's Kaczynski's revolution. It's violent, and it's based on

historical examples. Ellul revolution is exactly the opposite. So Kaczynski read Ellul's book, autopsy of revolution. When he was. I suppose when he was in Montana. But completely ignored or missed the point. So one of the little central points in this. Book is that. An anti tech revolution can't possibly be modeled on historical revolutions. And there are a few reasons for that. But one of the main ones is that. Technology is too global. And too pervasive to be overthrown like a. He thinks it's a huge mistake to extrapolate from historical examples of revolution. And he thinks that the kind of strategic, calculating thought about revolution. Which you'll find in Kaczynski's book anti Tech Revolution is. Exactly the kind of thought. That will simply reinforce technique as a mindset. So a little a little doesn't. Give you uh. Well, a handbook for revolution here and he's using revolution in a pretty odd sounding way. But you know, there's there's one little snippet from off Topsy revolution near the very end that I think captures what he means by revolution. So he says it. I'll paraphrase here. It would represent a fundamental breach in the technological society, a truly revolutionary attitude, if contemplation could replace frantic activity. So a loose revolution doesn't involve overthrowing anything by force. It involves deliberately slowing down. The well, the, the sort of arms race in which we find ourselves in modern.

Griffin: So just kind of not engaging with it, just backing off right and.

Sean: Well, it's not total. Divestment from it either. It it I don't think Null thinks we can run to the woods and and escape from it in any fundamental way but. What he thinks is that we can deliberately slow down in defiance. Of the system. And if enough people do. That if enough if enough. People refuse to think and live in a technical way concerned with means over ends with efficiency. Over all else. Then the system will inevitably breakdown.

Griffin: Do you find that to be a bit ideological, or do you think that's actually like refractory realistic in in some future?

Sean: I I'm not optimistic. I'm not optimistic about. The possibility of doing that? But it sounds to. Kind of like, uh, like what Gandhi says. About how the Indians should. Should well deliberately withdraw? Consent from the British Empire. So for Gandhi, the way of getting rid of the British was not to drive. Them out with force. But to refuse to participate in their industrial civilization? To put the mind over the body. And that is essentially a Ellul's idea. Resistance against technology looks like. Slow down is really the message.

Griffin: One thing that I like about your article is that you don't shy away from talking about. the violence aspect, especially in relation to like more modern movements like ITS and things like that that seem to be continuing these violent tendencies. One thing that got me thinking is, you know, you mentioned that it's kind of has this. Idea that violence is innate to human nature, kind of. And so like, that's kind of their way of revolting against the system that's in place. The non violent system that's in place is to embrace our humanity through violence, kind of. Or at least that's how I'm interpreting their their position and. It makes me think a little bit about like, you know, just I think it's very questionable what our natural tendencies are as humans.

And one thing that I think of about when I think about Ellul is his. I if I guess if I I was wondering if you could clarify for me then does Ellul have this idea? Humans have an innate tendency to think about things in a technological way, or to engage in, like, rational technique. Am I wrong about that or doesn't he kind of say that we have a tendency to rationalize the world in that way?

Human Nature

Sean: OK. Well, I don't think Ellul has any fixed concept of human nature. This is a fundamental difference between Kaczynski and... So again for Ellul, the problem with technology is that it has outstripped the evolution of our social structures and communities and norms. The mismatch between us and technology is sociological rather than biological right. It's not based on human nature. I think judging by the first part of the technological society, uh. And little thinks that in the past we were perfectly capable of resisting the pull of technique. So he talks about several different societies that resisted the urge to prioritize means over ends. So first, he says, look at the ancient Greeks. So the ancient Greeks were incredibly sophisticated, philosophically and scientifically. But he claims they had contempt for practical application. They could have used their knowledge to manipulate the world. But they didn't. They wanted to understand it. So he says for the Greeks there was a stark division between science, understanding of the world and technique application. And then he says. You can see this later on in Christian societies, you know from the Roman Empire to... The I don't remember whether he says the 12th or 14th century, he says. In Christian society. Early Christian society. Or even up through the Middle Ages? Christianity posed a difficult barrier to the expansion of technique. Hmm, Christianity was the sort of sand in the gears of the machine. Nothing could be developed without moral criticism. So early Christianity created this kind of external vantage point from which to criticize technique. So it was a constant source of judgment. That technique couldn't overcome. So for a little it's not human nature that's decisive. It's its culture that's decisive.

Griffin: That's interesting, especially considering, like you know, I think a lot about how the tech society that we live in today is very at least the way I experience it through the Internet and stuff. It's very vehemently, vehemently secular that it. There's like a rise in atheism with an embrace. That comes with an embrace of science and technology because I think you know, there's that recognition that it halts progress, so to speak. In so I guess yeah. Is that what we're kind of missing today, we're missing a moral barrier between that should be there for progress.

Sean: Well, little would say actually, we don't live in a secular age. We have simply abandoned the old religions.

Griffin: And adapt to the new ones.

Sean: And created a new one we've created. Uh, well, Kaczynski calls it technically. Analogous to Christianity. And rule calls it. I think technology, as in idolatry, hmm. And so he says. 1st, we abandoned religions of nature. We abandoned spiritual views of nature in favor of, you know, Abrahamic religions. And then we chased religious significance out of all the things we. Used to attach it to. Projected it onto the objects that we now Revere. So the computer. Is a religious symbol in our time. It's almost sacrilegious. Blasphemy is even to smash one. It's a damn belong. Just or, or even have contempt for one. It little thinks that it's not that we lack religion. It's that we've abandoned the old religions that grew up organically. Adhere to a kind of industrial, technological religion. Well, essentially deifies means. And has contempt for ends.

Griffin: That makes sense. Yeah, yeah, I guess I also want to ask too, there's these two approaches that a little consti seem to have. It's kind of like. So Elluls is to focus on contemplation rather than practicality, right? Kind of getting back to that Greek mindset, so to speak. Ted Kaczynski thinks that we need to take a more practical approach, and we need to use technology in order to take it down that we need to take the system down before it just harms us even further or turns us into slaves, or brings us into a dystopia where it will be too late to do anything about anything. I guess one thing that we've been learning about a little bit recently as a group. This concept of acceleration. ISM, which may or may not be a consequence or be derived from, like Marxist philosophy. I can't say for certain, but I don't. Do you have you thought much about accelerationism and how it connects this stuff? And like I don't know, I wonder if you could enlighten me a little bit on how that approach might. Relate to these guys.

Sean: All right, there's lots to say about accelerationism, so accelerationism in its well contemporary trendy form comes from. From what I know, one main source and that is the British philosopher Nick Land, yes. So he is a. A kind of reactionary who is. Incredibly optimistic about technology. I don't really understand what land is about and haven't read enough of him to comment much on him, but he. He seems to be the inspiration for directly or indirectly, for most of the contemporary forms of accelerationism, so you can divide acceleration into really two camps. You have the ones like land who are socially reactionaries. They want some sort of hierarchical, even Neo Catholic society, but at the same time our optimistic about the prospects that technology could liberate us from labor, for example. And then you have left accelerationist you think that? Capitalism is actually holding back technological progress. It's a hindrance. To what technology could do? If it were unleashed from the constraints of things like economic viability. So the left accelerationist wants to unleash the potential of technology to liberate humanity and in order. To do that thinks that. We have to. Accelerate past capitalism. But they have a common root in Nick Land, who is decidedly on the right now. I think acceleration of ideas go go back much further than that. So one source is Herbert Marcusa. So Marcusa is 1 dimensional, man is one of the most famous books that mounts a well what's often thought to be a critique of technology and so much as Paul did before him. He argues that the problem with

modern society is that. We have what he calls a A1 dimensional universe discourse. That assigns priority to specific kinds of rationality and efficiency. It's a Society of means over ends. To use a little kind of terminology. And so Marcuse is a critic of this kind of technological society. But at the very end of the book, he says, well, if only we could think about technology in the right way, if only would we could escape the constraints of this one-dimensional discourse. If only we could set up some, well, negative or two-dimensional or. That we could use to direct technology. Then it could. Liberate us from toil. he appears to be a radical critic of technology. If you read only some parts of the book, but once. You get to. The end you see that he's actually a radical. Optimist about technology. So marcusa I think is often wrongly placed on the critical side of the technological Ledger. So those are a few thoughts about Accelerationism and where it comes from. I think it. Yeah, of course, it's also there. In a A. In you know a nascent form in marks himself. The idea that technology is a force for liberation. Is certainly there in Mark.

