

The Unabomber and the origins of anti-tech radicalism

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Abstract

Theodore Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber, is one of America's most infamous domestic terrorists. His 1995 Manifesto, 'Industrial Society and Its Future', is well known and influential among radicals of many stripes, yet surprisingly little has been written about it. This article uncovers the origins of Kaczynski's ideas and examines his influence on contemporary anti-tech radicalism. Using newly discovered archival material, I reveal the sources that Kaczynski deliberately concealed in the 1995 *Washington Post* version of his Manifesto. My excavation of his sources shows that his ideology is more novel than the common 'eco-terrorist', 'green anarchist', and 'neo-Luddite' labels suggest. His Manifesto is a synthesis of ideas from three well known academics: French philosopher Jacques Ellul, British zoologist Desmond Morris, and American psychologist Martin Seligman. Further, I show that it is necessary to understand Kaczynski's distinct combination of ideas in order to understand the anti-tech radical groups that he has inspired, such as the Mexican terrorist group *Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje* (ITS). The ideological novelty of anti-tech radicalism has been overlooked because, like Kaczynski himself, it has been mistaken for radical environmentalism or green anarchism.

Introduction

Theodore Kaczynski is America's most academic terrorist. He graduated from Harvard in 1962, completed a PhD at the University of Michigan in 1967, and then became an assistant professor of mathematics at Berkeley. After resigning from his professorship in 1969, Kaczynski set out to live in the wilderness and eventually built himself a one-room cabin in rural Montana. From there he launched a bombing campaign that killed three people, injured 23, and ended with his arrest in 1996. Although much has been written about Kaczynski's life and crimes, surprisingly little has been written about his anti-technology Manifesto, 'Industrial Society and Its Future', which was published in *The Washington Post* in 1995.¹ Political theorists, intellectual historians, and even terrorism scholars have paid scant attention to his ideas.²

Kaczynski is of interest to scholars of ideology primarily because he has influenced many other radical actors and movements. In the aftermath of his arrest, he gained a following on the outer fringe of the green movement, including anarcho-primitivist John Zerzan and Deep Green Resistance cofounder Derrick Jensen.³ More recently, Kaczynski's disdain for 'leftism' has gained him a following on the far right. Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik extensively plagiarized him, and Greek neo-fascist party Golden Dawn published a translation of his Manifesto in 2018.⁴ Kaczynski has a

¹ I refer to the edition of 'Industrial Society and Its Future' (henceforth ISAIF) in Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery Volume One: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Scottsdale, AZ: Fitch & Madison, 2019). I cite ISAIF by the paragraph numbers. The most reliable published source of information about Kaczynski's life and crimes is Michael Mello, *United States of America Versus Theodore John Kaczynski: Ethics, Power, and the Invention of the Unabomber* (New York: Context, 1999).

² The few academic works about Kaczynski's ideas include Tim Luke, 'Re-Reading the Unabomber Manifesto', *Telos* 107 (Spring 1996), pp. 81–94; Bron Taylor, 'Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism: From Earth First! to the Unabomber to the Earth Liberation Front', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no. 4 (1998), pp. 1–42; Scott Corey, 'On the Unabomber', *Telos* 118 (Winter 2000), pp. 157–181; and Brett A. Barnett, '20 Years Later: A Look Back at the Unabomber Manifesto', *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 6 (2015), pp. 60–71.

³ Throughout this article, I refer to archival material from the Joseph A. Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan's Special Collections Research Center. I cite this material by the box number and, where available, the folder number and the FBI's K-number. Letters between Kaczynski and John Zerzan, Labadie Boxes 14 and 15; Letters between Kaczynski and Derrick Jensen, Labadie Box 7.

⁴ Cecilia H. Leonard et al., 'Anders Behring Breivik – Language of a Lone Terrorist', *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 32 (2014), pp. 408–422, at 415–416. For Golden Dawn's translation, see ISAIF (Athens: New Sparta, 2018). The popular YouTube audiobook of the Manifesto was created by Augustus Invictus, an American white supremacist.

Nietzsche-like quality: because he defies easy categorization, he is a magnet for radicals of different stripes.

But Kaczynski is more than a source of ideas for pre-existing radical groups. He has also created his own strand of radicalism and inspired an array of anti-tech radical groups.⁵ The most prominent of these is the Mexican terrorist group *Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje* (ITS – roughly, Individualists Tending towards the Wild), which picked up where Kaczynski left off and began sending bombs to scientists in April 2011. ITS and its offshoots have since claimed responsibility for attacks in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Greece, as well as many more in Mexico. Kaczynski’s own bombing campaign was a harbinger of things to come – and ITS may be only the beginning.

The purpose of this article is to uncover the origins of Kaczynski’s ideas. This task is not at all straightforward. Although Kaczynski cites many sources in his Manifesto, he does not cite his most important sources. The reason is that he had sent letters (in his own name, without bombs) to the authors he admired, and he feared that citing them would provide leads for the FBI.⁶ Previous attempts to identify Kaczynski’s influences have therefore been speculative.

I adopt what Michael Freeden calls a ‘genetic’ approach.⁷ Using hard, ‘forensic’ evidence of what Kaczynski read, supplemented by textual comparisons, I reveal the sources that he tried to conceal. I rely on archival material from the Joseph A. Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan, which contains copies of much of the material that the FBI confiscated from his cabin in 1996.⁸ The most important piece of evidence is a set of ‘private’ footnotes to the Manifesto.⁹ Kaczynski’s journals, notes, drafts, and correspondence provide further evidence of what he read and how it influenced him. The Manifesto’s main ideas are derived from the works of three well known academics: French philosopher Jacques Ellul, British zoologist Desmond Morris, and American psychologist Martin Seligman.¹⁰

My excavation of Kaczynski’s sources shows that his ideology is more distinct (if not more original) than has so far been appreciated. The two popular accounts of the

⁵ On Kaczynski’s followers, see Jake Hanrahan, ‘Inside the Unabomber’s Odd and Furious Online Revival’, *Wired*, 1 August 2018; John H. Richardson, ‘Children of Ted’, *New York Magazine*, 11 December 2018.

⁶ Author’s correspondence with a confidential source. See also Corey, ‘On the Unabomber’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 172.

⁷ Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 3.

⁸ On the Labadie Collection’s Kaczynski Papers, see Julie Herrada, ‘Letters to the Unabomber: A Case Study and Some Reflections’, *Archival Issues* 28, no. 1 (2003–2004), pp. 35–46.

⁹ Kaczynski, private footnotes to ISAIF, undated (1995 or 1996), Labadie Box 64, K1813: ‘These footnotes designated by Roman numerals are private and were not included in the manuscript sent to NY Times’.

¹⁰ Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964 [originally published in 1954 as *La technique ou l’enjeu du siècle*]); Desmond Morris, *The Human Zoo* (London: Vintage, 1994 [1969]); Martin Seligman, *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1975).

Manifesto are incomplete and overstated: it is not an eco-terrorist tract, nor a compilation of the critiques of technology that Kaczynski encountered at Harvard. His revolutionary anti-tech ideology is distinct from radical environmentalism, green anarchism, and even neo-Luddism. I show that it is necessary to understand Kaczynski's unique combination of ideas in order to understand the novel form of anti-tech radicalism that he has inspired. On closer examination, some 'eco-terrorists' turn out to be Kaczynski-inspired anti-tech terrorists.

The article has five main sections. The first section critiques the two popular accounts of Kaczynski's ideological formation: first, that his ideas are drawn from radical environmentalist literature; second, that he absorbed his ideas from Harvard's General Education curriculum. The next three sections delve into the archival material and uncover Kaczynski's three main influences: Ellul, Morris, and Seligman. The fifth section examines Kaczynski's influence on contemporary anti-tech radicalism, and especially ITS.

