

Adapted Fragments of a Correspondence between Sean Fleming and Último Reducto

Último Reducto

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Note: The following exchange took place as a result of UR's reading of Sean Fleming's article "The Unabomber and the origins of anti-tech radicalism"¹ so it is advisable to read this paper before reading the exchange.

¹ Available on: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13569317.2021.1921940>.

Part I

UR: I casually have come across your article “The Unabomber and the origins of anti- tech radicalism”. Generally I have found it accurate, though especially in the last part, “The New Anti-Tech Radicalism”, I think you are getting some things wrong. In fact, it seems that you actually don’t know anything about the *real* and *current* internal structure and relationships of the supposed movement you are writing about. Not only you suggest relationships (between groups and persons) that in fact never have existed, but you also fail to actually grasp the *real* nature and *current* state of those that do exist or have existed.

However, my intention is not to improve your knowledge of the extant relationships among the individuals and groups that supposedly are adopting, defending and acting based on the so-called “anti-tech”¹ ideas. I am just concerned about the ill informed and ill documented portrait of them that you have given *to others* in your article,

¹ I don’t regard the label “anti-tech” (i.e., “anti-technological”) as an acceptable term to refer to Kaczynski’s ideas or to those who share his main value (wild Nature), his main ideas (rejection of modern technology, and rejection of leftism and hippieism) and his goal (the elimination of the technoindustrial society), and I think that Kaczynski is deadly wrong and has been too clumsy in adopting this label as a name for his own ideas. Not only is this term inaccurate, but also confusing.

On the one hand, the use of the label “anti-tech” by Kaczynski suggests that his struggle is against all technology, when it is just against modern, complex or industrial technology (i.e., technology which needs large organizations in order to exist and work).

And in the other hand, the use of this label can suggest that there is always some mutual ideological and “political” affinity among those individuals or groups who seem to criticize or reject “technology”, when this is not true at all. First, before Kaczynski adopted it, the term “anti-tech” was already used by other people who was not akin at all to Kaczynski, or who even were not against modern technology as a whole, to name themselves (or being named by others, like journalists and politicians). For example, this term has been and is conventionally applied, especially in the USA mass media, to anti-vaxxers, to those parents and teachers who reject the use of computers in classrooms, to those who defend a reduction of economic investment in computer industry or biotechnological research, etc.; all for reasons that usually have nothing to do with Kaczynski’s ideas. And second, Neo-Luddites, primitivists, anti-industrial Marxists, eco-extremists, etc. all of them seem to reject or radically criticize technology, but their ideas, values, goals and attitudes are completely different or even opposite from each other. The common use of the catch-all term “anti-tech” to refer to them invites to lump together all of them into one ragbag, and what is even worse, given that Kaczynski has adopted it to call his own ideas, it invites to relate this ragbag with him. And the way you use the label in your paper, using it to refer to some people who Kaczynski is not actually thinking of as “anti-techs” when he uses it (that is, to refer to people who *actually* are not much ideologically akin to him), like Jacobi or ITS, proves my point.

Furthermore, I think that, unfortunately, the label has a fatuous teenish flavour (it resembles the typical labels devised and adopted by youngsters to fulfil the strong need of belonging and identity that

because it can induce its readers to extract misleading conclusions about those ideas and relationships. So here I am just going to make some comments on why I regard your interpretations of them as wrong.

In your paper, you suggest that there is a much closer relationship between Dr. Theodore John Kaczynski and Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje (ITS) than that which actually exists. Kaczynski has always rejected ITS as a bunch of ignorants and defeatists.² The only “relationship” between ITS and Kaczynski is that ITS took some of Kaczynski’s (and others’) rhetoric and vocabulary and used them to try to justify their own activities. But in fact ITS’s understanding of the concepts this vocabulary and rhetoric refer to is really poor or inexistent. And, given that ITS and the eco-extremists are defeatists -that is, they don’t even share Kaczynski’s goal: to destroy technoindustrial society, because they regard it impossible and thus unworthy to even be pursued-, they shouldn’t be regarded as really ideologically akin to Kaczynski (i.e., “anti-tech” in the sense Kaczynski uses this problematic term). You have given ITS a too much credit portraying them as much more intellectually competent than they actually are, basing only in a shallow impression about their use of superficially Kaczynski-like vocabulary and rhetoric.

You seem to be making the typical error of most of those supposed experts who pretentiously write studies, chronicles, portraits and analyses about social phenomena (movements, currents of thought, groups, cultures, etc.) from outside and from far away without ever having any real direct contact or relationship with these phenomena and with the people involved in them. Did you ever thought about asking Kaczynski himself, or any other of the supposedly ideologically akin people you mention in the paper, before writing the paper? If you thought, you obviously didn’t it enough. As a result, you have uncritically believed (or at least relied on) only some very doubtful and unreliable sources as if they were completely reliable and as if the version of the facts they provide were the only one and as it were completely true.

Jacobi, for example, not only is a highly unreliable source for understanding those ideas similar to Kaczynski’s, and the milieu in which these ideas have originated and

they usually feel) and it even reminds one of those ridiculous labels and abbreviations Marxist-Leninists were so fond of (e.g., “agit-prop”, and the like).

All this could have serious strategical consequences: to publicly induce a false idea of what are (and what are not) Kaczynski’s ideas and goal, and the movement he is attempting to create, and thus to attract undesirables to it and repel valuable people from it.

² See:

Fragmento de carta 1 (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KSzm7e8onmF_kkaltLByFPfGizQyV_A0/

Fragmento de carta 2 (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CIPIYxAicBEHfCxoPo-muf_Z4fZF_F6z4/).

Fragmento de carta 3 (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XErWRCEffVaHLFIIA8bx1UR7y41Q-i2X>).

Fragmento de carta 4 (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fGj-F4sF-8o20yyCZgnwJQn11qsE9Jz4>).
They are all consecutive pages of a letter from Kaczynski to a Mexican (September 2, 2012).

are developing, but he is also despised and disavowed by those whose ideas are closest to Kaczynski's (starting with Kaczynski himself).³

In this respect, it is worth to point out that the use of the term "indomitistas" to refer to me and the rest of Spaniards who share the main ideas, values and goal of Kaczynski was just another product of Jacobi's preposterous deliria. He was the only one who ever used this label to call us, we never used it (or any other label at all) to publicly refer to ourselves or our ideas.⁴

And Richardson is as equally unreliable as a source, if only because he has taken Jacobi as a major source for his article "Children of Ted".⁵ In this article Richardson puts some words in Kaczynski's mouth which anyone who minimally knew Kaczynski and his ideas would regard as undoubtedly spurious. I am referring to the fragment in which Kaczynski supposedly regards Jacobi as the Lenin of the "anti-tech" cause. First Kaczynski, supposedly in a letter to Richardson in 2018, says that, for the moment, there is no one who could play the role of an "anti-tech" Lenin. But, then immediately, he supposedly says that Jacobi is the man, though incongruently he also says that Jacobi is a "screwball" and an "unreliable" person. Apart from what I have shown above (footnote 5) about Kaczynski's real opinion on Jacobi already by 2015, this fragment is flagrantly nonsensical, and it doesn't fit Kaczynski's usual careful and logical way of expressing himself. Kaczynski tends to be much more cautious and intellectually rigorous than that and he would virtually never make a so obviously contradictory, illogical

³ See, letter from Kaczynski to U.R. (October 21, 2015): <https://drive.google.com/file/d/19AqMd7AxGEGqMjGjDZ6z8jLGhbiQUQN6/>. Translation to English of the text inside the red frame: "*Never write me anything about John Jacobi, and don't tell Jacobi anything about me, unless you just tell him that I plainly reject all his ideas and all his projects, and that I also reject him because he is irresponsible, fool and more than half crazy*".

