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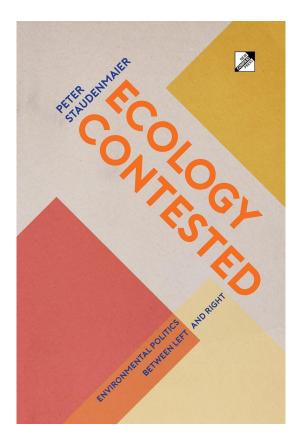
Environmental Politics Between Left and Right

Peter Staudenmaier

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ECOLOGY CONTESTED
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Preface

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Introduction: Ecofascism; Past and Present

Twenty-five years ago, in the summer of 1995, a small book appeared under the title Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience. It consisted of two essays, one by Janet Biehl on the post-1960s far right and one that I wrote on the so-called "green wing" of the Nazi party. Janet and I had worked together in the Left Green Network and at the Institute for Social Ecology, and both of us had contacts in the radical green milieu in Germany. As we explained in the brief introduction to the volume, we wanted to alert readers to a longstanding but little known tendency in environmental advocacy, the "hijacking of ecology for racist, nationalistic, and fascist ends." Our goal in examining those trends was to help "preserve the all-important progressive and emancipatory implications of ecological politics."[1]

Over the years since the booklet was first published, the termwe chose for ourtitlehas taken ona multitude of mutually incompatible meanings, and not a few commentators have preferred to avoid the concept of "ecofascism" altogether. Though an understandable response to widespread confusion about the term, this stance leaves the word open to appropriation by anti-environmental know-nothings as well as far right zealots looking to reclaim their supposedly proud ecological legacy. As long as climate change denial remains the predominant position on much of the established right, particularly in the United States, conservative opponents of environmentalism will exploit historical associations between fascism and ecology in the hopes of discrediting ecological politics as a whole.[2]

In the face of such efforts, then as now, a critical and historically informed engagement with ecofascism as an enduring phenomenon is the only effective alternative. We did not coin the term; it had been circulating on the international left for two decades

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[1] Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience* (Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press, 1995); expanded second edition: Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited: Lessons from the German Experience* (Porsgrunn: New Compass, 2011). Janet Biehl initiated and coordinated the original project and deserves primary credit for it. I remain grateful to her for our cooperation over the years.

[2] Examples of the tired environmentalists-are-Nazis genre include Elizabeth Nickson, *Eco-Fascists: How Radical Conservationists Are Destroying Our Natural Heritage* (New York: Broadside, 2012); James Delingpole, *The Little Green Book of Eco-Fascism: The Left's Plan to Frighten Your Kids, Drive Up Energy Costs, and Hike Your Taxes!* (Washington: Regnery, 2014); Rupert Darwall, *Green Tyranny: Exposing the Totalitarian Roots of the Climate Industrial Complex* (New York: Encounter, 2017). Radical rightists, in contrast, have adopted the term "ecofascism" with pride. A recent thread on Stormfront, the

by the time we borrowed it for the title of our little book.[3] The concept of ecofascism emerged in that distinctive context, among committed left ecologists concerned about the persistence of far right strands of environmentalism.

Despite this background, skepticism toward the notion of ecofascism remains prevalent in some liberal and left quarters. In my view, the concept is best understood as a particular instance of the broader current of right-wing ecology. Since the array of far right, authoritarian, and nationalist politics extends well beyond explicitly fascist forms, a term like "ecofascism" is not the most useful way to refer to all varieties of environmental sentiment on the right. It applies to a specific sub-set of the right, to groups or individuals with both a commitment to ecological issues and active connections to fascist politics. Other forms of reactionary ecological thought can certainly present a serious danger, especially when they involve increasingly aggressive anti-immigrant agitation, but there is little point in labeling them indiscriminately as fascist. The historical specificity of these interlinked traditions makes a difference in how we comprehend them today.[4] For that reason, it can sometimes be more illuminating to refer to "fascist ecology"—the title I gave to my 1995 essay—as the designation for characteristically fascist manifestations of environmental politics.

Whatever its limitations, the term "ecofascism" has become more and more relevant over the past quarter century. Following the horrific attacks in Christchurch and El Paso in 2019, it found renewed public interest and has been critically discussed beyond the English-speaking world.[5] If we want to understand its present relevance, we will need to investigate its history. There have been significant links between environmentalism and right-wing politics for more than a century, in Europe as well as North

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chief neo-Nazi online forum in the United States, was titled "Join the Eco-Fascism movement, save our race and planet." Its opening line urged: "Join us Eco-Fascists to bring back nature's balanced order of things." (www.stormfront. org, November 25, 2019) The site hosted previous discussions of "ecofascism" in 2005, 2009, and 2014.

[3] See among others André Gorz, *Ecology as Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1980; French original 1975), which warns against "ecofascism" repeatedly, and the lengthy section titled "Zur realen Gefahr des Öko-Faschismus" in Jan Peters, ed., *Alternativen zum Atomstaat: Das bunte Bild der Grünen* (Berlin: Rotation, 1979), 87–130. Gorz was one of the best known European theorists of political ecology to emerge from the New Left. Peters came from the vibrant mix of 1970s grassroots movements in West Germany known as the *Bürgerinitiativen* and drew on anti-authoritarian viewpoints; like others from the time, he pointed to the danger of far right appropriation of ecological themes even as he rebuked Stalinist attempts to jump on the green bandwagon. For Murray Bookchin's early use of the term "ecofascism" see e.g. Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1980), 277, 309, as well as his 1978 Introduction to "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" in *Antipode* 10 (1978), 21–22.

[4] Matthew Lyons points out: "Conceptual clarity about fascism isn't just an intellectual exercise; it's strategically important for recognizing qualitatively different opponents so we can respond to them intelligently." Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire* (Oakland: PM Press, 2018), 182.

[5] A July 2020 study documented an enormous increase in social media usage of the term "ecofascism," as well as Google searches for the term, from early 2019 onward: Alexander Reid Ross and Emmi Bevensee, "Confronting the Rise of Eco-Fascism" Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, July 7, 2020. For examples outside of anglophone contexts compare Marco Appel, "El sanguinario resurgimiento del

America and elsewhere, and the fact that ecological concerns were part of classical fascism has been recognized for some time. As Stanley Payne wrote in 1980: "Fascists and Nazis were in fact among the first major environmentalists in twentieth- century politics, though they failed to achieve most of their stipulated goals."[6] Because fascism in general has become more diffuse since 1945, it can be harder to figure out how to apply the concept in today's world.[7] The recent resurgence of the radical right around the globe nonetheless makes it indispensable to face that challenge.

From the 1960s onward there has been a conventional perception that environmental questions are affiliated with the left. Before that, however, ecological matters were much more politically ambivalent, and it was not unusual to find environmental themes on the far right end of the spectrum. From the nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth, many conservationists in various countries took deeply conservative political positions, often with nationalist and authoritarian features; racist worldviews were common. Knowingly or not, the perpetrators of the Christchurch and El Paso massacres continued that tradition. While they were unusual in putting their beliefs

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'ecofascismo'" *Proceso* May 14, 2019; Carlo de Nuzzo and Clémence Pèlegrin, "Les origines historiques de l'écofascisme en Europe" *Le Grand Continent* July 11, 2019; Elsa Koester, "Ökofaschismus: Rechte Ideologen entdecken den Klimaschutz für sich" *Freitag* August 27, 2019; Giusi Palomba, "Ecofascismo rivisitato: Storia e rischi dell'ambientalismo di estrema destra" *Napoli Monitor* March 12, 2020. Numerous further examples are cited in the following chapters. Entries on "Ecofascism" can be found in a variety of environmental studies handbooks; compare e.g. Dustin Mulvaney, ed., *Green Politics: An A-to-Z Guide* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), 116–18; Joni Adamson, ed., *Keywords for Environmental Studies* (New York University Press, 2016), 64–68. As the present volume was being readied for publication, a new article appeared assessing current ecofascist politics in detail: Daniel Rueda, "Neoecofascism: The Example of the United States" *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 14 (2020), 95–125. Rueda concludes: "Although today it represents a marginal political current, neoecofascism is likely to become increasingly important in the coming years or decades, like other forms of right-wing environmentalism." (116)

[6] Stanley Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 83. Payne also noted that "Hitler was well in advance of his times in his concern about ecology, environmental reform, and pollution." Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 204.

[7] On the continuing evolution of fascist politics in the "utterly transformed historical landscape" after 1945 see Roger Griffin, *Fascism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), 91–125. Scholars, activists, and public intellectuals have yet to settle on a consistent vocabulary for discussing the far right, both because the phenomenon itself is constantly changing and because of ongoing disagreements over proper terminology. In the essays collected in this volume, I have tried to reflect the significant differences among disparate sectors of the right while also recognizing their various points of intersection. In general I use the term "far right" for the broad range of currents examined here, often driven not just by antagonism toward the left but by an aggrieved contempt for presumedly unwarranted compromise by mainstream conservatives. Within the far right continuum, "radical right" refers to those who take a more aggressively hostile stance against the status quo, demanding greater defiance and intransigence, while "extreme right" refers to those who embrace increasingly belligerent approaches to their perceived enemies, typically culminating in violence. The term "fascism" points to a uniquely toxic apotheosis of all of these elements, forming a historically distinctive family of far right tendencies. Its outlines are traced in the heterogeneous studies by Griffin, Payne, Lyons, and others cited here, which do not offer a consensus about fascism's scale, scope, or fundamental features but nonetheless provide detailed grounds for further analysis.

into violent action, many of the same basic ideas run through the contemporary far right scene as well as substantial parts of the political mainstream. Ignoring those uncomfortable facts will not make them go away.

It would be better to take them seriously and confront the challenge they present. For ecological activists who see their work as part of an inclusive liberatory project, this will involve coming to terms with the ambiguous record of environmental politics in historical oscillation between left and right, including the vexed legacy of green trends within fascism. To make sense of the far right's ongoing appeal, we need to take account of its unanticipated facets. Studying the history of right-wing ecology can help contemporary activists learn more about the pitfalls their predecessors encountered and the dilemmas they faced. It can help disentangle current difficulties and provide context for problems that seem inexplicable. It can shed light on apparently paradoxical aspects of green thinking and practice and contribute to a more critical comprehension of current ecological and social crises and the range of responses to them. Conscientious engagement with the convoluted history of environmental politics will strengthen a diverse and radical ecological movement, one that can meet the demands of the present while minding the lessons of the past.

1. The Politics of Nature from Left to Right

Radicals, Reactionaries, and Ecological Responses to Modernity

With his long white hair and flowing robes, Baldur Springmann cut a memorable figure. One of the more colorful spokespeople for the German Greens in their formative years, he was a frequent presence in the West German media during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Viewers who saw him on television then can still recall him decades later. Promoting the Green cause in his idiosyncratic way, Springmann stood out from other leaders of the nascent party. Most of them came from the generation of 1968, the ecological offspring of the radical Sixties. Springmann was much older than his youthful compatriots, and his political roots were decidedly different. Born in 1912, he was a longtime organic farmer whose biodynamic ...

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2. A Revolution Against Technology

The Unabomber Manifesto in Historical Context

> Over the years we have given as much attention to the development of our ideas as to the development of bombs, and we now have something serious to say. And we feel that just now the time is ripe for the presentation of anti-industrial ideas.
>
> — Unabomber communiqué to *New York Times* April 20, 1995

From 1978 until 1995, over the course of seventeen years, twenty-three people were injured and three killed in bombing attacks attributed to the "Unabomber." Calling himself an anarchist and preaching a "revolution against technology," the Unabomber appeared to be a madman with a mission. His targets included scientists, technicians, academics, computer professionals, airline employees, and advertising executives.[1] According to Ted Kaczynski, the former mathematics professor eventually convicted of these crimes, the point of the lengthy campaign of destruction was a quixotic quest to overthrow "industrial society." Seven months before Kaczynski was arrested at his remote Montana cabin, a voluminous document entitled "Industrial Society and Its Future" was published in mainstream newspapers across the United States.[2] The circumstances of its publication were as peculiar as its content.

The 35,000 word jeremiad that immediately became known as the "Unabomber Manifesto" appeared as a special eight-page supplement jointly published by the *New*

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[1] The appellation "unabomber" reportedly referred to the prominence of universities and airlines among the early targets of the long-anonymous bomber. Details of the case can be found in popular treatments by Robert Graysmith, *Unabomber: A Desire to Kill* (Washington: Regnery, 1997) and Alston Chase, *Harvard and the Unabomber: The Education of an American Terrorist* (New York: Norton, 2003); both works are sensationalistic and should be consulted with care. An analysis of Kaczynski's trial is available in Michael Mello, *The United States of America versus Theodore John Kaczynski: Ethics, Power and the Invention of the Unabomber* (New York: Context, 1999).

[2] Early versions of the Manifesto used the first person plural throughout, suggesting collective authorship, and were signed with the pseudonymous initials "FC." Now serving a life sentence in prison, Kaczynski has subsequently published the text under his own name; cf. Theodore Kaczynski, *The Road to Revolution: The Complete & Authorized Unabomber* (Oakville: Mosaic, 2009), 19–100; Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery: The Collected Writings of Theodore J. Kaczynski, a.k.a. 'The Unabomber'* (Port Townsend; Feral House, 2010), 36–120. Forthe most recent statement ofhis views see Theodore Kaczynski,

York Times and the *Washington Post* on September 19, 1995. It was subsequently republished in a variety of other news outlets before taking on a life of its own on the internet. Kaczynski had been in anonymous contact with the New York Times since June 1993, and throughout 1995 negotiated with the newspaper about publication of the Manifesto. In an April 1995 letter to the *Times* Kaczynski wrote:

> Through our bombings we hope to promote social instability in industrial society, propagate anti-industrial ideas and give encouragement to those who hate the industrial system. [...] The people who are pushing all this growth and progress garbage deserve to be severely punished. But our goal is less to punish them than to propagate ideas. Anyhow we are getting tired of making bombs. It's no fun to have to spend all your evenings and weekends preparing dangerous mixtures, filing trigger mechanisms out of scraps of metal or searching the sierras for a place isolated enough to test a bomb. So we offer a bargain.[3]

If the Manifesto was published, the anonymous author assured his interlocutors, "we will permanently desist from terrorist activities." In the wake of a protracted series of bombings that had left many victims but few leads, this quid pro quo seemed to offer a break in the case. On the advice of federal investigators, the *Times* agreed to the deal.[4] The original manuscript of the Manifesto arrived at the newspaper on June 28, 1995, as a sixty-two page singlespaced document divided into 232 numbered paragraphs with thirty-six additional endnotes. Thus was "Industrial Society and Its Future" brought to the attention of the public. Kaczynski's hope evidently was that the master's tools might be used to dismantle the master's house.[5]

An anti-industrial gospel disseminated via the mass media, joined to an anti-technological praxis centered on intricately engineered explosive devices delivered through the postal service, may seem hopelessly incoherent. Despite such ironies, however, the Unabomber Manifesto merits close attention as a distinctively modern missive on redemption via destruction. It offers a narrative of technology and its discontents, of transgression and transcendence. In its pages Kaczynski paints an

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Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How (Scottsdale: Fitch & Madison, 2020).

[3] April 20,1995 letter to New York Times, quoted in Graysmith, *Unabomber,* 298. This letter and other correspondence with the *Times* used a numeric code to establish authenticity of authorship.

[4] The FBI's reasoning paid off when Kaczynski's estranged brother David read the published version of the Manifesto, recognized the writing style and content, and contacted the authorities. For his memoir see David Kaczynski, *Every Last Tie: The Story of the Unabomber and His Family* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

[5] Compare Audre Lorde's critical reflection on the contradictions inherent in this approach to social transformation: Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" in *Sister Outsider* (Trumansburg: Crossing Press, 1984), 110–13. A revealing historical survey of both bombs and print media as means to political ends can be found in Catherine Lavenir, "Bombs, Printers, and Pistols: A Mediological History of Terrorism" *History and Technology* vol. 19 no. 1 (2003), 54–62.

apocalyptic portrait of industrial society as a barren arena of total technical control with no room for human freedom or wild nature. Escaping this nightmare, we are told, and redeeming humanity and the natural world, will require the complete repudiation of technology as such.

Making sense of this notorious text and its improbable context presents a number of interpretive challenges and engages a wide range of debates in history, philosophy, and social criticism. I will address some of the more pertinent ones here, particularly those that have been neglected in previous discussions of the Manifesto and its antecedents. My argument will concentrate on three levels of analysis: the message of the Manifesto itself; its resonance with contemporary discourses on nature, freedom, and violence; and the specific ideological lineage within which "Industrial Society and Its Future" can best be understood. For although the Manifesto is in many respects a quintessentially American text, it echoes in sometimes uncanny ways a series of European reflections on the perils of technological progress.[6]

Against those interpreters of the Unabomber phenomenon who view its rejection of technology (whether approvingly or disapprovingly) as an extension of left critiques of untrammeled corporate industrialism, I present an alternative context within which to examine Kaczynski's pronouncements: the tradition of right-wing skepticism toward technology developed by German thinkers in the first half of the twentieth century. Since this tradition is not well known, I will devote considerable space to exposition of these ideas and trace their parallels within the Manifesto itself. Conceptual continuities of this sort reveal hitherto unnoticed aspects of the Manifesto's argument and its public reception.