‘Industrial Society’ and its origins

In an April 1995 letter to *The New York Times*, written in the name of ‘the terrorist group FC’ (Freedom Club), Kaczynski promised that he would end his bombing campaign if his ‘article’ of between 29,000 and 37,000 words were published in the *Times* or in ‘some other widely read, nationally distributed periodical’.¹ This was more a threat than a promise: publish this or more people will perish. *The Washington Post* accepted his article (with no revisions) and published it in a ‘special section’ on 19 September 1995.

The Manifesto makes five main arguments: (1) modern technology constitutes an indivisible, self-perpetuating ‘system’ that is not under human control; (2) human beings are biologically and psychologically maladapted to life in a technological society; (3) the continued development of the technological system will inevitably lead to catastrophe (i.e. the destruction of humanity or its total subordination to the system); (4) since the technological system cannot be controlled, and hence cannot be reformed, a revolutionary overthrow of the system is necessary to avert catastrophe; and (5) left-ist activism is a form of pseudo-rebellion that serves to distract attention from the problem of technology.²

There are two popular interpretations of the Manifesto, each wedded to a different account of Kaczynski’s ideological formation. According to the *green* interpretation, Kaczynski is essentially an ‘eco-terrorist’.³ The Manifesto espouses a form of radical environmentalism, akin to that of Earth First! or the Earth Liberation Front. Proponents of the green interpretation point to two facts. First, Kaczynski read radical environmentalist publications, including *Earth First!* and *Live Wild or Die!*, and used them to select some of his targets. Second, his counter-ideal to technology is ‘wild nature’ – a radical environmentalist trope. As Ron Arnold argues, ‘the Unabomber was only an isolated symptom of years of hate for industrial civilization that had been incited by the powerful environmental lobby’.⁴

¹ FC to *The New York Times*, 20 April 1995, Labadie Box 28, Doc. 3348, K1825.

² Here I follow Kaczynski’s own summary of his arguments in the foreword to *Technological Slavery: The Collected Writings of Theodore J. Kaczynski* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), pp. 11–15. See also, in the same volume, David Skrbina, ‘A Revolutionary for Our Times’, pp. 18–34.

³ Ron Arnold, *EcoTerror: The Violent Agenda to Save Nature: The World of the Unabomber* (Bellevue, WA: Free Enterprise Press, 1997); Barnett, ‘20 Years Later’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2; Richardson, ‘Children of Ted’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 5.

⁴ Arnold, *EcoTerror*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 13, p. ix.

According to the *Harvard* interpretation, put forth by Alston Chase, Kaczynski's gestures towards environmentalism are insincere and rhetorical.⁵ Instead, his 'core philosophy ... was a species of cultural primitivism', or neo-Luddism.⁶ The Manifesto is a compilation of critiques of technology that Kaczynski absorbed from Harvard's General Education curriculum from 1958 to 1962, while he was an undergraduate. He 'borrowed from or partially embodied the ideas of' a laundry list of social and political thinkers:

Aristotle, Jefferson, and Marx; social critics Lewis Mumford, Erich Fromm, Paul Goodman, and Eric Hoffer; economists Thorsten [sic] Veblen, E. F. Schumacher, and Leopold Kohr; philosophers Oswald Spengler, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Hannah Arendt; cultural anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead; psychologists Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, and B. F. Skinner; sociologists Theodor W. Adorno and Talcott Parsons; and many, many other thinkers including, of course, Ellul.⁷

Chase's argument builds on earlier work by Scott Corey, who counts several additional thinkers among Kaczynski's influences: John Dollard, Leon Festinger, Ted Gurr, Chalmers Johnson, Barrington Moore, Mancur Olson, and John Zerzan.⁸ The crux of the Harvard interpretation is that Kaczynski is a neo-Luddite who 'dressed his message in green ... because he thought it would make his treatise more popular'.⁹

The green interpretation and the Harvard interpretation both contain elements of truth, though both are incomplete and often exaggerated. The green interpretation is correct that Kaczynski had a longstanding and apparently sincere interest in environmentalism. He wrote to the Wilderness Society as early as 1969 (albeit with criticisms), and he was interested (if not actively involved) in Earth First! from about 1987 onward.¹⁰ Contrary to what Chase suggests, the Manifesto's ideal of 'wild nature' was not an afterthought or a piece of rhetoric. The same idea of 'wildness' appears in Kaczynski's 1979 essay, 'Progress Versus Wilderness', which was inspired by environmental historian Roderick Nash: 'Wildness is that which is not controlled by organized

⁵ Alston Chase, *A Mind for Murder: The Education of the Unabomber and the Origins of Modern Terrorism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004 [2003]), p. 94.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.

⁸ Corey, 'On the Unabomber', *op. cit.*, Ref. 2.

⁹ Chase, *A Mind for Murder*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 15, p. 94.

¹⁰ On Kaczynski's letters to the Wilderness Society, see James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), pp. 71–72. On Kaczynski's interest in Earth First!, see Kaczynski to David Skrbina, 30 October 2008, Labadie Box 93, Folder 1215.9; Kaczynski, 'Suggestions for Earth First!ers from FC' (unsent letter), 1995, Labadie Box 17; Kaczynski to Jim Flynn (Earth First! Journal), 3 October 2000, Labadie Box 17.

society'.¹¹ Chase overstates his case when he dismisses the green part of Kaczynski's Manifesto as 'a cynical attempt to win more supporters for his revolution'.¹²

However, the green interpretation is also easily overstated. The Manifesto is decidedly anthropocentric, in stark contrast to the biocentrism of Earth First! and other radical environmentalists.¹³ Kaczynski opposes modern technology not primarily because it has been a disaster for the planet, but, as he says in the very first sentence, because it has 'been a disaster *for the human race*'.¹⁴ His ideal of wild nature includes 'human nature', and wild *human* nature is his main concern in the Manifesto.¹⁵ Further, in his later writings, Kaczynski advises anti-tech revolutionaries to 'maintain clear lines of demarcation ... from other radical groups', including radical environmentalists and green anarchists.¹⁶ His relationship with environmentalism is more complicated and ambivalent than the green interpretation or the Harvard interpretation suggest. Although his commitment to wilderness is sincere, his concerns differ significantly from those of radical environmentalists.

The Harvard interpretation gets one crucial point right. The context in which Kaczynski wrote the Manifesto was not the context in which his ideology developed. The salient political events, ideas, and movements of the 1980s and 1990s – the end of the Cold War, the militia movement, Earth First! – had only a peripheral influence on him. Most of Kaczynski's ideas developed much earlier, in an *intellectual* context. In order to understand his ideological formation, it is crucial to determine what he read.

However, the details of the Harvard interpretation do not stand up to scrutiny. There is no evidence that Kaczynski read most of the authors whom Chase and Corey cite as his influences, and there *is* some evidence that Kaczynski did *not* read some of them. In May 2001, Corey mailed a copy of his article to Kaczynski and asked for his comments. Kaczynski's reply was unhelpful and dismissive, but his private notes on this article are revealing. He wrote that he had 'never read anything by' many of the authors whom Corey and Chase list as the Manifesto's sources: Alfred Adler, Hannah Arendt, John Dollard, Leon Festinger, Chalmers Johnson, Barrington Moore, Lewis Mumford, Mancur Olson, Talcott Parsons, and E. F. Schumacher.¹⁷ Kaczynski confirmed that he had read B. F. Skinner, as well as three books by Jacques Ellul: *The Technological*

¹¹ Kaczynski, 'Progress Versus Wilderness', Labadie Box 65, p. 2, citing Roderick Nash, 'The Future of Wilderness: The Need for a Philosophy', *Wild America* (July 1979), pp. 12–13, archived in the University of Montana's Clifton R. Merritt Papers, Box 110, Folder 2. Cf. ISAIIF ¶183–184.