⁴ In fact the story of the label "indomitistas" is as follows: Once, in a meeting of those Spaniards ideologically akin to Kaczynski who got together around the publication *El Boletín* (which later will become the website *Naturaleza Indómita*), one of us, B. R., *for a joke*, proposed the term "indomitismo" to call our ideas. We all had a good time laughing at such outlandish idea, and then focused again on to more serious issues. Years later, when Jacobi was looking for a label to name our ideas, I recalled B.R.'s joke and told him about it. Jacobi asked me what would be the English translation of "indomitismo". I answered that a rough translation could be something like "wildism". It seems that he took it too seriously, because he started to refer to us (Spanish people ideologically akin to Kaczynski) as "indomitistas" and adopted "wildist" as a label for himself and his ideas. Jacobi had a pathologically exaggerated and desperate need for belonging to some reference group and he used labels to try to placate it. First he called himself "(green) anarchist", then "(neo-)Luddite", then "wildist", and even later "primitivist" (you could and should have seen this crazy evolution of his deliria by looking at his website, but it was deleted some years ago).

And it seems that you are taking some of those ridiculous labels as seriously as Jacobi did.

⁵ *New York Magazine*, *Intelligencer*, December 11, 2018
(<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/12/the-unabomber-ted-kaczynski-new-generation-of-acolytes.html>).

claim.⁶ So either Kaczynski was drunk when he wrote to Richardson or Richardson is lying.

There are some few other aspects in the rest of your paper that are very questionable too, but they are much less grave compared to the above.

SF: Thank you for your comments on my article. First of all, let me recognize that there are several problems with my discussion of the “anti-tech” movement (if you’ll allow me to use that term) in the final section of the article. The discussion is far too short and too simple. Further, as you suggest (and as I discovered in the course of further research), Jacobi’s classification of the different factions of the “anti-tech” movement is flawed. The original version of this article was solely about the intellectual origins of Kaczynski’s ideas. But since no journal would publish it in that form, I had to add the part about contemporary “anti-tech” radicalism.

I know much more about the “anti-tech” movement than you think I do. I have indeed asked “insiders” about the movement. I am well aware that Kaczynski detests and disavows ITS, and I emphasize this fact in the final paragraph of the section on “The New Anti-Tech Radicalism.” Since you do not think I understand the “anti-tech” movement, would you answer some of my questions? I believe it is in your interest (and Kaczynski’s) to set the record straight, because I plan to publish a much longer article about the structure of the movement.

1) Since you regard Kaczynski’s “anti-tech” label as unacceptable, what do you think is an acceptable label for him and others in the same tradition?

2) If not the “indomitistas,” what would you call the group of Spaniards who share Kaczynski’s main ideas, values, and goals? Or do you reject all labels?

3) Other than Kaczynski and yourself, who are the most important authors in the “anti-tech” tradition (if you’ll forgive my use of that label yet again)? Who should I read?

4) Are there any other “impostors” (like ITS and Jacobi) who have misappropriated Kaczynski’s ideas?

5) You say that there are a “few other aspects in the rest of your paper that are very questionable” – would you like to say more?

6) You also say that generally you found my article quite accurate. What are the important points that my article gets right?

UR: All right, I can grant that much probably I was wrong in guessing that you know little about the so-called “anti-tech” wannabe movement, and I am glad to know that you now know more and better about it than I guessed. How much do you really know? I still don’t know. Moreover, you should understand too that I was writing basing on what I could infer only from the reading of your paper. By the way, if you had direct information from “insiders”, and if there is not any other reason I ignore

⁶ For some quite recent and worrying, exceptions see: Último Reducto, “Critical Comments on Ted Kaczynski’s ‘Ecofascism: An Aberrant Branch of Leftism’” Original version in Spanish available in *Último Reducto*: <https://ultimoreductosalvaje.blogspot.com/2022/09/comentarios-criticos-el-ecofascismo-una.html>. *Note added later for this post.*

for not using this information, why didn't you use it to give a more accurate portrait of such "movement" in your paper? Anyway, notwithstanding your reasons or excuses for including the last part (i.e., making the article publishable), the fact that it was so flawed will not do any good to such "movement" (or better said to its chances to someday actually come to existence as an efficient and healthy movement, because today, as far as I know, there is not actually anything that one can call a full-fledged movement⁷ still). This is my concern and the only reason why I wrote to you.

I am not sure that I should answer your questions. I distrust academic researchers, journalists, etc. because many times their goal is not precisely to help to spread, portrait or explain in an accurate way the ideas or phenomena they write about, but only to pursue their professional interests and goals (too many times at any cost). Give me a good reason for trusting you and maybe I will.

SF: I am not going to give you excuses for the flaws in my article. It was my mistake to rely on Jacobi's description of the "movement" (perhaps "milieu" is a better word), and I did not realize this mistake until it was too late. Although the article was published in May 2021, I submitted the final version for publication much earlier, in September 2020. Only this year, after further research, did I realize that Jacobi's description of the milieu was flawed and self-serving.

You ask for a reason that you should trust me. Let me give you two reasons. The first reason is that, although I could have revealed your real name in my article, I chose not to. I protected your privacy even though I had something to gain from violating it. And I give you my word that I will not reveal your identity.

The second reason you should trust me is that, as you admit, my portrayal of Kaczynski's ideas (presumably in the first three sections of my article) is "quite accurate." I am one of very few academics who have earnestly tried to understand his ideas. Of course, you may find flaws in my intellectual history of Kaczynski; I do not pretend that it is perfect. But no "leftist of the oversocialized type" would ever have written an article like this. In fact, the article was nearly impossible to publish, because political theorists and philosophers are so dismissive of Kaczynski. I have nothing to gain career-wise from writing about his ideas. If I wanted to advance my career, I would have kept writing about Thomas Hobbes instead.⁸

⁷ I mean a serious, definite, formal and organized movement, beyond some committed individuals more or less mutually connected by their shared contact with Kaczynski and their shared main ideas, values and goal with him. I don't mean a lax, ill-defined, boundary-blurred, unorganized, informal current to which often isn't clear who belongs and who doesn't. In short, I mean a group, with a clear and defined membership (i.e., an organization), not a nebulous "social movement" or "current of thought" of which anybody vaguely critic towards (modern) technology could be regarded as a member, and anybody vaguely critic towards (modern) technology could say he is a member. Of course, this is somewhat an oversimplification (the existence of an organization doesn't exclude the existence of a much more lax peripheral "movement" to some extent, but, unlike the former, the latter is not indispensable).

⁸ Previously to the writing of his article about Kaczynski, Sean Fleming had been working for years in research about Thomas Hobbes' ideas. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

However, I am not asking you to trust me. If I were you, I wouldn't put much trust in anyone. Journalists and academics have constantly tried to take advantage of Kaczynski and to portray him as a nut, and most of them would probably try to do the same to you.