Griffin: I think as you know, as a little seems to talk about in technique and state that marks is a little naive about his approach and that they're that, you know, like capitalism and socialism as he understands it, are both technological systems in the way that they were approaching it. Is that right?

Sean: Yeah. So little says. It it doesn't matter who controls the. Means of production. That's not the central issue, so it little says, and he looked at both sides of the Cold War and saw basically the same thing. So he looked at. The US and its assembly lines and its consumerism and its bureaucracies, and he looked at the Soviet Union and said. Well, maybe you have less consumerism but you. Still have the assembly lines and the bureaucracies. These are both technological societies. That the differences in ideology and economic doctrine. Are not as significant as they seem. So Alou was. Decidedly less optimistic about the possibility of accelerating. Past our current circumstance.

Griffin: So like as far as uh, thanks for that clarification. As far as Accelerationism goes, I guess you've enlightened me a. Little bit cause. I've I've heard about it a lot in the context of like an approach for an anti tech approach that's possible of an accelerationist approach. But I think it from what I've heard it takes this idea that Kaczynski mentions of and I don't. I guess I don't know if a little mentions of like the inevitable collapse of the system, that it's kind of driving itself downward even without us trying to. And so like it's our, you know, job as revolutionaries. To, you know, wait until it's weak enough to strike that final blow. And so like, I guess I've heard of that there are some people that take this like accelerationist approach where they see that there's inevitable collapse and they try to drive, they want to drive the system to collapse faster by supporting it. I guess, I don't know. Have you have you heard about this kind of approach? Or am I just like off base and what accelerationism is?

Sean: No, I think that is accelerationist, OK. And in some sense and I think it's already there in Industrial Society and Its Future. So there is a passage where Kaczynski

says that the anti tech movements. Should be in favor of trade agreements. So he says. We should support the. Whatever he's talking about, the World Trade Organization or the general Agreement on Tariffs and Trade because in order to bring down the system in one fell swoop. You have to. Tightly integrate the system. Make sure it's stitched together so the problem with the system as he saw it then was that it wasn't tightly coupled enough as he, as he says in anti tech revolution when you stitch it together. When you make all the parts dependent on all the others. As you do through trade. Then it becomes easier to make the whole thing collapse at 1:00. So there he is, putting forth a very accelerationist idea that in order to bring out bring about the collapse. You have to bring about the. Development of the system.

Griffin: Right. Or bring about those developments that will lead to like a weakening of the system, we're making it more vulnerable, so to speak.

Sean: Yeah, that's right. And this this idea now that I think on it. Is. Well, it's. Not quite there in the same prescriptive form in the rule. But the idea that the development of the system makes it more fragile is definitely there in allele.

Griffin: With his, his idea of monism, right?

Sean: That's right, yeah. Monism is definitely there. Yeah, but in in his later book, The Technological Bluff, his 1988 book he there's a section near the end about fragility. And how the development of the system appears to make the system stronger, but actually? Makes it more fragile. And there's a part of. Uh well, seems to anticipate Kaczynski's hit where it hurts, where he says well. Look at all these. Power lines the more than there. Are the more of these high tension wires there are? The more things. There are to. We'd be fools to think that. Someone won't eventually try to attack. And so and Lula is well aware of this, but a little doesn't write in the same prescriptive way and he doesn't. He doesn't tell us that we should go out there. And attack the system. Right. It's not a little game at all.

The Vanguard Party

Griffin: I guess you. You kinda you're talking about this monistic quality of technology and tying it together to weaken it. I guess it does kind of bring to light for me this possibly an issue with Kaczynski's taking his revolutionary ideas from history. Because you know, I think. About it like. The you know the French Revolution and the all the historical revolutions that he's drawing from, these were revolutions against human systems that. I guess I don't. I don't think there is a case of a global network that is trying to be revolted against like it's. It seems that in order to fight against a global system like Kaczynski wants to, you need to have a. A global revolution, right? I don't know how does this. How would that? This gel with his idea that ohh the revolution has to be like a small minority group, right, that that is strongly focused and able to. Efficiently, like get things done. Have you thought about this earlier?

Like, I don't know. Do you do you side with Ellul or Kaczynski on that idea of, like, drawing from history in order to figure out what to do now?

Sean: Let me take the second point first. So I think what Kaczynski has in mind is a set of attacks on central pieces of infrastructure where breaking down one part will inevitably, inevitably break down the rest. So think about the global payment system. If you can take out some. A particular node in some networks. That happens to be located in, the United States or Europe. You could potentially cause havoc globally. So he thinks that the system is coupled together enough. That if you attack one part. Of it, the dominoes will fall. And and this is I think, how he reconciles his claim that the revolution has to be led by a small. Group of people. With his claim that it has to be global. He thinks that. It hit hit where it hurts again. Is the decisive. This helps to explain what he's on about. So on the question of whether the anti tech revolution can be modeled on. Well, I think Ellul. Completely preempted Kaczynski's argument here. So a little. Seemed to anticipate that someone like Kaczynski would eventually come along. And lead the technological society and then think that a violent revolution was the answer. The purpose of autopsy revolution is exactly to say that this kind of revolution is dead. It doesn't work anymore. And he says. Whether you're talking about the French or the Russian Revolution or any of the later revolutions, these are all essentially the same kind of revolution these are. These all follow the same model of revolution, which is based on Mark's extrapolation. From the French Revolution, this is a historically specific idea of revolution that just doesn't travel is what he's trying. And so, whether you're talking about a revolution against technology or a revolution against a government, that little just doesn't think it works the same way anymore and why.

Griffin: Specifically, does it not work anymore?

Sean: Well, the system is. Let's let's take why doesn't it work against technology 1st? And then why doesn't it work against a particular government? So it doesn't work against technology. It depends on. Modes of thought. A mindset. This this is the point I mentioned before that you can overthrow a group of people. Violently on the. Model of the French or Russian Revolution? But you can't overthrow a system of thought. No violence can change governments, but it can't change minds. Yeah, that's essentially what he has in mind. he thinks that. Even for overthrowing governments, the old model. Doesn't really apply at that point. Is admittedly a little more opaque. The idea seems to be that. A true revolution. Has to cut against the tide of history. So history has a certain direction to it. You can predict with with some accuracy what you know. All of the things. Being equal the 1st. Or the next 20 or 30 years will bring. You can imagine what it would be like for our society to to develop in this direction over another 20 years. And he says. A real revolution cuts against the tide. of history. So this is what makes it revolutionary. Rather than just reformist or an acceleration towards the saying. And he says what's peculiar about. The French Revolution. Is that it pushes with the tide of history. Is pushing in the direction of power. So the the. The monarchy and the aristocracy were. Losing ground economically. To you know, new

land holders and new economic interests in France and all the revolution did was push in the direction that the economic forces were already pushing. Which was against the monarchy against the old feudal power structures. So Mark's mistake a little thinks. Is to is to. Think first of all, that revolutions have to be class based. And second of all. That they push in the direction of. So, you know, in Marxist thought revolutions are well the the. Locomotive of history is the. The kind of catch phrase. The little doesn't think. Any true revolution in our world? Can take the model of the French or Russian revolutions. Because a true revolution has to cut against. The probable course of history. That seems to be what makes a revolution. In the first place.

Griffin: That's just less possible now to cut against it.

Sean: I think the question for a little. Is how to cut against it. the way to cut against it is certainly not to be strategic and calculating the way to cut against it is not. Is not to develop a revolutionary doctrine and refine revolutionary tactics. That's just to reinforce technique. For a little. The way to cut against it, the way to defy the course of history. The way to. Have any real freedom? Is to reject the habits. Of thought and of action. That have been instilled in. Us to act in a deliberately non-technical, inefficient, contemplative way.

Griffin: I guess I'll. I wanna ask you where do you see any kind of like? Hope for that for that method of getting rid of the system or or do you think that we're just getting deeper and deeper sucked into it like I guess for the next generation of people, do you see any kind of hope there or any kind of at least in terms of how people are thinking about technology? Because I don't know, I feel like I see a little bit, we've noticed the resurgence of Kaczynski in popular culture. Now we have like these Netflix documentaries and stuff, and people seem to be whether it was like a result of the pandemic or just life in general. It seems like some people, or at least. Are getting disillusioned with the system. But even though some of those people are, I guess not really focusing on the right things that are wrong with society right now. A lot of people are focused on, like human rights issues and things like that and not seeing how a lot of these social issues that we face now. Are kind of a result of the technological issues that we're facing. So I guess I don't know what do you do? Do you have hope for the future, or do you think that we're just getting further sucked in? What do you think?