¹² Chase, *A Mind for Murder*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 15, p. 94.

¹³ Keith Mako Woodhouse, 'In Defense of Mother Earth: Radical Environmentalism and Ecoterrorism in the United States, 1980–2000s', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Terrorism*, eds Carola Dietze and Claudia Verhoeven (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); see also Corey, 'On the Unabomber', *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 169.

¹⁴ ISAIIF ¶1, emphasis added.

¹⁵ ISAIIF ¶183.

¹⁶ Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How* (Scottsdale, AZ: Fitch & Madison, 2016), p. 167.

¹⁷ Kaczynski's comments on 'On the Unabomber' by Scott Corey, 7 July 2001, Labadie Box 58.

Society, Autopsy of Revolution, and Propaganda. But of the authors he read, he denied that the Manifesto was influenced by several of them. In particular, he ‘read a small part of *The Authoritarian Personality* [by Adorno et al.] but stopped reading when it wandered into psychoanalytic bullshit’. He read *Growing Up Absurd* by Paul Goodman, but not ‘until after the N.Y. Times et al had received the Manifesto’. Kaczynski’s notes also cast further doubt on the green interpretation. He ‘never corresponded with or even heard of [anarcho-primitivist] John Zerzan until after [he] was arrested’; nor had he heard of Arne Naess or George Sessions, pioneers of deep ecology.¹⁸ Of course, it is possible that Kaczynski absorbed ideas from sources that he does not recall reading, or that he found the ideas of the above-mentioned authors second-hand. But Kaczynski’s notes appear credible; none of the other archival evidence contradicts them.

In sum, the two common accounts of Kaczynski’s ideological formation are, at best, incomplete. Whereas the green interpretation exaggerates his links to radical environmentalism, the Harvard interpretation points to many sources that he appears not to have read. In the following sections, I excavate Kaczynski’s sources and develop an alternative account of his ideological formation. Like Chase, I argue that Kaczynski’s core commitments are anti-technological rather than pro-environmental. But against Chase, I argue that Kaczynski’s critique of technology, which is evolutionary-psychological, differs significantly from the cultural and economic critiques of technology that were prevalent during his undergraduate years. I trace Kaczynski’s central arguments and concepts to sources published *after* he left Harvard. Ellul’s *The Technological Society* was not translated into English until 1964, two years after Kaczynski graduated, and the crucial books by Morris and Seligman were first published in 1969 and 1975.

To be sure, Ellul, Morris, and Seligman are not Kaczynski’s only intellectual influences. His private footnotes to the Manifesto cite works of anthropology, such as Colin Turnbull’s *The Forest People* and Elizabeth Marshall Thomas’s *The Harmless People*; works of political science, such as Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter’s *Roots of Radicalism*; and more than a dozen works of history.¹⁹ Kaczynski also read many works of fiction, which are not cited in his public or private footnotes.²⁰ My claim is that Ellul, Morris, and Seligman – in that order – are the Manifesto’s most important influences. It is from them that Kaczynski derived his central arguments (listed above) and most of his signature concepts (such as ‘surrogate activity’ and ‘the power process’).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Kaczynski, private footnotes to ISAIF, *op. cit.*, Ref. 9, I, II, V, VI, VII, IX, XI.

²⁰ On the works of fiction that influenced Kaczynski, see Donald Foster, ‘The Fictions of Ted Kaczynski’, *Vassar Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (Winter 1998), 14–17; and James Guimond and Katherine Kearney Maynard, ‘Kaczynski, Conrad, and Terrorism’, *Conradiana* 31, no. 1 (1999), 3–25.

Ellul: *The Technological Society*

Jacques Ellul is best known as a philosopher and critic of technology. His most famous idea is that ‘technique’ (roughly, rational efficiency) has become an end in itself and an autonomous force beyond human control. Although it is well known that Ellul influenced Kaczynski, this influence has never been examined in detail. In this section, I use Kaczynski’s annotated photocopy of *The Technological Society*, which includes his own cross-references to his Manifesto, to help determine precisely what Kaczynski borrowed from Ellul.¹

Kaczynski’s most obvious debt to Ellul is the idea that modern technology constitutes an indivisible, self-perpetuating system. This idea is developed mainly in the first two chapters of *The Technological Society*, which are not included in Kaczynski’s photocopy. However, the parallels are so clear that cross-references to the Manifesto are hardly necessary. Whereas Kaczynski writes that ‘[y]ou can’t get rid of the “bad” parts of technology and retain only the “good” parts’, Ellul writes that ‘[i]t is an illusion, a perfectly understandable one, to hope to be able to suppress the “bad” side of technique and preserve the “good”’.² Ellul calls this thesis ‘monism’: ‘techniques combine to form a whole, each part supporting and reinforcing the others’.³ Similarly, Kaczynski argues that ‘modern technology is a unified system in which all parts are dependent on one another’.⁴

Kaczynski’s argument that human beings are maladapted to life in a technological society is also derived from Ellul. In a passage that Kaczynski cross-referenced and annotated, Ellul writes,

the human being is ill at ease in this strange new environment, and the tension demanded of him weighs heavily on his life and being. He seeks to flee – and tumbles into the snare of dreams; he tries to comply – and falls into the life of organizations; he feels maladjusted – and becomes a hypochondriac.⁵

Since many people are incapable of adapting to the technological society, Ellul argues, techniques are developed to adapt them to it – ‘not, indeed, by modifying

¹ Partial photocopy of *The Technological Society* by Jacques Ellul with Kaczynski’s annotations, undated, Labadie Box 62. This photocopy appears to be from after Kaczynski’s arrest in 1996. Kaczynski refers to *The Technological Society* in his 1972 essay, ‘Progress versus Liberty’, Labadie Box 65.

² ISAIF ¶121; Ellul, *The Technological Society*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, p. 111.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ ISAIF ¶121.

⁵ Partial photocopy of *The Technological Society*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 31, p. 321, with cross-references to ISAIF ¶156 ‘and elsewhere’.

anything in man's environment but by taking action upon man himself'.⁶ Kaczynski illustrates this point in one of the cross-referenced paragraphs of the Manifesto: 'antidepressants are a means of modifying an individual's internal state in such a way as to enable him to tolerate social conditions that he would otherwise find intolerable'.⁷ He echoes Ellul's argument that humanity is incompatible with modern technology, as well as Ellul's fear that humanity is being modified to fit the technological system.

Kaczynski's least obvious debt to Ellul is the idea that social activism is a form of pseudo-rebellion. In a sentence that Kaczynski cross-referenced to his critique of leftism, Ellul writes that '[a]ll revolutionary movements are burlesques of the real thing'.⁸ He argues that none of the social or intellectual movements of the twentieth century – communism, pacifism, surrealism, anarchism, or existentialism – have 'achieved their own goals of re-creating the conditions of freedom and justice'. However, they 'have been completely successful from another point of view' – 'successful in pulling the teeth of aggressive instincts and in integrating them into the technical society'.⁹ Similarly, Kaczynski argues that 'leftists are not such rebels as they seem'.¹⁰ Social activism distracts attention from the real problem – technology – and diffuses the revolutionary energy that might otherwise be directed against the technological system. For Kaczynski, the leftist's attempt at rebellion is what Ellul calls 'useless revolt'.¹¹

Kaczynski's annotations also reveal that Ellul inspired his strategy for getting his Manifesto published. As prolific as Ellul was, he doubted that publishing books through conventional channels could change the world.