But I believe it is in your interest to answer some of my fairly general and non-intrusive questions. Whether we like it or not, academics and journalists determine the dominant narrative. I plan to write more about Kaczynski's ideas, and the fact that I am affiliated with Cambridge gives my words credibility. By answering my questions, you'll help to set the record straight and keep me from putting errors into print.

If I don't write about the "anti-tech" milieu, other academics soon will, and I can almost guarantee you that they will be much less fair and objective than I am. Which version of the story would you prefer? My version, which takes Kaczynski's ideas seriously and takes your views into account? Or the version written by leftist technophiles, who will probably lump you and Kaczynski in with the conspiracy theorists who think 5G towers cause viruses?

UR: First of all, I have never suggested that you belong to the "oversocialized type". I don't know enough about you as to say anything like this about your person, your psychology or your ideas.

My reasons to use a pseudonym instead of my real name have nothing to do with clandestinity or fear of having legal troubles. It is simply that, first, personally I feel aversion to become a public personality, and second, I don't want to distract attention from the content of what I say to my own person and personal life. Anyway, I think it would be not very difficult to discover my real identity if somebody really wanted to.

By the way, I would like to raise some questions for you too: If as you say, you are putting apart or even risking the advance of your academic career writing about Kaczynski's (or Kaczynski's-like) ideas, why do you do it? Why not to just keep on writing about Hobbes? If it is because you have some interest in Kaczynski's ideas apart the mere academic one, why are you so interested in them? If you have any personal interest in them, which one exactly? Is your interest merely theoretical or do you have any personal affinity with Kaczynski's ideas? If the case is the latter, to what extent?

Second, I have to tell you that I have not corresponded with Kaczynski since about 2017 (I had been corresponding with him since 2002).⁹ Though I have had some further contact with some of his closest partners. So I am not claiming to know completely and perfectly the *current* situation among all the ideologically akin people who has gathered around him and his ideas.

⁹ The reasons for quitting the contact were diverse, but the problems with the mail resulting from the penitentiary rules were paramount (I sometimes had to send some letters three times; letters in other language different from English had their delivery delayed even months for translating by prison personnel –this if they simply didn't get lost–; etc.). Eventually, I decided that it was not worth the effort, and said farewell to him. Our mutual differences about ideology and strategy were not the main reason.

Third, anything that I say in this exchange of correspondence are just my own opinions, not necessary shared by Kaczynski or other ideologically akin people. If you want to know what Kaczynski or anybody else think about something, ask them directly.

Here are my answers:

1) “*Since you regard Kaczynski’s ‘anti-tech’ label as unacceptable, what do you think is an acceptable label for him and others in the same tradition?*”: The first thing one should ask is if it is really necessary to create and use any label to name Kaczynski’s ideas or the “movement” he wants to create. It doesn’t seem so clear to me that any label to name such “movement” or ideas is necessary at all now because, as far as I know, there is not even any *real* movement still. I suppose that it probably will be unavoidable that at some point (when and if a full-fledged movement appears) somebody (if not from inside the movement, then from outside) will start using some label to refer to the movement. If and when this happens, it probably will be better that the movement names itself than to let others to name it (and for that matter, it could be the even better that it names itself *before* others name it). However, even in such case, it is quite probable that the label it will end up adopting will be somewhat inadequate anyway.

I am not going to suggest any label now and here, but whatever the label chosen were, it should fulfill at least all the following requirements:

a. It has to be **precise, unambiguous**. Its meaning should be clear. The label should be such that people from outside should infer easily, *only and exactly* the ideas of the movement from the label, but they couldn’t easily infer any other different ideas from it. Labels that can, even minimally, suggest that they refer to other ideas different than *exactly* those of the movement should be discarded.

b. Closely related to “a”, it has to be **unmistakable, unequivocal**. Labels that can, even minimally, suggest that they refer to other different movements or people should be discarded.

c. The label has to be **original** and **sober**, sound **normal**, and look **serious**: in order to fulfill “a” and “b”, the label probably should be created as a completely new label which never has been used before by anybody, instead of being adopted from a stock of pre-existent and previously used (by others) labels. And it has to give the impression of sobriety and seriousness. So abbreviations, easy or funny word-games, strange-sounding words or any other names that could be understood in a non-serious, informal, or even stupid way, or that could cause odd surprise or rejection in those who hear it, should be discarded.

I regard these requirements as the obvious conclusions of mere common sense, but we know that unfortunately common sense usually is not very common. Thus, to choose a good label, that fulfills the previous requirements (and maybe others I could be not aware of now) without problems, is not an easy task. Maybe it is impossible.

And, of course, “anti-tech” is not a good label, because, as it can be inferred from what I said above (footnote 3), it virtually doesn’t meet any of the previous requirements.

2) “If not the ‘indomitistas,’ what would you call the group of Spaniards who share Kaczynski’s main ideas, values, and goals? Or do you reject all labels?”: We didn’t reject all labels on principle, but we didn’t find it necessary to name ourselves then (or so far, in the case of those of us who are still active).

3) “Other than Kaczynski and yourself, who are the most important authors in the ‘anti-tech’ tradition (if you’ll forgive my use of that label yet again)? Who should I read?”: If by “anti-tech tradition” you mean any other author that had the *same* main values, ideas and goal than those of Kaczynski, I don’t know of anyone else. This doesn’t mean that there haven’t been any, it is only that I don’t know of any. Ask Kaczynski. Maybe he knows of anyone else.

4) “Are there any other ‘impostors’ (like ITS and Jacobi) who have misappropriated Kaczynski’s ideas?”: Any time there is a famous personality, there always will be opportunistic individuals who will try to take advantage of his fame and work for their personal benefit (not necessarily economic benefit, but also fame, prestige, academic or professional curricula, political profits, etc).

5) You say that there are a “few other aspects in the rest of your paper that are very questionable” – would you like to say more?: Basically I disagree with what you say about Kaczynski’s attitude towards biocentrism¹⁰ and wild Nature (i.e., wild ecosystems plus human nature). I have some evidences to believe that Kaczynski is not actually as much anthropocentric as you (and many other people) seem to think and that for him wildness and wild Nature are very important *in themselves*, and not only (or even mainly) because they are necessary for humans to be really free. For example, while it is true that he (signing as FC) didn’t discuss much in “Industrial Society and Its Future” (ISAIF) “the disaster that modern technology has been for the planet” (for the natural part of the planet, I suppose you mean), he did say, at the very beginning of ISAIF, that he was *also* very concerned about *the damage that industrial society has done to the “natural world”* though he said that he wouldn’t discuss it in ISAIF.¹¹ In the same work he proposed wild Nature as the ideal (that is as the main value) of the movement (and he obviously didn’t mean wild Nature as just human nature, but also

¹⁰ Here I suppose that you, like many people, are using this term in your paper as a synonym of “ecocentrism” (i.e., the idea that wild ecosystems are the most important thing, above and before humanity). But even if you were referring to the notion of biocentrism that only refers to life (“bios”) taken as a whole, as a general phenomenon (e.i., the biosphere or the set constituted by all living beings; that is, the biotic component of ecosystems), as sacred or as the main value (the most important thing), I still would think that you are wrong about Kaczynski, basing on my own knowledge of his ideas and even on evidences (i.e., letters).