Sean: Well, I think you're right that a lot more people are interested in the problem of technology and you see a lot of discussion about critics of technology nowadays, the one who is, I think, most trendy right now and more than trendy I think. I think there's a. Really deep engagement with him is Ivan Illich. Familiar with him? So which is someone who is pretty heavily influenced by Ellul and he's having his day in the sun now because he seems so much more prophetic in retrospect. So I think there are reasons for hope. And I'm not sure that I'd say all is lost. It's a good question.

Griffin: Yeah, it's it's hard, we're we like to think that hope is not lost, that it seems that a lot of people that are even aware of these ideas or are willing to engage with the, you know engaged in the discussion. Are kind of nihilistic about the whole

thing. Like they they notice all the issues that we're facing, how a lot of these result from the type of society that we've created and all the technology that we embrace day-to-day and that we now these are our new, this is the new church. It kind of. And you know, we we attend mass every waking hour and. Yeah, you know, I we want to try to fight against that nihilism, but it's hard when even like the people that are most vehemently against it, you know, disagree about what to actually do about it and what the best course of action is. And so a lot of people, I guess, get this. They descended denialist when they think, well, there's nothing. That I can. Do about it, so I'll just. Myself and in, in lieu of better options, I guess.

Sean: Yeah, I suppose there are two forms of well, maybe. Maybe we can distinguish here between nihilism and fatalism. Yes, well, you're describing seems to be the fatalistic response.

Griffin: Right.

Sean: We can't do anything about the system, so let's just live our lives. So you recognize all the problems and then you just go watch some Netflix. And that is, I think, a pretty common response, the less common one may be more worrying response. Yeah, I discussed ITS the Mexican terrorist group in my article and ITS is heavily inspired by Kaczynski but differs in one absolutely crucial respect. So Kaczynski still has hope. Kaczynski is actually a surprisingly optimistic thinker. In the end is. And well, an incredibly brutal thinker. But he still has hope. That the technological system can be overthrown. And that humanity can regain its ground, I guess.

Griffin: Yeah, he values human dignity, human freedom. he loves humanity, so to speak like.

Sean: Well, he that's what's remarkable about him, he. He actually does at some. Level love humanity of a particular kind, yeah. Now he doesn't love people he thinks have given up their humanity. By becoming COGS in the technological system, he thinks that they're legitimate targets for violence as soon as they have. They've they've given up their wild nature and gone into some technical profession, so he thinks that. the dignity of the human being. Is revocable, but it's nevertheless there to start with. Doesn't think revolution is possible. So ITS says to in response to Kaczynski that revolution itself is a leftist concept. So ITS says. Kaczynski was right in his critique of leftism. So it he's. He's right that. Leftist social activism is a distraction from the. Problem of technology. It's just a. Palliative it makes people feel better, but it doesn't actually do anything. So ITS accepts that but goes one step further and says well. The French Revolution is the model for Kaczynski's revolution, and that idea of revolution is thoroughly leftist. So ITS says to Kaczynski you're a leftist. Kaczynski's response is well. If you're if you're in. Nothing but despair if you don't think any. Anything can be done. About the technological system, if you're willing to throw up your hands and have this fatalistic, or worse, nihilistic attitude which says that all we can do is use violence to strike against the system like wild animals striking back against the predator, then you're the leftists. So he says one of the salient psychological features of leftists is feelings of inferiority, a sense of powerlessness. A sense of defeatism. And

he says that's its. You're the most defeatist of all, so. They abandoned the concept of revolution and he is absolutely unwilling to do that. That is the essential difference between him and ITS.

Griffin: I don't really you know. Personally, I don't. Know a whole lot about ITS apart from what I've read about. In your article. What is their like goal like? Do they have a goal or are they just totally like the revolution isn't possible? The system's killing everyone. We're just gonna. Like, do they have an objective? In mind or what do you think?

Sean: They don't have a strategic goal or an ultimate end, right? The purpose of their violence is essentially liberation. So they they subscribe to the idea of violence as liberation that you see in, you know, various thinkers like. JP Sartre or France phenol the idea that violence reaffirms our humanity. It's not a means to an end. It's almost an end of itself. And so the ITS's idea is that and this this part is taken from Kaczynski, that human beings are wild by nature. Or violent by nature, that while human nature is violent, that you know, hunter gatherer societies are not peaceful. They are well. Collections of little warlike tribes. One way to cast off the shackles of socialization and civilization. The ultimate form of defiance against it is to break the fundamental norm against violence. That's the way to reclaim your wildness. That's the that's the way you can be a. Wild human being. Even in the midst of a technological society. And so Kaczynski agrees with human beings are wild by nature, but he sees the purpose of violence is fundamentally different. He doesn't think. Violence is inherently liberating. That's not the point for. Him violence has. To be used strategically to overthrow the system. For ITS violence has a personal, psychological, liberating function.

Griffin: Would you say, but for Kaczynski, the violence is more, at least in the natural state, violence is for, you know, it's used in the means of fulfilling the power process. Is that right?

Sean: Yeah, that's right. So violence against the. Deer the to kill. It violence against someone who attacks you. Violence against for that matter. Someone who has food that you.

Griffin: Yeah, but not just violence for violence sake. For the sake of, like, violence isn't the thing that gets you that feeling of freedom. I guess it's it's. Fulfilling the power process as a whole.

Sean: Right. Yeah, that's right.

Griffin: So who? What do you? Do who do you think is the leftist here between I2S and Kaczynski?

Sean: I don't think I'm I don't think I'm. Well placed to adjudicate this dispute. I just think it's an an interesting dispute and I think going to be an important fault line in the anti tech movement in years to come. I think the fault line between ITS and Kaczynski about whether the technological system can be really overthrown, or whether personal liberation is really the goal. That is a crucial fault line, the other crucial. Fault line is. Between Kaczynski and a rule about whether. The technological

system is a. Material apparatus is the thing that we're trying to. Overthrow or whether a technique as a mindset. Is really the target of the revolution.

Griffin: Yeah, it's, I think that's a debate that, that debate between is it, you know, is it this external system thing or is it the way that we're thinking about the world and engaging with it and what's the real enemy? I think that's something that I struggle with a lot and that we as groups struggle with and, I think one of the worries that I have about taking. That's, you know, external system approach that that's the thing that we're attacking is that, you know, I worry that if we overlook some of the. Psychological aspects and like the, you know, the mindset that Eli is talking about, if we overlook that too much, then if we do end up like succeeding and taking down the system and then yay, we're in a post technological society. If we don't have the right mindset established at that point, or at least the right kind of culture. Place then in my eyes, nothing's gonna stop the system from just growing again and coming back. So I don't know. It seems I. Feel more sympathetic towards the Lowe's perspective because I think that, you know, we act based on what we believe and if we believe or if we think in a certain way that's gonna reflect in our treatment of the external world. And so, yeah, I think that that's. I don't know do. You have a position or idea? Like, what do you think is most important, which between Kaczynski and Ellul do you think you are more sympathetic to?

Sean: I'm not sure I'm sympathetic to either here, but I think the crux of the disagreement comes down to the old debate between idealists and materialists. So this is an old social scientific debate that is crucial here. So in this way. Kaczynski is more of a Marxist than a Louis. The Kaczynski thinks that material factors ultimately Dr. the course of history. Ellul thinks that. Ideational factors. Ideas. Are in some cases decisive. So he thinks that. Well, as as I said before that. The Greek division between science and technique. Was a decisive barrier against the development of technology, and later that Christianity was a decisive barrier against the development of technology in in, in both of those cases, Ellul is relying on an an idea. Or a set of ideas to explain the course of history. And Kaczynski, I think, is a material. That's yet another fundamental difference between.

Griffin: Yeah, I guess another thing I wanted to ask you about then is in relation to the power process as Kaczynski develops the four steps. So you mentioned that, you know he takes the basic ideas of maladaptation. From Aloul and he. Kind of he, that kind of constructs that those first two parts of the power process, right, and then he uses other authors like Morris and Seligman. How would you pronounce that sleep?

