

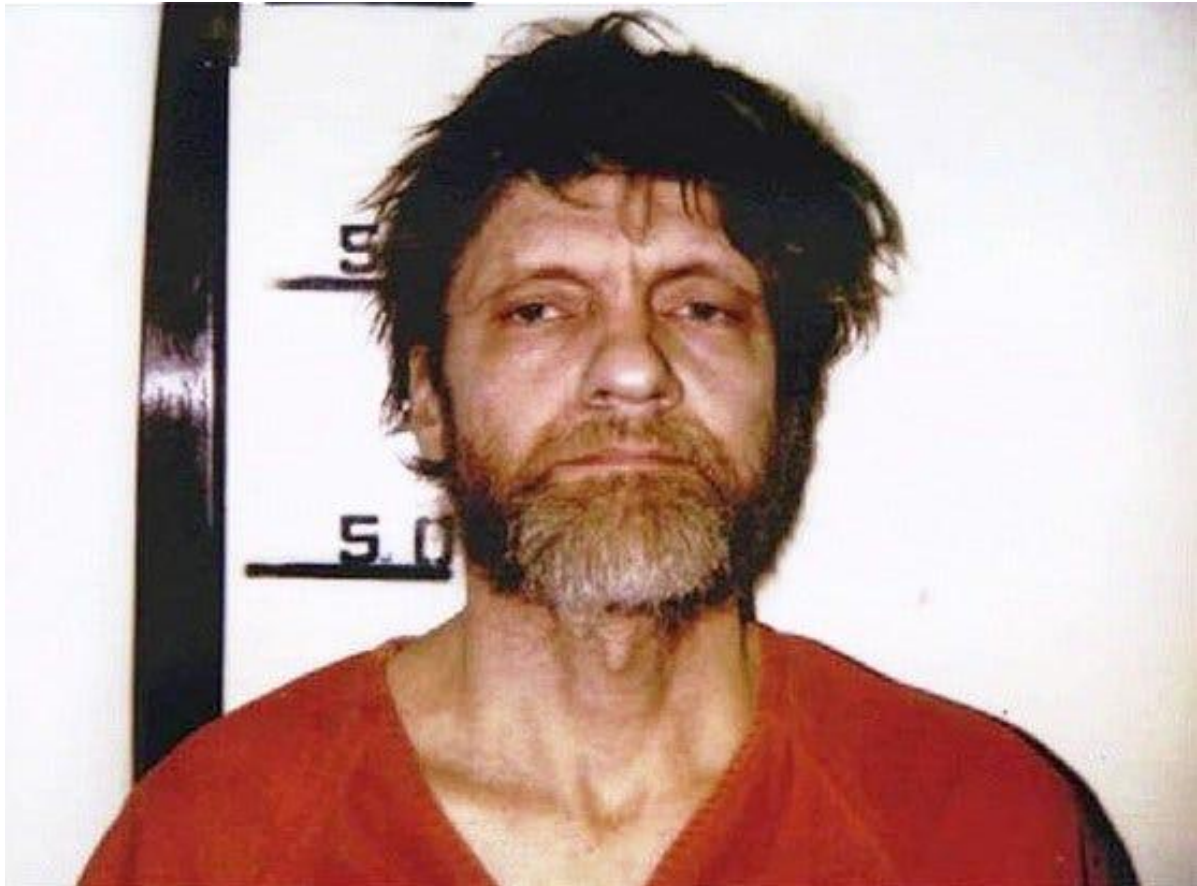
My Uneventful Correspondence with the Unabomber

Prose Matters



Apr 4, 2016

We were approached recently by a Proser on the back of our launch of the Letters From Prison Portal, looking to share a very interesting story regarding a letter he sent to one of the most notorious people in the world, Ted Kaczynski. Otherwise known as the “Unabomber”, Kaczynski is an American anarchist and domestic terrorist. He waged a nationwide bombing campaign against people involved with modern technology, planting and mailing numerous homemade bombs, that ultimately killed a total of three people and injured many.



Infamous for his social critiques, which opposed industrialization and modern technology while advancing a nature-centered form of anarchism; this is what Proser @Louisfriend has to say about when he wrote to the Unabomber:

A couple of years ago I wrote a letter to Ted Kaczynski who currently resides in ADX Florence (the “Alcatraz of the Rockies”) super-max prison located in Colorado. For the sake of refreshing, Dr. Theodore John “Ted” Kaczynski, a.k.a. ‘The Unabomber’, was one of the F.B.I.’s most wanted criminals for nearly two decades. Prior to that, his life showed extreme promise as he was accepted to Harvard University at the age of sixteen,

received his PhD in mathematics from the University of Michigan, and became an assistant professor at U.C. Berkeley by the age of twenty-five. He left that position after two years and became a recluse, living in a remote cabin in Lincoln, Montana, during which time he became increasingly angered with the establishment of modern technology. From 1978–1995 he engaged in what is referring to as his “bombing campaign” during which time he murdered three people and maimed twenty-three others using home-made explosives.

At the time I wrote him, I’d recently read his manifesto (Industrial Society and Its Future) and had some questions that I thought only he could answer. Because, in this day and age, these things may be misconstrued, I feel it’s worth stating that in no way do I condone the actions of Dr. Kaczynski; on the contrary, in fact. Clearly his actions were deplorable but I also felt that his manifesto was extraordinarily contradictory. I wanted to engage him in a conversation and slowly confront him on some of those contradictions (as you can read in the correspondence), however, the conversation never lasted that long. My letter and his response are included in this post. I’ve edited only my name and information.