Suppose one were to write a revolutionary book. If it is to be published, it must enter into the framework of the technical organization of book publishing. ... it must appeal to some public and hence must refrain from attacking the real taboos of the public for which it is destined. ... no one will publish a book attacking the real religion of our times, by which I mean the dominant social forces of the technological society.¹²

Although 'we can write or teach anything', including 'inflammatory revolutionary manifestoes', 'as soon as any of these appear to have any real effect in subverting the universal social order ... they are forthwith excluded from the technical channels of communication'.¹³ The paragraph that Kaczynski cross-referenced contains the Manifesto's only explicit justification for the violence that led to its publication.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 321, with cross-references to ISAIF ¶143-146.

⁷ ISAIF ¶145.

⁸ Partial photocopy of *The Technological Society*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 31, p. 426.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 425–426, with cross-references to ISAIF ¶12, 28–30.

¹⁰ ISAIF ¶24, 28.

¹¹ Partial photocopy of *The Technological Society*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 31, p. 427, with cross-references to ISAIF ¶12, 28–30. Kaczynski uses Ellul's remark about 'useless revolt' as the epigraph of his 2002 essay about leftism, 'The System's Neatest Trick', in *Technological Slavery Volume One*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, pp. 113–125, at 113.

¹² Partial photocopy of *The Technological Society*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 31, p. 418, with cross-reference to ISAIF ¶96.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 419, with cross-reference to ISAIF ¶96.

If we [i.e. FC] had never done anything violent and had submitted the present writings to a publisher, they probably would not have been accepted. ... In order to get our message before the public with some chance of making a lasting impression, we've had to kill people.¹⁴

Kaczynski clearly took Ellul's cynicism about the publishing industry to heart.

Despite the many close parallels, it would be a mistake to read Kaczynski as a parrot of Ellul. He does not simply repeat Ellul's arguments; he adapts them, builds on them, and in a few important places repudiates them.

Kaczynski's advocacy of violence marks a sharp break with Ellul. Despite the Manifesto's apparent ambivalence about violence, the revolution that Kaczynski envisions is definitely a violent one. As he reveals in an unpublished essay, 'In Defense of Violence', he 'did not explicitly advocate violence' in the Manifesto simply because he 'assumed that the mainstream media would refuse to publish anything that did advocate violence'.¹⁵ Ellul, on the other hand, condemns 'terrorists' as 'dreamers and pseudo-revolutionaries' who fall prey to 'vulgarized revolutionary ideology'.¹⁶ He advocates 'contemplation' instead of violence: 'It would represent a vital breach in the technological society, a truly revolutionary attitude, if contemplation could replace frantic activity'.¹⁷ Further, whereas Kaczynski thinks an anti-tech revolution must be led by a vanguard, because '[h]istory is made by active, determined minorities', Ellul argues that a revolution 'cannot be assigned to a handful of leaders, to a directive corps, or to an active minority'.¹⁸

Kaczynski's divergence from Ellul about the means and mechanics of revolution is symptomatic of a deeper divergence. One of Ellul's central arguments in *Autopsy of Revolution* is that past revolutions cannot serve as models for an anti-tech revolution. The technological system is too global and too pervasive to be overthrown like a government.¹⁹ Kaczynski, on the other hand, relies heavily on the history of revolution and societal change. His private footnotes refer to books about Argentina's struggle for independence, the Mexican Revolution of 1910, colonialism in North America, Simón Bolívar, and the revolutions of 1848.²⁰ His cabin library contained books about the French Revolution, the Spanish conquest of Central and South America, the secession of the American South, and the First World War.²¹ Ignoring Ellul's warning about extrapolating from history, Kaczynski argues that '[t]he pattern would be similar to that of the French and Russian revolutions'.²² The anti-tech revolutionaries would

¹⁴ ISAIF ¶96.

¹⁵ Kaczynski, 'In Defence of Violence', undated, Labadie Box 65, p. 1.

¹⁶ Jacques Ellul, *Autopsy of Revolution*, trans. Patricia Wolf (New York: Knopf, 1971), pp. 278–279.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

¹⁸ ISAIF ¶189; Ellul, *Autopsy of Revolution*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 46, p. 284.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, especially pp. 253–286.

²⁰ Kaczynski, private footnotes to ISAIF, *op. cit.*, Ref. 9, V, VI, VII, IX, XII.

²¹ List of documents found in Kaczynski's cabin, Federal Defender's Office, Labadie Box 29.

²² ISAIF ¶181.

propagate their ideology, build a movement, wait for a crisis to destabilize the system, and then emerge from the shadows to strike the final blow.

Kaczynski's idea of maladaptation also differs in a crucial way from Ellul's. For Ellul, the mismatch between human beings and modern technology is socio-cultural. The problem with 'technique' is that it 'dissociates the sociological forms, destroys the moral framework, desacralizes men and things, explodes social and religious taboos, and reduces the body social to a collection of individuals'.²³ Chase interprets Kaczynski too as a 'cultural primitivist', comparing him to the 'countless contemporary writers, from the Harvard social philosopher Lewis Mumford to Ellul himself, [who] warned that technological progress threatened the future of culture'.²⁴ However, unlike the cultural and economic critics of technology whom he might have encountered at Harvard, Kaczynski is not particularly concerned with the breakdown of traditional communities or ways of life. Although he acknowledges that 'rapid change and the breakdown of communities have been widely recognized as sources of social problems', he 'do[es] not believe they are enough to account for the extent of the problems that are seen today'.²⁵

If Ellul and Mumford are cultural primitivists, then Kaczynski is a 'bioprimitivist'. He argues that human beings are *biologically* maladapted to life in a technological society: 'We [i.e. FC] attribute the social and psychological problems of modern society to the fact that that society requires people to live under conditions radically different from those under which the human race evolved'.²⁶ Over hundreds of thousands of years, 'natural selection has adapted the human race physically and psychologically' to a 'spectrum of [natural] environments'.²⁷ But the Industrial Revolution has drastically altered these environments in the span of a few generations. Kaczynski thinks the mismatch between our hunter-gatherer genes and our technological environments is responsible for many common pathologies, including 'depression, anxiety, guilt, frustration, hostility, spouse or child abuse, insatiable hedonism, abnormal sexual behavior, sleep disorders, [and] eating disorders'.²⁸ Whereas Ellul's idea of maladaptation is socio-cultural, Kaczynski's is evolutionary-psychological. The difference between Ellul and Kaczynski thus marks the distinction between cultural primitivism and bioprimitivism.

Kaczynski often couches his idea of maladaptation in his bespoke psychological terms, which have no parallels in Ellul's thought. He argues that human beings have an innate need for 'the power process': 'in order to avoid serious psychological problems, a human being needs goals whose attainment requires effort, and he must have a

²³ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, p. 126.

²⁴ Chase, *A Mind for Murder*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 15, pp. 97–98. On neo-Luddism, see Steven E. Jones, *Against Technology: From the Luddites to Neo-Luddism* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

²⁵ ISAIF ¶53.

²⁶ ISAIF ¶46.

²⁷ ISAIF ¶178.

²⁸ ISAIF ¶44.

reasonable rate of success in attaining his goals'.²⁹ The goals that Kaczynski has in mind are basic, biological goals related to survival and reproduction. The power process is the process of using one's own physical and mental power to satisfy one's own biological needs.³⁰

Since many people in modern society can obtain the necessities of life without serious effort, they try to satisfy their need for the power process through 'surrogate activities', or activities that are 'directed toward an artificial goal that people set up for themselves merely in order to have some goal to work toward'.³¹ These include hobbies, sports, art, and most importantly for Kaczynski, activism and science. However, 'for many people, maybe the majority, these artificial forms of the power process are insufficient'.³² Our maladaptation to the technological society thus results from the fact that this form of society cannot satisfy our biologically rooted psychological needs.

