

#73 | The Unabomber, Post-Tech Society & Metaphysics of Technology W/ David Skrbina

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October 13, 2017

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David Skrbina is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Michigan where he teaches a course on the Philosophy of Technology, and is the author of "Panpsychism In The West" and "The Metaphysics of Technology." David has become well-known for being the so-called "pen-pal" of Theodore Kaczynski (a.k.a. The UNABOMBER), having communicated with Kaczynski for some time. David eventually published Kaczynski's anti-tech philosophy elaborated in his letters, essays, and his famous manifesto in the book "Technological Slavery: The Collected Writings of Theodore Kaczynski" published by Feral House.

In this episode, we discuss and critique the notion that "technological progress" is in and of itself inherently good and worthy of continuing. We need to step back and assess what our insatiable addiction to this form of progress is doing not only to our species, but our planet and all its life forms as well.

Is a shiny techno-utopia just around the corner? We argue no, not so much.

EPISODE NOTES:

- Opening reading of an excerpt from a "Letter to David Skrbina, September 18, 2004" from "Technological Slavery: The Collected Writings of Theodore Kaczynski"
- Find out more about "Technological Slavery: The Collected Writings of Theodore Kaczynski" here: feralhouse.com/technological-slavery
- Read Theodore Kaczynski's Manifesto "Industrial Society And It's Future": <http://editions-hache.com/essais/pdf/kaczynski2.pdf>
- "Panpsychism In The West" by David Skrbina: mitpress.mit.edu/books/panpsychism-west
- "The Metaphysics of Technology" by David Skrbina: routledge.com/The-Metaphysics-of-Technology/Skrbina/p/book/9781138240025
- Opening and closing tracks "Jorgy", "Bloop", and "Machines Pt. II" by Dabrye.

Introduction

PATRICK: David Skrbina, our guest for this episode is a professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan. David has become known for his teachings and writings on the philosophy of technology and for being Ted Kaczynski's AKA the Unabombers so-called Pen Pal. Having been in communication with Theodore Kaczynski, imprisoned. In a maximum security prison in Colorado for some period of time and published his manifesto and most recent work in letters in a collection entitled Technological Slavery, the collected writings of Theodore Kaczynski. David is the author of Panpsychism in the West, and the Metaphysics of technology. I will provide a link to David's work in the description of this episode, and once again, David, thank you for your time. Thank you for your thoughts and please check out his work. It's well worth looking into.

NEWSREADER #1: Who is Ted Kaczynski? Is he a genius whose mind was twisted by mental illness or an evil demon? Tonight we're very pleased to have our colleague, Forrest Sawyer join us with this fascinating report. Poris, welcome. To 2020 Thanks very much. You, Barbara. With today's sentencing, the Unabomber case is now officially over, but.

NEWSREADER #2: One big question does remain "why did Ted Kaczynski wage his war on society?"

TED: As matters stand at the moment revolution in the stable parts of the industrialized world is impossible, a revolution could only occur if something happened to shake the stability of industrial society. It is easy to imagine events or developments that could shake the system in this way. To take just one example, suppose a virus created in an experimental laboratory escaped and wiped out, say, 1/3 of the population of the industrialized world. But if this happened now, it hardly seems possible that it could lead to revolution. Instead of blaming the techno industrial system as a whole for the disaster, people would blame only the carelessness of a particular laboratory. Their reaction would be not to dump technology, but to try and pick up the pieces and get the system running again, though, doubtless they would enact laws requiring much stricter supervision of biotechnical research in the future. The difficulty is that people see problems, frustrations and disasters in isolation rather than seeing them as manifestations of the one central problem of technology.

If al-Qaeda should set off a nuclear bomb in Washington DC, people's reaction will be 'get those terrorists!' They will forget that. The bomb could not have existed without the previous development of nuclear technology. When people find their culture or their economic welfare disrupted by the influx of large numbers of immigrants, their reaction is to hate the immigrants rather than take account of the fact that massive population movements are an inevitable consequence of economic developments that result. Technological progress.

If there is a worldwide depression, people will blame it merely on someone's economic mismatch. Forgetting that in earlier times when small communities were largely self-sufficient, their welfare did not depend on the decisions of government economists.

When people are upset about the decay of traditional values or the loss of local autonomy, they preach against immorality or get angry at the government. Without any apparent awareness that the loss of traditional values and of local autonomy is an unavoidable result of technological progress.

Podcast Promo

PATRICK: Thank you for your attention. You can listen and subscribe to this podcast on SoundCloud and iTunes, and if you'd like to support the podcast, you can consider checking out last born the Wilderness's Patreon page at patreon.com/lastborninthewilderness. Last born in the Wilderness, Patreon allows you to make monthly Subs. Monthly donations excuse me to the creators of these various forms of media that you are consuming, so there's a lot of really impressive individuals out there who are, or groups that are putting out real. Good work and Patreon allows people to basically support that work directly and giving money directly to the creators of those projects. So if you. Would like to contribute to this podcast and support it. You can do that through this podcast Patreon page you can make a very small donation, a very small. Monthly donation to this podcast. That way. You can also make a one time donation through the podcast coffee page that is [ko-fi.com](https://ko-fi.com/lastborninthewilderness) slash. Last born in the wilderness, I'll provide a link to all this in the description of this episode, and I just recently started a new website, just an actual website for this podcast. Something that I just haven't done. I've just sort of relied on people going to the SoundCloud page or the Facebook page or accessing it through some other means like that. But I decided that it would best to create like a base, a place that people can access all of this stuff. They can access Patreon. The coffee page you can access the Facebook page you can access the podcast and you can contact me through this website as well. And you can go to that. It's a lastbornthewilderness.com. And again I will provide. A link to all of this in the description of this episode. So once again thank you so much for your attention and I really hope you have. A wonderful week. Thank you.