¹¹ “The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race. They have greatly increased the life expectancy of those of us who live in ‘advanced’ countries, but they have destabilized society, have made life unfulfilling, have subjected human beings to indignities, have led to widespread psychological suffering (in the Third World to physical suffering as well) *and have inflicted severe damage on the natural world.*” (Paragraph 1). “[S]ince there are well-developed environmental and wilderness movements, we have written very little about environmental degradation or the destruction of wild nature, even though we consider these to be *highly important.*” (Paragraph 5). Italics added.

or especially as “the natural world” on Earth, i.e., wilderness, wild ecosystems). In fact, his real reason for defending to destroy technoindustrial society is that it unavoidably destroys or enslaves wild Nature (i.e., wild ecosystems and human nature). I recall also some fragments of his letters to me that make me think he actually values Nature *in itself*, and even above humanity.¹²¹³

Perhaps, for some reasons,¹⁴ it might be that sometimes one thing is what he publicly says in his works and another what he really thinks personally and privately. Or, for similar reasons, it might be that some of his ideas (in his texts or privately) are not enough clear or deeply congruent in some respects.

6) *You also say that generally you found my article quite accurate. What are the important points that my article gets right?:* I found quite interesting and accurate all the explanation about the origins and meaning of the power process idea. You presented it in a quite clear, organized and easily understandable way. I only would raise the question: Did Kaczynski take his ideas from those authors (Ellul, Morris and Seligman) or rather he already had come (at least partly) to those ideas by himself before he read those authors and then he just used their works to polish, complete and improve the expression and formulation of his own intuitions? I am inclined to think the latter, but I really don’t know if it is true or to what extent.

SF: Why do I write about Kaczynski if doing so is such a liability? Because, for me, the whole point of being an academic is to write things that I believe are meaningful and important. Of course I could keep writing about Hobbes for the next few decades, adding lines to my CV and climbing the ranks. But then I would have squandered my opportunity to say something worthwhile.

I wrote about Kaczynski for two main reasons. First, I regard him as an important figure in the history of political thought. (I know that his proposed revolution is not

¹² In fact, it seems that at the beginning, when Kaczynski was young he valued wilderness only or mainly because it was the necessary milieu for experiencing personal autonomy (or real freedom), but with time, living in the woods, he eventually learned to appreciate the *intrinsic* value of wild Nature. Or at least so he told me once in a letter [unknown date]...

¹³ Two letters to prove my point are:

Letter from Theodore John Kaczynski to UR No.61, September 26, 2007, pages 13–14, about his valuing Nature over humanity (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bYmsvO_GgDt43oWlyQj2WQQjHXGI1Mtd and <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1amU9cIde6SKdHeiceU10uYNU5uVUAuyM/>). The translation from Spanish is: “What is more important? Human suffering or the need for saving the biosphere? If human beings have to suffer in order to the biosphere be saved, or in order to eliminate the technoindustrial system... well, then they have to suffer”.

Letter from Theodore John Kaczynski to UR No. 111, April 22, 2010, page 9, about the same issue (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ja4bGb195GtiyZ4Qx5MFW24d5tOg3DiH/>).

[Also see: Letter from Kaczynski to an anonymous person, July 1, 2003 (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iDM0tBTbACdErQ4zro3NoL8LDm8OME5R>). *Note added later for this post*].

¹⁴ Like, for example: strategy, lack of enough reflection about some issues that he regards as impractical, lack of enough experiential and direct knowledge about some issues, a high amount of eclecticism, etc.

a “political” revolution; leave that aside for now.) ISAIF is probably the most-read manifesto (at least in the West) since WWII. For that matter, I can’t think of any academic book since WWII that is as well known or as widely read as ISAIF. As a political theorist — someone whose job it is to study political ideas — I found it appalling and almost unbelievable that my profession had completely ignored Kaczynski. So I felt compelled to try to fill the gap.

Of course, this sense of professional duty was not a sufficient motivation. I did not write about Kaczynski’s ideas until I had done some serious archival research. Only then did I think I had something new to say. To the best of my knowledge, no one else has done a forensic analysis of Kaczynski’s sources, and no one before me had uncovered the crucial pieces of archival material, such as the “private” footnotes to ISAIF. In short, I wrote about Kaczynski’s ideas because I saw a glaring gap in the literature and a goldmine of material with which to fill it. Second, as you seem to suggest, I do have a more personal interest in critiques of technology. I’ve been worried about the negative effects of modern technology for many years- -especially in my home region, where oil, mining, and forestry are the dominant industries.¹⁵ I saw how the destruction of the traditional fishery has left much of the population dependent, demoralized, and helpless. For me, Kaczynski was a bridge to Jacques Ellul’s work, and to critiques of technology more generally. I could say a lot more, but I hope this gives you some insight into my motivations for writing about Kaczynski.

If I may, I’d like to ask a few follow-up questions:

1) In one of your above footnotes, you mention your “mutual differences about ideology” with Kaczynski, though you note that these were not the main reason why your correspondence came to an end. What were the most important differences between you and Kaczynski? (From the letters I have read, Kaczynski did not seem to mind your differences, and he considered you to be his best critic: “The only person I know who consistently reads my work with sufficient care to understand it is Último Reducto (though he sometimes disagrees or criticizes)”.¹⁶

2) To your knowledge, how active is ITS now? I know that the Greek, Chilean, and Mexican branches have continued to release communiqués and to claim responsibility for attacks. But I suspect that much of this is bluster and bluff -a few individuals pretending to be a movement. You probably have a better sense than I do, since you are in the Spanish-speaking world.

3) What do you think of David Skrbina?

UR: Here are my answers:

1) “*What were the most important differences between you and Kaczynski?*”: Generally they are not very big differences (indeed many times they are very subtle, and just of degree) though some could be important and have serious practical, strategical

¹⁵ Fleming is from Canada. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

¹⁶ Theodore J. Kaczynski to David Skrbina, 10 November 2011, Labadie Box 93, Folder 1215.10, page 6.

repercussions. I am not going to list and explain in detail all of them (I myself have never made a systematic list of them), but they can be roughly classified in some general groups:

- *Differences regarding the use, meaning or definition of some terms.* What I have said above about the label “anti-tech” could be an example of these differences. Other terms that we use or define differently (or that he simply doesn’t define enough clearly or at all) are: “revolution”, “leftism”, “power”, “environmentalism” or “technology”. In my opinion these differences generally boil down to our *different attitudes towards precision in expression*. I am much more concerned than him with making things clear and unequivocal, avoiding ambiguity as much as possible and making readers to understand what I mean *and only this*. From ambiguity and lack of clearness comes confusion and misinterpretations, and from confusion and misinterpretations come a lot of problems (many of them practical and strategical/tactical).
- *Differences regarding leftism.* His stance towards leftism is less vehement, and less clearly and openly opposite to it than mine. His main reasons for rejecting leftism are practical (i.e., leftist goals interfere with the pursuing of the goal of destroying the technoindustrial system). But, theoretically or ideologically his rejection of leftism is quite mild, at best (when it is not sometimes tolerant or even sympathetic towards some leftist ideas).¹⁷ My reasons for rejecting leftism are strongly ideological, *not just* practical. I reject leftist values, ideas and goals

¹⁷ One of the most striking examples of this was when he said in a supposed letter to Derrick Jensen (date unknown) that the movement should implement “affirmative action” inside its own ranks! [I say “supposed” because I found the text on Jacobi’s website; though, since I am quite familiar with Kaczynski’s ideas and way of writing, *the text seems to be authentic* to me; the original letter is probably in the Labadie Collection]. The fragment I refer to is this:

I also think it would be very useful to *practice* affirmative action but not to *preach* it. Here’s what I mean: If you start preaching affirmative action, a lot of white males think it means discrimination against them, and you drive them away. If you preach to white people about black slavery or about what was done to the American Indians, a lot of them react by saying, ‘Heck, I personally never had a slave, I never harmed a black person, I never personally took any land from the Indians. Why should *I* feel guilty.’ Again, you drive them away. So, instead of preaching, we should simply *practice* affirmative action by working to recruit people of all races and all ethnic groups into the movement, and getting members of all groups into leadership positions. Instead of emphasizing past or present conflicts between ethnic groups, we emphasize the common interests that they have *now*. In this way, we bring the members of the movement together instead of dividing them. (*Italics in the original*).