Along with their roots in the right, I will examine the specific connections between Kaczynski's beliefs and those of various anarchists and radical political ecologists who have staked out a variety of positions on similar issues, some of which converge with the program outlined in the Manifesto while others contest its basic assumptions. My task here goes beyond reconstruction of past and present intellectual trends toward a critical engagement with these ongoing debates. I will argue that scholars, social thinkers, and activists alike would do well to take the Unabomber Manifesto seriously as a powerful form of protest grounded in genuine concerns, while subjecting its core

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[6] Alston Chase characterizes the Manifesto as "a compendium of philosophical and environmental clichés that expresses concerns shared by millions of Americans." Chase, *Harvard and the Unabomber*, 24. Many of Kaczynski's arguments about nature and technology stand within a specifically American tradition of thought; for contrasting accounts of this intellectual background see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); David Nye, "Technology, Nature, and American Origin Stories" *Environmental History* vol. 8 no. 1 (2003), 8–24. Additional context is available in Arthur Melzer, ed., *Technology in the Western Political Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Mikel Hard, ed., *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology: Discourses on Modernity, 1900–1939* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); Daniel Headrick, *Power over Peoples: Technology, Environments, and Western Imperialism, 1400 to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

claims to careful analysis. This is more than a historical exercise; the project Kaczynski publicized still inspires eager emulation today.

Though the focus here will be on philosophical precursors to the Manifesto, its possible literary influences are noteworthy as well. Perhaps the most obvious of these is Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*, with its themes of anarchism, terrorist bombing, anti-science sentiment, and a professor gone over to violent extremism.[7] Dostoevsky is a further possibility, along with Karel Capek, Aldous Huxley, and Yevgeni Zamyatin.[8] This list could be extended to Goethe's Faust and Shelley's Frankenstein, to Thoreau and the Romantics and beyond, yet we have little direct information about what Kaczynski may have read, hence such hypotheses remain speculative.[9]

The usual genealogy of these ideas traces back to Rousseau, but there is a remarkable precursor in Shakespeare. Gonzalo's soliloquy in Act II of *The Tempest* reads:

> In the commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
> No occupation; all men idle, all;
> And women too, but innocent and pure;
> No sovereignty; — [...]
> All things in common nature should produce

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[7] Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (London: Methuen, 1907). The eerily prescient work of fiction may even have been the source for the name "FC"; the anarchist group in the novel carries the moniker "FP" for "Future of the Proletariat." Kaczynski was reportedly a keen reader of Conrad, and a copy of *The Secret Agent* was found in his cabin in Montana after his arrest. On Kaczynski and Conrad see Don Foster, *Author Unknown* (New York: Holt, 2000), 15, 141. The third chapter of Foster's book offers a worthwhile analysis of Kaczynski's writing style and intellectual background. Another study of Kaczynski's rhetoric is available in the chapter on the Unabomber in Ian Hill, *Advocating Weapons, War, and Terrorism: Technological and Rhetorical Paradox* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).

[8] Karel Capek, *R.U.R.* (New York 1923); Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London 1932); Yevgeni Zamyatin, *We* (New York 1952). Ernst Toller's 1922 play about the Luddites, *The Machine Wreckers*, is another possibility.

[9] Graysmith reports that "the FBI individually catalogued everything recovered from [Kaczynski's] cabin except the books"; his library included 233 volumes at the time of his arrest (Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 229). Partial lists of titles appear in Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 28, and Chase, *Harvard and the Unabomber*, 39. Access to this material has been complicated by federal court decisions ordering that items impounded from Kaczynski's cabin (including extensive unpublished writings) must be sold, with the proceeds going to compensate the Unabomber's victims; see "Unabomber's Papers Ordered to Be Sold" *New York Times* January 10, 2009, A14. On the post-1995 documents archived at the University of Michigan Library's Labadie Collection see Julie Herrada, "Letters to the Unabomber: A Case Study and Some Reflections" *Archival Issues* vol. 28, No. 1 (2004), 35–46.

Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance, To feed my innocent people. [...]
I would with such perfection govern, sir,
To excel the golden age.[10]

This Arcadian vision, with its echoes of Montaigne, continues to animate a wide array of anti-industrial visionaries.[11] These anarchists, primitivists, and critics of technological myopia are Kaczynski's closest contemporaries, and the broader body of work they represent lends a measure of coherence to the Manifesto's occasionally inscrutable claims. Because such dissident perspectives deserve a more thorough hearing than they typically receive, the public attention given to the Unabomber's beliefs offers an important opportunity to reassess radical critiques of technology. But this ideological terrain can be treacherous to navigate; those who traverse it frequently veer right and left in erratic ways, politically disoriented and heedless of the historical reverberations of the arguments they advance.[12] In this light, our task is to decipher the implications of Kaczynski's doctrines and examine their intellectual roots.

Since its publication, many commentators have dismissed the Unabomber Manifesto as mere nihilism[13] while others have seen it as an extension of radical left criticisms of contemporary society.[14] Both readings are wide of the mark. Whatever one makes of his bloody methods and his callous attitude toward his victims, the Unabomber's message is emphatically not an expression of nihilism, but a forceful statement of articulated ideals. The content of the Manifesto might well be considered a distorted form of utopianism, the opposite of nihilism.[15] More consequential is the erroneous correlation with the left. Although both defenders and critics of the Manifesto assigned it to the left end of the spectrum of critiques of overweening technology, the principal thrust of "Industrial Society and Its Future" belongs firmly to the right. Kaczynski rehearses a common version of right-wing discourse on the abuses of technological civilization, coupled with an atomistic conception of human liberty and a naïve understanding of nature.

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[10] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 13.

[11] Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 48–51 discusses the soliloquy and notes its resonance with "primitivist-anarchist programs" (51).

[12] Boris Frankel provides an astute guide to this territory in *The PostIndustrial Utopians* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

[13] Cf. Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 8 and Chase, *Harvard and the Unabomber*, 94 and 348.

[14] This reading was shared by the mainstream *Newsweek* and the left-leaning *Nation*; cf. Joe Klein, "The Unabomber and the Left" *Newsweek* April 22, 1996, and Kirkpatrick Sale, "The Unabomber's Secret Treatise: Is There Method in his Madness?" *The Nation* September 25, 1995. For a conventional assessment of the Manifesto as an inspiration for "environmental extremists" see Brett Barnett, "20 Years Later: A Look Back at the Unabomber Manifesto" *Perspectives on Terrorism* vol. 9 no. 6 (2015), 60–71.

[15] On the psychoanalytic dimensions of this phenomenon see Joel Whitebook, *Perversion and*

This political perspective takes a variety of forms, some of them not immediately recognizable. Kaczynski's analysis aligns the Manifesto with the individualist strands within anarchism and the biocentric strands within ecological politics. It displays consistent parallels to the legacy of antiindustrial and proto-ecological thinking on the German right, an often overlooked but influential body of thought.[16] Even more perceptive and historically informed interpreters of the Manifesto, while offering insightful readings on several points, miss its most significant tropes and most revealing contexts, and thereby misunderstand the trajectory of the Manifesto as a whole.[17] Kaczynski is above all a critic of decadence and a prophet of regeneration through violence. The tradition he invokes is that of right-wing *Kulturkritik* and *Zivilisationskritik*, the reactionary critique of civilization as such.[18] To draw out these conceptual parallels, a detailed examination of the Manifesto is in order.[(1)]

"Industrial Society and Its Future" states its argument in stark terms as a primordial "conflict of technology vs. nature" (188, 191) and repeatedly declares "destruction"

Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

[16] For overviews of this tradition compare Hermann Bausinger, "Zwischen Grün und Braun" in Hubert Cancik, ed., *Religions- und Geistesgeschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1982), 215–29; Albrecht Lorenz and Ludwig Trepl, "Grüne Schale – brauner Kern: Faschistische Strukturen unter dem Deckmantel der Ökologie" *Politische Ökologie* 11 (1993), 17–24; Axel Goodbody, ed., *The Culture of German Environmentalism: Anxieties, Visions, Realities* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2002); Friedemann Schmoll, "Vertraute und fremde Natur: Zum Konnex ökologischer und völkischer Deutungsmuster" in Hartmut Heller, ed., *Fremdheit im Prozess der Globalisierung* (Berlin: Lit, 2007), 59–73. Despite distorted interpretations, useful historical information can also be found in Rolf Peter Sieferle, *Fortschrittsfeinde: Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1984) and Thomas Rohkrämer, *Eine andere Moderne? Zivilisationskritik, Natur und Technik in Deutschland 1880–1933* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999); both are the extended efforts to rehabilitate this tradition.

[17] Compare Scott Corey, "On the Unabomber" *Telos* no. 118 (Winter 2000), 157–81, and Tim Luke, "Re-Reading the Unabomber Manifesto" *Telos* no. 107 (Spring 1996), 81–94; the latter appears in revised form in Luke, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ecology* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999). Both Luke and Corey offer unduly sympathetic readings of the Manifesto, and neither successfully distinguishes right-wing variants of technophobic discourse from left-wing variants. This is perhaps not surprising in light of the political trajectory of *Telos* since the 1980s; on the curious convergence of right and left themes within this journal see Boris Frankel, "Confronting Neo-Liberal Regimes: The PostMarxist Embrace of Populism and Realpolitik" *New Left Review* no. 226, December 1997; Tamir Bar-On, *Where have all the fascists gone?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 149–64; Joseph Lowndes, "From New Class Critique to White Nationalism: *Telos*, the Alt Right, and the Origins of Trumpism" *Konturen* vol. 9 (2017), 8–12.

[18] A distinctive feature of German right-wing thought for generations, the related traditions of *Kulturkritik* and *Zivilisationskritik* are difficult to convey in English; they sometimes referred to fears that

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[(1)] I will quote from the first book edition: *The Unabomber Manifesto: Industrial Society and Its Future* (Berkeley: Jolly Roger Press, 1995), which apart from minor typographic discrepancies is identical to the original September 19, 1995 version. Due to the large number of subsequently published online and print editions, I will cite paragraph numbers rather than page numbers, as well as the separately numbered "Notes" that Kaczynski appended to the main text. All ellipses are mine; all emphases in original; I have changed the mode of emphasis from ALL CAPITALS to *italics*.

as its goal (135, 166, 200, 222). The Manifesto begins by claiming, understandably enough, that "industrial society" has "inflicted severe damage on the natural world."[19] Kaczynski warns that "continued development of technology" will "inflict greater damage on the natural world" (1). The basic parameters are established at the outset: the mere existence of technology, of whatever sort, is a threat to nature, and consequently technology itself must be destroyed.[20] "We therefore advocate a revolution against the industrial system." (4) Throughout the Manifesto, "the industrial system" and "technology" are the culprits, without modifiers, qualification, or specification; it is "technology" per se that stands accused.[21] For Kaczynski, "the isolation of man from nature" is a straightforward result of "technological progress." (48) Hence of "the industrial system" he says quite simply: "we must destroy it." (135) Anything less than destruction is futile, for if "the development of technology" continues, it will "advance toward its logical conclusion, which is complete control over everything on Earth" (163).[22] The task that Kaczynski sets himself is nothing less than "to overthrow the whole technological system" (141).

But "wild nature" (5) is not the only victim of unrestrained technological advance. Kaczynski is equally concerned with the dire effects on human freedom. The heart of "the system" is "control over people and nature" (164). This conjunction of freedom and nature is one of the more promising strands within the Manifesto, indicating potential

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the rise of "the machine" would destroy all organic bonds and leave a hollow shell in place of "natural" communal heritage. Fritz Ringer has described this ideology as a nebulous protest against "sterile, mechanical, and modern civilization." Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 259. Another early critical analysis offers ample material about right-wing attacks on "industrial civilization": Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), xi, xvi, xxvi, 60, 118, 122, 146. For further context compare Hans-Joachim Lieber, *Kulturkritik und Lebensphilosophie: Studien zur deutschen Philosophie der Jahrhundertwende* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974); Pier Paolo Portinaro, "Kulturpessimismus und die Grenzen der Entzauberung: Diagnosen zu Technik, Kultur und Politik nach der Jahrhundertwende" in Rüdiger vom Bruch, ed., *Kultur und Kulturwissenschaften um 1900: Krise der Moderne und Glaube an die Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989), 175–96; Michael Spöttel, *Die ungeliebte 'Zivilisation': Zivilisationskritik und Ethnologie in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1995); Georg Bollenbeck, *Eine Geschichte der Kulturkritik* (Munich: Beck, 2007). A lively history of left-wing *Kulturkritik* can also be found alongside the right-wing strand.

[19] For a more historically specific account of the vague concept of industrial society see "The Rise of Industrial Society" in Ernst Braun, *Wayward Technology* (Westport: Greenwood, 1984), 1–38.

[20] Kaczynski portrays technology as a kind of addiction: "Never forget that the human race with technology is just like an alcoholic with a barrel of wine." (203)

[21] Sometimes the two chief evils are combined in the figure of "industrial-technological society" (77, 114). On occasion Kaczynski points to "science and technology" as his targets (87) and cautions that "science marches on blindly" (92). At times the indictment extends to "civilized societies" as a whole (58). In many other instances his critique is even more abstract, holding a vague notion of "the system" responsible for the dire state of the world; indeed mantra-like invocations of this undefined term recur throughout the Manifesto (references to "the system" at 119, 129, 139, 162, 163, 164, 175, among others).

[22] See also 157: "Assuming that industrial society survives, it is likely that technology will eventually acquire something approaching complete control over human behavior."

affiliations with radical proposals in ecological ethics and nature philosophy as well as contemporary anarchist thought. But the specific analysis of human freedom that Kaczynski advances is crucial to the argument of the Manifesto as a whole, and clearly distinguishes its approach from the emancipatory alternatives put forward by other anarchists and ecological thinkers. In continued reliance on the amorphous category of "technology," Kaczynski writes that his goal is "to protect freedom from technology" (111, repeated verbatim 136). Negative effects on human freedom are simply "the fault of technology" (119). This conspicuously decontextualized diagnosis is accompanied by a conservative conception of freedom as unimpeded liberty.

The Manifesto complains that "modern man is strapped down by a network of rules and regulations (explicit or implicit) that frustrate many of his impulses," ascribing this presumably dismal state of affairs to "industrial society." (71) It is an ahistorical and psychologically naïve argument; nowhere is the possibility acknowledged that the regulation of some impulses may be a fundamental aspect of every society, indeed of sociality as such.[23] Kaczynski instead remains committed to a definition of "freedom" as pursuit of individual goals "without interference, manipulation or supervision from anyone" (94). He even looks askance at "traffic regulations" as an impingement on freedom (127).[24] At the same time, the Manifesto sharply distinguishes between "freedom" and "permissiveness" (72, 94), condemning the latter, and dismisses religious freedom and sexual freedom as "unimportant." (72)

In contrast to the illegitimate constraints of technological society and the illicit permissiveness of modernity, Kaczynski promotes the ostensible virtues of self-sufficiency via an idealized image of the nineteenth century American frontier and the lifeways of "primitive" peoples.[25] Preaching the virtues of rugged individualism and self-reliance against the chronic dependency of the modern era (67–68), he appeals to the robust character of "the 19th-century frontiersman" in opposition to "modern man" (57). He similarly invokes "primitive man" (71) as counterpole to the debilitating effects of mod-

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[23] This is the basic import of Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*, which many latter-day primitivists oddly invoke as part of their anti-civilization stance. Kaczynski does not engage the question of which sorts of regulation are necessary to social life and which merely reinforce unjust power relations; he does not entertain the possibility of an important distinction between legitimate sublimation and "surplus repression." See Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon, 1955).

[24] At one point Kaczynski does appear to recognize the underlying principle of social life: "Since the beginning of civilization, organized societies have had to put pressures on human beings for the sake of the functioning of the social organism." (143) But he seems to resent this fundamental fact about human existence and wish that it might miraculously be suspended. Sociality figures not as a positive good but as a burden, a hindrance to individual liberty. The Manifesto implicitly denies the possibility that "organized society" might be a condition of freedom, and the autonomous regulation of impulses one of the bases of collective self-control and self-management, an expression of social freedom rather than a frustration of it.

[25] Kaczynski does not reflect on the strange contradiction involved in this juxtaposition of role models; the success of the frontiersmen he admires came at the price of the annihilation of the indigenous inhabitants, themselves shining examples, in his portrait, of the Romanticized image of primitive peoples.

ern life. The Manifesto declares that "primitive peoples" are often "quite content to sit for hours at a time doing nothing at all, because they are at peace with themselves and their world. But most modern people must be constantly occupied or entertained, otherwise they get 'bored,' i.e. they get fidgety, uneasy, irritable." (147) This is a classic combination of laudable ideals – people at peace with themselves and their world – and suspect conjectures about the lifeways of both "primitive peoples" and "modern people," linked via the standard trope of posing the former as foil for the latter.[26] Each of these arguments depends on problematic assumptions about historical and anthropological difference, and their combined effect is to obscure the normative bases for Kaczynski's critique of contemporary society.

Those premises, once unearthed, are eminently questionable. Kaczynski fears the "decadent" and admires "fighting aristocracies" (34). He warns against "sinking into decadent hedonism" (38). His analysis is suffused with a longing for the rigor and discipline of a society based on hard work and genuine needs (41), the antithesis of distraction and dissolution; a world of hardened individuals pursuing authentic goals.[27] His chief complaint about life in modern society is that it is not demanding enough (e.g. 59–64 and Notes 10 and 12). He yearns for "a stable framework" and "a sense of security" (49), as well as a return to "traditional values." (50)

The Manifesto's litany of the ill effects of modern life is remarkably profuse; it includes not only "anxiety," "boredom," and "eating disorders" but also "child abuse, insatiable hedonism, abnormal sexual behavior" and "sexual perversion" (44) as alarming symptoms of the cultural-psychological decline induced by industrial society. Its debauched character results in "communities that are emasculated, tamed and made into tools of the system." (52) Such a society is a departure from "the natural pattern of human behavior" and contradicts "natural human impulses." (115)[28]

In light of these invidious assumptions, it is scarcely surprising to find Kaczynski fulminating against the left. Denunciations of "leftism" constitute the bulk of the Manifesto; there is some reference to it in nearly a third of the paragraphs, scattered throughout the document, and it is the central theme of both the first and the last titled sections ("The Psychology of Modern Leftism" and "The Danger of Leftism" re-

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[26] See also 197–198 on primitive vs. modern forms of power over nature. For a more complex view of primitive societies compare Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (New York: Dover, 1927); Dorothy Lee, *Freedom and Culture* (New York: Spectrum, 1959); Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1974); Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State* (New York: Zone, 1987).