Conversation Begins

I think that people find out about your work. And who you are and what you do, because maybe in some roundabout way they have come across Theodore Kaczynski's work, his manifesto that he released in the in the 90s. And I know that you have your own thing that you're doing, but you do have a relationship with him and you have been in contact. With him for quite a while, from what I understand. And, UM, if you wouldn't mind going over that a little bit like what is your relationship with Ted Kaczynski?

DAVID: Yeah, sure. So well, I'm a, I'm. A professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan. Yes, yes.

DAVID: And I started teaching there in 2003. And one of my interests was in technology philosophy of technology. And as it happened, we had no such course that was in the university system at the. Time, so I undertook the effort to create a new course with that title, which I've been teaching ever since. And so, as part of the. Usual development I'm, compiling. Material creating a reading. List and so forth. Some historical things, some recent things, and of course I wanted to get some. Material from Kaczynski. I wanted wanted to include. The manifesto, because that was a recent. And significant piece in philosophy criticism. But it has been several years since anyone had heard from. Him, . He was what captured in 1996. Put put in jail about a year later and then. Pretty much dropped off the map. And I really knew nothing about him. At that that. Point at all. This like 2004. Yeah, and so I. I actually I wanted to get an updated. Information I guess I knew I would have to. Write to him. Directly, that was probably my only hope to get some information, so I. I just sent off a letter to him addressed. To the prison. Not, not really. Expecting to get any answer, but he replied about 2 weeks later I got answer. Nice handwritten letter saying thanks for. Your letter I'll. I'll follow up with a detailed reply to your. Questions I had about a dozen questions. In my first letter. Yeah, yeah.

DAVID: And then and. Then about 2 weeks later after. That I got out like a 20 page handwritten letter of lengthy answers to all my questions. And so that was the. That was kind of the start of a just a. Yeah, letter writing campaign back and forth between he and I. You know I was asking questions about the thoughts since the since he was in prison. Any new writings that he had done turns out he'd done a number of important new essays. I was challenging him with some of the ideas. In the manifesto. Just . Whether philosophical critiques or just looking for evidence or other other points that I could challenge or question his ideas and then sort of spark it back and forth discussion. You know, you give me lengthy answers to my challenges. UM?

DAVID: And yeah, so we just. Went back. And forth for several years, I think I've received about 100 and 120 letters in total from him. Yeah, eventually we had enough material we. Decided to put it in book form. So that's what turned into the book technological slavery, which was kozinski's first book, which included the Manifesto five of his unpublished essays, about 100 pages of his letter responses to my letters and a few other things there, and that came out in 2010. Yeah, so yeah, that's kind of the background there.

PATRICK: So for me personally, I came across his manifesto which is titled Industrial Society and its future. I came across that years ago and I don't remember exactly how I came across it. But there was something. I mean, obviously if you have to think logically about these types of subjects because Ted Kaczynski of course has been found to have, been a what's considered a terrorist. He sent bombs out from his cabin I think Wyoming, and in fact it was the release of the manifesto. That ultimately led to his capture because his brother had recognized that writing style that he was using for it and inevitably led to his arrest. So I think a lot of people, what they tend to do is that oh, this guy, he's a terrorist. He murdered people. I don't want anything do with his ideas automatically, they just dismiss his point of view completely. And I think that's a foolish way of looking at it. I mean, obviously he is in a very intelligent person who maybe his actions are not something you would ever condone by any means. And I know that you've said that over and over again. I do not condone his actions. I'm not in favor of how he went about his campaign to spread his and to spread his message. But you do recognize that he was an intellectual, that he wasn't, that he knew what he was talking about. He had really well formulated ideas and he put them out in and kind of challenged the public to kind of recognize where we're at in this moment in human history, where it's been a couple 100 years since the industrial revolution. Again, and things seem like they're moving along at a very steady pace, but we don't know where we're going. We don't know where this going to end up, and we seem to be in this lost in this kind of technological bubble of delusion. You know, we can't really seem to. Get our bearings of where we really are anymore. And I think that your work. I mean, it's unfortunate that of course Kaczynski went down the path he did because. I mean, it's kind of an interesting thing to think about if he had an had. Done what he'd done. I don't know if we would have ever had. Our understanding of his ideas kind of spread the way that they had and by no way is that condoning his behavior. But, but because he did what he did and he basically made a deal saying I will stop doing this, I will stop sending these. Bombs if you publish. This manifesto I've written and unedited. You know, I want it to be in mainstream publications. I want people to read this, but then you get people like you who of course you don't want to do anything like that, but you want to sort of. Bring up really legitimate critiques of technology and where it's leading us.