Although, in my opinion, *if this text is faithful to what he actually wrote in his handwritten original letter*, here Kaczynski would be probably confusing “affirmative action” (that is, to discriminate in favor of some supposed victims and to intentionally try to implement some quotas –i.e., getting into the movement’s ranks members of supposedly oppressed races, ethnicities, sexual preferences, sexes, etc. at any cost and no matter their actual qualification for occupying such posts-) with just not discriminating at all (e.g., membership and rank shouldn’t depend on members’ sexes, sexual preferences, races, etc. at all, but just on their qualification for being members and occupying their posts). In such case, to the obvious strategic idiocy of publicly defending such a leftist value as “affirmative action” as a value of

per se, because I regard them as wrong (that is, because leftist ideas are based on falsities and leftist values and goals are bad), *not just* because they interfere with the goal of destroying technoindustrial society. If they didn't interfere, I would despise them likewise.

Besides, Kaczynski seems to think that it is enough not allowing leftists in the ranks of the movement and clearly drawing the line between leftism and the movement, but it is not clear at all to what extent he thinks that the movement can safely collaborate with leftist organizations and leftist people.¹⁸ I think that the only safe way to draw the line and effectively keep the distance with leftism or other undesirable currents or people is not to have “*politically*” any friendly or collaborative contact with them at all. Otherwise, the movement (or its promot-

the movement, it could be added the flaw that Kaczynski would be mixing up concepts and would be speaking without even knowing what he was speaking about. And, even if I am wrong and he was really aware of what affirmative action actually means, and he indeed defended its implementation inside the movement (or the implementation of something similar –and certainly, the sentence “working to recruit people of all races and all ethnic groups into the movement, and getting members of all groups into leadership positions” could indeed be understood in such a way-), then he would be undermining the effectiveness of the movement, given that actual affirmative action always implies the subordination of the merits, talents and abilities of the individuals to some other kinds of practically unimportant traits (race, sex, etc.). “Affirmative action” indeed implies not to put always the most qualified people in high positions and not to put always the least qualified people in low positions. Which, when this happens inside the system, is usually good for the cause against technoindustrial society (because affirmative action reduces the efficiency of the system), but if implemented inside the movement, it would be very bad for the cause, because it likewise would reduce movement's efficiency.

Another example:

Not that we have anything against social justice, but it must not be allowed to interfere with the effort to get rid of the technological system. (ISAIF, paragraph 201, italics added).

Well, I *do* have some things against social justice, and especially against saying in public that one has nothing against it.

¹⁸ Kaczynski seems to have changed his mind about this issue over time (for worse in my opinion), because in ISAIF he explicitly and correctly said that “a movement that exalts nature and opposes technology must take a resolutely anti-leftist stance and must avoid all collaboration with leftists” (paragraph 214), but in *Anti-Tech Revolution* he even encourages to collaborate with radical environmentalists (who, whatever “radical environmentalism” means, tend to be mostly leftists) or participate in their actions and organizations (pages 172–173 of the 2015 Fitch & Madison edition), and he even refers to Lenin in order to try to justify it (*ibid.*, pages 172–173 and page 185, note 179).

An actual and recent example of his current stance is the publication (with his permission) of the French edition of *Anti-Tech Revolution* this very year by the French publishing house Editions Libre. If you take a look at their website, especially the section “A propos” (<https://www.editionslibre.org/a-propos/>), you will easily see that they are paradigmatically leftists (something similar to green anarchists). So, at least in the French-speaking world, Kaczynski and many of his ideas (those expressed in this book) are going to be presented through the catalog of a leftist, “radical environmentalist” publishing house, full of leftist stuff, and thus he and his ideas are likely going to be associated with leftist, “radical environmentalist” ideas and milieus by many of those who look at the catalog. The obvious effect of this is that it will attract leftists to Kaczynski's ideas, repel non-leftists from them and suggest that Kaczynski is a leftist, “radical environmentalist” in the eyes of French-speaking public. Not precisely a good move by Kaczynski...

ers) would appear as working happily shoulder to shoulder with leftists in the eyes of the public, and this will always have much more weight for the majority of the people than anything else the movement (or its promoters) can publicly say about its distance from leftism. If Kaczynski commits this kind of error, then he shouldn't be surprised that leftists feel attracted to his ideas and person like flies to honey, because he is actually inviting them to do so. And Kaczynski shouldn't be surprised if public opinion regards him as ideologically akin to such leftist currents or movements he openly collaborates with either.

- *Differences regarding philosophical basic attitudes.* He is not *as much* openly concerned or committed as me with *some* basic philosophical positions, like determinism, mechanism or materialism. He is quite a short-sighted pragmatist and an eclectic, that is, if he thinks that some idea or way of thinking could be useful for advancing towards the goal of eliminating modern technology, he usually accepts and adopts it, often without thinking much about its further or wider theoretical (and many times indeed practical) repercussions (like, for example, that it could imply some deep contradictions with other ideas also adopted and defended by him). If he doesn't see that to think about an idea can be directly and immediately useful for advancing towards the goal of destroying technoindustrial society, he tends to regard it useless and unpractical and rejects to invest any further time or effort on it, even if doing so could be actually useful or even necessary for clarifying and strengthening a more general approach. I think that *some* philosophical issues that at first glance and immediately can seem to be unworthy of investing time or effort on them can have and in fact do have a great *practical* transcendence for the cause against technoindustrial system when considered from a wider perspective.

Anyway, I agree with him about the futility of metaphysical (that is, without any empirical base and solution) philosophical discussions, about regarding intellectual debates *beyond any practical* purpose as mere surrogate activities, and about regarding ideological preaching *by itself* as useless to make real changes in a society.

- *Differences regarding our anthropological stance.* He is less “anthropologically pessimist” than me. For example, he has a better opinion about primitive humans than me. He also probably gives more importance to human real freedom or individual autonomy than me (for me it is very important too, but always less than the autonomy of wild non-human Nature –real human freedom is just a concrete case of the wildness of Nature taken as a whole; when real human freedom is compatible with the wildness of non-human Nature, it has to be taken into account; but if at some point it were not, it should be regarded as a minor concern, a secondary value-).

- *Differences in our degree of naïveté.* He tends to trust much more some sources than me (for example, in anthropology)¹⁹. He tends to trust too much and too quickly those who contact with him and even to invite others to collaborate with these new contacts, without minimally checking out them before (and then too often he ends up being cheated by them).²⁰ He tends to not to realize beforehand or in time some possible negative implications or misinterpretations of some of his statements that the public or some other people could make.²¹ Etcetera.