[27] This element in Kaczynski's argument displays striking parallels with the work of Italian fascist theorist Julius Evola (1898-1974); see among others Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1995); Evola, *Men Among the Ruins* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2002); Evola, *Pagan Imperialism* (Gornahoor Press, 2017).

[28] See also Note 6 on "excessive sex" and associated "perversions." Kaczynski appears to consider "transsexuality" a problem as well (45). For a critique of this approach to "natural human impulses" as a template for social norms see Roger Lancaster, *The Trouble with Nature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

spectively), the latter the second-longest section of the text overall. Kaczynski characterizes "leftism" as a specific kind of psychopathology, offering extended descriptions of what the category refers to: "the spectrum of related creeds that includes the feminist, gay rights, political correctness, etc., movements" (218). He continues:

> "When we speak of leftists in this article we have in mind mainly socialists, collectivists, 'politically correct' types, feminists, gay and disability activists, animal rights activists and the like." (7) Leftists support "gun control," "sex education," "affirmative action" and "multiculturalism" (229); their ranks include "minority rights activists" (11); they use "the common catch-phrases of the left like 'racism,' 'sexism,' 'homophobia,' 'capitalism,' 'imperialism,' 'neocolonialism,' 'genocide,' 'social change,' 'social justice,' 'social responsibility'." (229) Kaczynski reserves a special animosity for feminism. Paragraph 14 reads in its entirety: "Feminists are desperately anxious to prove that women are as strong and as capable as men. Clearly they are nagged by a fear that women may *not* be as strong and as capable as men."

Kaczynski categorically rejects any compromise with the left as he defines it, and insists on rigorously excluding left elements from the revolution against industrialism. He is unequivocal on this point: "a movement that exalts nature and opposes technology must take a resolutely anti-leftist stance and must avoid all collaboration with leftists." (214) The Manifesto points out that "radical environmentalism" includes both leftists and non-leftists, and excoriates those radical environmentalists "who ought to know better than to collaborate with leftists." (227) According to this analysis, "The leftist is anti-individualistic, pro-collectivist" (16) and has "a negative attitude toward individualism." (229) Leftism is "inconsistent with wild nature" and with "human freedom" because it is "collectivist" and believes in "organized society" (214). If leftists ever get technology "under their own control," they will "use it to oppress everyone else" (216). Kaczynski dismisses "social justice" as a goal; petty concerns about economic deprivation and disparity, about adequate food and clothing, "must not be allowed to interfere with the effort to get rid of the technological system." (201) Ethnic exclusion and racial justice are similarly "superficial matters" (29) and merely "of peripheral significance." (192)

Much of Kaczynski's polemic against the left reads like a parody of right-wing prejudices: "Leftists tend to hate anything that has an image of being strong, good and successful. They hate America, they hate Western civilization, they hate white males, they hate rationality." (15) Indeed, "Self-hatred is a leftist trait." (20) But this is no parody, and the sour note of anti-left ressentiment resounds throughout the Manifesto. Long stretches of the screed against "leftism" are nevertheless virtually irrelevant to its broader argument, consisting largely of an amalgam of pop sociobiology and irritation about the alleged excesses of "political correctness" in the academy, mixed

with antagonism toward affirmative action and initiatives for gender equity. At times Kaczynski sounds like a critic of degenerate art: "Art forms that appeal to modern leftist intellectuals tend to focus on sordidness, defeat and despair, or else they take an orgiastic tone" (17). He does on occasion offer perfunctory criticism of "some conservatives" (Note 30), namely those who "enthusiastically support technological progress and economic growth." (50)[29] But these passing remarks seem insignificant in light of his unqualified condemnation of "leftism" as a whole.

Central as these arguments are to Kaczynski's case against modern society, the Manifesto is not exhausted by wholesale repudiation of technology, cultural decay, and the sins of the left. Kaczynski also has a positive alternative to offer. In place of the sterility and corruption of science, technology, and industrial organization, he holds out the promise of an utterly different world. This vision is founded on the idea of "wild nature."[30] In the words of the Manifesto: "The positive ideal that we propose is Nature. That is, *wild* nature; those aspects of the functioning of the Earth and its living things that are independent of human management and free of human interference and control." (183) Proclaiming that "nature is beautiful," Kaczynski expounds "an ideology that exalts nature and opposes technology." (184) This ideology will not only be beneficial to the natural world but to its human inhabitants as well: "Whatever kind of society may exist after the demise of the industrial system, it is certain that most people will live close to nature." (184)

The Manifesto provides a number of reasons for adopting an ideology of wild nature. "Nature makes a perfect counterideal to technology for several reasons. Nature (that which is outside the power of the system) is the opposite of technology (which seeks to expand indefinitely the power of the system)." (184) Kaczynski evokes the religious character of this ideology as well. Noting that "there is a religious vacuum in our society that could perhaps be filled by a religion focused on nature in opposition to technology," he writes: "A further advantage of nature as a counter-ideal to technology is that, in many people, nature inspires the kind of reverence that is associated with religion, so that nature could perhaps be idealized on a religious basis. [...] Thus it may be useful to introduce a religious element into the rebellion against technology, the more so because Western society today has no strong religious foundation." (Note 30)

With its enemies clearly identified and its alternative vision at hand, the Manifesto dauntlessly draws the consequences. Along with a massive "reduction of the population" (167), a "breakdown of technological civilization itself" (133) will be necessary for the redemption of humanity and the planet. Kaczynski insists that "the system cannot be reformed in such a way as to reconcile freedom with technology. The only way out

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[29] See also Note 13 for brief criticism of free-market conservatives.

[30] The Manifesto uses the term "wild nature" in multiple contexts; see e.g. 5, 177, 183, 214, Note 22, etc. There is a certain ambivalence to the Manifesto's treatment of science, and it is difficult not to read a trace of autobiographical bitterness into some of its remarks on this score. Consider the following plaintive passage in light of Kaczynski's own childhood as a mathematical prodigy sent off to Harvard

is to dispense with the industrial-technological system altogether." (140) Overthrowing it will require "a revolution against the industrial-technological system." (141) The revolutionaries must be committed "exclusively to the destruction of technology." (222) Kaczynski's revolution adamantly prohibits all other aims; he reiterates that revolutionary energies must be mobilized "for only *one* purpose: to attack the technological system." (202) Since "the single overriding goal must be the elimination of modern technology" (206), he insists, "Until the industrial system has been thoroughly wrecked, the destruction of that system must be the revolutionaries' *only* goal." (200)

To reach this goal Kaczynski argues for a strategy of tension, deliberately intensifying social instability in order to hasten complete technological collapse. He recognizes that "If the system breaks down there may be a period of chaos," which will give those who survive "a new chance." (165) Hence the "revolution against technology" must take a twopronged approach: "the two main tasks for the present are to promote social stress and instability in industrial society and to develop and propagate an ideology that opposes technology and the industrial system." (181) The Manifesto spells out what this strategy will entail:

> Therefore two tasks confront those who hate the servitude to which the industrial system is reducing the human race. First, we must work to heighten the social stresses within the system so as to increase the likelihood that it will break down or be weakened sufficiently so that a revolution against it becomes possible. Second, it is necessary to develop and propagate an ideology that opposes technology and the industrial society if and when the system becomes sufficiently weakened. And such an ideology will help to assure that, if and when industrial society breaks down, its remnants will be smashed beyond repair, so that the system cannot be reconstituted. The factories should be destroyed, technical books burned, etc. (166)

These methods and their bleak consequences are consistent with Kaczynski's own practice, bombs combined with doctrines. "Industrial Society and Its Future," in the manner of its delivery and publication, is an instantiation of its own logic. For the Unabomber, the medium is the message: "In order to get our message before the public with some chance of making a lasting impression, we've had to kill people." (96)

Though Kaczynski's work betrays little awareness of it, there is a lengthy tradition of political violence in the name of transcendent goals. Within the broad spectrum of anarchist thought, perhaps the most influential justification is Georges Sorel's 1908

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on scholarship at the age of sixteen: "For example, the system needs scientists, mathematicians and engineers. It can't function without them. So heavy pressure is put on children to excel in these fields. It isn't natural for an adolescent human being to spend the bulk of his time sitting at a desk absorbed in study. A normal adolescent wants to spend his time in active contact with the real world. [...] Among the American Indians, for example, boys were trained in active outdoor pursuits—just the sort of things that boys like. But in our society children are pushed into studying technical subjects, which most do

treatise *Reflections on Violence*.[31] Equally relevant, in view of Kaczynski's reliance on "nature" and the quasi-messianic tone of the Manifesto, is Walter Benjamin's 1921 essay in response to Sorel, "Critique of Violence."[32] There are undoubtedly echoes in the Unabomber Manifesto of Sorel's conception of violence as redemptive; the Manifesto's propagation of an all-encompassing ideology that opposes technology and exalts nature might even be seen as a variation on Sorel's notion of "myth" as a counterforce to prevailing societal assumptions. In crucial respects, however, Kaczynski's proposed strategy and actual practice represent a return to an earlier phase of anarchist uses of violence, the late nineteenth century era of propaganda of the deed. This tactic focused on assassinating politicians, aristocrats, and industrialists, often by bombings. Such attacks proved ineffective as a catalyst to revolution, and the anarchist movement largely abandoned propaganda of the deed by the 1920s.[33] The Unabomber phenomenon is a revival of that older and seemingly discredited legacy.

A related question concerns the particular strands within the anarchist tradition that bear the strongest resemblance to Kaczynski's approach. His very first letter to the media began with the words: "We are an anarchist group calling ourselves FC." A later communiqué repeated: "We call ourselves anarchists."[34] As the Manifesto itself points out, however, Kaczynski espoused a "particular brand of anarchism." (Note 34) His brand is notably individualistic, affiliated with a tendency in anarchist thought that extends back to Max Stirner. This strand of anarchism has long been at odds with the communal tendencies in anarchist practice over the last century and a half that are sometimes grouped under the rubric of social anarchism. From a social anarchist perspective, the "particular brand of anarchism" championed by Kaczynski incorporates some of the most dubious elements of the tradition as a whole.[35]

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grudgingly." (115)

[31] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (New York: Collier, 1950). For background see Irving Louis Horowitz, *Radicalism and the Revolt Against Reason: The Social Theories of Georges Sorel* (London: Routledge, 1961), and Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[32] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings* volume I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 236–53; see also Michael Löwy, "Walter Benjamin's Critique of Technology" in Löwy, *On Changing the World: Essays in Political Philosophy from Karl Marx to Walter Benjamin* (London: Humanities Press, 1993).

[33] For historical overviews see the chapter on "Terrorism and Propaganda by the Deed" in James Joll, *The Anarchists* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), and the collection edited by Philippe Kellermann, *Die Propaganda der Tat: Standpunkte und Debatten (1877–1929)* (Münster: Unrast, 2016). There is also a venerable lineage of anarchist pacifism.

[34] Letter to *New York Times* postmarked June 21, 1993; letter to *New York Times* April 20, 1995; quoted in Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 259 and 296. Scott Corey situates the Manifesto within the tradition of "revolutionary anarchism" while noting its anarcho-individualist orientation in contrast to social anarchist tendencies; cf. Corey, "On the Unabomber," 157 and 169–71.

[35] For comparison to Kaczynski's fragmentary appropriation of anarchist themes in the service of his longed-for revolution against technology, see the sophisticated discussion of technological knowledge and state hegemony in James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), particularly 311–33.

Such intra-anarchist debates do not focus solely on individualism; they include several other themes that are central to the Unabomber Manifesto as well. The two most immediately relevant are the dispute over left-wing and right-wing influences within anarchism, and the contentious question of primitivism. Of those contemporary anarchists who find the Manifesto's message appealing, most are unsurprisingly hostile to the left as such.[36] Many of them identify strongly with the individualist tradition. While denying any special attachment to the right, they focus on furious denunciations of the left, sometimes proclaiming themselves "neither left nor right."[37] A number of these anarchists have proven receptive to the Manifesto's arguments.[38]

The primitivist strand of contemporary anarchism provided an even more congenial home for Kaczynski's ideas.[39] Centered on an array of periodicals devoted to "the destruction of civilization," this tendency's most influential spokesperson is John Zerzan.[40] Zerzan defended the Unabomber Manifesto from the moment it appeared,

[36] Examples include Bob Black, *Anarchy After Leftism* (Columbia: C.A.L. Press, 1997), and the periodical *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. Black contends that the Unabomber represents "the best and the predominant thinking in contemporary North American anarchism" (quoted in John Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization*, Los Angeles: Feral House, 2002, 153). For a contrary view see Wayne Price, "Is the Unabomber an Anarchist?" *Love and Rage* September 1995.

[37] See the exchange on "Post-Left Anarchy" in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* no. 57, Spring/Summer 2004, 50–70. An extended critique of "post-left" anarchism from a left anarchist perspective can be found in Peter Staudenmaier "Anarchists in Wonderland: The Topsy-Turvy World of Post-Left Anarchy" (Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2003). Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery*, 356 fully endorses the 'beyond left and right' stance.

[38] Cf. "Two, Three, Many Unabombers" *Anarchy* no. 46, Fall/Winter 1998; "He Means It. Do You?" *Anarchy* no. 44, Fall/Winter 1997. An important exception in this regard is David Watson, a.k.a. George Bradford, the leading theorist at the anarchist journal *The Fifth Estate*, which since the 1970s has developed a complex variation on anarchist critiques of technology. For an example of Watson's early work see George Bradford, "Technology: A System of Domination" *Fifth Estate* Winter 1984. The journal was an important early forum for anarcho-primitivist author John Zerzan and may have helped shape Kaczynski's thinking as well. After the Manifesto appeared, Watson wrote a lengthy critique of its core ideas: "The Unabomber and the Future of Industrial Society" in David Watson, *Against the Megamachine* (New York: Autonomedia, 1997), 252–68. Neither disavowing nor revising his own contributions, Watson denied that the *Fifth Estate* had a discernible influence on Kaczynski's theories, asserting that "neither the Unabomber's language nor his strategy resembled the FE's work" (258). For context see Steve Millett, "Technology is capital: *Fifth Estate*'s critique of the megamachine" in Jonathan Purkis, ed., *Changing Anarchism: Anarchist Theory and Practice in a Global Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 73–98.

[39] Though primitivist anarchists and "post-left" anarchists overlap, they are distinct currents; see e.g. Jason McQuinn, "Why I am not a Primitivist" *Anarchy* no. 51, Spring/Summer 2001. Alongside and against the anti-left and primitivist strands of contemporary North American anarchism, there is a longstanding tradition of ecological thinking within the historical anarchist movement running from figures like Kropotkin and Reclus to Bookchin. For the German context see Ulrich Linse, *Ökopax und Anarchie: Eine Geschichte der ökologischen Bewegungen in Deutschland* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986).

[40] The following journals, now largely defunct, offer representative viewpoints: *Green Anarchy* (Eugene, Oregon), which described itself as "an anti-civilization journal of theory and action"; *Green Anarchist* (London, England); *Live Wild Or Die; The Final Days; Species Traitor; Feral: A Journal To-*

and he and Kaczynski conducted an extensive correspondence after the latter's arrest.[41] Much of Zerzan's work revolves around a critique of domestication, analogizing humans under industrial conditions with domestic animals, while proclaiming a re-assertion of wildness as alternative, to be achieved through a total "refusal of technology."[42] With an eclectic philosophical background, Zerzan was for a time a more articulate advocate of Kaczynski's views, preaching the imminent collapse of industrial civilization and an absolutist anti-technological stance. An apocalyptic sense of impending catastrophe pervades his work, linked to a millenarian vision of redemption through destruction focused on technological doom and undomesticated rebirth.[43]

These particular wings of contemporary anarchism appear to have exercised an important influence on Kaczynski's thinking while he was still at large. In his April 1995 message to the *New York Times* he wrote: "anyone who will read the anarchist and radical environmentalist journals will see that opposition to the industrial-technological system is widespread and growing."[44] Kaczynski himself contributed to all three of these strands within latter-day anarchist discourse, pursuing an individualist argument, an

wards Wildness. Aspects of the anarcho-primitivist perspective were also developed in *Earth First!* and *The Fifth Estate* as well as *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed.* Zerzan's books include *Elements of Refusal* (Seattle: Left Bank, 1988), *Future Primitive* (New York: Autonomedia, 1994), and *The Stand Against Civilization* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2015), as well as the anthologies *Questioning Technology* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1991) and *Against Civilization* (Eugene: Uncivilized, 1999). Zerzan's statements of the primitivist position include "Why Primitivism?" *Anarchy* no. 56, Fall/Winter 2003, and "Twilight of the Machines" *Anarchy* no. 54, Winter 2002. For social anarchist critiques of anarcho-primitivism see Brian Sheppard, *Anarchism vs. Primitivism* (Tucson: See Sharp, 2003); Charles Thorpe and Ian Welsh, "Beyond primitivism: Towards a twenty-first century anarchist theory and praxis for science and technology" *Anarchist Studies* vol. 16 no. 1 (2008), 48–75.

[41] See e.g. Zerzan's 1995 essay "Whose Unabomber?" reprinted in *Running on Emptiness*, 151–55. In the same book Zerzan provides a detailed account of his relationship to Kaczynski (187–93), noting his "heavy emotional identification" with the imprisoned bomber (189). Zerzan dedicated the second edition of his book *Elements of Refusal* (Columbia: C.A.L. Press, 1999) to Kaczynski.

[42] Cf. Zerzan's early essays "Industrialism and Domestication" and "The Refusal of Technology" in *Elements of Refusal*, as well as Wolfi Landstreicher, "How then Do We Go Wild?" *Anarchy* no. 52, Fall/Winter 2001. The Unabomber Manifesto gestures toward a critique of domestication in paragraphs 174–175.