DAVID: Exactly, yeah, well, yeah you. Know, I mean, there's a. I mean all throughout history there's been a variety of methods that people have used to bring their ideas. To public attention right and. So there's sort of the normal, the normal peaceful ones,

and sort of the less the. Less normal ones, right, right? And yeah, I mean obviously this an extreme case, right? So he's he's taking violent action to get the notoriety required in order to publish his ideas and get them widely disseminated. He and I think you're right, if he's done really nothing. If he's just been a professor at mathematics, at Berkeley where he was and if he just, typed up some nice little anti tech essay and. Try to get. It published somewhere chances. Are it would not have been published, it's. Not the kind of thing. That . Philosophical or whatever journals are looking for so. Probably would not have been published if it was published. You know, but. It would have been. Read by 10 or 20 people and. That would have been it. So obviously this had a much harder effect taking the route that he did. I mean, it's extreme and nobody condones that, but. But the fact is. That it did get the idea that. Front of yeah. Millions of people. That would never. Have been exposed to those ideas and. The ideas really are distinct from his actions there's. There's nothing in the. Manifesto that talks about. Those actions nothing talks about mail bombs or killing people or nothing. There's actually no violence at all. In the manifesto, which was a striking statement to. Me that you. Know I have sort of expected it. Would be there, but it wasn't.

PATRICK: Right, something that Kaczynski of course is proposing very seriously is. That we need. We need to throw off the we need a revolution in a real sense. I mean It's nice that we can talk about these things and it's nice that we can, have all these conversations about what it means to kind of overthrow technological society and culture. But. You know he's actually serious, and obviously his actions speak to that, but. You know, and I wanted to just ask you something because I could talk as much as I want about. Or you could talk as much as you'd like about technology and what it's doing and the short term and long term implications of living under. You know these sort of systems that have been built without our consent. But I think that technology is a really broad term, so I think that something that I think about when I read your writings or I read Kaczynski's writings or any other sort of. Maybe primitivist or Luddite or whatever term you want to use to describe those types of thinkers. Whenever I read that, I think, well, what exactly are they? What exactly are you meaning by technology? As in because I mean human beings again have been around for some time and the majority of our existence as a species hasn't been with. Civilization, I mean, we've been foragers and hunter gatherers for most of our existence, but Imagine that like all hunter gatherers, there are tools that are used I. Mean we see. Tool use in many species beyond just human beings. But what makes our technology so disastrous? And so terrible for all the life on this planet. You know what is it? What is it? When you mean technology like? What exactly are you meaning by that?

DAVID: Yeah, well, right. Exactly, I mean, that's it's. A It's an interesting and a. Difficult question actually to define. Because sure, I mean. At some level, any any tool or any device, or. Any utensil of any kind is a kind of technology. So you go back to stone hand tools, which are as old as humanity itself. You know the oldest findings that we have of human remains are found with stone tools. So, so as long as there's

been humans, there's been tools around, so we've never been without technology. Most of the time it was very simple. But we've always used tools. As you point out, it's true that many. Animals use tools. So It's yeah, It's. An interesting philosophical problem to sort of. Define what we mean. In some sense, they're natural tools and. I flew.

DAVID: Let's say you. Know artificial tools or less natural tools in the in the sense that certain tools. The planet has evolved. To handle them in some sense so. So a stone hand tool doesn't pose an existential threat to the global ecosystem because it's using stones which. Are a natural part of the environment. But high power electrical systems and internets, and nuclear weapons and so forth. Obviously that's not an evolved feature of the of the planet, so these these pose new kinds of risks which never have never existed before, so. Yeah, I. I mean It's an extra challenge. To think about. How technology itself has changed what? It really is how what drives it forward. I mean, that's been a big. Area of my own research as well.

PATRICK: Right? Right, and I think that people who maybe stumble across your work or kozinski's work or whoever, and this question is posed, is this really? Is this really making us feel happy? Is this actually giving us the. Is this actually? Really giving us anything that is that is really enhancing or fulfilling our own existence. As a species on this planet. And I think that's a good question because I mean, I. You know there's this whole argument that technology is neutral. You know it's a matter of how. Technology is used. So one end extreme example of that of course is like oh, will we develop nuclear energy so we can make nuclear bombs that can destroy the planet. But we also have nuclear energy which we can use to, we can harness the power of nuclear. Of nuclear energy and we can maybe get off fossil fuels, or like there's all these kind of pipe dreams of what that can bring about in our society. But it seems that the negatives. At least from what I can tell, at least in the long term, far outweigh the positives. And it isn't anything. I mean I look at even like cellphones and smartphones and how people use them. I mean, sure, it's pretty remarkable. It is pretty spectacular to think about it. I mean what it's capable of doing, but it's endlessly distracting. I mean, and especially considering the economic system that we have, . Obviously the technology is going to be pushed in a direction that is only going to be used for. Kind of an kind of to sort of distract the public away from what's actually happening. Does that make? Does that make? Any sense?

DAVID: Yeah, I think it does. I mean, you're raising, you're raising. A couple of good issues there, right so?

PATRICK: Right?

DAVID: People do think of. Technology is just kind of a neutral device or tool that can be used or abused and depending on how you how you deal. That and this. This actually a major issue with technology. To what extent that's actually true. The technology is neutral or isn't. I mean, it's on the. Face of it, it seems. Like it, it must be true because you can take any. You can take. A hammer you can build. Something or you can hurt somebody with it so. It seems like it could go either way. But when you think about it, sort of. In detail and what the actual consequences are, it turns. With

that, almost all the thinkers in the. Technology and decided technology is actually not neutral. And it's for some of those reasons that you actually mentioned, because a neutral device would seem to have certain characteristics to it. So for example it. Would have completely optional. Use for example it. Might be full, it would. Be have to be fully under human control. You would have to understand the consequences. You would have to be. Able to manage the. Risks, right? It would have to produce. A clear net gain a net benefit because that's why the things were designed right and when you look at what technology is actually do, they don't really do any. Six then maybe start. Out as an optional. Thing and they become compulsory or even addictive like. You're saying with self? And it turns out that we cannot really control them and we can't predict the risks and we don't understand the consequences and in many cases there's a net loss to human well-being, not a net gain. So all those things, all the all the actual. Evidence that we have argues against. A neutrality argument for technology.