Of course all these naïvetés of Kaczynski doesn't prevent me from sometimes and in some respects being susceptible of committing naïvetés myself too. But maybe in some respects, such as political militancy and *direct* knowledge of some radical political milieus, I probably have more practical experience than him, which, among other things, makes me more skeptic, pessimistic, wary and suspicious regarding many things.

- *Differences in tactical/strategical aspects.* For example, he regards as very important the study of past revolutions and political movements, and he takes them

¹⁹ For example, he is too fond of quoting, among others, the works of Colin Turnbull *The Forest People* and *Wayward Servants* and Elisabeth Marshall Thomas' book *The Harmless People*, without questioning much their reliability. Turnbull is a leftist anthropologist the reliability of whose statements about Mbuti Pygmies have been questioned by later anthropologists, like Robert Edgerton (*Sick Societies*, Free Press, 1992, page 6). And something similar goes for Thomas (one should suspect of her romanticizing the Bushmen just from looking at the title of the book. See *ibid.* page 6). Certainly, Kaczynski has somewhat called into question Turnbull's rigor in passing in "The Truth About Primitive Life", but as far as I know, he has never called into question Thomas reliability. [At least not publicly. He occasionally said something, for example in a draft of a letter to F.B. (April 17, 2008) that he sent to me that somewhat questioned the reliability of Thomas, but in public he usually presents her work as a reliable reference. See: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/17RcZdk-R3wp2XBlJIqZyYJveQSLZxgwh>. Note added later for this post].

²⁰ A good example of this is the following: In the publication of the edition of *The Road to Revolution* by the Swiss publishing house Xenia (actually the first edition of what in later editions by other publishing houses would be *Technological Slavery*), Kaczynski was in fact deceived by Patrick Barriot, a Marxist-Leninist who kept his real ideological stance hidden from Kaczynski until after the book was published, and wrote a crazy epilogue for this book connecting Kaczynski with some communist terrorist groups, rejecting Darwinism, defending leftist ideas, etc.

And this case, though remarkable because of its effects, is not actually an exception but almost the rule. Among all the people Kaczynski put in contact with me, many of them turned out to be undesirable or unreliable people. And a person very close to him, once said to me the same: many of the people that contacted her via Kaczynski were leftists and kooks.

²¹ For example, Kaczynski had been calling himself "anarchist", or at least suggesting some close affinity and sympathy for anarchism, for years (even since before his arrest) until he disavowed the label in an addition in 2016 to the note 59 to the 215 paragraph of ISAIF in the Fitch & Madison edition of *Technological Slavery*, Vol. One, 2019, page 106. Should we be surprised that so many leftists of the anarchist kind (anarcho-primitivists, green-anarchists, and the like) feel so much attracted to his ideas and person? Should we be surprised that the public, journalists, and other people tend to regard him as an "eco-anarchist" or a primitivist? These negative consequences could have been easily foreseen by anybody who were less naïve and had more practical experience in social-political issues.

as references for action. I give them much less importance (though I don't deny that they can be important to some extent). To see some of the reasons why I regard them not as important as he seems to think, see for example my "Critique to Ted Kaczynski's *Anti-Tech Revolution*" (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19keZrCRRjHETccM4rM6KYKbKDg49Qm3E>).

Another example: he has a very unclear stance about how much popular the "revolution" has to be (that is, whether it has to involve masses and majorities, or just or mainly elites and minorities). Sometimes he seems to suggest or imply that it will involve masses and majorities, others he says or insinuates that it will mainly imply small elites. I am very clear in my mind (and say it explicitly) that the latter is the right approach. This difference implies in turn many other differences regarding how to do things. It is not the same to address the masses (which are stupid, or at least mediocre, on principle) than to address an intelligent small minority of potential recruits, for example. The quality needed in the expression of the ideas (rigor, precision, clarity, definition, conscientiousness, etc.) is very different in both cases. In many cases, and contrary to some of his statements about that the revolutions are made by small committed minorities, he seems to be more concerned about addressing the masses, judging by his lack of precision, ambiguity, lack of definition, etc. regarding some concepts and ideas.

- *Other differences in many theoretical details.*

There probably are more kinds of differences that now I can't think of, but this can serve as a sample of the most important kinds of them.

Of course, all this is very simplified (I am not explaining in detail all the extant differences) and must be understood in a nuanced way. For example, when I say that he is more ambiguous or less concerned with precision than me, I am not suggesting that he is a fool unable to use language correctly to express his ideas clearly and precisely. On the contrary, he usually is much more clear and precise than most people. It is only that sometimes he is not as precise and unequivocal as he should. When I say that he is not as committed with materialism, mechanism or determinism and that he doesn't invest as much time and effort thinking and deepening on philosophical issues as me, I am not meaning that his way of thinking is shallow, that he has not clear his ideas in his mind or that he is mostly an anti-determinist, an anti-mechanist (voluntarist) or anti-materialist (idealist). Indeed he is much more clear in his mind than most people and he is much more materialist, mechanist and determinist than them. Though he is not always clear, materialist, mechanist and determinist enough. And so on. I hope you understand it.

And despite all our mutual differences, both, Kaczynski and I, still share the main value (the autonomy of Nature or wildness), the main ideas (rejection of

civilization and modern technology and rejection of leftism and hippieism –i.e., counterculture, postmodernism, irrationalism, etc.-), and the goal (the destruction of technoindustrial society). And in my opinion, for the moment, this is much more important than the differences between us (though, as I have said, some differences could come to be very important and have very serious consequences).

For more criticisms of his stances and more differences between us, you can read the English version of “Crítica a *Anti-Tech Revolution*“. And for knowing more about the details of some of my own ideas (and thus, to be more able to infer some differences with Kaczynski’s) you can read the available English versions of some of my texts on my blog (<https://ultimoreductosalvaje.blogspot.com/>).

By the way, the letter to Skrbina that you refer to above is quite old (2011). In those days Kaczynski also said things like that I was one of the few persons he completely trusted on Earth.²² But I don’t know if Kaczynski’s opinion about me is still the same now.

2) “*How active is ITS now?*”: Honestly, I don’t know, and I don’t give a damn about it. I quit following their evolution several years ago. I currently don’t know anything about their current situation and don’t even try to know. As I said, you are probably giving them too much credit. In my opinion they are just big children playing terrorists. You can also see the English version of “Intercambios de correspondencia VI (Parte I)” on my blog (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OhEEw-CL4u8Ji4UaObsS-A46Y41ilwWC>).

3) “*What do you think of David Skrbina?*”: I could say a lot about him, and nothing good. See the English version of my review of his book *The Metaphysics of Technology* in *Naturaleza Indómita* (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/188NskGSZ58o09YylNUwbUYiwe7fyxzst/view>). It is focused on the content of his book, but in it (especially at the very beginning and end, that is, in the three first paragraphs and the last one), I say some things about him that could answer your question.