In sum, Ellul's ideas constitute the core but by no means the whole of the Manifesto. Kaczynski's systemic understanding of technology, his idea of maladaptation, his critique of leftism, and many of his finer points are derived from *The Technological Society*. But Kaczynski modifies and supplements Ellul's ideas under the influence of evolutionary theory and modern psychology. In particular, the ideas of *biological* maladaptation, the power process, and surrogate activity are not derived from Ellul. One of the main puzzles about the Manifesto is where these ideas originated.

²⁹ ISAIF ¶37.

³⁰ ISAIF ¶40-41. See also Kaczynski, 'Reflections on Purposeful Work', 1978-1979, later parts 1981-83, Labadie Box 65.

³¹ ISAIF ¶39.

³² ISAIF ¶64.

Morris: *The Human Zoo*

Kaczynski's amendments and additions to Ellul are derived from several sources. The most important is *The Human Zoo* by zoologist Desmond Morris, the 1969 sequel to his 1967 bestseller, *The Naked Ape*. Drawing on his experience as curator of mammals at the London Zoo, Morris observes that modern city-dwellers are afflicted by many of the same psychological problems that afflict other mammals in captivity. He attributes these problems to the fact that '[t]he modern human animal is no longer living in conditions natural for his species'.¹ Human beings, who evolved to be tribal hunter-gatherers, pay a high psychological price for living in the relative safety of their urban 'zoos'.

Kaczynski's debt to Morris is well hidden. The *Washington Post* version of the Manifesto does not cite Morris and contains only subtle allusions to *The Human Zoo*. After listing the various psychological problems caused by disruption of the power process, Kaczynski adds that '[s]ome of the symptoms listed are similar to those shown by caged animals'.² On his private copy of the Manifesto, he followed this sentence with a private footnote to *The Human Zoo*.³

Kaczynski's Darwinian spin on Ellul is derived from this book. His 1978–1979 essay, 'Reflections on Purposeful Work', closely echoes Morris and anticipates the Manifesto's idea of biological maladaptation: 'the reasons [sic] modern man is so prone to frustration and other emotional problems is that in the technological society he lives a life that is highly abnormal; as compared with the life to which evolution has adapted him, namely, the life of a hunter-gatherer'.⁴ Kaczynski put an endnote after this sentence, but the endnotes are missing. A reference to *The Human Zoo* would have fit perfectly.

Kaczynski's idea of the power process is derived in large part from Morris. In a 1996 letter, written three months after his arrest, Kaczynski recommends 'two books that seem to give some support to the manifesto's assertion about the power process: Desmond Morris, *The Human Zoo*, and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death*'.⁵ He is vague here because admitting to being the author of the Manifesto would have meant incriminating himself.

¹ Morris, *The Human Zoo*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, p. VII.

² ISAIF ¶44, note 8 (note 6 in the *Washington Post* version).

³ Kaczynski, private footnotes to ISAIF, *op. cit.*, Ref. 9, IV½.

⁴ Kaczynski, 'Reflections on Purposeful Work', *op. cit.*, Ref. 60, p. 1; cf. ISAIF ¶46.

⁵ Kaczynski to Jean-Marie Apostolidès, 10 July 1996, Labadie Box 17, Folder 636.

The power process is based on Morris's idea of 'the Stimulus Struggle': 'the struggle ... to obtain the optimum amount of stimulation from the environment'.⁶ This struggle faces 'opportunist' species, such as dogs and apes, when they are kept in zoos. Because these species 'have evolved nervous systems that abhor inactivity', they have to find ways of maintaining a certain level of stimulation even when all of their other needs have been satisfied by the zookeepers. Otherwise, they will become 'bored and listless and eventually neurotic'.⁷ Similarly, Kaczynski argues that people who can obtain anything they like 'without effort' often suffer from 'boredom and demoralization'.⁸ Since 'modern society', like a zookeeper, 'tends to guarantee the physical necessities to everyone in exchange for only minimal effort', modern humans are constantly struggling to find stimulation through 'surrogate activities'.⁹

Kaczynski's idea of surrogate activity is based on Morris's idea of 'survival-substitute activity'. Morris observes that many zoo animals engage in distractions, such as excessive grooming or harassing spectators, in order to maintain an optimal level of stimulation. He argues that hobbies and pursuits – from 'furniture rearranging and postage-stamp collecting' to 'the fine arts, philosophy and the pure sciences' – serve essentially the same 'survival-substitute' function for human beings.¹⁰ However, for zoo animals and modern humans alike, these artificial forms of stimulation may be inadequate: 'Substitutes for real survival activity remain substitutes ... Disillusionment can easily set in'.¹¹ Kaczynski similarly argues that modern society suffers from 'a deficiency of real goals', and, following Morris, he uses stamp-collecting and scientific pursuits as paradigmatic examples of 'surrogate' activities.¹² In a handwritten draft of the Manifesto that the FBI found in his cabin, Kaczynski uses 'substitute' instead of 'surrogate'. His note to himself at the top of the first page reads, 'throughout this material, replace the phrase "substitute activity" by "surrogate activity"'.¹³ Kaczynski may have changed Morris's terminology to avoid giving the FBI any potential leads.

The concept of surrogate activity plays an obvious role in Kaczynski's idea of maladaptation: human beings evolved to hunt and gather, not to solve equations or collect stamps. It also helps Kaczynski explain his own disillusionment with mathematics. In addition, surrogate activities play an important role in his understanding of technology. The core idea that modern technology constitutes a self-perpetuating system comes from Ellul, but the self-perpetuating part was too vague for Kaczynski's liking. Ellul describes 'technique' as an autonomous force 'with its own substance, its own particu-

⁶ Morris, *The Human Zoo*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, p. 114.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁸ ISAIIF ¶34-35.

⁹ ISAIIF ¶61.

¹⁰ Morris, *The Human Zoo*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, pp. 118–119, 122.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118, 122.

¹² ISAIIF ¶84, 87.

¹³ Kaczynski, handwritten draft of ISAIIF, undated, Labadie Box 79, K1814.

lar mode of being, and a life independent of our power of decision'.¹⁴ Kaczynski uses the idea of surrogate activity to provide a more fine-grained explanation of how the technological system perpetuates itself.

Scientific pursuits are the surrogate activities that drive the development of the system. What primarily motivates scientists, Kaczynski argues, is 'neither curiosity nor a desire to benefit humanity but the need to go through the power process: to have a goal (a scientific problem to solve), to make an effort (research) and to attain the goal (solution of the problem)'.¹⁵ Scientific surrogate activities are a consequence of the fact that the power process has been disrupted. For most people, the attainment of survival-related goals requires only trivial effort. Consequently, some people turn to scientific research in an attempt to find a sense of purpose. The result is a vicious circle. The more people pursue scientific surrogate activities, the more the technological system develops. The development of the system further disrupts the power process, which drives ever more people to pursue scientific surrogate activities.¹⁶

For Kaczynski, then, the technological system is not a product of rational design, let alone evil design; there is no conspiracy among scientists or technocrats.¹⁷ Combining Ellul's systemic worldview with Morris's Darwinian worldview, Kaczynski understands the development of the technological system as an evolutionary process.¹⁸ Scientists' surrogate activities produce constant mutations in technology, which are then filtered by competition between 'large organizations' such as states and corporations. Technological advancement is favoured by 'natural selection', because 'those organizations that make effective use of technology are more successful than those that do not'.¹⁹ There is an invisible hand of technology, not unlike the invisible hand of the market.