PATRICK: Yeah, yeah, totally I. I understand that completely. So and the and then the question of. Course is. So if one recognizes this and let's say let's say like because Inski or others maybe have proposed, we need a we need a revolution, we need something to kind of. Overthrow this system of things and try to bring about something different and it's interesting as well, because I think that what they call like anarcho primitivist people who believe like oh the. The life of hunter gatherers and tribal society was just really easy and fun. And there was a lot of leisure time and it was actually reading an essay that he had written in that book. Technological slavery where he's talking about in fact, I mean what we can actually tell is that it isn't an easy life. It isn't an easy life. To live outside. Of I guess the technological comforts that we've become accustomed to, so I think a lot of people are resistant to think about. Well, what would that look like? What would it look like to be in a post technological society and I and I like to ask people like like you like I. I'm wondering like well. They have problems, but what's a? What's a? What's a vision of the future that's potentially better than our own?

DAVID: Right, so yeah. I mean It's kind. Of a strange thing, right? When modern people think about living under less modern pre modern conditions. You know people have funny ideas, right? They think about like camping, so they're looking to like some future low tech aside and they just think it would be like. Like a permanent camping trip. Right, yeah?

DAVID: Right, so they're thinking like. There's going to be. Like a lot of bugs that and I can't take a hot shower and I've got no power. And that would really be nasty, right? Everybody's happy. To do it for a week or two, but you don't want to live that way. But of course I mean. There's a lot of funny paradoxes, . Things that you get used to. Suddenly you have to have those. Like air conditioning and electricity. And before. You ever had those? Nobody missed them. It wasn't even a problem, wasn't. Even an issue. Right, so you have these these funny little psychological traits with that. They're sort of. Sort of part of human nature that you get. Adjusted to things. And you don't want to do without them. I mean.

DAVID: That's one thing. I guess another thing is you can't really go post technological. You could always going to have some technology like we've always had in the past and we. Always would in the future, so. I prefer to describe it more of as a low. Tech society. Which is really what it is returning to. A low tech society. And in some sense it's maybe not even an. Optional sort of thing I. Mean It's pretty clear that you can't continue to. Burn fossil fuels. For much longer in a large. Right?

DAVID: Large time frame. I mean they're going to be burned up. It's going to cause catastrophic. Not a change, so pretty much that can't go on. I don't know, maybe another 100 years at most and. And then. We will be back. I guess the point is you. Know at that point then you'll be back to a pre. Fossil fuel which is. A very low energy. Unless we get some kind. Of magic, nuclear fusion thing going on. It seems likely that we'll be back to a low energy, which is a. Low tech kind of society which. Which is what the? Earth has evolved to handle on. Which . Will allow the rest of the. Planet to recover and will support a. Lot fewer people than we have today. But that just seems to be inevitable, so some of us have argued, well, we could either sell nature, drives us back to where we should be. And nature is pretty ruthless when she does those things, or we can be a little bit intelligent and try to do it rationally on our own while we.

PATRICK: Right?

DAVID: Still have time to do nothing about it.

PATRICK: Right, I think that there are people who are seeing this happening. I mean you. Know peak oil. Is a term that's thrown around, but we have. We only have, like you said, we only have so much fossil fuels that we can possibly burn. It's not necessarily very realistic to assume that. Alternative energy sources are going to provide the same level of energy production that you would have, say with fossil fuels. Maybe they'll get to that point, I don't know, but I think what they're trying to do with, especially with the alternative, fuels just talk about that alternative energy sources is. They're just trying to maintain the status quo because they do know that fossil fuels are diminishing and going away. Completely and they can't be used in the way they were, have been used previously so they think they're trying to maintain the status quo and move over to like other energy sources. But those themselves also require a lot of mining and extraction of resources from the Earth, and that is also completely. Sustainable so yeah, like you said, it's going to be a low tech society, . I mean, these different systems that they're trying to build. Probably may not come to fruition and so. I think that. There are movements, and I do think that there. Are people around the world? Who do sense that this happening that we are moving into this new phase and they are like OK? We need to get back to the land. We need to understand how to work with it again because I think that's maybe one of. The most damaging. Things about what one of them? One of the more damaging things about living in this sort of technological bubble is that we've completely lost connection with how things actually work on this planet. And so yeah, it's a matter of trying to figure out how to live again. The way our ancestors did in some way, and maybe even better because. You know, I think that there are very legitimate criticisms of like say pre

industrial society as well. So I don't. I don't know what my point is exactly, but I just wanted to kind of say that you. Well, maybe a post technological society isn't really is totally a logical and understandable thing. You can totally kind of comprehend it if you really think about it. And work on it, right?

DAVID: Yeah, yeah, . And I and I tried. To point out. That it wouldn't necessarily be. In sort of the crude historic sense because. So there's certain certain base knowledge which. Doesn't seem like it can go away. Like for example, the fact that. Sure, sure.

DAVID: There's germs, right? And that . Basic like hygiene things and how to make. Simple soaps, right? I mean, this caused countless problems in the past. The people that understand these disease vectors but now. That you do and. It doesn't take a high tech system. To avoid a lot of. Those kind of. Problems that cause. You know some kind of pain and suffering. People in simpler society. I mean, I mean, I think it could. It could be low tech, but it. Could be a kind. Of a high quality, low tech existence, even with just really simple knowledge that. Doesn't seem like it like it. Could be lost.