By the way, I would like to mention another thing in your article that I disagree with. You seem to think that there is going to be an increase in “anti-tech” violence in the near future worldwide. It seems that you are taking ITS and the ecoextremists as reference for such statement. Well, while it is true that we (those ideologically most akin

²² Though he also said things like that I am leaned to focus on the negative aspects of things. Which is probably true, though not necessarily as bad as he seems to think. (He supposedly said it in a letter to an unknown person that, if I correctly recall, was also published in Jacobi’s website and that is probably in the Labadie Collection too).

to Kaczynski, and Kaczynski himself) think that violence (and aggressiveness more widely) is an intrinsic, necessary and greatly unavoidable part not only of wild Nature (including human nature), but of reality as a whole (including *all* human societies), and that we don't regard it as necessarily or absolutely bad, there is a big difference between ITS's attitude towards violence and ours. For ITS violence is an end in itself, *the end* in fact, they pursue violence for its own sake (though they usually cover it with a shallow layer of justifying rhetoric; perhaps because they are still too much leftist and socialized as to be able to openly and crudely acknowledge their taste for violence and that they carry out it for its own sake, without trying to excuse it? I don't know for sure). For us violence is a mere means, just a tool for attaining a goal (in this case the goal is the destruction of technoindustrial society; in other cases and circumstances, it can be to kill a prey, to attain status, to get territory, a mate, resources, self-defense, etc.). ITS and the ecoextremists love violence in itself, not as a means (at least not as a means for anything beyond venting their rage) but as an end per se. And they judge the validity of any radical "political" current *mainly* by the amount and the degree of the violent actions it carries out. So one should neither judge both stances towards violence equally, nor put them into the same ragbag. Doing so would be a too shallow approach to such phenomena.

Taking this into account, what is going to happen in the near future? Who knows. The future course of development of a society (and of its constituent elements, including those that seem to be "critical" or "adversarial") is greatly impossible to foresee. If you want to persist in the divination of the future, maybe you should quit your studies on political sciences and buy a crystal ball and a pointy hat...

I would like to make some qualifications about some of my answers in my previous letter (just above).

- What I said in the answer 1 of my last letter, regarding Kaczynski's "mild" ideological criticism of leftism, has to be understood as a general rule that works usually, but not always. He sometimes does indeed clearly and bluntly criticize leftism ideologically, like in *ISAIF*, paragraph 214:

[The movement] must take a resolutely anti-leftist stance [...] Leftism is in the long run inconsistent with wild nature, with human freedom and with the elimination of modern technology. Leftism is collectivist; it seeks to bind together the entire world (both nature and the human race) into a unified whole. But this implies management of nature and of human life by organized society, and it requires advanced technology. You can't have a united

world without rapid long-distance transportation and communication, you can't make all people love one another without sophisticated psychological techniques, you can't have a "planned society" without the necessary technological base. Above all, leftism is driven by the need for power, and the leftist seeks power on a collective basis, through identification with a mass movement or an organization. Leftism is unlikely ever to give up technology, because technology is too valuable a source of collective power.

The main difference between he and I in this respect is of degree, I think that I tend to make this kind of hard and open ideological criticisms of leftism more frequently than him; and, contrary to him, I *never* suggest (at least wittingly) any tolerance or sympathy for leftist ideas or stances, like the ones mentioned about affirmative action or social justice in footnote 19. I think that I usually draw a clearer line between me and my ideas and leftism than him.

- In footnote 20, I said that Kaczynski seems to have changed his mind for worse over time regarding collaborating with leftists, because when I quoted paragraph 214 of ISAIF I was thinking of it as an example of how he thought about this subject when ISAIF was written, in the 1990s. But later I realized that ISAIF has been published again in a somewhat revised way in 2019 by Fitch & Madison in *Technological Slavery* and Kaczynski has not changed a word of this paragraph, even though in fact it contradicts what he said four years before in *Anti-Tech Revolution* about collaborating with "radical environmentalists" (who almost always are leftists, as I said). So it is not so much as that he has changed his mind, but as that he contradicts himself in different parts and times of his rhetoric and thus he isn't making clear at all his stance about this issue (and others) in a general, congruent way.²³

All this issue of criticising Kaczynski is not only a disagreeable subject to me (I admire Ted, he has been a teacher to me in many respects, we share many values and ideas, and he always has been correct to me), but also a very shaky ground. One has to be very cautious with what one says, and there is always a great risk of making errors, being misunderstood and/or causing serious troubles. I think that this criticism has to be done, but I am also aware of its risks.

²³ In 2022 an "enhanced" edition of the book has been published, and the referred fragment remains exactly as in 1995. *Note added later for this post.*

Part II

UR: have you ever tried to get in contact directly with Kaczynski for your research?

SF: I have not tried to contact Kaczynski. For methodological reasons, I believe it is usually better to rely on hard, forensic evidence than on memory -even Kaczynski's memory, which tends to be reliable. Suppose that I asked Kaczynski what he was reading in, say, 1972. Who remembers exactly what he was reading 50 years ago? At best, he could give me a *rough* idea of when he read particular books and articles, and he may misremember. Using his journals and notes from that period, I've been able to determine *exactly* when he read much of the relevant material. Further, when one asks questions long after the fact, the answers one gets are often *post hoc* rationalizations and justifications. Suppose that I asked Kaczynski why he said X in "Progress Versus Liberty"¹. He would probably give me a plausible answer, but that answer may or may not accurately represent what he was thinking at the time. I barely remember why I said Y or Z in an article about Hobbes four years ago, but, if someone asked me why I said Y or Z, I'd come up with an answer -quite possibly a *post hoc* rationalization of what I said. Kaczynski has left an enormous paper trail that spans over half a century, so there is usually no need to ask him questions about the origins of his ideas; his "past self," via the archival material, has answered most of these questions with much more accuracy than his "present self" possibly could. In addition, many of his correspondents have already asked the questions that I have thought to ask, and his answers are available in the Labadie Collection.

All of that said, I recognize that there *are* some kinds of questions that the archival material cannot answer. For instance, does Kaczynski still believe what he argued in, say, "Hit Where It Hurts"²? Only he, in the present, knows the answer. One has to be careful not to assume that Kaczynski still believes everything that he has said in the past. If the danger of asking questions is 'extracting' answers, then the danger of relying on archival material is overstating the consistency of a person's thought. Note, also, that these methodological considerations apply specifically to a historical project such as mine, the aim of which is to uncover the sources of Kaczynski's ideas. They may not apply to other kinds of projects.

In any case, judging by Kaczynski's responses to other academics (e.g., Scott Corey), I doubt that Kaczynski would be willing to answer my questions. He is understandably

¹ There is a version of this essay available on: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ted-kaczynski-progress-versus-liberty>. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

² *Technological Slavery*, Feral House, 2010, pages 247–253. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

suspicious of academics because, like journalists, they have written a lot of things about his ideas that are either demonstrably false or wildly speculative. But I am curious whether he has read my article and, if so, what he thinks of it. That, right now, is the only question I would like to ask him.

If you have any thoughts about the methodological considerations above, I would be very interested to hear them.

Would you also consider publishing your translation³ in a Spanish-language political science/political theory/philosophy journal?