Sean: Seligman. Yeah. Yeah.

Griffin: Seligman to kind of develop the 2nd to attainment and autonomy. Can can you? I don't know. Can you talk a little bit about these other two authors and how they helped him develop his ideas?

Sean: OK, so let's start with what the power process is. OK. The power process for Kaczynski is the process of using your own physical and mental abilities, your own physical and mental power, to attain the necessities of life. That's essentially what

it is so. As he puts it in kind of psychologized language, the power process has four parts. Goal effort, attainment of goal and autonomy. In order to go. Through the power process, you have to use efforts. To attain a goal autonomously so. The idea that human beings need. Goals that require effort. Comes from Desmond Moore. In this 1969 book called. The human zoo. This is also where the idea of. The biological mismatch comes from. So just some background on Morris before I get into where the first part of the power process comes from. Morris was curator of mammals at the London Zoo in. The 50s or 60s and. One of the. Things he noticed was that zoo animals suffer from many of the same psychological problems that human beings suffer from in modern society. So eating disorders, anxiety, depression, insomnia, you know, tick disorders, they pull out their feathers or their fur. All of these things are, well, analogous to. Or precisely the same even as problems that human beings suffer from in modern society, so that Morris the central claim in this book, is that. Yeah, the city is not an urban jungle. It's not at all like a jungle. It's actually like a zoo. You know it's. Like a zoo in the sense that. It requires minimal effort to attain the necessities of life. All you have to do is do a little trick once. In a while and the zookeeper will feed you. So Morris says one of the problems. With keeping animals in zoos, is that? In the wild, omnivores like raccoons, dogs, bears. Animals of that sort. They have a psychological need to expend effort. In order to attain their goals. As he says they. Have a certain need for stimulation. And so Morris puts a label on this. He says these. Animals have a need for the stimulus struggle. They need to. In order to get their food or to to get water or whatever, they have to expend effort. In some varied and interesting way. In order to get what they want. So they have a need for stimulation and Kaczenski translates Morris's idea of the stimulus struggle. Into his language of goals and effort. So the first part of the power process is derived from Morris's idea of the stimulus struggle. And the second part comes from Martin Seligman. Who's a famous American psychologist who's most famous for the idea of learned helplessness? So the basic idea of learned helplessness. Is that when an animal is? To stimuli that it can't escape from. When it feels like it can't control its own fate. Its morale can be broken. So in Morrison's famous experiment, he put a dog in a box and subjected it to shocks that it was incapable of getting away from. He'd shock the dog over and over again and the dog would have to sit there and take it. And then when he would give the dog an opportunity later to escape from the shocks, you know the dog, for instance, could move to the other side of the box and get away. From the shocks, a little opening would be there. For the dog to run away, and many of the dogs just lay down and whine. They didn't even try to get away. When the dogs were subjected repeatedly to stimuli that were beyond their control. They became helpless. It broke their morale.

Griffin: It's kind of like that, fatalistic, that kind of like fatalistic attitude that we were talking about earlier.

Sean: So because they.

Griffin: Would you say it's?

Sean: Exactly. So this is this is part of what's going on in Kaczynski's diagnosis of the pathologies of the left.

Griffin: Analogous to that.

Sean: So we can we can get on to that in, in a moment. But As for the second and third parts of the power process, so. If you fail to attain your goals repeatedly. If it seems like what you do has no effect on the desired outcomes, whether it's in you know. Studying for a class or whether it's, practicing a sport or whatever, if you. Put in effort. And don't attain the desired result repeatedly. You start to feel helpless. You'll stop trying. Because it seems like the result you get is independent. Of the effort you.

Griffin: Right.

Sean: That's the essence of helplessness. So, Kaczynski says human beings don't just need goals that require effort. They don't just need what more is called stimulation. They need to attain their goals with a reasonable. Rate of success. Or else they'll start to feel helpless. And in addition, they need or at least most human beings need some autonomy. In the pursuit of goals. They need to feel like. They're not just going through through the motions, not just following rules that someone else has set down. They also need to be able to. Make their own decisions. About how to pursue their goals. So in short. The idea that human beings need goals that require effort comes from Morris's idea of the stimulus struggle. And the idea that human beings need. To attain their goals. At a reasonable rate and to pursue them autonomously, and the evidence for the influence of these two authors is, I think, one of the most. Interesting things in the archive. If you read industrial society in its future, you see that. It has a full slate of footnotes. So he cites lots of sources in the manifesto, but he doesn't cite his most important sources. Yeah, he doesn't cite the rule. He doesn't cite Morris. He doesn't cite Seligman. And the reason is that he had corresponded. With academics he admired while he was in Montana, he had sent letters to them in his own name. If he had cited them, that would have. Left clues for the FBI? If he had cited Seligman, for example, the FBI would have gone straight to Seligman and said, have you ever received letters? That looked something like this manifesto and in all probability they would have turned up letters from Kaczynski so. He doesn't tell you where his most important ideas came from. He deliberately conceals his sources for his own protection. So one of the things I found in the archive was a secret set of footnotes to the manifesto. Where he cites. A whole host of sources that he concealed in. The public version. Right after the section on the power process, he cites Martin Seligman's book from 1975 called Helplessness. And then when he's talking about the psychological problems that human beings suffer from in modern society, he cites Desmond Morris as the human zoo. And both of those sources are ideas from both of those sources are plastered all over the manifesto, so after a Ellul, Morris and Seligman are his two most important sources. And no one seems to. Have discovered that, people were sort of aware of. A Lowe's influence on Kaczynski, but. There was really nothing about Morris or Seligman.

Griffin: Yeah, it's really interesting. It's it's like you found this golden nugget that nobody else had discovered yet. And just like buried in the ancient footnotes at the library.

Sean: He had been sitting there for 20 years, either not. And lots of people had looked at his correspondence, but no one had bothered to look at at his notes on all these academic articles the the, the apparently dry and boring stuff is actually by far the most interesting. Yeah, the there's lots of journalists who go there just to look at salacious.

Griffin: Isn't that so often the case?

Sean: Years, but yeah, and just make cheap news stories out of it. One has really used that archive. For a genuine scholarly purpose, yeah. And it's still a gold mine and I encourage people to go look for themselves.

Griffin: Uh, were were you able I guess just a practical question. Did you have to go there physically to look at them or was there some like online ability for you to check them, check out these sources?

Sean: I did go there physically, so I went in 2019 and I'm glad I did. Right now, there's no way I could even enter the country. Yeah, right. So, yeah, I went there and I spent days and days just digging through boxes. There's about 100 file boxes of material. There's massive amount of material it would take. At least months to look through all the relevant material on Kaczynski. But it's a goldmine for historians political theorists. Anyone else really you? There's so much yet to be written. On this subject.

Griffin: And then I guess kind of the, you know, the mood towards the end of your article, it gives me the feeling of that. You have the impression that that you know and these anti tech ideas are only going to become more prevalent, that this drama between ITS and kids. These ideas are, you know, they're going. Could be become very important as technology advances further and further and I guess ideally people become more disillusioned and start seeing the issues and start wanting to actually address them. And so yeah, do you see do you see a revolution in our future or do you? I think that. I don't know I.

Sean: No, that that is a great question. I'm not sure I see a revolution, but I do see an increasingly large and formidable anti tech movement growing up.