PATRICK: Right, yeah, yeah, I think that we've we. Yeah we have. I mean, we've definitely learned a lot in the past few 100 years. And we could definitely still use that knowledge and apply it to future scenarios and. But another thing that I I when were doing some e-mail exchanges. I was kind of throwing some ideas out there of what we wanted to talk about and something that I mentioned was and you said and you mentioned that your most recent book, the Metaphysics of Technology, that you go over a lot of these ideas and. My question I guess, and my thoughts were. Technology I mean. It seems like it doesn't seem like it is actually happening where technology is advancing exponentially. At this point you've got these kind of techno futurists like Ray Kurzweil or like maybe in Elon Musk or some other. Maybe Google or Facebook executives or whatever and they might. They think that OK, there's going to be some sort of artificial intelligence that's going to reach a singularity and. Human beings are going to merge completely with machines, and we're going to enter this new kind of. They almost describe it like the second coming of Christ or something like this going to save us and this going to bring us into a whole new level. You know we're gonna become like gods. I meand they and they basically say that. I mean they may not use those terms explicitly, but that's essentially what they're saying and. Well, I think that might be a bit delusional. You know I, I just wonder like what is happening like the whole thing about how the machines are now controlling us. The computers are now have taken over. I mean we have whole systems that govern everything and they're based off of computer systems. You know we have a very large sector of our economy that is based purely on creating consumer products. Based on technological advances,m, and my I'm wondering like what is happening because. You don't see this in any other species. You know you have to wonder like what? What may, why did we go down this path? And it's almost like technology. Is this not maybe not technology, but maybe a technological civilization. Civilization itself is. It's like it's it has its own end game that it's working towards and it's and I know that's kind of a weird idea, but

it's like this system is using human energy, human intelligence to kind of perpetuate itself into grow itself and to become something. And I don't think that it necessarily has our best interests in mind when it's doing this. But I mean, what are your thoughts on that? Does that sound crazy to you? That I said that.

DAVID: No, no, no. I think actually it's on. The right track. Yeah, so in. So in my in my book I. Tried to lay out some kind of. A theory about how that might might be. Possible, and I think we actually have some good arguments in favor of something like this that. You know when you look at sort of the large scale universal processes. That are going on. Everything kind of focuses around energy flows, and even physics. All all physics is really in terms of energy. And energy densities and so. Forth and the conditions of the universe seem to be such that there is this like superabundant of energy flows available, and it seems like whenever. That excess energy is present that some kind of structure or. Order appears. And what you see over the long sweep of time is, is like the Super abundant energies, let's say of The Big Bang, which is sort of coalescing or condensing down. Into structures, right? Like atoms and then building up the stars and planets and then life forms and so forth. And even on a technological system. And so it seems like. It's part of the whole sort. Of sweep of nature. And there's been some people out there. Eric Chason is one guy in particular who's an astrophysicist who's kind of said, technology is on the same continuum of energy, increasing energy density, more energy flows through smaller and smaller. Packages and technology loaded on the same continuum with life forms and stars and planets and everything else. All right?

DAVID: And so it seems like it seems like the universe is kind of just moved because of this abundance of energy in the universe. It's moving towards these higher and higher orders of complexity and it and it. Is just how it goes it goes into. The matter and then the planets. And the simple. Life forms and the higher life forms and then something beyond life forms which happens to be technological systems. And then maybe something. Beyond that, so . We're sort. Of part of.

DAVID: That process we. Contribute to that process because we are that process. I mean we are a product of this energy flows in the universe, and then we're alsort of, building on this next layer. These technological systems, which even access more energy. But that really suggests that it really. Is if it really is a? Universal kind of process. That it's like a law of nature or it's like evolution. And we really don't control it at. All we just sort. Of are part of it and . I mean, that's kind of really interesting, but like really frightening and dangerous at the same time because you have no control of these things and you're just being. Swept along in. These currents of universal evolution. And I, I think maybe we need to think about. Technology in that sense. And that puts a. Whole new light on the whole problem.

PATRICK: Well, that sort of reminds me of, UM, he was this psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna. And, he had this idea that. That the universe is a novelty generating machine or something like that. So novelty as in more and more complex and unique things of systems that come out of out of the universe is. Kind of. It seems

like the universe is and as a really broad term the universe. But the universe is. Is it's like on Earth the conditions were just right for biological life to emerge and those biological life forms became more and more complex and then eventually a species like human beings came along and somehow our conscious our, our self-awareness and consciousness expanded and then were developing tools and we didn't really know what were doing. You know were just kind of fumbling along. We're like oh we discovered this. OK, this how this works better and this better right until eventually we get to computer systems and in the Internet and the Internet of Things right where everything is now interconnected through this kind of wireless network. And It's like in his view, it was like we're leaning towards our destiny. I guess like. This just the course of the universe. Like we're we're. It's just the universe is just meant to create more more complex things but I mean I, I don't know I don't know if. I guess the question that needs to be asked is like did we? Really consent to this, did we really? I mean, we're born in this time. In this place we don't really get to choose to be here, from what? I can tell. And you're just sort of here and you're like, oh wow, I'm in this really unique moment in history, I guess. And how do I feel about that? You know, like, how do I feel about the fact that things are changing so rapidly that you could see the change generation to generation? I mean, it's so rapid now. And it doesn't. Seem like the effects are all that positive. So these futurists and people that are proposing like yeah it's going to be a beautiful future. It's going to be amazing but it's like well look at it now. I mean, is this really shaping up to be that beautiful, wonderful technological utopia that you've kind of been talking about? And I mean, I think that people need to. Be a little more critical of that.