In sum, Kaczynski draws from Morris to provide evolutionary underpinnings for his Ellulian sociological arguments. The Manifesto's ideas of biological maladaptation, the power process, and surrogate activity are derived from *The Human Zoo*. But Kaczynski disagrees with Morris about precisely what it is about modern society that causes widespread psychological problems. Morris thinks human beings are, above all, maladapted to a crowded world of strangers: 'the shift from the personal to the impersonal society ... was going to cause the human animal its greatest agonies in the millennia ahead'.²⁰ Although Kaczynski acknowledges that 'crowding increases stress and aggression', he denies that it is 'the decisive factor': 'A few pre-industrial cities were very large and crowded, yet their inhabitants do not seem to have suffered from psycholog-

¹⁴ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, p. 93.

¹⁵ ISAIF ¶89. See also Kaczynski, 'Letter to Dr. P. B. on the Motivations of Scientists', in *Technological Slavery Volume One*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, pp. 267–281.

¹⁶ ISAIF ¶87-92.

¹⁷ Cf. Jones, *Against Technology*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 54, p. 224: 'Kaczynski sees technology as a monolithic conspiracy'.

¹⁸ ISAIF ¶106, 153.

¹⁹ Kaczynski, 'some notes for a follow-up essay', Labadie Box 29. See also Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 26, Chapter 2.

²⁰ Morris, *The Human Zoo*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, p. 6.

ical problems to the same extent as modern man'.²¹ He found an alternative diagnosis in the work of one of the most influential psychologists of the twentieth century.

²¹ ISAIF ¶48, 54.

Seligman: *Helplessness*

Martin Seligman’s best-known idea, and the one that influenced Kaczynski, is ‘learned helplessness’. In the most general terms, an animal is helpless when it believes that its behaviour cannot affect the relevant set of outcomes – that it cannot control its own fate. Helplessness causes acute psychological distress and destroys morale. In Seligman’s famous experiments, dogs were subjected to a series of inescapable shocks. When these dogs were later subjected to shocks that they *could* escape from, two thirds exhibited learned helplessness: instead of trying to escape, they ‘lay down quietly and whined’.¹

Seligman’s influence on the Manifesto is carefully concealed. The *Washington Post* version does not cite him, and the word ‘helpless’ appears only twice.² However, Kaczynski included a private footnote to Seligman at the end of his discussion of the power process: ‘Relevant to paragraphs 33–44, and important, is Martin E. P. Seligman, *On Depression, Development, and Death*’.³ He also cited Seligman (along with Morris) in support of the idea of the power process in a letter written three months after his arrest.⁴

Recall the four components of the power process: goal, effort, attainment, and autonomy.⁵ Whereas the first two comprise Morris’s stimulus struggle, the latter two are derived from Seligman’s idea of learned helplessness. Kaczynski argues that human beings need more than just the ‘stimulation’ that comes from pursuing goals that require effort. If their efforts are repeatedly unsuccessful, then helplessness will set in: ‘Consistent failure to attain goals throughout life results in defeatism, low self-esteem or depression’.⁶ In addition, human beings need to pursue their goals autonomously, ‘under their own direction and control’. Only by ‘making an *autonomous* effort’ can a person acquire ‘self-esteem, self-confidence and a sense of power’.⁷ As Kaczynski wrote in a 2004 letter, ‘[i]f one has had insufficient experience of the power process, then one has not been “immunized” to learned helplessness’.⁸

¹ Seligman, *Helplessness*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, p. 22.

² ISAIF ¶68.

³ Kaczynski, private footnotes to ISAIF, *op. cit.*, Ref. 9, IV.

⁴ Kaczynski to Apostolidès, 10 July 1996, *op. cit.*, Ref. 67.

⁵ ISAIF ¶33.

⁶ ISAIF ¶36.

⁷ ISAIF ¶44, emphasis in original.

⁸ Kaczynski to David Skrbina, 12 October 2004, in *Technological Slavery Volume One*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, p. 148.

Kaczynski recalls in that 2004 letter that he first read Seligman's *Helplessness* 'in the late 1980s'.⁹ But he appears to have been aware of the theory of learned helplessness long before then, and even before the book was published. In a 1969 journal entry, he noted that 'the important things in an individual's life are mainly under the control of large organizations; the individual is helpless to influence them'. Primitive man, on the other hand, has more control over his life: 'His decisions count; he is not helpless'.¹⁰ This line of argument would later become an important part of the Manifesto.

Kaczynski uses the concept of learned helplessness to provide a psychological mechanism for his maladaptation argument. The threats that human beings evolved to cope with were at least partly within their control, whereas many of the threats that modern human beings face are completely outside of their control.

Primitive man, threatened by a fierce animal or by hunger, can fight in self-defense or travel in search of food. He has no certainty of success in these efforts, but he is by no means helpless against the things that threaten him. The modern individual on the other hand is threatened by many things against which he is helpless: nuclear accidents, carcinogens in food, environmental pollution, war ... nationwide social or economic phenomena that may disrupt his way of life.¹¹

Kaczynski thinks modern human beings are like the dogs in Seligman's shock experiment. Faced with so many forces that they cannot possibly control, many people simply roll over, take drugs, watch TV, and accept their fate.¹² The widespread psychological problems in modern society are thus due to an epidemic of learned helplessness.

Kaczynski understands leftism as the political manifestation of helplessness. The typical leftist intellectual is 'oversocialized', which means that he has deeply internalized the norms of the technological society, such as equality, civility, and non-violence.¹³ He therefore feels 'shame and self-hatred' whenever he transgresses these norms, even in his own thoughts. Oversocialization keeps the leftist 'on a psychological leash' that often 'results in a sense of constraint and powerlessness'.¹⁴ (Kaczynski tends to use 'powerless' instead of 'helpless', just as he uses 'surrogate' instead of 'substitute'. He may have been trying to mask Seligman's influence to avoid leaving clues for the FBI.) Because the leftist feels powerless as an individual, he tries to gain a vicarious sense of power through 'a large organization or a mass movement with which he identifies

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁰ Kaczynski's journal, Series I #1, 1969, Labadie Box 82, K2046, pp. 56–57.

¹¹ ISAIIF ¶68. Kaczynski's understanding of 'primitive' societies was shaped by the two works of anthropology that he cites in private footnote VI, *op. cit.*, Ref. 9: Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Harmless People* (New York: Knopf, 1959); and Colin M. Turnbull, *The Forest People* (Simon & Schuster, 1961).

¹² ISAIIF ¶44, ¶145–147.

¹³ Kaczynski may have borrowed the term 'oversocialization' from biologist René Dubos, *So Human an Animal* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970 [1968]), p. 154.

¹⁴ ISAIIF ¶26.

himself'.¹⁵ Social movements thus provide an artificial sense of power, just as surrogate activities provide artificial goals.

Among the papers that the FBI confiscated from Kaczynski's cabin were some handwritten notes on Seligman's *Helplessness*, which consist mostly of long quotations describing the results of experiments.¹⁶ For the most part, these notes reinforce what his private footnotes tell us: the concept of learned helplessness shaped his idea of the power process. But these notes also show that Kaczynski made the concept of learned helplessness his own. Although he was fascinated by the experiments on helplessness, he was unimpressed with psychologists' interpretations of the results. As he wrote in a 2010 letter, Seligman's *Helplessness* 'is of central importance for an understanding of the psychology of modern man'; 'Seligman, however, is too much of a conformist to draw the conclusions about modern society that can and should be drawn from his work'.¹⁷ In Kaczynski's hands, the concept of learned helplessness became a mass-psychological diagnosis.

¹⁵ ISAIIF ¶19.