Sean: And right, I think it would be less of a unified movement and more of a family of movements. So what I think is going to happen is that you'll have an increasing number of people who are opposed to modern technology in some form or another. But coming at it from different angles, you'll have lots of people who are opposed to technology for broadly green reasons. People who are opposed to technology because they think it's a disaster for the environment. Then you'll have people. Like Kaczynski, who oppose technology primarily because they think it's a disaster for humanity. So they either think it will deprive us of our dignity or humanity, that it will cause more and more severe psychological problems. That it will destroy the planet or the human race like think of existential risk, lots of people will come at this from an existential risk

angle and say that technology is just not worth the risk of destroying everything. The convenience is just not worth the risk. Of obliterating ourselves and everything else. Everything else with us. Then I think there's going to be a more. Conservative wing of the anti tech movements, which will oppose modern technology for. Well, I guess you might say bio conservative reasons, so you'll have lots of opposition to genetic engineering that will be based on the kind of ick factor and objection to messing with the genes of living things. That's, I guess, sort of analogous to. Uh, you know. Pro-life sentiments. There will be a kind of neovim Talisman. If you want to put it that way. That objects to any tinkering. With the composition of our bodies. Or the bodies of other things. Then I think there might be a more. I guess if you want to use colors if we have a blue version in the conservative faction and a green version in the environmental faction. And a kind of colorless version or a Gray version in the Kaczynski faction. I think we're going to have a red version as well. You'll have lots of people who will oppose technology because they think it's an. It's it's a force that inherently increases economic inequality. So you know, you see this now with opposition to Amazon, Google, Facebook and so on, you'll. Of a kind of. Maybe anti tech socialism, something like that. Techno skeptic socialism. I think that's a. Predictable direction for this and then I think you'll have. A more anarchist faction of the anti tech movement. That is mostly concerned with. The centralization of power in the hands of the state. With the increasing surveillance. That technology makes possible so in short, I think people will come at anti tech from probably dozens of different angles. another angle. That I didn't mention, but I think is important. Is, well, a flat out conspiratorial angle. There will be. Some people like. The people who've been burning 5G towers? Not sure if you've heard of this. Yeah. Yeah. Across Europe, there have been people just Catching Fire to. 5G towers. I'm not sure exactly what the conspiracy is, but there's some belief that these 5G towers are responsible for disease, possibly responsible for COVID.

Griffin: Yeah, that's what I've been hearing.

Sean: So it it's. Amazing how many of these things have been burned to the ground. It's remarkable actually. I joked when this started happening that you know the Lud-dites have come back to, to the Midlands of England, yeah. But and I also think there's just going to be a. A kind of juvenile destructive angle to this too, we we know how. The average kid has. For machines you know. Kids think of how. Kids throw snowballs. Well, in my neck of the woods, snowballs and other other peoples domain more, more like. Rocks and cart. Yeah, kids see something that only adults can use and have a desire to mess. And I don't think this goes. Away with age you look at. How often people mess with self driving cars. This this has been a real. Problem in some places where they've. Tried to test them people. Will spray paint them and throw stuff at them and. Let the air out of. The tires just mess with them. And so I think. There's going to be a. A more impish. Wing of this too. It doesn't really have an ideology attached to it. But in in a loose term it will be more revolt than revolution. So interesting in short, I think I I don't think the anti tech movement will be a unified thing

and part of what makes anti tech I think. So powerful, so ideologically. Powerful and one of the reasons I think that. Anti tech will be one of the major political forces in the next century is precisely this ideological convergence. People will be anti tech for radically different reasons.

Griffin: Do you think that I don't know. I I I think I would say I agree with you. It seems to be that it's turning into more of like a movement. Maybe it's a consequence of like just the mass amount of people that exist that like the idea of creating a centralized movement like this seems just kind of practically. Untenable at least considering, like just the different mindsets that everybody's coming from and the different things that people want to focus on in, in terms of, like what technology is doing but. It also sounds a little bit worrying because I don't know, isn't this kind of one of Kaczynski's big worries about leftists is that, like, they'll kind of create these pseudo revolutionary movements that end up taking power away from the people that are actually just focusing on. The problem of technology, I guess do you do? Are you concerned at all about groups that are coming at it from all different angles? Because it's the way that I'm interpreting Kaczynski. He wants all these people to be very focused on just the technological problem. But do you think that? There is a way to be focused on the tech problem from multiple angles, or that that is the same kind of leftist conspiracy that he's worried about.

Sean: I think Kaczynski even underestimates the problem here. So I think many of these groups will be exclusively focused on the problem of technology. But they will not agree on what the problem is. So it you know, even if everyone is focused on the problem of technology, that doesn't really demonstrate any fundamental agreement. What is the problem of technology anyway? Is that technology dehumanizes us? Is it existential risk that it will destroy the environment? Is it that it makes us more unequal? What is it? What exactly is the problem of technology? In the first. Place and I think there will be, well, surprising agreement. Between some of the factions of the anti tech movement, despite the fact that they think about the problem differently. I think there will. At least be some strategic alliance between. Them they'll and even where there's not, they'll tend. To push in the same direction.

Griffin: Right. Kind of like a A. What's the analogy that heard it? Like a something rolling down a hill and it's kind of like moving in different directions. But overall, it's moving downhill, kind of. So it made me enter a little bit, but they're unified in this kind of way, I guess another question that I've. Liking to ask people or that we've been wanting to ask people is, I guess your view on whether. Like no tech or some tech, I guess one of the big divisions that we've kind of noticed within the anti tech culture, I guess you could call it right now is. There's a lot of people. That are advocating for complete elimination and like going all the way back to primitive society to like Hunter gatherer society, right? And that's where that's where humanity was evolutionarily like fit best. And that was a sustainable type of culture and society. And so that's what we. Should try to get back to. Maybe it's even wrong to call it a society. But and then there are some people that think that no, we just need to dial it back. We need to get

back to, like the state of the ancient Greeks where, like they had technology, but in a very limited way. I guess do you have a vision for how far back we should be going or? You know, maybe maybe it's. Wrong to think about it as going back to you know, we're going forward. But how do you see a space for technology in the future? I guess is my question. Well, do you?

Sean: Think I don't have a particular I. Don't have a. Particular view on this, but I can discuss some of the ones that I think are salient right now. So on one hand, on or on one pole, I. Guess you could. Say you have anarcho primitivists. You have people like John Zerzan who want to. Go back to before language.

Griffin: Right.

Sean: They think we made a wrong turn. When our relation to the world became mediated through language, what they want is a perfectly authentic relation to the world, which can only be. Direct and unmediated. It's only without symbolism. Without language that we can truly relate to the world in an authentic way. And they think the. Ultimate wrong Turn was the agricultural revolution, not the industrial revolution. So it started 10,000 years ago with the agricultural. Revolution and when? We domesticated animals. We also domesticated ourselves. That's when civilization really began. So the hunter gatherer ideal is their ideal. I think it's also at some level cause inski's ideal, so he thinks that hunter gatherers struggle for survival is the perfect fulfillment. Of the power process. That's what the power process really is. It's the psychology of the hunter gatherers struggle for survival, translated into the language of modern behavioral or cognitive psychology.

Griffin: But he also disagrees with the Anarcho Primitivists in some key ways, doesn't he?

Sean: So he he's incredibly critical of anarcho primitivist. He thinks that they idealize hunter gatherer societies and project leftist. Values onto them. So Kosinski says. Look, the idea that people just sat around plucking. Fruit out of trees. And, you know, singing Kumbaya and playing. Ring around the Rosie. And you know, without any racism or sexism or xenophobia or violence, it's just absurd. And hunter gatherer societies were sexist. They were racist. They were xenophobic and they were certainly violent and living in them. Was a hell of a lot of. The idea that people had. Leisure in these societies is just. Just false that he has this essay where it's called the truth about primitive life and he doesn't say it, though he does say it in some letters that it's intended to be a takedown of John Zarza. It's a takedown of anarcho primitivism. And so he argues that well, even if. Living like 100 Gatherer is the ideal. They don't know what it was actually. Like to live like. A hunter gatherer, they've been duped by the leftish anthropologists who portray primitive societies as. Little Gardens of Eden. Right. OK. So then, then we have Kaczynski. The Industrial Revolution was really the wrong turn. There's no way of going back to a society with that agriculture, some small scale agriculture is pretty much inevitable and we can't predict what the post collapse society is going to look like anyway. So we just have. To bring it down and hope. For the best. he doesn't have a particular ideal for what the post collapse society.

Is going to look like. He doesn't tell us to wind back the clock only so. So far, or at least so far, he doesn't think we can decide how far back to wind the clock because one of his well. Central claims derived from Ellul is that. The development of a society can never be subject to rational control. You can't control the development of technology. There's no point you might be able to help precipitate a collapse. But that is the only way in which we can control it. The hunter gatherer ideal is closest to our. Well, genetic heritage and for that reason, probably the most satisfying. But he thinks any more primitive mode of existence. Any mode of existence in which we don't have the exponential growth of technology. Is preferable to what we have now. Then we have David. Sarina, who says, well, we should rollback technology. Well, a state where we have some form of high culture. We have developed intellectual culture and sophisticated forms of art and language so he doesn't want to go back as far as hunter gatherers or as far back as John Zerzan wants to go. But he wants to go back far enough so that we're not too close to the industrial revolution, right? We're not too close to the takeoff point. We have a bit of a temporal buffer. Between us and the acceleration that began when we developed in technology. Now I don't remember exactly which century he says that the 12th century maybe.