DAVID: Yeah, it's. For sure they need. To be more critical, right because? Again, it's you. Know as. Complexity increases and the power of the system increases and its autonomy increases because it's complete increasingly detached from human oversight and control. You know the potential for disaster just. Goes up geometrically right when the. Right?

DAVID: Systems increase like. So yeah, you can always say theoretically we could have some wonderful new. I don't know video games or health care systems or whatever these guys. Are talking about but. But the but the magnitude of the potential for catastrophic outcomes. Seems to be. Far greater and you would have to have something approaching total and complete control the system to just to just. Squeeze out of it. All the good things that you like and not have any of the bad consequences. And that's like literally impossible. So, so we have to assume that of the multiple disaster scenarios that could happen that one or more of these probably will and we that's sort of the guiding outlook for people who take a little bit. More pessimistic view of technological progress. So we need to be worrying about the worst case scenarios and not and not sort of, smacking our lips at these, though wonderful possibilities. That they that they're talking about.

PATRICK: It's like as a result of our technological. Advances I mean we are experiencing rapid abrupt climate change as a result, and that's coming very soon. I

mean it's happening right now, so it's like the detrimental effects of having this sort of industrial society that's been fueled on fossil fuels for over 100 years now. The effects are starting to come back. I mean it's starting to it's starting to make its way back to us in a more. Blunt fashion, I guess. And also, like in the news recently. I mean, I don't know if you've been paying attention to what's going on in politics and stuff, but I mean, Donald Trump, our president, right? He made this like bombastic kind of grandiose threat toward North Korea, right? Like if you threaten us again. You know you will face fire and fury. And blah blah. Blah and no president has ever said that. But again, these are unique times. I mean, we did happen to we do happen to have a very. A unique personality in the White House right now and the people that he surrounded himself with as well I think, are more inclined to maybe engaging in this type of warfare with North Korea or any other nation for that matter. And it's like I don't think the people that were making nuclear power and nuclear energy in the first nuclear bomb. We're thinking, well, maybe someday we'll have a. Narcissistic ***** as our president. Like really like to the Max and that maybe he's going to, push the button someday. Not to say that he has the power to do that, but the idea that because we still have these social systems in place, we have these political systems in place that allow these people to rise to the top. And then they have this whole technological system like this whole infrastructure that this whole military. I should say military industrial complex at their disposal and they can use the technology that the military has been funding and generating for the past few decades and use that to. So essentially annihilate millions and millions of people. I mean It's baffling to me that people still defend nuclear energy, even though yeah, of course it would be wonderful if we could all live off of really cheap renewable energy, but it seems that what's happening right now is that the detrimental effects are so much bigger than the positives. At this point, so it's like just look around you and see that the problems are already here. They're already manifested.

DAVID: I mean, you're right. I mean, even though we haven't really. Used nuclear weapons right since. Since World War Two, but the threat is always there and. That causes the. I mean just the threat of these things causes huge problems and it's huge expenditures and it's huge. You know, counter systems that have to be put into place. Huge defensive technologies that have to be produced for theoretical risk of these . Nuclear weapons for example. So, so there's all kinds of negative spin off consequences which. Which I'm not sure it ever figures into the total calculation, nobody really. Thinks about it, it's just like. OK, we've got them first, and that's nice. You're the first guy with one, and then you're great cause you're the only one with it. But pretty soon other. People have them and then now your value goes away. The danger increases, but anybody's benefit actually decreases. As more people have nuclear. Weapons, right? Because if everybody's got. Them It's like no strategic advantage anymore, and we're kind of slowly moving in that direction. So It's kind of an interesting case where there maybe an initial supposed benefit. Was there maybe for. One initial party or something, but that goes away and then you're left with all the negatives that follow on from.

PATRICK: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, and. I don't know. I mean I. I don't know what's gonna happen. Of course we don't know what the future is going to hold for any of us. For sure. But we try to. I mean, It's. Trying to think about. What exactly people should do? You know, I, I guess that part of me, even though I know that maybe there's things that can't be changed in the direction that we've taken as a whole can't be can't be changed too much, but I like to think that there is some measure of decisions that we we can make still make decisions. We can still do things to. Kind of. I mean to just kind of enhance our own lives and I and what I mean.

DAVID: Sure, yeah, yeah, right? I mean, this it's a classic kind of situation any any? Social problem or dilemma ? You always want. To try to. Improve things, but you have limited power because. You're just an individual person, right? So I guess the obvious thing is you start with. Your own personal sphere of. Action and you. Detectify your life. As much as you can, right? So I mean, I do what? What little I can. For example, I. Don't have a cell phone at all? So I have. No problems with cell phone addiction at all. I don't even have one I don't buy apps I don't update. My phone I. Got nothing. I never use a cell phone. I do have to use e-mail as part of my business because otherwise I couldn't function in my job, but. I actually don't need a. Phone just little things. Like that where you try to minimize your own. Personal effect and also in your family right? So I have two grown daughters daughters so we raised them. In, let's say as a low tech of environment as plausibly possible in modern society. I mean sometimes it's just these little these little acts of, just putting up resistance, just not jumping in for the latest thing and saying I can do without that. And I don't need this and my. Kid doesn't actually. Need to do that right and? My kid doesn't need a computer in their room and. They don't need their own cell phone when they're 12, and . Even though even those things I think can. Make a personal difference in people's lives and then and then we start to think about. The effect on us. As individuals, yeah, so that's. At least the start, yeah.