¹⁶ Kaczynski, notes on *Helplessness* by Martin Seligman, undated, Labadie Box 80. See also his notes on *Human Helplessness: Theory and Applications*, eds Judy Garber and Martin Seligman, undated, Labadie Box 80.

¹⁷ Kaczynski to David Skrbina, 23 October 2010, Labadie Box 93, Folder 1215.10.

The New Anti-Tech Radicalism

In thought and in action, Kaczynski is a lone wolf. His Manifesto articulates a theory or worldview that is peculiar to him and built from a unique combination of Ellul's, Morris's, and Seligman's ideas. Terrorism scholars have recently questioned 'whether it is time to put the "lone wolf" category to rest altogether', since alleged lone wolves are rarely as independent as they appear: 'ties to online and offline radical milieus are critical'.¹ Yet, as I have shown, Kaczynski is unusual in that most of his ideological formation took place in a library, outside of any radical milieu. His association with radical environmentalists, who shared his disdain for modern technology, was a consequence rather than a cause of his radicalization. The Unabomber case shows that terrorists can emerge from a relative ideological vacuum, even if this is rare, and that the concept of the lone wolf might therefore be worth retaining.

Although Kaczynski began his anti-tech bombing campaign as a lone wolf, he has since become the leader of a pack. Just as he had hoped, his Manifesto has spawned an ideology – a public discourse of anti-tech – and inspired a cluster of anti-tech radical groups. Kaczynski is not just an extreme example of an anti-tech radical, but also the founder and lodestar of a new form of anti-tech radicalism.

In the immediate aftermath of his arrest, many of Kaczynski's followers came from the outer fringe of the green movement. One of his early correspondents and confidants was John Zerzan, a prominent anarcho-primitivist. Another was Derrick Jensen, cofounder of the radical environmentalist group Deep Green Resistance.² Kaczynski's alliances with green anarchists and radical environmentalists were tenuous and short-lived. He ultimately fell out with Zerzan, Jensen, and their respective movements for the same reason: they are committed to many 'leftist' causes that he considers to be dangerous distractions.³ Whereas Kaczynski's opposition to technology is stubbornly single-minded, Zerzan and Jensen see technology as only one facet of 'civilization', alongside patriarchy, racism, and exploitation of animals. Only years later did Kaczynski begin to attract a following that was committed to *his* brand of anti-tech radicalism.

¹ Bart Schuurman et al., 'End of the Lone Wolf: The Typology that Should Not Have Been', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 42, no. 8 (2019), pp. 771–778, at 775 and 771. Schuurman et al. acknowledge that Kaczynski was exceptionally isolated and independent.

² Letters between Kaczynski and Zerzan, *op. cit.*, Ref. 3; Letters between Kaczynski and Jensen, *op. cit.*, Ref. 3. For more of Kaczynski's correspondence with green anarchists and radical environmentalists, see Labadie Boxes 1–20.

³ ISAIF ¶213-230. See also Kaczynski, 'The System's Neatest Trick', in *Technological Slavery Volume One*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 1.

As he notes in his 2016 book, ‘it is only since 2011 that I’ve had people who have been willing and able to spend substantial amounts of time and effort in doing research for me’.⁴ Coincidentally or not, 2011 is also the year that the Mexican terrorist group ITS emerged.

John Jacobi, a follower of Kaczynski, distinguishes three clusters of Kaczynski-inspired anti-tech radicals.⁵ First are the ‘apostles’ of Kaczynski, the *indomitistas*, led by his pseudonymous Spanish correspondent *Último Reducto*. The *indomitistas* devote themselves mainly to translating and analysing Kaczynski’s writings. They comprise part of his ‘inner circle’, which also conducts research for him and operates the publisher, Fitch & Madison, which prints his books.⁶ The other two clusters are the ‘heretics’, who are inspired by Kaczynski’s writings but diverge from him and the *indomitistas* about the finer points of doctrine, strategy, and tactics. One is Jacobi’s own group, the wildists, which broke away from the more orthodox *indomitistas* to build a broader coalition of ‘anti-civilization’ radicals.⁷ The other cluster of heretics, which is my focus in this article, comprises ITS and its offshoots. Whereas the *indomitistas* and the wildists focus on developing and propagating anti-tech ideas, ITS is eager for dramatic and violent action.

Journalists and terrorism scholars have labelled ITS ‘eco-terrorists’ and sometimes ‘eco-anarchists’, comparing the group to Deep Green Resistance and the Earth Liberation Front.⁸ ITS itself uses the term ‘eco-extremist’, which invites these comparisons.⁹ However, ITS is not just a more bellicose variant of radical environmentalism or green anarchism. An analysis of the group’s communiqués shows that its ideology is a distinctly Kaczynskian form of anti-tech radicalism.

Although ITS was influenced by radical environmentalism, the ‘eco’ in ‘eco-extremism’ is misleading. It does not refer to ‘deep ecology’; ITS rejects the ‘sentimentalism, irrationalism and biocentrism’ that it sees in many radical environmentalist groups.¹⁰ Instead, the ‘eco’ refers to the group’s ideal of ‘wild nature’, which accords a central place to human nature. ITS’s central concern, like Kaczyn-

⁴ Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 26, p. 4.

⁵ John Jacobi, ‘Apostles and Heretics’, in *Atassa: Readings in Eco-Extremism* (2016), pp. 15–33. *Atassa* is ITS’s English-language journal.

⁶ Members of Kaczynski’s inner circle are listed and thanked, often by their initials or pseudonyms, in the prefaces of his books. E.g. *Technological Slavery Volume One*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 1.

⁷ Jacobi, ‘Apostles and Heretics’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 105, p. 30. On Jacobi, see Richardson, ‘Children of Ted’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 5. See also Jacobi’s book, *Repent to the Primitive* (North Carolina: Wild Will Coalition, 2017).

⁸ Leigh Phillips, ‘Armed Resistance’, *Nature* 488, no. 7413 (2012), pp. 576–579; Chris Toumey, ‘Anti-Nanotech Violence’, *Nature Nanotechnology* 8 (2013), pp. 697–698; Zachary Kallenborn and Philipp C. Bleek, ‘Avatars of the Earth: Radical Environmentalism and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Weapons’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 5 (2020), pp. 351–381, at 363–364.

⁹ See *Atassa*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 105.

¹⁰ ITS, ‘Sixth Communiqué’, in *The Collected Communiqués of Individualists Tending Toward the Wild*, second edition, pseudonymous translation by ‘War on Society’ (2013), p. 76.

ski's, is that 'human beings are moving away more dangerously from their natural instincts'.¹¹ Adopting Kaczynski's 'bioprimitivism', as I have called it, ITS argues that 'the human being is biologically programmed ... through evolution' for the life of a 'hunter-gatherer-nomad'.¹²

Although it shares the hunter-gatherer ideal with green anarchists, ITS vehemently rejects any such label: 'we are not "eco-anarchists" or "anarcho-environmentalists"'.¹³ The group describes as 'delusional' those who 'romanticize Wild Nature' and 'believe that when Civilization falls everything will be rosy and a new world will flourish without social inequality, hunger, repression, etc'.¹⁴ This thinly-veiled attack on Zerzan's anarcho-primitivism echoes Kaczynski's essay, 'The Truth About Primitive Life', where he sets out to 'debunk the anarcho-primitivist myth that portrays the life of hunter-gatherers as a kind of politically correct Garden of Eden'.¹⁵ ITS follows Kaczynski in condemning green anarchism as 'leftist'.