Griffin: Yes, I think it was a 12th century.

Sean: So that idea. Is interesting, but it requires us to reject one of Kaczynski's central premises and one of the. Which is that the development of technology can never be subject to rational control in order to engage in a deliberate retrenchment or reversal, we have to be able to control technology at some level. Yeah, it has to be possible to guide the system with human intent, and this is precisely what Kaczynski and Ellul deny. So in order to even have this debate about how far back to go. You have to reject a crucial piece of the argument that a little sets for. Now there's also another position here. The assumption is that people who are critical of technology want to go back. I don't think that's true, and I don't think that's a very helpful way of thinking about it. Why should we talk about going back? It seems that the and it seems that the pain go back and in a literal sense that's false, but I think in a more fundamental sense that's also false. You know the. The thinker who's helpful here I think is Ivan Illich. So Ivan Illich says, look, I'm not trying to go back. I'm trying to create a more convivial, he says future. He's trying to create a future where human beings are. A set of technologies that is more suited to their needs and aptitudes. I think of future oriented way of thinking about it is a lot more helpful. Instead of thinking about how far to go back. Think about what? The future should look like. The danger of this is utopianism. Now the thing about the past to think about thinking in terms of the past is that it at least does constrain us in a certain way and prevent us from being completely sensible. So it's true that if some if a state of affairs has existed, it is at least possible. But if we think purely about the future. There's a tendency for us to indulge in grand designs about what the future should.

Griffin: Be and then we're right back in the out of the pot or out of the frying pan into the fire, so to speak.

Sean: That's right, it's exactly right. So we have. To think about some form of realistic future. And I think that's one of the purposes, one of the fundamental purposes of political theory. To think about some realistic future, not to be hemmed in by our current prejudices.

Griffin: Right.

Sean: But not to indulge in. Well, utopian speculation either we have to be between those two poles.

Ellul is the antidote to Kaczynski

Griffin: One like kind of a closing question that I like to ask people is what? You know, for someone that is new to these ideas that maybe just discovered Kaczynski via Netflix documentary or something and is like looking around For more information, or rather, that they see some of the truth in its arguments as we have. Do you have any kind of advice that you would give? Someone as to like how they can go about. They're supporting this movement or just bettering their own life or trying to better their community like I, I guess, are there any steps that you've taken in your own life or things that you would recommend for other people to do in order to try to bring about a better future for us?

Sean: Well, I'm just going to recommend that anyone who reads Kaczynski and is persuaded by some of the arguments go and read a rule, read the rules, book the Technological Society. It's much more demanding than Kaczynski.

Griffin: It's a bit thicker, yeah.

Sean: So it's what 400 and 54160 pages? Something like that.

Griffin: Including the endnotes. Yeah, about that? Yeah, about 4:50.

Sean: OK, well it's it's. A thick tone for sure, but. It's well, it will give you some insight into where Kaczynski got his ideas, but it will also give you some interesting. Counterpoints to Kaczynski. Lots of people who've read Kaczynski. Project him back onto Ellul far too much. But if you read him as a different thinker. If you read him as an interlocutor with Kaczynski, I think he's in. He's as much an antidote to Kaczynski as he is and an influence on him. I'd I'd recommend that you read them alongside each other. Don't just read everything. Kaczynski is written. Read someone else. Kaczynski is tempting because he's. So easy to read. He's incredibly clear. He's incredibly precise and concise. And he's he gives you the. Analytic philosopher's version of anti tech. But don't just stop with Kaczynski. And also read some of the stuff that you don't think you'll like, like know your enemy is a good model here. Read the acceleration is manifesto. Read Ray Kurzweil, the futurist. Read Kevin Kelly. Yeah, I think it was John Stuart Mill who said, you know that I'm paraphrasing. He knows only one side of the argument knows nothing of that, or he who knows only his own side of the. Read widely about tech. It's tempting when you find a text that resonates with you, to just

read everything. By that author. But don't read Kaczynski in isolation. Yeah, is my best advice.

Griffin: Yeah, that, that's a really good advice I. Like that and I'll I'll say. Too, you know? Aloul is not too difficult to read. I mean, Heidegger is much more difficult, I would say as far as just like understanding what's being said, lose less technical or you know, less analytic than Kaczynski is. So it's a little less straightforward, I guess is fair, but it's by no means I think a difficult read. It's inspirational in a lot of ways. I love the, the, the fanciful way that he writes sometimes. It's refreshing and he has a reverence for humanity too, in the same way that Kaczynski does.

Sean: I think yeah. And he's. I'm much more complicated thinker, to be sure he's not someone whose ideas are easily distilled into a doctrine. And so I think Ellul helps. Us guard against the temptation. To form a kind of anti tech doctrine. Because he doesn't have. One so I think one of the biggest takeaways from. The rule which is. Really helpful as a counterpoint because Unski. Is the idea that freedom? Is essentially resistance against necessity. Resistance against power. So in order to be free, there has to be a constraint and you have to overcome it. And one of the things that that a little. Argues is that it's not possible to find freedom in nature because nature is a set of necessities and determinisms too. Nature is a system that determines our behavior. Now it does so in a different way that technology than technology does. It's a different set of constraints and determinisms and necessities, but it's a system of constraints determinisms and necessities nonetheless. And So what? A little prods us to do is. Look at our current circumstance. Understand the forces that are acting against us and resist them and transgress them. And the forces that are acting on us and pushing us. A change overtime, identifying one force and overcoming it. And thinking that you're finally free at. Last is a mistake. So, you know, Kaczynski's idea of the power process to Ellul is is absurd. You're not going to find freedom by obeying human nature. To to a little Kaczynski's power process is. Nothing but enslavement to human nature. If you're obeying the power process. Well, you you are subject to the power of nature subject completely to the forces of nature. Now it might be preferable to being forced to subject to the much more powerful forces of technology. But it's certainly not freedom in any fundamental sense. So This is why I'd recommend that you read a little. It rule gives you, I think a much more powerful conception of freedom. And that idea of freedom as transgressing or resisting necessity. I think is. Is the idea that I think. Might help you live your life in a different. So every time you feel the pull of your phone or feel the urge to. Check your e-mail. And you say no, you recognize? That you have this compulsion. You recognize that the phone is pulling you, that the e-mail is pulling you. And you deliberately resist and keep reading your book. That is freedom. That is what freedom from technology really looks like. Well, willpower is a crude way of putting it. But deliberate resistance. First, the recognition that you're determined and 2nd the refusal to obey.

Sean: Yeah, that's the idea. That that's the idea of freedom that Elul gives. You that you will not find in Kaczynski.

Griffin: Now I want to ask you too, because I know you've read a lot of a little and most people are. That are talking about these ideas are most familiar with the technological society. Is there a number two book that you would recommend for people to that that they wanna if they want to dig into a little a little bit more past the tech society?

Sean: Well, there's a broad tie for #2. It's pretty hard to pick a #2. The one that people typically read second is called propaganda. So in the technological society, a little gives you comprehensive overview of the tech, the technical phenomenon as he calls it, the society that is structured according to technique that is organized around the idea that everything must be rational and efficient. And then in in propaganda. He gives you an account of 1 particularly important technique in our society, which is propaganda. So the function of propaganda is to give people a psychological. That allows them to live in the society. That we've created. It it's a set of psychological techniques. That allows us to cope with the stress and anxiety and depression and pressure that we're put under by the technological society. So propaganda is the usual #2. The more difficult, but I think. Work that's tied for #2 is a little book autopsy of revolution, and I've discussed that a bit, so don't really need to rehash it. And there a Ellul gives you a critique of the contemporary idea of revolution. He says the French Revolution can't be our model and then he sketches out at the end what an alternative idea of revolution would look like. Then he has a couple of other books about technology that are worth reading. So he wrote a book that's a follow up to the Technological Society published, I think in 1977 called the Technological System. And there he's trying to update the technological society to take into account the more recent developments in technology. And he's especially thinking of computers and networks. And later on in 1988, he published his last book about technology, which is called the Technological Bluff. And in that book. He's analyzing not technique or techniques, but technology proper, meaning the discourse of technique. So he's he's analyzing. The words and phrases and modes of thought. That make up the technological society. So he's analyzing the technological mindset. In other words. And that's his. That's his last. Word on technology. Hmm, so that's well worth a. Read and gives you his. Reflections on what he had written before, as well as some new. Thoughts about technology? Now if you. Want to start at the other end? And you want. A kind of overview of Alou's thought that gives you both the theology and the critique of technology. I'd suggest starting with, well, his. I guess it was his first book on the subject at least. I think it was published in 1948 and it's translated in two different ways. One is presence in the modern world and the other is the presence of the Kingdom. To look up either of those titles and you'll find it, and there you get in a very short book. Almost a total overview of everything. A little wrote after that. You get encapsulated in one book. Most of the, or at least in some form, most of the points that Alou went on to develop in his later books. So you get his Christian theology and you get the idea that our society is fundamentally one in which means our privilege over it. So that gives you. I think a. Pretty big overview of a little thought. The thing to