The following is my correspondence with the Unabomber:

9/23/2014–19:42

Mr. Kaczynski,

I feel that it is most rude, and inappropriate to begin things without a proper introduction. So, allow me to introduce myself...Hello, my name is _____. I am twenty-six years old and currently reside in Texas. Like the many others who have undoubtedly written you during your incarceration, I have read extensively on your position regarding Industrial Society and the Technological Revolution. Yet, I have questions which remain unanswered. These are questions whose answers are not meant for a school paper, news publication, or trite, water-cooler conversation; they are meant solely to fulfill my own personal curiosities. It is my intention to correspond with you in the hope that they will be answered. If it’s all the same to you, I’d prefer to go straight to the source. I would also like to note that, unlike you, I am not what our society would consider an educated man; I am a high-school drop-out, and any research of mine has been independent. The questions are:

We are approaching the 20th anniversary of the release of your manifesto, “Industrial Society and Its Future”; in this time, we

have seen that some of your assessments regarding the consequences of a technological age may be accurate. For instance, since your incarceration, as I am sure you are aware, the advent of hand-held devices has swept the globe. Although we are less personable, have forgotten our manners, and certainly have forgotten to step outside and return to nature, our society remains intact. It would appear that we are headed more toward enslavement than collapse. With so many theoretical eventualities, I challenge you to expand on those that may lead to collapse, in lieu of enslavement, as I cannot. Which, if any (save for the most regurgitated, nuclear-apocalyptic), are there?

Assuming that you still consider our society, due to these technological advances, to be on the brink of enslavement or collapse, what are the possible timelines for such an event? I suppose the answer to that question depends on the catalyst...

You mention that, "If the system survives...there is no way of reforming or modifying the system so as to prevent it from depriving people of dignity and autonomy." (#2 — Industrial Society) Yet, also, that the system, "...may survive. If it survives, it may eventually achieve a low level of...physical and psychological suffering," which, to me, seems contradictory. How may the system come to achieve a low level of suffering, but not be reformed or modified? Does this mean that, while the system may allow for a relatively low level of suffering, the same system will still continue to deprive people of dignity and autonomy? Is that not suffering?

"We therefore advocate a revolution against the industrial system. This revolution may or may not make use of violence..." (#4 — Industrial Society). You imply that the revolution against the industrial system is possible through means of non-violence. In hindsight, is there a way to have achieved awareness for your cause through non-violent means?

Is it fair to assess that, during the decades of your campaign, you focused on the eco-invasion of the industrial/techno revolution? How do you think you would view the industrial-technological system had you been born twenty years later, thus experiencing the techno-boom of the early 21st century? Computers, the internet, hand-held devices, etc.

What did you set out to achieve with your campaign from 1978–1995? In other words, what was the best case scenario? Certainly

you had to have known that, even in what you may have considered to be the best case scenario, it would have been but a drop in the bucket towards achieving the goal of an end to the technological system. In that sense, it seems as though your intentions would have been mostly for awareness. Is this true?

On what level did you suspect that the publication of your manifesto would lead to your capture? Was it more important that your message be read and understood by the public than to potentially be captured and incarcerated?

Which do you think furthered your cause more, the bombing campaign, or the publication of your manifesto?

Thank you immensely for your time. I look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

I received an envelope from the ADX Florence penitentiary a little over two weeks after I sent the initial letter; it was from TJK. His response was written on the back side of an actual, developed photograph of the Cloud Gate structure near Chicago, Illinois (which you can see above). Although, with no identifying markings or explanation at all, it took a little research to figure out what it was. The photograph is interesting to me for several reasons: I have no idea where it came from, if he took it, or if it was bought from the prison commissary, but Cloud Gate stands today approximately seventeen miles from where TJK was born, in Evergreen Park. Also fascinating to me, one can easily recognize the meticulous nature in which it was handled. For example, the ten stamps adhered to the back side are near perfectly in line with one another. Likewise, the dividing line TJK created on the back of the photo was made with pen, by hand. Look at it. He must have used a ruler or something similar with a straight edge, drew the lines in the perfect center of the photograph, and filled it in; mind you, this is an elderly man in his seventies.

Cloud Gate is a shiny, metallic structure; as such, it appears to show the reflection of photographer standing directly beneath it, however, since TJK has been incarcerated since 1996 and the photograph looks a little newer, I doubt it is him. The response reads as follows:

From:

Theodore John Kaczynski

04475-046

U.S. Penitentiary Max
P.O. Box 8500 Florence CO 81226-8500
10/10/2014

Mr. _____,

No way I can find time to answer your questions! But you'll find many answers in my book Technological Slavery, which you can get from amazon.com -TJK



I'm not entirely sure how it could be difficult to "find" time while you're spending your life in prison. Maybe he wasn't searching in the right place...or, maybe he just didn't care. TJK has apparently been bitten before by corresponding with a particular individual at length; a Google search indicates as much. While it certainly was not the response I was hoping for, I did go buy the book...



Well, soon our Letters From Prison Portal will soon be populated with work from residents of Peterborough Prison who we assure you will want to make time to share words with us. Subscribe now to be privy to the extraordinary content that is sure to come shortly.

Thanks to @Louisfriend for sharing, do please follow and interact with them on theprose.com

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Originally published at blog.theprose.com on April 4, 2016.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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