PATRICK: You're talking about, you're raising children. And yeah, I try to imagine. I don't. I don't have children, but. You know, if I did have children sometime here in the future, I would. I would want to limit their ability to access, or not limit their ability but maybe not necessarily. Give them a cell phone or not, not give them. Any of these? Sort of because I was reading an article recently and they've done research. You know over the past few years. Because, smartphones and. iPads and these these tablets they are. I don't know if they're necessarily. Imagine that they are designed in some way to be somewhat addictive, but I mean I've seen so many toddlers on iPads and their parents iPhones and they're just like it's like a drug. It's so weird because I mean, I see it in adults too, and I see it in myself. But it's like don't the parents see that this a that this a? This a very crucial point of their development, and that giving them access to this. To this piece of technology is probably detrimental to their well-being on the in the. Long term. It doesn't seem like it seems like the changes are happening so rapidly that this new technology likes likes, touch screen, smartphones and tablets and computers like that has come into our lives. Most fairly recent. So we

haven't really had a chance to grapple with the implications of having these technologies in our day-to-day experiences. And that's, again, that's another danger, but it's not something that I hear a lot of. People talk about.

DAVID: Yeah, exactly because a lot of the harms and the negative consequences are longer term effects and the benefits. Seem to be. Immediate right? So as soon as you pick up a phone you can call somebody the smartphone. You can look up things on the Internet you. Can have map functions. And all kinds of nice stuff, right? So the benefits are immediate the. The, the. The downside are. Long term and subtle and so people who are ? And the mass focus on short term. Thinking they tend to just see the. Value of the. Images and they don't. Even consider or don't even understand the negative consequences. And you're right. I mean, I agree it's appalling when I see little kids or infants even and the parents sticking a tablet or something in their face and letting them play around with whatever these little infant games. I mean, it's.

DAVID: That's really appalling and. You gotta wonder what these parents are thinking. You know, yeah, they just they think they're doing their kid any good. They're just trying. To shut them up and they'll do. Anything for them? I mean, yeah, it's like. Yeah, I don't know, It's. A it's a bad situation.

PATRICK: Yeah, It's. It's hard for me because I mean. You know, I know people who do this right. I know people who give their kids their cell phones to play on. And there's a lot of other things too that I might observe that I maybe think, OK, that's not necessarily going to be good in the long run. And it's like I don't know how to. Bring that up. To them it's like it's. A difficult. It's a difficult scenario because. People do not want to be told how to raise their children, and so or anything. I mean, it could be it's not necessarily just that example of children on smartphones, it could be a whole other. You know, there's a whole bunch of situations and scenarios, and involving technology. You're like I don't know if that's the best course of action. Maybe you shouldn't get that. Or maybe this having a detrimental effect on your psychology in some way. Yeah, it's a challenging thing and it sounds like for me, because I admit, like I'm doing this podcast so I have to have access to the Internet. Right?

PATRICK: I'm emailing people I'm using social media, I'm. You know It's a. It's a kind of a paradox and I don't know if it makes me a hypocrite. I don't know if that's the right word I would use, but it's. Like I'm using technology to record this conversation. Right now I'm using social media that I and streaming services and such to put this podcast out there so people can kind of get this idea in their head. Maybe they can come across and maybe read your work or read Kaczynski's work as a result. It's like using the using the tools, yeah?

DAVID: Yeah, well exactly. I mean, any technology critic is going to face this little dilemma of kind of paradox of being supposedly being a right, so . And I face it too, all the time, right? As a critic of technology but. You know, in a sense it's not. Really relevant in this case because, well, for. A couple of reasons like I. Said we're always using technology anyway. We can't even live as human beings without some level of technology, so it's not like. It's not like a technology critic has to forego. All

technologies that's. Not even possible. Most technology critics dude. That I know do try to kind. Of minimize the. Presence in their lives so they. They do kind of live with the minimum. And then ultimately, you're faced with this question of engaging. With society or not so. The problems we're stuck with the tech high. Society that we all live. In and you can engage with that society. Or you can. Sort of turn your. Back and just leave it right. So if you want to sort of, just head off into the woods and live in a little cabin off the grid and. And be nice. Nice for you, but that in the sense that's kind. Of turning your. Back on. The world. And so. In order to engage with the world, you have to engage in the tools that the world is using, which is technological tools so. So that's the real. Dilemma right and I guess obviously. I would choose to engage as you are. Choose engage with people to talk about these things and try to promote these actions and try to move things in a better direction and. And we have no choice, so we'll use the. Technology, but that. Doesn't stop us from. Still being critical of these very processes either.

PATRICK: Yeah, and you mentioned like moving off the grid and living in a small cabin somewhere. Which of? Course is. I don't know if that was I. Don't know if. That idea popped into the popular imagination because of cozbi. But that is something he did. He basically said I'm done with society. I'm moving away. I'm going to live alone in this cabin and just sort of subsist. To the best of my abilities out in the wild and what's interesting is that. Is that I think. Human beings, I mean, we're social animals, and we thrive when we're with people that we are in relationships with that we love that are in. You know, I mean, human beings. Again, we evolved in these really kind of tight knit small band hunter gatherer tribes and everybody sort of shared everything. And that's a big part of the experience of being human being. And of course one of the one of the detrimental effects of our culture and our tech. Our reliance on technology. That it tends to have a. Alienating effect on human beings. So when people are like I'm done with technology, screw this. I'm moving to the woods like well. Are you going to be by yourself like that's not really going to provide a solution either, because the whole point is to create. Basically, to be with other people that maybe don't rely on technology, either because when you're just living with other human beings and you're in a respectful and engaging relationship. With them and you're surviving and subsisting together, that is, when the human life seems to be very fulfilling. It's not when you're by yourself, trying to survive on your own right.