keep in mind with the rule is in every book except the presence of the Kingdom. You're dealing with one side of a dialectic. So when you read the technological society by itself, you get this. Well, seemingly pessimistic fatalistic view that we are determined on all sides by technology and there's no way out. It's the kind. Of book that by itself. Would drive you to despair. And unless you read the other side, and unless you read a little ethics like one of his books is the ethics of freedom. Unless you read the theological part. And you accept it. Which is quite a demand. You're only getting one side of the argument. So presence in the modern world or the presence of the Kingdom is really the only book. That gives you both sides of the little spot. So that, in a nutshell, is. What people should read? I would suggest that. After the technological society, you look at the technological bluff.

Griffin: OK, for sure. Tech Tech society, then. Tech buff. Yeah. And then. And then we also got presence of the modern world. The presence of the Kingdom. Thank thank you. Thank you for that, Sean. But yeah, is, is there anything else at the and I think we're gonna sign off in a minute here. Do is there anything, lastly, that you wanted to mention or do you feel you didn't get to explain enough or something that you were working on that maybe you want to talk about, I don't know? It's kind of a free form. If not, it's totally cool too.

Sean: Well, I will eventually, hopefully in the not too distant future, have a book about anti tech ideas that centers on. Aloha and Kaczynski. So stay tuned for that. The article is a. Is one part of a larger project and there will. There there will be a. Book hopefully in the not too distant future.

Griffin: Looking forward to that once again. Your article is the Unabomber, and the origins of anti tech rattle radicalism published in the Journal of Political Ideologies. And I'll put a link to it in the description to this video and recommend everyone go read it and check it out and cite it and start writing your own stuff. And let's get this discussion. Going in the movement, moving further along. Yeah, Sean, thank you again for agreeing to come on and talk with us and talk about these connections with the Kaczynski and a little and where a lot of these ideas come from and the kind of the intellectual history and development of these. Is I think it's really refreshing to talk about and. Hear about other thinkers besides Kaczynski, because he's such a huge name right now and he's, you know, the one that most people are aware of, but not a lot of people know where he had his ideas from and or even know that he wasn't the originator. Of a lot. Of his ideas and that there's a whole slew of literature and things to look at and study out there. So thank you again for coming on, Sean and. Talking with us.

Sean: Well, thanks so much for having me. This has been a lot of fun and thanks to everyone for listening as well. Yes, thank thank you for listening, everyone. And yeah, we'll catch you soon, we hope.

Griffin: Hey guys so after the interview Sean and I kept talking for a little while and the following is that conversation. Yeah, it is important.

Sean: And your first question, why are we so afraid? Of the unabomber? I. I really don't know.

Griffin: Maybe it's too recent. It's too real because like, I don't. Know not too recent though you.

Sean: Know it's it's. Been over 1/4 of a. Let's put this into school.

Griffin: Yeah, that is weird to think about. It doesn't feel like it. Was that long ago but. A lot has happened since then.

Sean: the man is has been in prison. No threat to anyone. He's an old mathematician sitting in a prison cell writing books. I don't see why it's easy to publish an analysis of. Say you know some far right thinker. You can you can easily publish an article in Karl Schmidt. Are you familiar with?

Griffin: Him. I'm not. I'm not.

Sean: The Nazi legal theorist. Ohh OK yeah, yeah. Yeah, he's the darling of political theorists now, and some philosophers are also fans of his. But he was, after Heidegger, the most famous German intellectual who was a. Member of the Nazi party. And he's a staunch critic of liberalism, he's. Decidedly a figure of the right. Said lots of anti-Semitic things. OK. Yeah, he's. A contemporary boogeyman if anyone is. But it's easy to publish about. It yeah, lots of figures on the left have taken up some of his ideas. Co opted them, used them. I don't understand why. Heidegger is not beyond the pale, and Schmidt is not beyond the pale, and Antonio Negri is not beyond the pale, all of them, On the contrary, are. Thinkers that you can discuss in polite society and intellectual establishments. But Kaczynski is. Kaczynski will hinder your career if you dare. To talk about him.

Griffin: Do do you think it's maybe it might be partially due to the fact that he's like an individual advocating these ideas, that he's not part of like some grand groups. So like, I don't know, maybe you could. Maybe people are more comfortable talking about like Carl Schmidt, because they can attribute some of his ideas to like this to like the Nazi Party as a whole. That, like I don't know that they that there's they can somehow separate the individual from like the group that they were part of. But Kaczynski's it's just all him. So. I don't know do. You do is do you think there might be something with that? I'm just kind of speculating right now.

Sean: That's I think that's an interesting hypothesis, but I think what cuts in the other direction is the fact that. He is so often lumped into some group or another, people don't think about him as an individual for the most part, they think of him as. You know a radical environmentalist or Neo Luddites, or an. Anarchist you know, they they. Stick a label on them. They try to. Make sense of him by slapping some enact label on him.

Griffin: Which is a technical move. In itself, right that we're afraid of engaging.

Sean: Well, of course. It is detective. Yeah, it's it's a way to pigeonhole and and to avoid having to. To deal with it, trying to think. Of what else could be it? Well, at least some of it is the wide, widespread perception that he's insane.

Griffin: Hmm. Yeah, that's. Probably part of it. And then, yeah, then and then, like these Netflix documents and stuff aren't helping either. When they they focus so much on like the MK Ultra experiment and like ohh we never got laid in college and like the tripping.

Sean: Yeah, of course. They they try to explain him away. And you know, and it it worked on me in. The beginning and I thought well. This guy is a crazed conspiracy theorist. That kind of Charles Manson. I bought that narrative. But one only has to read the manifesto. To dispel that one with thought.

Griffin: Yeah, that's really it, right. Like I, I reading his words makes it makes it apparent how, like, not insane he was. I don't know. For me, when I first read the manifesto, it was like I don't know, just like. Stumbling upon some answer that I didn't even know. I had a question about kind of like.

Sean: I it's a great way of putting it. All the things. That he talked about.

Griffin: Right. Like all these things that he was talking about, like with the power process. And engaging in surrogate activities. I was like, that is why I feel this way about the world that we're living in right now. He was like he hit. The nail on the head for me, and so I was. Like I was. Like, oh, like he's he's he's right. And then you hear the whole story of like. He, like, evaded the FBI for 17 years, living in a cabin in Montana. And I'm like, crazy people can't do that.

Sean: No, that's right. And Michael Mello. I mentioned him earlier, the law professor. Yeah, he exchanged. About 150 letters with Kaczynski and had dozens of phone calls with him and said, look. The only way that you could portray this. Guy as insane is if. Sending bombs to people in the mail. And living in a cabin. And hating technology? Add up to mental illness. So if those things by definition. Imply mental illness. Then he's mentally ill. But Mellow says. That's just so far from the truth. That is just. A smokescreen, mellow says he's not a mad bomber. He's a chillingly sane bomber. And from the perspective of. Even from the perspective of the people he bombed, I think it. Does a disservice to them. To say that he's insane. If he's insane, it mitigates his responsibility. It's not just a disservice to his ideas. Disservice to the people he killed and injured. This is my response to the people who portray him as insane. This is was a completely cynical, dishonest attempt to. Mitigate his responsibility for his crimes. When someone accuses you of being an apologist or saying Kaczynski isn't insane. It's you have an easy retort. Are letting him. Off the hook for his crimes by. Saying he's insane. Yeah.