[43] See Zerzan, "It's All Coming Down!" *Green Anarchy* no. 8, Spring 2002. p. 3. A thoughtful and historically informed examination of the development of Zerzan's ideas is available in the dissertation by Spencer Sunshine, "Post-1960 U.S. Anarchism and Social Theory" (CUNY Graduate Center 2013), 61–70. Sunshine points out that in addition to various forms of Marxism, "one of the main influences on Zerzan was the interwar German right." (69)

[44] April 20, 1995 letter to the *Times* quoted in Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 296. Kaczynski was apparently an avid reader of the anarchist and radical environmentalist press, and some of these periodicals may have influenced his choice of targets; see e.g. Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 280 and 426, and Foster, *Author Unknown*, 136. On Kaczynski's relationship with radical environmentalist activism see Bron Taylor, "Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism: From Earth First! to the Unabomber to the Earth Liberation Movement" *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 10 no. 4 (1998), 1–42.

anti-left argument, and a primitivist argument in his writings both before and after the Unabomber Manifesto.[45]

Kaczynski developed these ideas across a span of decades. A 1971 anti-tech essay that he distributed among friends and family members, a sort of ur-text of the later Manifesto, begins as follows: "In these pages it is argued that continued scientific and technical progress will inevitably result in the extinction of individual liberty."[46] The final page of the essay bemoans "the ceaseless extension of society's power." Thirty years later, in a 2001 letter to *Green Anarchy*, Kaczynski continued the line of reasoning on "leftism" that he expounded at length in the Manifesto, reproaching the Zapatistas in Chiapas for not seeking "an end to modernity."[47] Declaring such endeavors typical of the left, he denounced the Zapatistas for trying to bring electricity, plumbing, and medicine to indigenous communities in southern Mexico.

In 2002 Kaczynski offered an updated version of the Unabomber Manifesto's core arguments, under the title "Hit Where It Hurts."[48] Addressed as a rallying cry to "opponents of the techno-industrial system," the article calls for a fundamental challenge to "the system."[49] Carefully avoiding any exhortations to illegal action, Kaczynski reminds his readers that "technology is the target" and that for the sake of "wilderness" a "life-and-death struggle" will be necessary. He flatly rejects pragmatic options such as "developing cleaner methods of generating electricity." Ecologically sustainable technology is still technology. "To accomplish anything against the system you have to attack all electric-power generation as a matter of principle, on the ground that dependence on electricity makes people dependent on the system."[50] Finally, Kaczynski recommends biotechnology as the most promising target for concerted attack.[51] Argu-

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[45] Kaczynski attempted to correspond with parts of the anarchoprimitivist milieu even before the Manifesto was published; cf. Chase, *Harvard and the Unabomber*, 77. He continued this correspondence during his imprisonment; see e.g. Kaczynski's letter to the editors, *Live Wild or Die* no. 7, Spring 1998, and the substantial interview "Ted Speaks" in *Green Anarchist* no. 57, Autumn 1999. After a falling out with Zerzan, Kaczynski came to reject the primitivist paradigm; see his expansive critique of anarchoprimitivism in Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery*, 128–89.

[46] Ted Kaczynski, untitled 1971 typescript, p. 1; a photographic reproduction of the twenty-three page document appears in Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 488–510. In it Kaczynski warns against "genetic engineering" (8–10) and concludes with a call for "stopping federal aid to scientific research." (23)

[47] *Green Anarchy* no. 7, Fall/Winter 2001, 5.

[48] Ted Kaczynski, "Hit Where It Hurts" *Green Anarchy* no. 8, Spring 2002. Kaczynski's piece was the lead article in this issue of the premier primitivist journal, beginning on the top of p. 1 and continuing on pp. 18–19. The editorial collective noted their partial disagreement with the article (particularly "Ted's hostility towards feminism") in an addendum on p. 19. Four years later Kaczynski criticized *Green Anarchy* in a lengthy interview with *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*; see "Ted Kaczynski Interview" *Anarchy* no. 61, Spring 2006, 37–43.

[49] Kaczynski, "Hit Where It Hurts," 1.

[50] Kaczynski, "Hit Where It Hurts," 18.

[51] The Unabomber Manifesto similarly emphasizes the dangers of "genetic engineering" and "the immense power of biotechnology" in paragraph 124; this appears to be a consistent theme throughout Kaczynski's various writings. For a contrasting range of radical critiques of biotechnology see Brian Tokar, ed., *Redesigning Life? The Worldwide Challenge to Genetic Engineering* (London: Zed, 2001).

ing that biotechnology is "central to the whole enterprise of technological progress," he focuses on "research scientists" and "corporate executives" as the lynchpin of the industry, and maintains that "persuading" these figures to "get out of biotech" would be the best way "to hit the system where it really hurts."[52]

Taking the totality of these texts into account, with the Unabomber Manifesto at their center, the outlines of Kaczynski's argument come into sharper relief. "Industrial Society and Its Future" presents a classic example of a familiar but often misunderstood genre: a fierce indictment of modern artificiality in the name of an imagined authenticity. Among twentieth-century critics of untrammeled technological advance, two figures are frequently invoked as possible influences on the Manifesto: Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul.[53] Both are reasonable choices; Mumford was arguably the most influential voice along these lines in an American context in the post-war period, and Kaczynski himself cited Ellul.

There are, however, significant differences between these critics of technological complacency and Kaczynski's totalizing renunciation of technology in all its forms. While Mumford discussed "organization man" and the role of "control" in terms similar to the Manifesto, his approach displayed a powerful sense of the aesthetic dimension of technological artifacts and stressed the mutual interplay of technology and culture. In his earlier work he rejected technological determinism and maintained a basically optimistic view of the possibilities for a humanized and ecologized technics.[54] Mumford's writings on urbanism are also at odds with the anti-urban sentiments of latter-day primitivists. Even Mumford's later work *The Myth of the Machine*, whose argument is closer to that of Kaczynski, Zerzan, et al., concludes on a note of possibility and renewal rather than evoking a technological Ragnarok.[55] In Mumford's own words, his

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[52] Kaczynski, "Hit Where It Hurts," 19.

[53] Tim Luke reads the Manifesto as congruent with Mumford's work (Luke, "Re-Reading the Unabomber Manifesto," 87), while Scott Corey emphasizes Kaczynski's debt to Ellul (Corey, "On the Unabomber," 159). Both authors are treated at length in Langdon Winner's superb intellectual history *Autonomous Technology: Technics-out-of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977). Mumford and Ellul are also discussed extensively in Nicols Fox's celebration of neoLuddite attitudes, *Against the Machine* (Washington: Island Press, 2002). Kaczynski's brother David reports that Ellul's book *The Technological Society* was Ted's "bible" (Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 394). In 1985 Ted wrote to David: "You'll recall how pleased I was when I encountered Jacques Ellul's book, *The Technological Society*, because his thinking ran so close to my own." (Quoted in Foster, *Author Unknown*, 139) Kaczynski cited the book in his untitled 1971 essay, p. 10; cf. Graysmith, *Unabomber*, 497.

[54] Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, 1934).

[55] Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine* (New York: Harcourt, 1967). Here Mumford wrote, in direct contradiction to the Manifesto's fundamental themes, "I submit that at every stage man's inventions and transformations were less for the purpose of increasing the food supply or controlling nature than for utilizing his own immense organic resources and expressing his latent potentialities." (8) "At its point of origin, technics was related to the whole nature of man, and that nature played a part in every aspect of industry: thus technics, at the beginning, was broadly life-centered, not work-centered or power-centered. As in any other ecological complex, varied human interests and purposes, different organic needs, restrained the overgrowth of any single component." (9)

work is "far from disparaging the role of technics."[56] He held that it was a particular cultural matrix and a constellation of specific social structures that led to the rise of what he called the "megamachine."[57]

Ellul's analysis is in some respects more compatible with Kaczynski's. The French philosopher and theologian was a technological determinist regarding modern technical apparatuses, and he described the "automatic growth" of technology as "a self-generating process."[58] But unlike his anti-civilization acolytes, Ellul held a positive view of civilization and its capacity for moderating technological structures and imperatives. He praised ancient Greek society, with its judicious self-chosen limits on technological forms, as "an apex of civilization" and was confident that in other historical contexts a humanist ethos had served to restrain technological growth.[59] Unlike previous eras, however, Ellul believed that by the twentieth century the threshold had been crossed: "Today technique has taken over the whole of civilization." Thus in our time technology "desacralizes men and things," and the technological system "eliminates or subordinates the natural world."[60]

These arguments are a clear precursor to the Manifesto. Ellul characterized the present situation as "all or nothing," declaring: "If we make use of technique, we must accept the specificity and autonomy of its ends, and the totality of its rules. Our own desires and aspirations can change nothing."[61] In a later work, on the other hand, Ellul wrote: "the issue is not technology *per se*, but the present structure of society."[62] Ellul was sympathetic to anarchism, from his eclectic Christian viewpoint, but emphatically repudiated violent acts: "By anarchy I mean first an absolute rejection of violence. Hence I cannot accept either nihilists or anarchists who choose violence as a means of action."[63] Ellul's thought thus yields a mixed legacy in regard to Kaczynski's program of violent upheaval against technology.

Other possible influences have been proposed in addition to Mumford and Ellul. Tim Luke, for example, contends that the Unabomber Manifesto "parallels Marcuse's

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[56] Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*, 10.

[57] Mumford attributed major technological shifts to "social organization," not to "mechanical inventions," and had a dialectical conception of the intertwining of "positive" and "negative" aspects of the rise of large-scale technology (*The Myth of the Machine*, 11, 259), while flatly rejecting the notion that "civilization inexorably develops in this fashion" (Mumford, *Art and Technics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1952, 156).

[58] Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Vintage, 1964), 87.

[59] Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 29, 42.

[60] Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 128, 126, 93.

[61] Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 141.

[62] Ellul, *Autopsy of Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 275. For further discussion of Ellul's views on technology see Detlev Langenegger, *Gesamtdeutungen moderner Technik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990), 105–84.

[63] Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 11. See also Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective* (New York: Seabury, 1969). The Unabomber Manifesto acknowledges that some other anarchists would reject Kaczynski's violent tactics; see Note 34.

reading of technology."[64] Although several terminological correspondences may be noted between the Manifesto's vocabulary and Marcuse's writings, this interpretation is untenable. Marcuse disagreed with Kaczynski on virtually every substantive issue, from nature to political violence to hedonism to technology to freedom to the structure of psychological drives and the "origins of the repressed individual."[65] Even *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse's bleakest work and the closest in tone to the Manifesto, forcefully contradicts Kaczynski on several crucial points. In these pages Marcuse does indeed write:

> Technological rationality reveals its political character as it becomes the great vehicle of better domination, creating a truly totalitarian universe in which society and nature, mind and body are kept in a state of permanent mobilization for the defense of this universe.[66]

But the very emphasis on the "political character" of technological rationality is at odds with Kaczynski's approach, which thoroughly discounts "political structure" (Note 33) and repeatedly rejects "political revolution" (4, 193). Marcuse, in contrast, held that "the techniques of industrialization are political techniques" and insisted on the possibility of a different form of technology: "The technological transformation is at the same time political transformation, but the political change would turn into qualitative social change only to the degree to which it would alter the direction of technical progress— that is, develop a new technology."[67] Marcuse held open the potential for "science and technology" to "pass beyond" their current form and lead toward an overcoming of oppression. He argued that "technological rationality, freed from its exploitative features," could become part of a liberated and self-directing society at peace with its natural surroundings.[68]

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[64] Luke, "Re-Reading the Unabomber Manifesto," 83; three paragraphs later he reiterates that Kaczynski's argument "parallels Marcuse's account of technology" (84).

[65] See e.g. "Nature and Revolution" in Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*; "The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition" and "Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts" in Marcuse, *Five Lectures*; "On Hedonism" in Marcuse, *Negations*; "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology" in Marcuse, *Technology, War and Fascism*; as well as Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* and Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*. For further discussion compare C. Fred Alford, *Science and the Revenge of Nature: Marcuse and Habermas* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985); Andrew Feenberg, "Marcuse and the Critique of Technology: From Dystopia to Interaction" in Feenberg, *Alternative Modernity: The Technical Turn in Philosophy and Social Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Samir Gandesha, "Marcuse, Habermas, and the Critique of Technology" in John Abromeit, ed., *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[66] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 18.

[67] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 18, 227. In a complete reversal of Kaczynski's stance, Marcuse pointed to automation as a route toward freedom and away from technological subjugation (37), and speculated that "mechanization and standardization may one day help to shift the center of gravity from the necessities of material production to the arena of free human realization." (160)

[68] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 233, 235.

The origins of Kaczynski's conception of technology and society are not to be found in the work of left theorists like Marcuse.[69] As contemporary anarcho-primitivist fans of the Unabomber Manifesto have come to recognize, some of their true predecessors are thinkers of the German right who took a skeptical view of technology and industrialism. Although there is little mention of such figures in the existing literature on the Manifesto, it is to right-wing theorists like Ludwig Klages, Oswald Spengler, and Friedrich Georg Jünger that we must look for consistent conceptual parallels to "Industrial Society and Its Future."[70] The affinities traced here are not a matter of direct ideological influence; there is little indication that Kaczynski was familiar with this literature.[71] Disregarded as they may be, these authors produced several of the most detailed critiques of modern technological life to emerge from the right in the twentieth century.

In a sense, Klages (1872–1956), Spengler (1880–1936), and Jünger (1898–1977) represent successive generations on the German right, with Klages a proponent of *Lebensphilosophie*, Jünger an advocate of the Conservative Revolution, and Spengler a mediating figure between the two currents.[72] Klages was a mystical philosopher who counterposed "biocentric" wisdom to the afflictions of rationalism and degeneration. Spengler gained notoriety for his sweeping chronicle of cultural devolution and grim prophecies about the fate of Western society. Jünger's ardent nationalism was matched

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[69] Kaczynski seems to have had no affiliations whatsoever to the New Left. He spent the 1960s at Harvard, the University of Michigan, and Berkeley, yet was apparently never involved in any of the radical movements of the era. For his retrospective account of his political views at the time see Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery*, 388: "I've never had anything but contempt for the socalled '60s kids,' the radicals of the Vietnam-War era. [...] I was a supporter of the Vietnam War." Kaczynski's sometime associate Zerzan, a former leftist, now identifies himself straightforwardly as an anti-leftist; see John Zerzan, "Post-Leftists! One more Effort if you would be Anti-Leftist!" *Anarchy* no. 58, Fall 2004, 64.

[70] Neither Luke nor Corey in their *Telos* articles discusses the tradition of German right-wing critiques of technology, and neither mentions Klages, Spengler, or Jünger. Kaczynski's fellow anti-civilization enthusiasts are not so circumspect. Zerzan invokes both Spengler and Jünger in support of his own arguments; see Zerzan, "Twilight of the Machines," 3839; Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness*, 153; Zerzan, *Questioning Technology*, 217; Zerzan, *Future Primitive Revisited* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2012), 143 and 160–61. The opening editorial in *Green Anarchy* no. 11, Winter 2003, 2, begins with a quote from Spengler, and Spengler is positively invoked in issue no. 17, Summer 2004, as well.

[71] Though the possibility is not far-fetched; Kaczynski knows German and seems to have read widely in the critical literature on technology. References to Klages, Spengler, or Jünger do not appear in his published works.

[72] For useful introductions to this intellectual context see Kurt Sontheimer's classic study *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1962), in particular 48–58, 65–72, 322–26, and Stefan Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit: Die deutsche Rechte im Widerstreit ihrer Ideen 1871–1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), with references to Klages, Spengler, and F.G. Jünger throughout. Anne Harrington has aptly described *Lebensphilosophie* or 'life philosophy' as "the somewhat inchoate and scattered intellectual movement of the postwar years that aimed collectively to demand that the whole Enlightenment tradition responsible for the Machine in all of its faces now stand up and prove its legitimacy against Life" (Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler*, Princeton University Press 1996, 32).

by an unabashed elitism, the dual foundation for his vehement rejection of democracy. At a time when questions of technology, industry, and environmental decline were becoming pressing issues that generated little consensus on either the left or the right, these writers articulated a rightist response to increasing mechanization that was distinctively critical without simply calling for a return to plainer and purer times.[73]

Klages set the stage for this standpoint with his influential 1913 essay "Man and Earth." A favorite of the right wing of the ecology movement ever since, this seminal treatment begins by locating the source of the modern malaise in "science" and "technology."[74] The text continually identifies "progress" as a negative phenomenon while decrying the disappearance of wilderness and the expansion of industry. Klages bewails deforestation and the endangerment of animal species, proffering a catalogue of the deleterious effects of "progress" on people's lives, and warns against viewing the world as "a great machine."[75] He also makes reverential references to "the German landscape" and condemns capitalism, Christianity, and science in one fell swoop.[76] These themes found continuation among a number of later figures on the German right.

Oswald Spengler's approach to the same constellation of topics was more complex. His major work on the subject, the 1931 book *Man and Technics*, was indebted to Klages in several respects.[77] To a greater extent than Klages, however, Spengler stressed

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[73] On the intense debates surrounding these topics at the time see Friedrich Dessauer, *Streit um die Technik* (Bonn: Cohen, 1928). The fourth edition (Frankfurt 1956) includes an extensive bibliography of German-language literature on technology from 1807 until 1956. Proponents of far right ecology in twentyfirst century Germany point to Klages and F.G. Jünger as their forebears; see e.g. Norbert Borrmann, "Ökologie ist rechts" *Sezession* October 2013, 4–7. On the Italian right, Julius Evola displayed a particular interest in both Spengler and Klages, and translated Spengler's *Decline of the West* into Italian.