DAVID: Exactly, and historically that was like. A death sentence, right? If you got exiled, you got sent off into the wilderness alone. That was like you were going to die.

PATRICK: Right?

DAVID: So it's like. People don't even. Live that way so? Sure, the best case is. Is something approaching our our normal evolutionary case which was living in Hunter gatherer van. The yeah between 30 and 50 people. This was the typical size of our community that we've. Lived in for almost. Of the two million years. That we've been around on this planet. So an ideal case would. Yeah, take a small group of something

of that size, a few dozen people, and then establish a little. Community in some. You know, Neo primitivist Setting and that might be a. Sustainable and a satisfactory sort of sort. Of life, at least at some level.

PATRICK: Right? Yeah, I think that's what I think some people are working on in some fashion. I know that there's a. Lot of different. People who have,, authors, thinkers, philosophers and. And such that are coming up with these ideas and figuring out like how can we. How can we move away from this system that we currently are a part of? And I think that is going to be increasingly more and more necessary as things begin to get more difficult for people in. In our society and. In our civilization, yeah, yeah, I always think it's like I remember when I was coming of, coming into my own politically and starting to understand how things were actually working in the world and doing my own research. And It's great to talk about the problems. You know that's important. You need to understand what's wrong. But then at a certain point, I was dissatisfied because I'm like. OK, I understand what's wrong, but what's the solution? And so I would look at these different solutions and some of them were not didn't work, ? And then there's others that have come about like, Oh well, here's something that actually works with human nature. We actually understand human beings enough, which is funny. To say that we as human beings have tried so hard to understand ourself. But I think that we've kind of gotten lost along the way, and I think maybe we're coming back into our own again, maybe, maybe not.

DAVID: Right?

PATRICK: I mean may very well end in catastrophe. Complete catastrophe. But I.

DAVID: Yeah, well and yeah that I mean.

PATRICK: Hope hope.

DAVID: That's true because almost every aspect of modern life is radically different than we evolved. To live under and. And we sort of understand that a sort of like a genetic level or maybe a subconscious level. And we know that it's not really normal to be indoors. You know most of your life and be surrounded by thousands of other people who you barely know and to be moving at high speeds across the earth. I mean, at some level we kind of know that's not normal, and it imposes. These kind of stresses and. You know dislocations and like you say, alienations on the psyche, right? Is it's? That's why it's important to kind of understand where where we came from in some. Sense where? We belong. And that maybe point that points the. Way forward I think for us.

PATRICK: Yeah, so I wanted to get to 1 last point actually, before I let you go and I really thank you again for taking the time to do this. I was looking forward to this conversation for. I don't know, maybe a couple of weeks now since I contacted you so I really appreciate it. But the thing I wanted to say is like I know that you had that book that you published meant the metaphysics of technology and I was looking it up online so I wanted to order it. But I think that like every copy I've seen is like over \$100. Matters and I don't know why that's the case and I was just curious if you had

a reason for that. And also I mean I would like to read it, but honestly I don't know if I can fork over that. Much money? For your book, so I don't.

DAVID: Yeah no, no.

PATRICK: Know if there's a way that we can access. Maybe the full book or segments of the book or anything like that so that people can kind of. You know, understand your ideas.

DAVID: Yeah, well, that's sort of the business of academic publishing. They like to put out hardcover library quality copies and they charge 140 a 150 bucks for a while. But actually I've had a. There's a paperback version out of the book, enough for about. A year it costs about. \$50.00 or \$45.00 I think. OK.

DAVID: So, and that's from it's from Rutledge. Rutledge is the publisher, so there is a lower cost paperback copy and I always try to also tell people if they have any access to a library system. Particular university library. Almost any university library can get you a copy, so that's another option, yeah?

PATRICK: OK. Yeah I would just yeah, I don't know what you're. You know if you have any future projects, any future books that you're planning on publishing or anything? But I just think that sometimes those it's. It's weird how the universities seem to do that and it's like everybody should have access to this information. Yet it seems very difficult for the average person who works. Like a, a job like they're not, they're not making enough money necessarily to be throwing that kind of money down for a book on anti technology. So It's difficult and I just wanted to bring that up to you because I would personally again for my own personal reasons. I would love to get that book, but at this time even \$50.00 is kind of a bit a. Bit steep so.

DAVID: Yeah, you're right, you're right.

PATRICK: I don't know.

DAVID: Yeah, I, I know I really kind.

PATRICK: I don't know if you yeah.

DAVID: Of hate the. Economics of book publishing days.

PATRICK: Yeah, I didn't if you had.

DAVID: I don't know. Somehow, maybe maybe we'll be able. To come up with a low. Cost publisher option or something, but for now?

PATRICK: Yeah, yeah I would love to.

DAVID: We're kind of stuck.

PATRICK: I would love to pick that book up and. And kind of get more into those ideas that you've brought up in this in this conversation. So thank you, David, I really appreciate your time.

DAVID: Yeah Patrick, thanks anytime.

UNKNOWN: Thank you for listening to lost born in the wilderness. Have a wonderful week. And as a psychedelic Bard, Terence McKenna said. Take it easy dude, but take it.

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October 13, 2017

Last Born In The Wilderness

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