Kaczynski's influence on ITS is difficult to miss. Many parts of the group's communiqués are merely paraphrases of the Manifesto: 'The essence of the power process has four parts: setting out of the goal, effort, attainment of the goal, and Autonomy'.¹⁶ But the depth of Kaczynski's influence on ITS is difficult to appreciate without knowing the origins of his ideas. ITS cites Morris's *The Human Zoo* in support of its claim that 'the Wild Nature of the human being in general was perverted when it started to become civilized'.¹⁷ The same communiqué later echoes Morris without citing him: 'it is totally abnormal to live together with hundreds of strangers around you'.¹⁸

ITS explicitly acknowledges some of its debts to Kaczynski. But this has not been enough to prevent misconceptions, because Kaczynski himself has also been lumped in with radical environmentalists and green anarchists.¹⁹ It is necessary to understand Kaczynski's distinct constellation of concepts in order to appreciate the ideological distinctness of ITS. The group uses his signature vocabulary: the technological system, the power process, surrogate activities, leftism, feelings of inferiority, oversocialization, etc. This is not the vocabulary of radical environmentalism or green anarchism. With the exceptions of 'civilization' and 'domination', ITS explicitly rejects the 'leftist' vocabulary of anarchism: oppression, solidarity, mutual aid, class struggle, hierarchy,

¹¹ ITS, 'Third Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 37.

¹² ITS, 'Seventh Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 101.

¹³ ITS, 'Fifth Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 70.

¹⁴ ITS, 'Second Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 21.

¹⁵ Kaczynski, 'The Truth About Primitive Life: A Critique of Anarcho-Primitivism', in *Technological Slavery*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, p. 157.

¹⁶ ITS, 'Fourth Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 45.

¹⁷ ITS, 'Seventh Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 94, note 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁹ Kallenborn and Bleek, 'Avatars of the Earth', *op. cit.*, Ref. 108, pp. 363–364. See also Ref. 13 above.

inequality, injustice, and imperialism.²⁰ Further, as I have already shown, even the ‘green’ parts of ITS’s communiqués have been filtered through Kaczynski. ITS is not an eco-terrorist or green anarchist group, but a novel kind of *anti-tech* terrorist group. The group’s ideology is distinctly Kaczynskian, genealogically and morphologically.

The *modus operandi* of ITS is not typical of radical environmentalists or green anarchists, who tend to be saboteurs or ‘monkeywrenchers’. Environmental radicals almost always target property rather than people.²¹ ITS, on the other hand, declares that it ‘is not a group of saboteurs (we do not share the strategy of sabotage or damage or destruction of property)’.²² Instead, as Kaczynski did, ITS aims to kill or maim people, such as scientists, whose surrogate activities propel the development of the technological system.²³

Anti-tech radicals and environmental radicals have different attitudes towards violence in large part because they have different ideals. As Bron Taylor argues, environmental radicals share ‘general religious sentiments – that the earth and all life is sacred – that lessen the possibility that [environmental] movement activists will engage in terrorist violence’.²⁴ As he correctly points out, there is ‘no indication that Kaczynski shared the sense, so prevalent in radical environmental subcultures, that life is worthy of reverence and the earth is sacred’.²⁵ Kaczynski is instead committed to the ideal of wild nature, which serves to naturalize violence. He argues, and ITS concurs, that ‘a significant amount of violence is a natural part of human life’.²⁶ Part of what it means to be a wild human being is to be a violent one, unencumbered by the fetters of civilized morality.

The ideal of wild nature helps to explain anti-tech radicals’ target selection. For Kaczynski and ITS, living things have value only insofar as they are wild, and to be wild is to be ‘outside the power of the system’.²⁷ When human beings become instruments of the system, they forfeit any value or dignity that they might have had. Scientists and technicians are permissible targets of violence because they have betrayed their wild nature, and they are desirable targets because they symbolize the technological system.²⁸ Whereas environmental radicals’ reverence for life tends to steer

²⁰ ITS, ‘Fourth Communiqué’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 49; ‘Seventh Communiqué’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, pp. 88–93.

²¹ Jennifer Varriale Carson, Gary LaFree, and Laura Dugan, ‘Terrorist and Non-Terrorist Criminal Attacks by Radical Environmental and Animal Rights Groups in the United States, 1970–2007’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (2012), pp. 295–319.

²² ITS, ‘Third Communiqué’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, pp. 40–41.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁴ Taylor, ‘Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁶ Kaczynski, ‘Letter to M. K.’, 4 October 2003, in *Technological Slavery*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, p. 376. Cf. ITS, ‘Fifth Communiqué’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 72: ‘we are in favor of violence that is natural’.

²⁷ ISAIF ¶184.

²⁸ See, generally, C. J. M. Drake, ‘The Role of Ideology in Terrorists’ Target Selection’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no. 2 (1998), pp. 53–85.

them away from violence, towards destruction of property, anti-tech radicals' ideal of wild nature serves to justify their violence.

Yet ITS diverges from Kaczynski about the purpose of violence. For Kaczynski, violence is primarily a means to overthrow the technological system. ITS, on the other hand, argues that Kaczynski's proposed revolution is 'idealistic and irrational'.²⁹ Not only is this revolution bound to fail; Kaczynski also falls into the trap of leftism when he models his revolution on the French and Russian revolutions.³⁰ For members of ITS, violence is not a means to revolution, but a way to affirm or reclaim their own wildness: 'the attack against the system ... is a survival instinct, since the human is violent by nature'.³¹ Kaczynski condemns ITS and accuses the group of misappropriating his ideas. He hurls the charge of leftism right back at them, along with a diagnosis of learned helplessness: 'The most important error that ITS commits is that they express, and therefore promote, an attitude of hopelessness about the possibility of eliminating the technological system'.³² This attitude of hopelessness gives ITS a more vengeful and nihilistic character than Kaczynski himself.

**Conclusion

I have shown that the main ideas in 'Industrial Society and Its Future' are derived from three academic authors who are not cited or even mentioned in the 1995 *Washington Post* version. Kaczynski's revolutionary anti-tech ideology combines Ellul's philosophy of technology, Morris's sociobiology, and Seligman's cognitive psychology. The Manifesto defies easy categorization because it is a novel synthesis of ideas from several disciplines and intellectual traditions.

My analysis of Kaczynski's ideology sheds light on the novel threat of anti-tech radicalism. This threat has flown under the radar because, for lack of a better term, it has been lumped in with radical environmentalism and green anarchism. As I have shown, anti-tech radicals comprise a distinct ideological cluster, and one with a much greater propensity for violence than environmental radicals. The revival of interest in Kaczynski and the emergence of groups such as ITS has been driven by increasing concerns about the negative effects of modern technology. Anti-tech radicalism is likely to grow in the coming decades, in tandem with fears about the consequences of automation, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. Some terrorism scholars and futurists have already predicted a wave of 'technophobic' terrorism in this century.³³ Opposition to technology is ideologically powerful, they argue, because it unites many disparate issues and concerns: climate change and pollution; automation, unemployment, and inequality; alienation and disruption of community; mass

²⁹ ITS, 'First Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 15.

³⁰ ITS, 'Sixth Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 74: "'Revolution" is a leftist concept'.

³¹ ITS, 'Fourth Communiqué', *op. cit.*, Ref. 110, p. 67.

³² Kaczynski to John Jacobi, unknown date.

³³ E.g., Manuel R. Torres-Soriano and Mario Toboso-Buezo, 'Five Terrorist Dystopias', *The International Journal of Intelligence, Security, and Public Affairs* 21, no. 1 (2019), pp. 49–65; Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines* (London: Phoenix, 1999), pp. 224–234.

surveillance and social control; and moral concerns about biotechnology. As today's most infamous anti-tech radical, and as the one with the most detailed blueprint for a revolution, Kaczynski may well become the 'Marx' of anti-tech.

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Notes

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