[74] Ludwig Klages, *Mensch und Erde* (Jena: Diederichs, 1929); see repeated references to "Wissenschaft" and "Technik," 1–2 and 12. The essay is available in English translation from the far right publisher Arktos: Ludwig Klages, "Man and Earth" in Klages, *The Biocentric Worldview* (London: Arktos, 2013), 26–44. For background see Martin Kagel, "Widersacher des Fortschritts: Zu Ludwig Klages' ökologischem Manifest 'Mensch und Erde'" in Jost Hermand, ed., *Mit den Bäumen sterben die Menschen: Zur Kulturgeschichte der Ökologie* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 199–220; Joachim Radkau, *The Age of Ecology: A Global History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 28–32.

[75] Klages, *Mensch und Erde*, 3–7, 10, 16.

[76] Klages, *Mensch und Erde*, 4, 20. For further discussion of Klages' views on technology see Gerd-Klaus Kaltenbrunner, "Vom Weltschmerz des technischen Zeitalters: Ludwig Klages" in Karl Schwedhelm, ed, *Propheten des Nationalismus* (Munich: List, 1969), and Nitzan Lebovic, *The Philosophy of Life and Death: Ludwig Klages and the Rise of a Nazi Biopolitics* (New York: Palgrave, 2013). His ecological outlook continues to find admirers on the far right; as an example see Reinhard Falter, *Ludwig Klages: Lebensphilosophie als Zivilisationskritik* (Neustadt: Arnshaugk, 2015).

[77] Oswald Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik: Beitrag zu einer Philosophie des Lebens* (Munich: Beck, 1931); English translation *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1932). Rolf Peter Sieferle notes that part of the book's argument proceeds "in the footsteps of Ludwig Klages" (Sieferle, *Die Konservative Revolution*, Frankfurt: Fischer 1995, 119), while Gilbert Merlio observes that "some passages in *Man and Technics* seem to be directly copied from Klages" (Merlio, "Kultur- und Technikkritik vor und nach dem ersten Weltkrieg" in Friedrich Strack, ed., *Titan Technik: Ernst und Friedrich Georg Jünger über das technische Zeitalter*, Würzburg: Königshausen &

technology's tendency to establish and impose its own logic, bringing his analysis an important step closer to Kaczynski's. *Man and Technics* is a brief but multifaceted text that stands in a somewhat ambiguous relationship to Spengler's famous earlier work *The Decline of the West*, and the later book on technology has received widely varying interpretations.[78]

Spengler posits an original state of human wildness as the exemplar of "perfect freedom" and opposes this primal selfsufficiency to the emasculating effects of ostensibly laborsaving technological devices, while simultaneously rebuking the "ever-increasing alienation from *all* Nature."[79] He characterizes technology as "unnatural" and holds it largely responsible for the "steadily increasing, fateful rift between man's world and the universe."[80] The book points to the emergence of agriculture and sedentary human communities as a fatal turning point; from then on, "the rolling stone is approaching the abyss in rapid leaps."[81] Spengler calls cities "*completely* anti-natural" and takes a

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Neumann 2000, 37). For further background see Detlef Felken, *Oswald Spengler: Konservativer Denker zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur* (Munich: Beck, 1988), especially 177–83 on *Der Mensch und die Technik*. Felken locates this work in the tradition of "Lebensphilosophie naturalism" (178) and notes its "biologistic implications" (179).

[78] Jeffrey Herf's reading of *Man and Technics*, for example, is diametrically opposed to the reading I will present here. Herf asserts that Spengler "wrote *Man and Technics* to establish his protechnological credentials." (Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge University Press 1984, 38) Herf further argues that in Spengler's view technological advances "expand human freedom." (ibid. 65) Dina Gusejnova similarly sees an "endorsement of technological progress" in *Man and Technics*: Gusejnova, "Concepts of culture and technology in Germany, 1916–1933: Ernst Cassirer and Oswald Spengler" *Journal of European Studies* vol. 36 no. 1 (2006), 5–30, quote at 12. There are undoubtedly ambivalent elements in Spengler's book, but in my view such claims are incompatible with the text itself. For interpretations of *Man and Technics* that are contrary to Herf's and Gusejnova's see Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 291–92; Winner, *Autonomous Technology*, 145–46; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Stanford University Press, 1991), 16–17; cf. also Theodor Adorno's brief critical review of Spengler's book from 1932: "Oswald Spengler, Der Mensch und die Technik" in Adorno, *Vermischte Schriften* I (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 197–99.

[79] Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 43; I have retained the characteristic typography of the original English translation (for example, "Nature" is capitalized throughout) while occasionally modifying the wording; cf. Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 34. More concretely, Spengler warns against deforestation, climate change, and the extinction of animal species in terms similar to Klages (*Man and Technics*, 94; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 78). On Spengler's early concerns about deforestation see Oswald Spengler, *Spengler Letters* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), 129–30.

[80] Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 44; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 35. He goes on to describe machines as "weapons against Nature" (*Man and Technics*, 88; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 73). For a salutary contrast to Spengler's narrative of the "revenge of Nature" (*Man and Technics*, 69) see Max Horkheimer, "The Revolt of Nature" in Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).

[81] Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 50; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 38. John Zerzan proposes a similar theory of agriculture as the original misstep; see "Agriculture" in Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal*. See also Spengler's critique of "domestication" (*Man and Technics*, 61; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 48). For Spengler's warnings against increasing population see *Man and Technics*, 69–70; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 56.

decidedly dim view of "society" itself.[82] Directly prefiguring core themes in the Unabomber Manifesto, Spengler traces the decline "from *organic* to *organized* existence, from living in natural groups to living in artificial groupings," and laments the fact that the "creator *against* Nature," technological man, "has become the slave of his creation."[83] In mournful tones he declares:

> The mechanization of the world has entered on a phase of highly dangerous over-tension. [...] All things organic are dying in the grip of organization. An artificial world is permeating and poisoning the natural. Civilization itself has become a machine that does everything in mechanical fashion.[84]

Man and Technics goes on to invoke the "cold atmosphere of technical organization," and the book ends with a desolate vision of inevitable decline and eventual "catastrophe."[85] The affinities to "Industrial Society and Its Future" are pronounced. Like the Manifesto, Spengler invokes "unspoilt primitive people" as his positive contrast to the "modern technical process," while Kaczynski echoes Spengler in deploring the "isolation of man from nature, excessive rapidity of social change and the breakdown of natural small-scale communities" (47). Against the backdrop of the German right, the Unabomber Manifesto begins to appear in sharper political definition.

The final figure in this ideological sequence is Friedrich Georg Jünger, author of *The Failure of Technology*.[86] While not as well known as his older brother Ernst Jünger, Friedrich Georg Jünger was a prolific writer who played an important role in the

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[82] Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 76; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 61; emphasis (as always) in original.

[83] Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 66, 69; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 5253, 55–56. In a further parallel to the Manifesto, Spengler argues that there are two kinds of people, "men whose nature is to command and men whose nature is to obey" (*Man and Technics*, 63; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 50), emphasizing that the few leaders and many followers are born to their station (*Man and Technics*, 92; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 77). In Kaczynski's words, "The majority of people are natural followers, not leaders" (Note 5); see also his distinction between "intelligent" people (187) and "the unthinking majority" (188).

[84] Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 93–94; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 78–79.

[85] Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 97, 102; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 82, 87. Adorno's early review of the book offers a condensed and incisive critique of this fatalism, noting that in Spengler's narrative, technology has been "rendered absolute," "without even raising the question of whether technology's autonomy from its social use could be corrected by changing the social structure." Adorno, *Vermischte Schriften*, 198. Racial themes play a conspicuous if subordinate role in Spengler's book; see e.g. *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 54, 65, 70, 86. The passages are somewhat muted in the English edition, where the term "Rasse" becomes "breed"; cf. *Man and Technics*, 67, 80, 85, 101.

[86] Friedrich Georg Jünger, *Die Perfektion der Technik* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1946). The original 1939 manuscript bore the title *Die Illusionen der Technik*. The English translation is titled *The Failure of Technology: Perfection Without Purpose* (Chicago: Regnery, 1949). Jünger wrote two further books on the theme: *Maschine und Eigentum* (Frankfurt 1949) and *Die vollkommene Schöpfung: Natur oder Naturwissenschaft?* (Frankfurt 1969). Written mainly in 1939, with an epilogue added in 1946, *Die Perfektion der Technik* was a reversal from Jünger's 1926 manifesto *Der Aufmarsch des Nationalismus*,

circles of the non-Nazi right.[87] Unlike his brother, whose "heroic" treatments of technology from the 1920s and 1930s are renowned, Friedrich Georg Jünger adopted a skeptical stance toward technology from a relatively early stage.[88] *The Failure of Technology* criticizes "the entire technical organization."[89] Jünger rebuffs "all the illusions which technical progress creates" and maintains that technological progress is inextricably "coupled with a growth of organization, with a mushrooming bureaucracy."[90] His recurrent foes are "technology," "industry," "the machine," and "organization." For Jünger, "ruthless destruction of resources is the characteristic of our technology."[91] He denounces technology's impact on nature: "The machine invades the landscape with destruction and transformation [...] Technology darkens the air with smoke, poisons the water, destroys the plants and animals." The telos of technology is "the most complete and the most intensive exploitation on a planetary scale."[92]

Like Kaczynski, Jünger also attacks the degrading effects of technology on human life. The phrase "organization of the human" is repeated throughout the text as an anathema, and Jünger emphasizes that "technical progress and the formation of masses

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which had been basically pro-technological in the same vein as his brother's work of the period. For his perspective in the Nazi era see Friedrich Georg Jünger, "Über die technische Perfektion" *Deutsches Volkstum: Monatsschrift für das deutsche Geistesleben* January 1941, 9–13.

[87] There is an extensive literature on both brothers; on the question of technology see the collection edited by Strack, *Titan Technik*, which offers a variety of viewpoints sympathetic toward the Jüngers, as well as Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit: Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Georg Jünger 1920–1960* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007). For an early overview of Ernst Jünger's approach to technology, framed within a broader perspective on Jünger as a "conservative anarchist," see Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Der konservative Anarchist: Politik und Zeitkritik Ernst Jüngers* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1962), chapter 7, "Über die Technik," 189–205.

[88] Even Ernst Jünger's views were not as consistently pro-technological as they are sometimes depicted. See, for example, his 1933 essay "Die Technik und ihre Zuordnung" (published less than a year after *Der Arbeiter*), reprinted in Strack, *Titan Technik*, 291–95. The essay adopts a notably ambivalent attitude toward "die Technik" and its impact on the individual, as well as toward the future of technological society. Ernst Jünger's later work took a decidedly pessimistic turn on the question of technology; in *Aladins Problem* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), 64 he wrote: "I have been convinced for years that we live in a desert, and that technology increasingly contributes to the monotony and extent of this desert." His change of heart can be traced in part to his exchanges with his brother and with their mutual friend Martin Heidegger. For a recent re-appraisal see Oliver Jahraus, "Der verkannte Vordenker: Ernst Jünger und die Grünen" *Kursbuch* March 2019, 64–78.

[89] Jünger, *The Failure of Technology*, 8; *Die Perfektion der Technik*, 7. Later in the book, Jünger distances his own analysis from "the romantic rejection of technology" (*Failure of Technology*, 141; *Perfektion der Technik*, 161).

[90] Jünger, *The Failure of Technology*, 9, 17; *Die Perfektion der Technik*, 9, 17. He also notes that "technical progress has enriched a small and not always pleasant group of industrialists, entrepreneurs, and inventors" (12).

[91] Jünger, *The Failure of Technology*, 20; *Die Perfektion der Technik*, 19. He also states categorically that "technology" is "filled with destructive forces." (*Failure of Technology*, 118; *Perfektion der Technik*, 142)

[92] Jünger, *The Failure of Technology*, 21, 164; *Die Perfektion der Technik*, 21, 182.

go hand in hand.”[93] He deplores “the devastation of spiritual life which grows in step with mechanization.”[94] *The Failure of Technology* identifies routinization and uniformity as the principal traits of a technology that has become selfperpetuating: “The autonomous, uniform, and repetitive function of mechanization is the chief characteristic of our technology.”[95]

Jünger, Spengler, and Klages were not unique. Anguished forebodings about a looming technological deluge have been a regular refrain in German right-wing thought for many years. In his 1899 magnum opus *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, a veritable reactionary bible better known for its celebration of Aryan superiority, Houston Stewart Chamberlain included a section titled “The Machine” asserting that the devastation wrought by modern technology is “absolutely beyond conception.” The rise of factories and an industrial workforce led him to regret the “inexpressible misery caused everywhere by the introduction of the machine,” as evidenced by “the reduction of thousands and millions of human beings from relative prosperity and independence to continuous slavery, and their removal from the healthy life of the country to a miserable, light-less and airless existence in large cities.”[96]

Half a century later, Martin Heidegger began his 1953 essay “The Question Concerning Technology” by noting: “Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it.”[97] Apart from the competing tradition of left-wing critiques of industrialized capitalism and its technological configuration, there are other figures who do not fit neatly into the left-right spectrum and who developed profoundly critical accounts of technology and industrialism, such as Theodor Lessing or Günther Anders. Kaczynski and his epigones draw indiscriminately on this loose

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[93] Jünger, *The Failure of Technology*, 126; *Die Perfektion der Technik*, 148. Jünger distinguishes between “people” and “the masses” (*Volk* and *Masse*), the former a positive category, the latter a negative one (*Failure of Technology*, 132; *Perfektion der Technik*, 154). The corresponding distinction in Spengler is between “personality” and “mass” (*Persönlichkeit* and *Masse*): Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 71; *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 58.

[94] Jünger, *The Failure of Technology*, 164; *Die Perfektion der Technik*, 181.

[95] Jünger, *Die Perfektion der Technik*, 32; cf. *The Failure of Technology*, 31. Jünger shared several of Kaczynski’s other preoccupations, bemoaning “the emancipation of women” (*Failure of Technology*, 180; *Perfektion der Technik*, 203) and warning against “technical organization” that is “subsidized by the state” (Jünger, *Die vollkommene Schöpfung*, 10).

[96] Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Lane, 1912), 363–64; see also Chamberlain, *Natur und Leben* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1928). Further examples of the genre include Alfred Böttcher, *Das Scheinglück der Technik* (Weimar 1932); Paul Krannhals, *Das organische Weltbild* (Munich 1928); and the works of Raoul Francé, such as *Aphorismen zu einer Natur- und Lebensphilosophie* (Zurich 1908); *Die Harmonie in der Natur* (Stuttgart 1926); *Welt, Erde und Menschheit* (Berlin 1928). For post-war continuations of this tradition see Werner Haverbeck, *Das Ziel der Technik* (Olten 1965), and Haverbeck, *Die andere Schöpfung* (Stuttgart 1978).

[97] Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper, 1977), 311. On the relation between Heidegger’s and Friedrich Georg Jünger’s approaches to technology see Langenegger, *Gesamtdeutungen moderner Technik*, 197–98 and 213–15. Comparable ideas are evident in Ernst Niekisch’s 1931 essay “Menschenfresser Technik” (“the cannibalism of technology”) and his later article “Technik und Natur.”

range of works and their popularized corollaries.[98] There are nevertheless too many distinctive continuities between the analysis proposed in the Unabomber Manifesto and the arguments put forward by Klages, Spengler and Jünger, and too many telltale signs in the text of the Manifesto, to ignore Kaczynski's debt to rightwing thought.[99] "Industrial Society and Its Future" assembles a collection of grievances common to multiple generations of reactionary theorists. This constellation of modern discontents is not in itself sufficient to locate Kaczynski's position within the tradition of right-wing *Kulturkritik* and *Zivilisationskritik*, but when such complaints are framed by denunciations of decadence and dissipation, emasculation and perversion, and the pernicious role of leftism, the similarities are unmistakable.

These aspects of the Manifesto, in conjunction with the affinities to figures like Sorel and Evola, raise the specter of a possible proto-fascist reading of the Unabomber phenomenon. As scholars of fascism have noted, "The love of nature in fascist propaganda is a veiled reaction to failed civilization, a reactionary turn against the failure truly to liberate the human senses. [...] the lovers of nature are often also the most vicious killers."[100] Several complicating considerations should be taken into account: the specific strands of right-wing German thought canvassed here had an equivocal relationship to German varieties of fascism, National Socialist or otherwise; and aside from Nazism's deeply ambivalent stance on technics and nature, Italian Fascist attitudes toward ecological questions were not typically anti-technological.[101] Kaczynski's self-conception may perhaps be better understood as a species of the same "neither left nor right" thinking that animates several of the anarchist tendencies examined earlier and has found some resonance within ecological circles in recent decades. This desire to transcend the left-right continuum has a distinct historical pedigree tracing back to the early period of ideological consolidation within classical fascist and protofascist movements at the beginning of the last century.[102] Overall, the mixed historical

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[98] A further factor that complicates any easy categorization of such perspectives into left and right variants is the persistence of personal and intellectual continuities between the two camps, a dynamic that is perhaps most notable in the case of Heidegger's erstwhile student Marcuse.

[99] See Foster, *Author Unknown*, 138 on the parallels to contemporary American conservative pundits in Kaczynski's style and vocabulary.

[100] Mark Neocleous, *Fascism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 87.

[101] Marco Armiero and Wilko Graf von Hardenberg, "Green Rhetoric in Blackshirts: Italian Fascism and the Environment" *Environment and History* vol. 19 no 3 (2013) summarize the situation in Fascist Italy as follows: "Nature conservation showed itself in a plurality of forms, seldom respectful of ecological relationships within the natural world, but always structured as an attempt to bring a 'civilised' nature nearer to the people." (311) There were of course exceptions; a Fascist attack on "the myth of the machine" in an explicitly racist context can be found in Massimo Scaligero, *La Razza di Roma* (Rome: Mantero, 1939), 170–73. For surveys of this contentious theme see Eric Brose, "Generic Fascism Revisited: Attitudes toward Technology in Germany and Italy, 1919–1945" *German Studies Review* vol. 10 no. 2 (1987), 273–97; Peter Staudenmaier, "Fascism" in Shepard Krech III and Carolyn Merchant, editors, *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History* vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2004), 517–21; John Guse, "Nazi technical thought revisited" *History and Technology* vol. 26 no. 1 (2010), 3–33.