Griffin: Take an easy way out. I was gonna say too that uh. Well, she was going to. Ohh yeah, I've even like we've toyed with the idea of like printing out copies of his manifesto and just like taking his name out or putting it at the very end or something like that. And saying by the like, by the way this. Was written by like. I wonder if people would be more reticent to. The idea is if they didn't know who wrote them, because I mean, especially like in like our generation, I don't know like. I didn't. I wasn't an avid reader when the manifesto came. Out if I. Was even alive. So like, you know, some of people that like are. My friends from like high school and stuff and

they'll see that I'm working on this project and they're like, oh, like you talk about like, because since he didn't he, like, kill a bunch of people and like, yeah, did you read what he wrote? And they're like, no. And I'm like, ohh. And you you probably should. And then you might have a different opinion. I know people are so ready. To to buy that story. Because it just it, it allows them to continue living their lives without having to question it. Probably you know. It's it's a hard thing to swallow when you're so invested in the technological society. You don't wanna, you don't wanna hear criticism about it, right? Like that forces you to.

Sean: Yeah, of course the. The fact that. He used violence, provides an easy reason. To dismiss him. It's it's an easy out for those who don't want to engage with them, but at the same time. Well, even easier to dismiss precisely because he doesn't have the notoriety. So on one hand, here's what. Kaczynski would say he'd say well. The reason that you've. Read this at all. The reason that anyone has read this is precisely that I've used violence. Who the hell has heard? Of Jacques aloul yeah. People who listen to this podcast. A few philosophers of technology, a few sociologists and a few theologians. But you know one thing Jacobi says in this essay of his in Dark Mountain, he says, you know. People hate Kaczynski because he won. I think that's part of it. he kind of did. One up the system.

Griffin: He kind of did and he kind of did get a he got away from the FBI for 17 years. he I guess is this is would this be considered the like only time that we've that the United States government has given in to the demands of a terrorist or yeah.

Sean: I I think it is and it's. Certainly the only. Time that newspapers have been blackmailed in the publishing a short book, it's.

Griffin: Yeah, completely unedited, just like.

Sean: Yeah, well, the joke is that, you know, he submitted this manuscript. He well, what, what? I've written in a piece. That's coming up soon. So first he broke the rule against submitting the same manuscript in multiple journals simultaneously. To the to penthouse, to the Washington Post, the New York Times, couple of others. And then, well, this was as as one sociologist said, so this is the most reviewed academic manuscript in history. Think about all the academics that the FBI sent it. To before it was published. Had more reviewers than any journal article in history, and he didn't even get a revise and resubmit, no.

Griffin: So successful like successful publication.

Sean: So it that is. Uh, one of the most remarkable parts of the story. But there is another there's another piece to all of this that that's often neglected when people talk about the manifesto and the demand for publication. One of the things that was in there, one of the things he demanded. Uh, in exchange for uh ceasing his bombing campaign? Was actually the right to publish follow-ups. So he well and they. Agreed to publish short follow-ups. After the publication of the Manifesto and I actually found his notes for a follow-up essay. Oh, so he had a. Skeleton structure of a follow-up that's way, which is another one of the pieces of gold that's.

Griffin: In that archive, OK, it's called gold you said or.

Sean: So no, no.

Griffin: It's a gold. Yeah, that's right.

Sean: So that it it's just notes for a follow up and uh one of the things in there, one of the things he planned to elaborate on. There's a tiny bit in one of my footnotes about this, so he planned to have a section on natural selection and how evolution drives the development of technology. So there was a lot more to be written about the evolutionary underpinnings. Of his view of technology.

Griffin: Yeah, that is something that I. I don't know. I haven't dug into too deeply, but something that like sticks in my brain is like, I don't know. I guess a lot of pro tech people have this attitude that we are kind of like. No, I guess it's one or two things. I guess there are some people that think that we're kind of using technology to overcome evolution, right, that we're kind of like engaging in this rational control of how we develop. But it's not actually we're not the ones controlling it and. But then I think there's some people. That say that, you know we are. Again, have this like natural tendency to to create technology that like making tools, is something innate to humanity and that like to for to expand to this point is like a success for evolution for them.

Sean: Well, think about it this way. The retort the obvious retort to the second. Point is that OK? Well, maybe we do have a an innate tendency or drive to create and use tools. But at a certain point, technology ceases to be merely a collection of tools and machines. Yeah, it becomes a system like an ecosystem or an Organism in its own right that. And of course. You know I. A tumor is built from our own cells. A tumor is, in some sense, part. Of us as well.

Griffin: Yeah, technology is in some sense natural right in the same kind of way.

Sean: But it's all. That's right, a tumor is natural, isn't it? At least natural once removed as technology is.

Griffin: This is this is made. Out of paper, if you want to call book technology, this is made out of natural resources right at some point.

Sean: And there's Scherbina emphasizes this constantly says there's no deep ontological distinction between technology and nature. Yeah, that binary doesn't really work. Technology is, in some sense, natural. But again, a tumor is natural, so from the perspective of a biological human. This form of rapid technological evolution is malignant and threatened, so just as the tumor kills its host well. Yeah, the technological system is a. Well, a rapidly growing tumor. On our humans.

Griffin: Cancerous entity, I think one of the hardest questions, though, is figuring out when it stops being, you know, like a tool for human means and when it turns into a system it it seems like really hard to define where that point is. And I guess This is why some of, like the anarchy. Anarcho primitivist sentiments kind of makes sense to me and. Like anyone else that's drawing a line, it seems like it's really hard to defend that line. And so if you just like, say no, we're just getting rid of all of it, just like level the ground, so to speak, that at least I don't know, at least requires a less rigorous argument, it seems.

Sean: Yeah, it well eliminates the need. To draw some arbitrary distinction. It's very difficult to identify the point at which technology took off and became autonomous. Yeah, and like Kaczynski says, this somewhere. I think it's in. The manifesto says at some point Europe became dynamic. And we don't really know why. There's no particular reason for it. It it's not clear when it became an autonomous system. The fact is that. Yeah, that's undeniable. When it happened, is a difficult question and it's difficult, not least because it's, well, the people of the time would not have recognized it because it was a gradual process, right? And we don't have access to the information necessary to determine what it when it became autonomous. Now a little, I think believes that. Technology is always, in some sense, autonomous. That even the simple tool. Is a means that easily becomes an end in itself. Yeah, so fine and acts, the stone acts is something for cutting down a tree. But when you make it. Your lifes work. To develop a better and better axe. Well, who's really in control there when an arms race takes off, you know, one tribe develops a better axe, and then the other has to develop a better axe to keep up who's really in control. Competition drives a kind of arms race. In which each? Side has to develop. Better and better means. So in that case, the memes. Do become ends, they overshadow. All the ends. the fundamental question for a rule. Is when do the means start to become ends in themselves? That is really the question. It's not a specific point of autonomy, but a question of the relative balance between means and is. On that note, I should get going and have some supper here.

Griffin: Yeah, it's same. I gotta get.

Sean: Some food, too. Yeah, but this has been great. So thanks again. For having me, this has been a. Really enjoyed this and hopefully we can do this again at some point in the future.

Griffin: Thank you for coming on.

Sean: Cheers Griffin. Have a good.

Griffin: Weekend cheers. You too. Bye.

4. West Northwest "Humanity First"

Oct. 27, 2021

In this episode of The Anti-Tech Cast, Ryan and Griffin talk with anti-tech philosopher West Northwest about her essay entitled, "The Conservation of Man and Wild Nature in Light of 21st-Century Post-Industrial Technologies." When we fight for nature, we must remember that humanity and nature are t...

5. Charlie Clendening ”Avoiding Checkmate”

Jan. 26, 2022

In this episode of The Anti-Tech Cast, Ryan and Griffin talk with local anti-tech thinker, Charlie Clendening. They discuss Covid, anti-technique, low-tech forms of entertainment, and a lot more. For more visit antitechcollective.com

6. Nayla Agameya and Mai Mokhtar "Egyptian Roof Garden"

June 20, 2022

Griffin talks with ATC member Nayla Agameya and her mother, Mai Mokhtar about the roof garden they care for in Alexandria, Egypt. For more visit antitechcollective.com

7. Jesse Dustin "From Silicon to Serenity"

July 11, 2022

Griffin is joined by Jesse Dustin, the founder of Heartland Goats and author of *The History of Nicholas and the Oracle of Knowledge*. They discuss Jesse's journey of leaving the tech industry to start a goat farm and lead a more fulfilling life.

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