[102] On "neither Right nor Left" as a classic fascist slogan see Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of*

record points to a generally rightist but not necessarily fascist milieu as the intellectual backdrop to many of the ideas Kaczynski promotes.

The fundamental shortcoming of the Unabomber Manifesto as a would-be call to revolution, however, is not that it consists of a rehash of right-wing shibboleths. Kaczynski's disquisition on the evils of modern technology fails as both critique and as reconstruction: neither its analyses nor its alternatives are adequate to the task of confronting a technological-industrial system gone awry. The Manifesto posits a conception of technology that is devoid of distinctions; not only is technology demonized, it is rendered monolithic. Kaczynski's undifferentiated hostility toward all things technological prevents him from taking seriously the crucial contrasts between divergent modes of technological practice.[103] This represents a significant departure from the original Luddite movement, whose target was not technology as such but the social relations expressed and enforced by a particular technological apparatus.[104]

Indeed the Manifesto seems to regard social relations as a mere epiphenomenon of technology; it is "technical advances" that have "created a world" deprived of freedom (128), rather than unfree social relations shaping a particular palette of technical choices. This stance erases the central insight on which other critiques of technological irrationality rest, namely that every technical artifact embodies social preferences, principles, and priorities, that every technological device represents and reinforces a specific set of social relationships. Kaczynski misconstrues this elemental reciprocity. He recognizes that "technology changes society" (127), but fails to consider the reverse, that societies also change the technologies they implement, that social factors frame the technological apparatus they produce and reproduce.[105] In his account, it is a static and one-way process in which technologies determine social relations, rather than a dynamic interaction between the two. Contrary to the Manifesto's one-dimensional framework, Langdon Winner writes:

> Different ideas of social and political life entail different technologies for
> their realization. One can create systems of production, energy, trans-

Fascism (New York: Knopf, 2004), 11–12, as well as the provocative exploration of this background in Sternhell, _Neither Right nor Left_, and Steve Bastow and James Martin, _Third Way Discourse: European Ideologies in the Twentieth Century_ (Edinburgh University Press 2003), 93–116. Herbert Gruhl, one of the conservative founders of the German Greens, introduced this phrase into green politics at the beginning of the 1980s before leaving the Greens to found a series of far-right ecological parties.

[103] For an illuminating contrast to Kaczynski see Cornelius Castoriadis' profound meditation on _techne_ and its historical transformations in Castoriadis, _Crossroads in the Labyrinth_ (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 229–59, as well as Castoriadis, "Dead End?" in Castoriadis, _Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy_ (Oxford University Press 1991).

[104] "The Luddites," writes David Noble, "were not against technology per se. They were contending with the social relations of industrial capitalism" (Noble, _Progress Without People: In Defense of Luddism_, Chicago: Kerr 1993, 35). Tellingly, there is no critique of capitalism anywhere in the Unabomber Manifesto.

[105] In the words of Arnold Pacey, "technology is partly an expression of the values and aspirations of

portation, information handling, and so forth that are compatible with the growth of autonomous, self-determining individuals in a democratic polity.[106]

Against this socially mediated and technically nuanced view, "Industrial Society and Its Future" insists on the indivisibility of all technology: "The 'bad' parts of technology cannot be separated from the 'good' parts." (121) Like a golem unleashed, the technological juggernaut cannot be redirected or reconfigured, but only destroyed. For Kaczynski, "modern technology is a unified, tightly organized system, so that, in order to retain *some* technology, one finds oneself obliged to retain *most* technology" (200).[107] In his eyes, the process is both unilinear and irreversible: "technological progress marches in only one direction; it can never be reversed. [...] the system can move in only one direction, toward greater technologization." (129) The Manifesto explicitly rejects the idea of a "new kind of social order." (184) A "society that would reconcile freedom with technology" is simply impossible. (112)

Kaczynski's analysis forecloses the very possibility of technological innovations that are humane and ecologically sound.[108] He does not distinguish bicycles and windmills from nuclear power plants and internal combustion engines. For him, "technology" is simply an oppressive force without specific social contours, ubiquitous and uniform, an inevitably threatening impulse that presents human societies with a stark either-or

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the people who create and use it." Pacey, *The Maze of Ingenuity: Ideas and Idealism in the Development of Technology* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1975), 14.

[106] Winner, *Autonomous Technology*, 325. This social specificity is lost on Kaczynski: "To relieve the pressure on nature it is not necessary to create a special kind of social system, it is only necessary to get rid of industrial society." (184)

[107] There is one brief moment in the Manifesto that acknowledges a possible differentiation. At paragraph 208 in a 232 paragraph essay, Kaczynski writes: "We distinguish between two kinds of technology, which we will call small-scale technology and organization-dependent technology." While this concession is an improvement on the document's otherwise across the board dismissal of technology as such, the distinction Kaczynski draws here depends on precarious assumptions about social organization and scale, and in any case plays no appreciable role in the rest of his analysis.

[108] For an ecological-anarchist exploration of these possibilities see Murray Bookchin, "The Social Matrix of Technology" in Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Palo Alto: Cheshire, 1982), as well as Bookchin, "The Concept of Ecotechnologies and Eco-communities" and "Self-Management and the New Technology" in Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1980). Bookchin was an early critic of Ellul's *Technological Society* and Jünger's *Failure of Technology*, noting that "Both Juenger and Elul believe that the debasement of man by the machine is intrinsic to the development of technology": Murray Bookchin, "Towards a Liberatory Technology" in Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley: Ramparts, 1971), 86. Innovative readings of the debate between social ecologists and deep ecologists can be found in Mark Stoll, "Green versus Green: Religions, Ethics, and the Bookchin-Foreman Dispute" *Environmental History* vol. 6 no. 3 (2001), 412–27; Stephen Millett, "Divergence and Disagreement in Contemporary Anarchist Communism: Social Ecology and Anarchist Primitivism" (dissertation, University of Central Lancashire, 2002); Keith Makoto Woodhouse, *The Ecocentrists: A History of Radical Environmentalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Brian Morris, "Anarchism and Environmental Philosophy" in Nathan Jun, ed.,

choice: to accept it or reject it as a whole.[109] Even Kaczynski's concrete examples of techno-industrial perfidy display this superficial character. His article "Hit where it hurts" points to computers, electric power, and the communications sector, along with the entertainment industry, journalism, and advertising, as the heart of "the system"; Kaczynski says nothing about assembly lines, factory production, or Taylorist work regimens; there is no discussion of mining, no mention even of how computer chips are manufactured. His critique is entirely fixated on the shiny surface of technological gadgetry, not on the physical infrastructure that produces it, much less the social infrastructure that supports it. The myriad ways in which particular technologies incorporate and impose particular labor norms and particular usage patterns are foreign to his analysis. As a consequence, his writings do not register any sense of the social matrix of technological development.

In philosophical terms, the Unabomber Manifesto may be seen as a classic instance of abstract negation. The involuted entwinement of technological progress and social regress, however, calls for a much more finely calibrated determinate negation.[110] Nowhere is this more clear than in Kaczynski's image of wild nature as the alternative to technology run wild. Like Gonzalo's vision of a natural paradise, "innocent and pure," with "no use of metal" and no "need of any engine," Kaczynski conjures up "a nontechnological society" (Note 32) in a revived wilderness. The leitmotif of "wild nature" appears to have fueled much of Kaczynski's personal rage against the machine. In a journal entry from 1985 he wrote: "Have to get revenge for all the wild country being fucked up by the system."[111]

At the crux of the Manifesto's analysis lies a spurious conception of the natural world. This pivotal aspect of Kaczynski's philosophy places him close to the tradition of biocentric thinking, an approach better known in some quarters as deep ecology. Echoing Klages and others on the German right, Kaczynski himself has endorsed "the biocentric paradigm."[112] Identifying its adversary as "industrial society," the centerpiece of deep ecology's view of nature is the notion of wilderness, natural areas unaffected by

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Brill's Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 369–400.

[109] The Manifesto thus fails to capture the complexity of critical reactions to the rise of industrial technology. For a historical overview compare Samuel Hays, *The Response to Industrialism 1885–1914* (University of Chicago Press 1957), and Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[110] For a variety of perspectives that point in this direction see David Dickson, *The Politics of Alternative Technology* (New York: Universe, 1975); Ynestra King, "Toward an Ecological Feminism and a Feminist Ecology" in Joan Rothschild, ed., *Machina Ex Dea: Feminist Perspectives on Technology* (New York: Pergamon, 1983); Andrew Feenberg, *Critical Theory of Technology* (Oxford University Press 1991); Takis Fotopoulos, "Towards a Democratic Conception of Science and Technology" *Democracy and Nature* no. 10, 1998; John McCormick, ed., *Confronting Mass Democracy and Industrial Technology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

[111] Quoted in Chase, *Harvard and the Unabomber*, 59.

[112] Chase, *Harvard and the Unabomber*, 360. Tim Luke notes that the Manifesto's "simplistic construction of 'nature'" comes "straight out of deep ecology." (Luke, "Re-Reading the Unabomber Manifesto," 88) The complex history of shifting conceptions of nature in the Western tradition is examined

human contact. In the biocentric worldview, humanity and nature form a fundamental dichotomy, and the task is to protect the latter from the former.[113] It is from this understanding of nature as the contrary of humanity, and of wild nature as a pristine realm untroubled by the presence of people, that the Manifesto's argument proceeds. But conceiving of nature in this way merely recapitulates the very division it seeks to overcome, and posits a purely imaginary alternative to a very real social and ecological crisis.[114] In one of the momentous ironies of the Manifesto, Kaczynski's perception of nature is ensnared within a decidedly modern and Euro-American paradigm.[115]

Against its own intentions, then, "Industrial Society and Its Future" emphatically demonstrates, in the words of Theodor Adorno, "how erroneous the crude antithesis of technology and nature is."[116] Adorno's diagnosis, composed before any of Kaczynski's bombs had been built, goes to the core of the Manifesto's failings and lays bare the social and ideological conditions out of which the Unabomber developed:

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in R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (Oxford University Press 1960); Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon, 1983); Kate Soper, *What is Nature? Culture, Politics and the Non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[113] For a concise statement of this position see Andrew McLaughlin, "The Heart of Deep Ecology" in George Sessions, ed., *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995). John Zerzan, for his part, sharply repudiates the possibility of a transformed technology participating in an "integration between humanity and nature." (Zerzan in *Green Anarchy* no. 14, Fall 2003, 1)

[114] A wealth of historical and philosophical literature interrogates the notion of 'wilderness'; cf. Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique" *Environmental Ethics* vol. 11 no.1 (1989), 71–83; Peter Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (Johns Hopkins University Press 1990); Peter van Wyck, *Primitives in the Wilderness: Deep Ecology and the Missing Human Subject* (State University of New York Press 1997); J. Baird Callicott, "Contemporary Criticisms of the Received Wilderness Idea" in David Cole, ed., *Wilderness Science in a Time of Change* (Fort Collins: Rocky Mountain Research Station, 2000), 2431. The best condensed critique is by environmental historian William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting back to the Wrong Nature" in Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: Norton, 1995).

[115] While Kaczynski does recognize that "even pre-industrial societies can do significant damage to nature" (184), he never examines the presuppositions of his construction of nature in a historically informed way. Cf. William Thomas, ed., *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (University of Chicago Press 1956); Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature* (Johns Hopkins University Press 1992); William Denevan, "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* vol. 82 no. 3 (1992), 36985; Charles Redman, *Human Impact on Ancient Environments* (University of Arizona Press 1999); Stephen Germic, *American Green: Class, Crisis, and the Deployment of Nature in Central Park, Yosemite, and Yellowstone* (Lexington Books 2001); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature* (University of California Press 2001); Noel Castree, *Making Sense of Nature* (Routledge 2014).

[116] Theodor Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 106; cf. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 68. Building on his critique of the Unabomber Manifesto's precursors, Adorno's analysis anticipates and negates Kaczynski's: "So long as

Delight in nature was bound up with the conception of the subject as being-for-itself and virtually infinite in itself; as such the subject projected itself onto nature and in its isolation felt close to it; the subject's powerlessness in a society petrified into a second nature becomes the motor of the flight into a purportedly first nature. [...] In schema borrowed from bourgeois sexual morality, technology is said to have ravished nature, yet under transformed relations of production it would just as easily be able to assist nature and on this poor earth help it become what perhaps it would like to be.[117]

For Kaczynski, however, nature and freedom occupy an absolute status, one that sanctions violence as regenerative and salvific. In his longing to disrupt industrial society he has fashioned a false alternative, an ideology that claims to exalt nature and is announced by explosions. This ideology misunderstands both nature and freedom; the vision of redemption it proffers is poisoned at the root.[118] Kaczynski takes his place in an unlikely ideological lineage that encompasses proto-fascists and neo-primitivists. Eschewing the determinate negation of ecological despoliation and social misery in favor of a simpler scapegoat under the rubric of technology, the Unabomber Manifesto forgets its own historical context and political trajectory, in a hoped-for escape from a modernity gone mad.[119]

progress, deformed by utilitarianism, does violence to the surface of the earth, it will be impossible – in spite of all proof to the contrary – completely to counter the perception that what antedates the trend is in its backwardness better and more humane. Rationalization is not yet rational; the universality of mediation has yet to be transformed into living life; and this endows the traces of immediacy, however dubious and antiquated, with an element of corrective justice. The longing that is assuaged and betrayed by them and made pernicious through spurious fulfillment is nevertheless legitimated by the denial of gratification continually imposed by the status quo." Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 64.

[117] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 65–68; I have altered Robert HullotKentor's fine translation by rendering "Technik" as "technology" and have drawn on Herbert Marcuse's partial translation as well (see Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 66); cf. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 103–07. Consider also this passage: "For in every particular aesthetic experience of nature the social whole is lodged. Society not only provides the schemata of perception but peremptorily determines what nature means through contrast and similarity. Experience of nature is co-constituted by the capacity of determinate negation. With the expansion of technique and, even more important, the total expansion of the exchange principle, natural beauty increasingly fulfills a contrasting function and is thus integrated into the reified world it opposes." (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 68)

[118] Against this tradition stand the closing words of Max Horkheimer's 1944 essay "The Revolt of Nature": "In summary, we are the heirs, for better or worse, of the Enlightenment and technological progress. To oppose these by regressing to more primitive stages does not alleviate the permanent crisis they have brought about. On the contrary, such expedients lead from historically reasonable to utterly barbaric forms of social domination. The sole way of assisting nature is to unshackle its seeming opposite, independent thought." Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 127.

[119] It is instructive to re-read the Manifesto's candid statement "The positive ideal that we propose is nature" in light of Adorno's penetrating criticism of the deceptive simplicity this move conceals: "If the whole is the spell, the negative, then the negation of particularities, whose concept consists in that whole, remains negative. Its positive moment would only be determinate negation, critique, not a suddenly transformative result that holds affirmation happily in its hands." (Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*,

Though a product of its time, "Industrial Society and Its Future" continues to inspire admirers and adherents a quarter of a century after its appearance. With its frontier ethos and its myth of a manly hero standing up against overwhelming odds, the Unabomber story unwittingly replicates conventional expectations about the "masculine primitive" bravely resisting the "perils of civilization."[120] Kaczynski's beliefs have proven attractive to figures like Anders Breivik, who appropriated substantial portions of the Manifesto for his own crusade.[121] But the more significant contemporary influence emerges in various environmental offshoots seeking "the collapse of industrial civilization," from Derrick Jensen and "Deep Green Resistance" to Paul Kingsnorth's "Dark Ecology."[122] Today the Unabomber seems to be enjoying an online renaissance, drawing a new generation of enthusiasts.[123]

This resurgence of interest makes it all the more important to confront the flaws in Kaczynski's credo. If the future prophesied in the Manifesto remains a prisoner of its own unexamined past, what alternative outlook might there be? What could a different technological prospect look like? To those who are profoundly dissatisfied with the same ensemble of social and ecological conditions that Kaczynski so furiously denounces, a more dialectically complex approach to the topic is unlikely to provide the same kind of visceral identification. Yet the effort is vital nonetheless.

A critical perspective based on collective social transformation rather than catastrophism could be built around a contextual understanding of technology instead of

Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1966, 161; cf. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, New York: Continuum 1973, 158–59) See also Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 164: "The whole, as a positive entity, cannot be antithetically extracted from an estranged and splintered reality by means of the will and power of the individual; if it is not to degenerate into deception and ideology, it must assume the form of negation."

[120] Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic, 1993), 227–32 and 251–54; for the classic study of these myths see Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (Wesleyan University Press 1973).

[121] Aage Borchgrevink, *A Norwegian Tragedy: Anders Behring Breivik and the Massacre on Utøya* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 20–22; Mattias Gardell, "Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe" *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 26 no. 1 (2014), 129–55.

[122] See e.g. Paul Kingsnorth, "Dark Ecology" *Orion Magazine* December 20, 2012, reprinted in his 2017 collection *Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist.* Jensen's case is more complicated. As with Zerzan, Kaczynski's relations with Jensen and his circle have evidently become strained, though ideological commonalities are not difficult to discern. There are also noteworthy differences; for a "Deep Green Resistance" perspective on the history of right-wing ecological politics see *Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet* (New York: Seven Stories, 2011), 115–26.

[123] John Richardson, "Children of Ted: The Unlikely New Generation of Unabomber Acolytes" *New York Magazine* December 2018; Jake Hanrahan, "Inside the Unabomber's odd and furious online revival" *Wired* August 1, 2018. Perhaps the clearest successor to Kaczynski is the semi-clandestine (and possibly apocryphal) group calling itself "Individuals Tending Toward the Wild," sometimes rendered "Individualists Tending Toward Savagery" or ITS, whose early communiqués cited the Manifesto before disavowing Kaczynski. Like many of his comments on kindred contemporaries, Kaczynski's remarks about ITS have been dismissive. See the discussion of ITS in Michael Loadenthal, *The Politics of Attack: Communiqués and Insurrectionary Violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 84–90.

a rigid technological determinism, reaching toward an integration of social and ecological values rather than hypostasizing their separation. This would mean actively re-shaping human engagement with technology instead of capitulating to the notion—apparently radical but essentially reactionary—that the very attempt to do so must have an inevitably warping effect. Such a critical perspective renounces the dream of regeneration through violence in order to overcome debasement. These are the sorts of conclusions that might have resulted from some of the Manifesto's reflections, but that in the end are impeded by the text itself, by the brutal conditions of its dissemination, and by its reception and interpretation so far.

Kaczynski's hope of transcending technological disaster in order to return to wild nature is a hollow ambition that mistakes its own origins and obstructs its own aims. Surmounting the current ecological crisis will mean more than simply changing or eliminating technical equipment; it will mean fundamentally reconstructing all of society from the ground up. Whether in local or global terms, as Chaia Heller observes, "There is no recipe for a 'good' or 'ecological' technology independent of a truly democratic context."[124] In Kaczynski's eyes, though, radical social transformation itself is inconsequential. That decisive error indicates how thoroughly ideologies of industrial apocalypse misunderstand the interrelationship between technology and its social underpinnings.[125] Devoid of this dialectical sensibility, Kaczynski is left with a grandiose but futile call for "a revolution against modernity, and against civilization in general."[126]

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[124] Chaia Heller, *Ecology of Everyday Life: Rethinking the Desire for Nature* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1999), 32.

[125] Ole Moen accurately captures this aspect of Kaczynski's argument: "Kaczynski seeks to initiate a revolutionary movement that will aim to 'kill' technological civilization. This is a good aim for a revolutionary movement, he argues, since it is a simple aim that has a clear criterion for success, and once success is achieved, the revolution will be irreversible. These features, he suggests, will make the anti-tech revolution more likely to succeed than the 20th century socialist revolutions. The socialist revolutionaries had a complicated goal and a vague success criterion. Eradicating technology is more clear-cut. Moreover, since the socialist revolutions only changed the structure of society, the revolutions could be undone. The anti-tech revolution, by contrast, essentially involves the destruction of all advanced technological tools." Moen, "The Unabomber's ethics" *Bioethics* vol. 33 no. 2 (2019), 223–29.

[126] Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery*, 171.\

3. Disney Ecology

The Walt Disney movie Bambi, one of the best-known films of all time, is more than a treacly children's fable. The tale of Bambi and Thumper is also a parable about habitat destruction, as seen through the eyes of various furry critters. One of the movie's dramatic high points comes in a scene which I still recall vividly from the first time I saw it at age seven. All the animals are grazing peacefully in a meadow at the forest's edge when the soundtrack shifts to ominous tones. Suddenly the creatures scatter in every direction, and after several harrowing moments of chaos and confusion, Bambi finds his way back to his mother. Shaken, he asks her what happened. In a grave voice she responds: *"Man was in the forest."*

This one line, spoken by a cartoon doe and absorbed by generations of children, epitomizes much that is wrongheaded and dangerous in North American environmentalist thought. "Man was in the forest" signifies, to Bambi and to the audience, that the mere presence of humans in a natural landscape is threatening and dangerous. The message this sends, the ideology it projects, is that human interaction with the natural world is by definition destructive. In much more subtle and sophisticated forms, this same notion animates an alarmingly large proportion of contemporary environmental activists. People as such are bad for animals and ecosystems alike.

Aside from revealing a thoroughly Disneyan contempt for historical and social specificity, this view is literally ecologically hopeless: the only choice it leaves us is despair. This view means that stemming and reversing the environmental crisis, and undertaking an ecological reconstruction of the devastation that "Man" has wrought, are simply impossible. If humans are per se hazardous to the earth, there is no point in trying to reshape societal structures or change environmental practices; habitat destruction, species loss, and a poisoned planet are just inevitable as long as we're around.

Unfortunately, such misguided attitudes often reach their peak in the crucial issue of wilderness defense. Many environmentalists most active and militant in this arena—an immensely important one for the radical ecology movement as a whole—are inclined to portray wilderness as those regions that are untouched by human impact of any sort. In keeping with the patriarchal terminology of "Man's" inevitable destructiveness, the notion of "virgin forests" propagates the false idea that the remaining large tracts of old-growth trees have reached their supposedly pristine state without any human influence, and that the best way to protect such areas is to reduce or eliminate all forms of human contact with them.

This perspective is not just historically naive; it also surreptitiously endorses the imperialist view of the North American continent put forth by the European conquerors.

For these grand forests that today appear as wilderness were, of course, populated for millennia by indigenous peoples who left their mark in myriad ways on the landscape. In fact, the symbiotic relationships established between indigenous communities and the woodlands they lived in often enhanced, rather than detracted from, biodiversity. Far from representing some mythical untouched terrain, remaining old-growth forests should properly be seen as the product of particular human influences. (Of course, there are also many historical examples of indigenous practices that had dire environmental effects; the romantic image of native peoples as ecological saints is yet another, equally racist, myth.)

If we want to avoid this sort of historical ignorance, radical ecologists need to resist the tempting simplifications of Disney Ecology. In our engagement within environmental movements, in social struggles of various sorts, and in interactions with our coworkers and neighbors, we can offer an alternative to the ideology of humans-as-cancer. Social ecology's insistence on the societal roots of environmental disruption, and the vision of social and ecological reconstruction it upholds, point to a fundamentally different way of understanding the ecological crisis and our possible reactions to it. Building on social ecology's insights, radical environmental activists can help to create and promote a coherent alternative to Disney Ecology: an ecological humanism.

This won't be a simple task, but it is a vitally important one. Several decades ago, when I first saw Bambi, the goal of environmentalists was to convince people of the seriousness, indeed the reality, of the ecological crisis. That struggle, of course, has not been definitively won, but it has shifted into a new phase. The challenge we face today is to formulate an appropriate analysis of and response to this crisis—one that is radical, emancipatory, and sustainable. Social ecology offers us the critical tools to help meet that challenge in the years to come.

4. Ambiguities of Animal Rights

Throughout Europe and North America, a considerable portion of the contemporary radical scene takes for granted the notion that animal liberation is an integral part of revolutionary politics. Many talented and dedicated activists in anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian movements came to political maturity in the context of animal rights campaigns, and in some circles veganism and animal liberation are considered the apogee of oppositional authenticity.[1]

In order to contest these views, and critically examine the philosophical and political presuppositions that underlie them, it is not necessary to defend or condone the exploitation of non-human animals in factory farms, cosmetics laboratories, and elsewhere. Much of the current industrialized manufacture of animal products is socially worthless and ecologically disastrous, as is to be expected in an economy organized around commodification and profit. Nor does the critique of animal rights entail the wholesale rejection of personal convictions or lifestyle choices. There are a number of legitimate reasons to abstain from eating meat or to oppose cruelty to animals.

This essay explores some of the illegitimate reasons for doing so. Such an undertaking is fraught with difficulties, not least of which is the strained sense of incredulity and indignation that critiques of animal rights almost invariably arouse. The topic leads onto tricky terrain, both ethically and politically, in part because it directly impinges on dietary predilections, a matter that is at once profoundly private and inescapably public. Although animal rights involves much more than vegetarianism or veganism, it does tend to exacerbate the seemingly inherent self-righteousness of food politics, where puritanism is often mistaken for radicalism.[2]

It is nevertheless essential to face such misgivings squarely, in the hope of provoking a more thoughtful debate on the merits of animal rights. I view animal rights thinking as a specific kind of moral mistake and a symptom of political confusion. Much like its ideological cousin, pacifism, the political and moral theory of animal rights offers simple

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[1] For purposes of this essay, I am ignoring the differences between 'animal rights' and 'animal liberation' discourses. I will use both terms more or less interchangeably to designate the belief that harming and killing non-human animals is on the whole impermissible.

[2] A further complication stems from the fact that many advocates of animal rights are also determined practitioners of an elusive eclecticism: When challenged on philosophical grounds, they quickly shift the terms of the dispute onto political territory. When their political claims are rebutted, they fall back on arguments about economics or religion or biology or personal health. Freely mixing empirical and normative claims, they cut a wide swath through anthropology, ethology, linguistics, psychology, and a host of other fields. This can make it difficult to assess what is at stake and why. I will try to take account of a variety of animal rights positions in my critique.

but false answers to important ethical questions. At the risk of collapsing competing versions of animal rights theory into one monolithic category, I would like to consider several of these questions from a social-ecological perspective in order to show why much of the ideology of animal rights is both anti-humanist and anti-ecological, and why its reasoning is frequently at odds with the project of creating a free world.[3]

As an attempt to extend traditional ethical frameworks to non-human nature, animal rights is simultaneously much too ambitious and much too timid. It fundamentally misconstrues what is distinctive about humans and our relation to the natural world as well as to the realm of moral action, and at the same time treats "higher" animals anthropomorphically while completely ignoring the vast majority of creatures that make this planet what it is. But the problem with animal rights thinking goes deeper still. The very project of simply extending existing moral systems, rather than radically transforming them, is flawed from the start.

Many animal rights theorists readily acknowledge that mainstream western traditions of ethical thought are unsatisfactory, but they focus their criticisms on traditional morality's supposed anthropocentrism. This is unconvincing; the primary problem with the mainstream western tradition is not that it promotes anthropocentric ethics, but that it promotes bourgeois ethics.[4] The basic categories of academic moral philosophy are steeped in capitalist values, from the notion of 'interests' to the notion of 'contract'; the standard analysis of 'moral standing' replicates exchange relations, and the individualist conception of 'moral agents' obscures the social contexts which produce and sustain agency or hinder it.

Yet these categories are the same ones that animal rights theorists ask us to apply to those creatures (some of them, anyway) that have typically been neglected by moral philosophy. In this way, animal liberation doctrine perpetuates and reinforces the liberal assumptions that are hegemonic within contemporary capitalist cultures, under the guise of contesting these assumptions. Indeed one of the chief reasons for the popularity of animal rights within radical circles is that it appears to offer an ex-

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[3] My discussion is primarily based on the following texts: Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*; Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*; Mary Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter*; James Rachels, *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism*; David DeGrazia, *Taking Animals Seriously*; Gary Francione, *Rain Without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement*.

[4] Anthropocentrism is an ideology that serves to mask the crucial divisions within humankind. Animal liberationists are not alone in misapprehending the function of anthropocentrism; this misunderstanding is widely dispersed throughout contemporary environmental philosophy. Social change movements often err by mistaking entrenched institutions for mere ideologies (consider, for example, the many critiques of racism that conceive of it as a collection of attitudes to be changed by appeals to conscience); this is the typical idealism of would-be reformers. The animal rights movement, along with much of ecocentric philosophy, has made the opposite error, and thus succumbed to a different sort of idealism. It mistakes the ideology of anthropocentrism for an actual institution, an embodiment of social practice. But there are no powerful anthropocentric institutions, only elitist ones hiding behind a universal veneer. Capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, to choose three prominent examples, certainly do not privilege humans as such, but rather some humans over other humans.

treme affront to the status quo while actually recuperating the ideological foundations of the status quo.

Relying on a dubious analogy to institutionalized forms of social domination and hierarchy, animal rights advocates argue that drawing an ethically significant distinction between human beings and non-human animals is a form of 'speciesism', a mere prejudice that illegitimately privileges members of one's own species over members of other species. According to this theory, animals that display a certain level of relative physiological and psychological complexity – usually vertebrates, that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals – have the same basic moral status as humans. A central nervous system is, at bottom, what confers moral considerability; in some versions of the theory, only creatures with the capacity to experience pain have any moral status whatsoever. These animals are often designated as 'sentient'.

Thus on the animal rights view, to draw a line between human beings and other sentient creatures is arbitrary and unwarranted, in the same way that classical racism and sexism unjustly deemed women and people of color to be undeserving of moral equality. The next logical step in expanding the circle of ethical concern is to overcome speciesism and grant equal consideration to the interests of all sentient beings, human and non-human.[5]

These arguments are seductive but spurious. The central analogy to the civil rights movement and the women's movement is trivializing and ahistorical. Both of those social movements were initiated and driven by members of the dispossessed and excluded groups themselves, not by benevolent men or white people acting on their behalf. Both movements were built precisely around the idea of reclaiming and reasserting a shared *humanity* in the face of a society that had deprived it and denied it. No civil rights activist or feminist ever argued, "We're sentient beings too!" They argued, "We're fully human too!" Animal liberation doctrine, far from extending this humanist impulse, directly undermines it.

Moreover, the animal rights stance forgets a crucial fact about ethical action. There is indeed a critically important distinction between moral agents (beings who can engage in ethical deliberation, entertain alternative moral choices, and act according to their best judgement) and all other morally considerable beings. Moral agents are uniquely capable of formulating, articulating, and defending a conception of their own interests. No other morally considerable beings are capable of this; in order for their interests to be taken into account in ethical deliberation, these interests must be imputed and interpreted by some moral agent. As far as we know, mentally competent adult human beings are the only moral agents there are.[6]

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[5] The locus classicus for this line of reasoning is Peter Singer's book *Animal Liberation*, which is built around the idea that the social liberation movements of the 1960's lead naturally to the animal liberation movement and that the logical structure of racism, sexism and 'speciesism' are identical.

[6] Animal rights theorists like to respond that human infants and mentally disabled adults are not agents in this sense, a point which I take to be obvious and irrelevant to the question at hand. I am not arguing that moral considerability is restricted to moral agents, nor that there is a firm ontological

This decisive distinction is fundamental to ethics itself. To act ethically means, among other things, to respect the principle that persuasion and consent are preferable to coercion and manipulation. This principle cannot be directly applied to human interactions with animals. Animals cannot be persuaded and cannot give consent. In order to accord proper consideration to an animal's well-being, moral agents must make some determination of what that animal's interests are. This is not only unnecessary in the case of other moral agents, it is morally prohibited under normal conditions.

To grasp the significance of this difference, consider the following. I live with several people and a number of cats, toward whom I have various ethical responsibilities. If I am convinced that one of my human housemates needs to take some kind of medicine, it is not acceptable for me to force feed it to her, assuming she isn't deranged. Instead, I can try to persuade her, through rational deliberation and ethical argument, that it would be best if she took the medicine. But if I think that one of the cats needs to take some kind of medicine, I may well have no choice but to force feed it to him or trick him into eating it.[7] In other words, taking the interests of animals seriously and treating them as morally considerable beings requires a very different sort of ethical action from the sort that is typically appropriate with other people.

The failure to account for this salient feature of moral conduct is one reason why so many proponents of animal rights are hostile to humanist values. But an equally serious failing of animal rights thinking is its obliviousness to ecological values. Recall that on the animal rights view, it is only individual creatures endowed with sentience that deserve moral consideration. Trees, plants, lakes, rivers, forests, ecosystems, and even most creatures that zoologists classify as "animals", have no interests, well-being, or worth of their own, except inasmuch as they promote the interests of sentient beings. Animal rights advocates have simply traded in speciesism for phylumism.[8]

Thus even on its own terms, as an attempt to expand the circle of moral consideration beyond the human realm to the natural world, animal rights falls severely short. But the problem is not merely one of inadequate scope. The individual rights approach,

divide between humans and other organisms. What the peculiar role of moral agents demonstrates is that some distinctions between different types of moral considerability are very much warranted, and that the mere equal consideration of interests fails to capture some fundamental facets of ethical action.

[7] To recognize the special status of competent adult humans in this sense is not an instance of privilege or prejudice. It is no more arbitrary than acknowledging that women have a special status in reproductive decisions, or that goalkeepers have a special status in soccer games, or that pilots have a special status in aerial transport. To cry 'privilege' in this context is analogous to condemning the 'injustice' inherent in the fact that only speakers of Hungarian may participate in a conversation in that language. Since cross-species 'translation' of this sort is impossible, the anomalous position of human moral agents is likely to persist until we encounter other beings who are capable of engaging in ethical discourse.

[8] Technically the phylum Chordata includes animals that have a central nervous system regardless of whether they have a fully formed spinal column; it is the closest taxonomic approximation to the sort of animals that animal rights theorists consider "animals", although many animal rights proponents focus primarily on the even smaller class of mammals. While prominent spokespeople for animal liberation like Peter Singer have explicitly defended the view that no other organisms have any kind of moral

with its concomitant view of interests, suffering, and welfare, cannot be reconciled with an ecological perspective. The well-being of a complex functioning ecological community, with its soils, rocks, waters, micro-organisms, and animal and plant denizens, cannot be reduced to the well-being of those denizens as individuals. The dynamic relationships among the constituent members are as important as the disparate interests of each member of the ensemble.

To focus on the interests of singular animals (and on the small minority of sentient ones at that), and to posit a general duty not to harm these interests or cause suffering, is to miss this ecological dimension entirely.[9] Conflicting interests are part of what accounts for the magnificent variety and complexity of the natural world; the notion of granting equal consideration to all such interests is incoherent in evolutionary as well as ecological terms. This would remain the case even in a completely vegetarian society populated solely by organic subsistence farmers; food cultivation of any sort means the systematic deprivation of habitat and sustenance for some animals and requires the continuous frustration of their interests. Extending the individual rights paradigm to sentient animals simply obscures this fundamental facet of terrestrial existence.[10]

Animal rights thus degrades, rather than develops, the humanist impulse embodied in liberatory social movements, and its basic philosophical thrust is directly contrary to the project of elaborating an ecological ethics. As a moral theory, it leaves much to be desired. But what of its political affiliations and its practical implications? Here as well skepticism is in order.

All factions in the animal rights camp appear to share a profound faith in the revolutionary potential of purchasing decisions and consumer choices: If enough people stop buying meat, factory farms will go out of business. This commitment to consumer politics is a classically voluntarist approach to social change which further highlights

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standing, this position is not necessarily shared by all animal rights philosophers. Tom Regan, for example, acknowledges that non-sentient life forms may have inherent value which could be accounted for within a broader environmental ethic. But a rights framework is patently unsuited to such a project; a meaningful ecological ethics cannot be based on the interests of individual organisms, whether sentient or not.

[9] The emphasis on suffering is questionable in any case. That physical comfort involves an aversion to pain is a truism, but this tells us little about its moral significance. Especially in its utilitarian variants, animal liberation unproblematically treats pain as a moral bad and pleasure as a moral good. Such a straightforward identification is implausibly simplistic even within the social realm; there are not a few instances in which pain is a moral desideratum, as well as cases in which pleasure should be discouraged rather than fostered. The ethical import of sense experiences is entirely context-dependent.

[10] The conception of rights as individual attributes that function as a sort of moral trump evolved in conjunction with the reciprocal notion of *responsibilities*; each was held to entail the other. These ideas were moreover developed in a social context that emphasized democratic deliberation and the contestation of competing claims, in the course of which rights-bearers continually refined and modified their moral claims. This context cannot be transferred to human-animal interactions. There is no meaningful sense in which animals can be expected to attend to their responsibilities; and their claims to rights can only be advanced representationally, via human intermediaries. Trapped as it is within a liberal conceptual framework, animal rights is inevitably paternalistic.

animal liberation's debt to liberalism. It also reveals an elementary misunderstanding of the structure of capitalist economies.[11]

Even within the narrow confines of 'ethical shopping', however, an animal rights perspective frequently confuses the relevant issues. Instead of investigating the social and ecological conditions under which bananas and coffee, for example, reach shopping carts and kitchen tables in Seattle and Stockholm, the myopic focus on sentience asks us to cast a suspicious eye on locally raised free-range poultry.

This regressive shift from the political economy of food production to the pangs of conscience of individual consumption is testimony to the underlying class bias and cultural insularity that run throughout much of the animal rights tendency. Animal rights takes the range of nutritional choices typical of a narrow socio-economic stratum and elevates it to a universal virtue, while stigmatizing the sources of protein commonly available to economically deprived urban communities, rural working class families, and peasants in the global south.[12]

The unexamined cultural prejudices embedded deep within animal rights thinking carry political implications that are unavoidably elitist. A consistent animal rights stance, after all, would require many aboriginal peoples to abandon their sustainable livelihoods and lifeways completely. Animal rights has no reasonable alternative to offer to communities like the Inuit, whose very existence in their ecological niche is predicated on hunting animals. An animal rights viewpoint can only look down disdainfully on those peasant societies in Latin America and elsewhere that depend on small-scale animal husbandry as an integral part of their diet, as well as pastoralists in Africa and Asia who rely centrally upon animals to maintain traditional subsistence economies that long predate the colonial imposition of capitalism. These are not matters of "taste" but of sustainability and survival.

Forsaking such practices makes no ecological or social sense, and would be tantamount to eliminating these distinctive societies themselves, all for the sake of assimilation to standards of morality and nutrition propounded by middle-class westerners convinced of their own rectitude. Too many animal rights proponents forget that their belief system is essentially a European-derived construct, and neglect the practical

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[11] That production, not circulation, is the decisive sector in market economies has been a mainstay of radical analyses of capitalism since the first volume of *Capital* was published in 1867. But this insight is hardly unique to Marxists. Even mainstream economists concur that consumer spending "is not a driving force in our economy, but a driven one." Robert Heilbroner and Lester Thurow, *Economics Explained*, New York 1998, p. 92.

[12] Kathryn Paxton George's book *Animal, Vegetable, or Woman? A Feminist Critique of Ethical Vegetarianism* (Albany 2000) provocatively criticizes this elitist cultural and physiological model, along with its curiously myopic nutritional assumptions, as an expression of masculine bias. In a similar vein, Michael Pollan's article "An Animal's Place" diagnoses animal rights as a quintessentially urban ideology that reflects a detached and distorted relationship with the natural world. Pollan's article can be found at http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/an-animals-place/

repercussions of universalizing it into an unqualified principle of human moral conduct as such.[13]

Nowhere is this combination of parochialism and condescension more apparent than in the animus against hunting. Many animal rights enthusiasts cannot conceive of hunting as anything other than a brutal and senseless activity undertaken for contemptible reasons. Heedless of their own prejudices, they take hunting for an expression of speciesist prejudice. What animal rights theorists malign as 'sport hunting' often provides a significant seasonal supplement to the diets of rural populations who lack the luxuries of tempeh and seitan.

Even indigenous communities engaged in conspicuously low-impact traditional hunting have been harassed and vilified by animal rights activists. The campaign against seal hunting in the 1980's, for example, prominently targeted Inuit practices.[14] In the late 1990's, the Makah people of Neah Bay in the northwestern United States tried to re-establish their communal whale hunt, harvesting exactly one gray whale in 1999. The Makah hunt was non-commercial, for subsistence purposes, and fastidiously humane; they chose a whale species that is not endangered and went to considerable lengths to accommodate anti-whaling sentiment.

Nevertheless, when the Makah attempted to embark on their first expedition in 1998, they were physically confronted by the Sea Shepherd Society and other animal protection organizations, who occupied Neah Bay for several months. For these groups, animal rights took precedence over human rights. Many of these animal advocates embellished their pro-whale rhetoric with hoary racist stereotypes about native people and allied themselves with unreconstructed apologists for colonial domination and dispossession.[15]

Such examples are far from rare. In fact, animal rights sentiment has frequently served as an entry point for rightwing positions into left movements. Because much of the left has generally been reluctant to think clearly and critically about nature, about biological politics, and about ethical complexity, this unsettling affinity between animal rights and rightwing politics — an affinity which has a lengthy historical pedigree — remains a serious concern.

While hardly typical of the current as a whole, it is not unusual to find the most militant proponents of animal liberation also espousing staunch opposition to abortion, homosexuality, and other purportedly 'unnatural' phenomena. The "Hardline"

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[13] It is certainly true that many non-western cultural traditions have cultivated a markedly more respectful attitude toward animals. Indeed many Europeans and Euro-Americans have come to vegetarianism through an encounter with Eastern spiritual traditions, usually refracted through an orientalist and Romantic lens. My point is simply that the full-fledged philosophy of animal rights is ultimately a reaction against the western heritage's comparative lack of attention to animals – a reaction which itself stands well within the boundaries of that heritage.

[14] On the anti-sealing campaign and its impact on Inuit (Eskimo) society, see George Wenzel, *Animal Rights, Human Rights: Ecology, Economy and Ideology in the Canadian Arctic* (Toronto 1991).

[15] For an incisive early analysis of the Makah whaling conflict, see Alx Dark's article "The Makah Whale Hunt" at http://www.cnie.org/nae/cases/makah/

tendency, which in the 1990's spread from North America to Central Europe, is perhaps the most striking example.[16] But the connections to reactionary politics extend substantially further. The recent Russian youth group "Moving Together", an ultranationalist and sexually repressive organization, has made animal protection one of the central planks in its platform, while the Swiss "Association Against Animal Factories" wallows in antisemitic propaganda. In Denmark, the only party with a designated portfolio for animal concerns is the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party, while the far-right British National Party boasts of its commitment to animal rights. The contemporary neofascist scene in Europe and North America has shown an abiding interest in the theme as well; over the last decade many "National Revolutionaries" and "Third Positionists" have become actively involved in animal rights campaigns.[17]

Although this widespread overlap between animal liberation politics and the xenophobic and authoritarian right may seem incongruous, it has played a prominent role in the history of fascism since the early twentieth century. Many fascist theoreticians prided themselves on their movement's steadfast rejection of anthropocentrism, and the German variant of fascism in particular frequently tended toward an animal rights position. Nazi biology textbooks insisted that "there exist no physical or psychological characteristics which would justify a differentiation of mankind from the animal

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[16] The "Hardline" faction grew out of the Straight Edge movement in punk culture, and combines uncompromising veganism with purportedly "pro-life" politics. Hardliners believe in self-purification from various forms of 'pollution': animal products, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and "deviant" sexual behavior, including abortion, homosexuality, and indeed any sex for pleasure rather than procreation. Their version of animal liberation professes absolute authority based on the "laws of nature". The "Hardline Creed" reads in part: "The time has come for an ideology and for a movement that is both physically and morally strong enough to do battle against the forces of evil that are destroying the earth (and all life upon it)... That ideology, that movement, is Hardline. A belief system, and a way of life that lives by one ethos — that all innocent life is sacred, and must have the right to live out its natural state of existence in peace, without interference... Any action that does interfere with such rights shall not be considered a "right" in itself, and therefore shall not be tolerated. Those who hurt or destroy life around them, or create a situation in which that life or the quality of it is threatened shall from then on no longer be considered innocent life, and in turn will no longer have rights. Adherents to the hardline will abide by these principles in daily life. They shall live at one with the laws of nature, and shall not forsake them for the desire of pleasure — from deviant sexual acts and/or abortion, to drug use of any kind (and all other cases where one harms all life around them under the pretext that they are just harming themselves). And, in following with the belief that one shall not infringe on an innocent's life — no animal product shall be consumed (be it flesh, milk or egg). Along with this purity of everyday life, the true hardliner must strive to liberate the rest of the world from its chains — saving lives in some cases, and in others, dealing out justice to those guilty of destroying it." See http://www.faqs.org/faqs/cultures/straight-edge-faq/section-88.html and http://www.fortunecity.com/greenfield/shell/5/sxe4life.htm#hardline

[17] The National Revolutionary and Third Position currents trace their lineage back to leading Fascists from the 1920's and 1930's, especially to "dissident" Nazis like the Strasser brothers. For a firsthand example of this increasingly common trend and its wholehearted embrace of animal liberation politics, see http://autarky.rosenoire.org/nrf/personaldefence.html The flirtation between neofascists and animal liberationists has not been a one-sided affair. Jutta Ditfurth provides an excellent overview of the upsurge in extreme right views among animal rights groups in Germany in her book *Entspannt in die Barbarei* (Hamburg 1996), esp. Chapter 5.

world."[18] Hitler himself was zealously committed to animal welfare causes, and was a vegetarian and opponent of vivisection. His lieutenant Goebbels declared: "The Fuhrer is a convinced vegetarian, on principle. His arguments cannot be refuted on any serious basis. They are totally unanswerable."[19] Other leading Nazis, like Rudolf Hess, were even stricter in their vegetarianism, and the party promoted raw fruits and nuts as the ideal diet, much like the most scrupulous vegans today. Himmler excoriated hunting and required the top ranks of the SS to follow a vegetarian regimen, while Goering banned animal experimentation.

The list of pro-animal predilections on the part of top Nazis is long, but more important are the animal rights policies implemented by the Nazi state and the underlying ideology that justified them. Within a few months of taking power, the Nazis passed animal rights laws that were unprecedented in scale and that explicitly affirmed the moral status of animals independent of any human interest. These decrees stressed the duty to avoid causing pain to animals and established extremely detailed and concrete guidelines for interactions with animals. According to a leading scholar of Nazi animal legislation, "the Animal Protection Law of 1933 was probably the strictest in the world".[20]

A 1939 compendium of Nazi animal protection statutes proclaimed that "the German people have always had a great love for animals and have always been conscious of our strong ethical obligations toward them." The Nazi laws insisted on "the right which animals inherently possess to be protected in and of themselves."[21]] These were not mere philosophical postulates; the ordinances closely regulated the permissible treatment of domestic and wild animals and designated a variety of protected species while restricting commercial and scientific use of animals. The official reasoning behind these decrees was remarkably similar to latter-day animal rights arguments. "To the German, animals are not merely creatures in the organic sense, but creatures who lead their own lives and who are endowed with perceptive facilities, who feel pain

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[18] Quoted in Louis Snyder, *Encyclopedia of the Third Reich* (New York 1976) p. 79. This stance had a long history within right-wing circles in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period when vegetarianism and animal welfare sentiment often went hand in hand with racial mythology and authoritarian political and cultural beliefs.

[19] Joseph Goebbels quoted in Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton 1999) p. 136. It is important to recognize that Hitler's vegetarianism was a matter of conviction, not merely the eccentric whim of a crazed dictator. I emphasize this not to embarrass contemporary vegetarians, much less to endorse the misguided search for the 'good' features of Nazism, but to point out the intellectual parallels at work here. Chapter 5 of Proctor's book, "The Nazi Diet", offers an informed assessment of Nazism's food politics.

[20] Boria Sax, *Animals in the Third Reich* (New York 2000), p. 112. Sax's book is an invaluable source on Nazi attitudes toward animals.

[21] Quoted in Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order* (Paris 1992; Chicago 1995), pp. 99–100. Sax gives a compact exposition of the same passage on pp. 121–2 of *Animals in the Third Reich*.

and experience joy," observed Goering in 1933 while announcing a new anti-vivisection law.[22]]

While contemporary animal liberation activists would certainly do well to acquaint themselves with this ominous record of past and present collusion by animal advocates with fascists, the point of reviewing these facts is not to suggest a necessary or inevitable connection between animal rights and fascism.[23] But the historical pattern is unmistakable and demands explanation. What helps to account for this consistent intersection of apparently contrary worldviews is a common preoccupation with *purity*. The presumption that true virtue requires repudiating ostensibly unclean practices such as meat eating furnishes much of the heartfelt vehemence behind animal rights discourse. When disconnected from an articulated critical social perspective and a comprehensive ecological sensibility, this abstentionist version of puritan politics can easily slide into a distorted vision of ethnic, sexual, or ideological purity.

A closely related trope is the recurrent insistence within animal rights thinking on a unitary approach to moral questions. Rightly rejecting the inherited dualism of humanity and non-human nature, animal rights philosophers wrongly collapse the two into one undifferentiated whole, thus substituting monism for dualism (and neglecting most of the natural world in the process). But regressive dreams of purity and oneness carry no emancipatory potential; their political ramifications range from trite to dangerous. In the wrong hands, a simplistic critique of 'speciesism' yields liberation for neither people nor animals, but merely the same rancid antihumanism that has always turned radical hopes into their reactionary opposite.

Rather than positing a static, one-dimensional moral landscape populated by humans and animals facing one another on equal terms, those drawn to animal rights ought to consider a more complex alternative: a variegated ethical viewpoint that encompasses a social dimension and an ecological dimension without conflating the two. Such an approach recognizes the crucial continuity between humankind and the rest of the natural world while respecting the ethically significant distinctions that mark this continuum. Incorporating a dialectical view of natural processes and entities, this alternative perspective comprehends the breathtaking abundance, sophistication, and diversity of life forms and living communities on the earth as an occasion for awe and as valuable in themselves.

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[22] Hermann Goering quoted in Sax, p. 111. For readers familiar with the philosophical literature on animal liberation, it is impossible to miss this passage's resonance with Regan's conception of sentient animals as "subjects of a life" and Singer's emphasis on their capacity for experiencing pain. The legacy of Nazi animal rights measures ought to be reason enough (if any more were needed) for animal liberation proponents to abandon their egregiously ill-considered comparisons between factory farms and the death camps.

[23] In fact a number of left advocates of animal rights are also active anti-fascists. My critique is not meant to impugn their political commitment but to draw attention to the philosophical and historical ambiguities involved in the attempt to combine social emancipation with animal liberation.

The dynamic which generated this wondrous profusion of life can be understood as a dialectic of cooperation and competition.[24] Humans are the first creatures capable of transcending this dialectic, which gave rise to us, by consciously advancing the moment of cooperation – that is, by structuring our interactions with each other and with other creatures along mutually beneficial lines. This cooperative potential has two distinct components: one interhuman and social, and the other interspecific and ecological.

Within the social sphere, the potential for cooperative relations is, in an important sense, universal. While it would be naïve to suppose that contradictory interests will disappear in a free society, there is no 'natural' reason for the persistence of large-scale social competition. In regard to the rest of the biosphere, on the other hand, this cooperative potential is notably circumscribed. It is not just impossible to eliminate competition among organisms over resources, habitats, and so forth; the very notion is profoundly incompatible with the basic parameters of living systems. The potentials for cooperation between humans and other animals are thus more modest and more particular.

An ecologically and socially credible effort to take animal interests seriously will dispense with the notion that killing and harm are wrong per se, and will surmount the dichotomy of sentient vs. non-sentient beings by integrating a concern for animal welfare into an inclusive appreciation for the well-being of whole ecological communities. In practice, this would likely result in a revival and refinement of the custom of humane treatment of animals, accompanied by the insight that cultivating humanist values is a component of, rather than a hindrance to, this endeavor. People will not consistently treat animals humanely until people — all people — are treated humanely.

None of these ethical potentialities can be realized, however, as long as we continue to replicate social institutions built around domination and hierarchy. Overcoming those structures will require a revolutionary transformation, ethically as well as politically. This momentous historical goal can only be reached by a movement that reclaims, not rejects, the uniquely human capacity for freedom. In their present form, the philosophy and politics of animal rights cannot guide us toward this goal.

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[24] This insight is anything but new; in its modern form it extends at least back to Kropotkin. Animal rights enthusiasts seem alternately to forget the competitive and the cooperative aspects of this process, and above all appear to ignore the fact that all creatures are eventually food for other creatures—a fate that is entirely fitting and not the least bit troubling. This is not nature red in tooth and claw, but the incomparable beauty of natural evolution.

5. Blood and Soil Revived? Ecological Politics on the Far Right

Chapter Synopsis: It provides an unsettling overview over the role that environmentalist politics play in the far right today, and emphasizes the importance of sharpening environmentalist perspectives on the left. We are facing a crucial battle over the direction that environmentalism will be taking. We don't know how it's going to play out, but Staudenmaier's book helps us to be well equipped.

Peter Staudenmaier
Ecology Contested (Preview)
Environmental Politics Between Left and Right
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