UR: I was not considering publishing the translation anywhere else. For some reasons. First, I am not a professional translator. My style in translating is self-learned, and probably it doesn't meet the typical standards of professional translation or the typical requirements of style for being published in serious academic publications. Second, I haven't forgotten that the explicit goal of your article is to help the system to better understand the currents against technoindustrial society in order to better combat them (although probably you have had other personal unstated reasons and goals for writing it; perhaps some of them very respectable ones), and since my goal is to destroy the technoindustrial system, not to help it to protect itself from attacks, I am not precisely eager to give publicity to the article *per se* or *gratuitously*. I want to publish your article only because it is a necessary complementary material for making our correspondence exchange understandable and thus for allowing me to publish this exchange in my blog. And third, as you have seen, the article has some important errors or imprecisions in your descriptions and conclusions about some facts related with Kaczynski (I told you about the main ones), and I don't want to help to further spread them. On the contrary, I hope that our exchange of correspondence has been helpful in making you acknowledge, revise and correct them in further works. And, while I am aware that this also would help the defenders of the technoindustrial system to improve their knowledge about us, those who oppose to it, I regard as more important, in this case, the positive consequences that clarifying the true facts about us would have for our cause than the possible negative consequences that improving the knowledge about us could have for it (though, admittedly, I could be wrong). In fact, from the beginning of our exchange, I only wanted to point out and correct these errors (or avoid further ones) for the kind of public that usually read my blog, because it seems that some of them are taking your text as a reference without being aware of these imprecisions. The fact that in turn this could be improving your knowledge about us (and probably the knowledge of the defenders of the system you (partially) seem to be writing for too) is just the price I have had to pay in order to attain my goal. It's just reciprocity: You have to give something in order to receive something.

³ "Unabomber y los orígenes del radicalismo antitecnológico" available in *Ultimo Reducto*: <https://ultimoreductosalvaje.blogspot.com/2023/01/unabomber-y-los-origenes-del.html>. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

I couldn't help you very much in commenting on your methodological approach even if I wanted to. I simply don't know enough about this subject. Anyway, I think that you could have avoided some of the errors you committed if before writing or publishing the article you had contacted with Kaczynski and asked him about those matters or told him about your project and asked him for a revision of your text (in case he had wanted to collaborate, of course; but I wouldn't be a priori as sure as you seem to be about that he wouldn't have collaborated; if he seemingly somewhat collaborated even with someone like John H. Richardson, the author of the article "Children of Ted", *New York Magazine*, dec. 18, 2018 (<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/12/the-unabomber-ted-kaczynski-new-generation-of-acolytes.html>), for example, I don't see why he would not collaborate with someone seemingly much more serious and honest like you?).

SF: I am well aware that our correspondence is based purely on a coincidence of interests or goals.

You've already told me the *main* points where you think I have erred. (In particular, I am persuaded that you're right about Kaczynski's understanding of wild nature; the archival evidence backs you up.) But I would also like to know any finer points that you think I should revise, reconsider, or qualify in my future work.

UR: Some other "finer" points are:

- The fact that you gave too much credit to Jacobi implies that you echoed and spread his ideas about us (the so-called "indomitistas") as "apostles" of Kaczynski, as opposite to the supposed "heretics", and thus as somehow blind or uncritical followers of Kaczynski. In fact, none of us has ever been a blind follower of him and we always have had some discrepancies with him (and he always has acknowledged it -at least regarding me-, even before other people). For a long time we remained mostly publicly silent about such differences, just spreading his works and ideas without any public critical comments on him, but over time the few of us who still are active have been ever more fed up of some of the errors of Kaczynski (especially regarding some details in strategy and tactics) and some of us have begun to include some open public criticisms of his work in our websites. And it seem that these criticisms are going to grow in quantity and strength in our work, if nothing in the stance of Kaczynski and his closer crew changes for better (and we fear it could indeed change for worse). As far as I know (and, admittedly, I don't know much, and probably not enough) many of the other "apostles" or closest collaborators of Kaczynski are much more uncritical (or at least so they seem publicly). Many of them not only don't criticize even the tiniest detail of Kaczynski's ideas or works, but some of them even sometimes look like parrots, just repeating his words or sloppily trying to apply them to reality without the slightest questioning; or like fundamentalist Christians believing and quoting literally the Bible (i.e., Kaczynski's works, especially *Anti-Tech Revolution*). Anyway, this opinion of mine could be greatly subjective, because

currently I don't know exactly and with much precision what is exactly going on in such milieu (the cadre constituted by the closest collaborators of Kaczynski) or who exactly constitute it; though I have some contact with some of its members, I am quite apart from it. And I prefer it so.

- Your conclusion that probably in the next few decades there will be a growth in “antitech radicalism”, is dubious in my opinion. Leaving apart what the hell really means “anti-tech radicalism” and whether the people included under such expression really share some ideological features and goals beyond shallow, trivial appearances, the future is impossible to predict. Equally probable or even more is that there will never emerge any serious movement against technoindustrial society, or that if some movement emerges, it will get corrupted sooner or later (much probably sooner; even from its beginning) and turned into a innocuous caricature of a movement before attaining its goal. Especially if it follows some erroneous guidelines given by Kaczynski. Or that what grows in activity will be groups like ITS, which actually have nothing important to do with Kaczynski, beyond shallow appearances. Or whatever else. Who knows. I already commented something about this in one of my previous letters.⁴

In my opinion, the least probable possibility is precisely that a serious and effective movement, first, emerges; second, develops itself healthily to an stage in which it has enough “power” (i.e., strength, means, resources, capacity, etc.) to try to attain its goal with a real chance of success; and third, attains its goal. But to try to predict with assurance such things is greatly a waste of energy and time, with a high risk of ending up erring.

- Related with the latter it is the fact that you include and present ITS as a group related with Kaczynski and the rest of us, when they actually have nothing to do with us. ITS have just taken some of our rhetoric (terms, expressions, and the like) to theoretically justify their love for violence. They did so because they were anarchist leftists (animal liberationist anarcho-punks or something quite similar) and they got contact with my work through anarcho-leftist milieus. They could have taken anything else as reference, but unfortunately, they found my work and, through it, Kaczynski's just when they needed a rhetoric to rationalize their highly violent pseudo-rebelious impulses. They could equally have taken for example the insurrectionist anarchism as reference which was also a fashion among the most radical anarcho-leftists more or less in that same days (in fact they did, to some extent, as can be seen in their first communiques). To include them in the same general box (that you call “anti-tech radicalism”) together with us is to give a false idea of the reality, and does not help to make the truth about us known. The error is not much different from those who defend the so-called “Harvard hypothesis” about Kaczynski's ideas, who relate him with many authors

⁴ *Idem. Note added later by UR for this post.*

whose works he hadn't even read or heard about, just because the "Harvard hypothesis" advocates found some superficial and misleading resemblances with them in his theory.

- Your article doesn't portrait the current state of the "political" milieu around Kaczynski (those who have contact and collaborate with him, and in what degree, and those who don't; just *now*). It is somehow obsolete and imprecise.
- Your article gives the impression that there currently is a real movement against the technoindustrial system, but actually there isn't. Even the "milieu" (using the term you suggested) that seems to exist when seen from outside is actually incohesive and constituted by people who at least sometimes have nothing to do with each other (the case of ITS commented above, or Jacobi and his supposed and self-assigned role as the exegete of the "anti-tech movement" and even as the Lenin of it, are the most extreme examples of this; but even among the so-called "apostles" there are differences). A real movement worth of being called so has to have a membership clearly and unequivocally limited and determined, its members have to share the main and basic ideological points and goal of the movement, and it has to be highly organized. It has to be basically an organization. And there isn't such a thing (still?). A bunch of not much coordinated people who more or less share some ideas or keep in contact to some extent, and nothing else, is not an organized movement in the sense it has to be the movement against the technoindustrial system in order to be really efficient.
- The information I gave you about Kaczynski's ecocentrism (plus the one you have found by yourself) should make you revise your writing about the so-called "Green hypothesis". It seems that this hypothesis, though not completely accurate, is much more close to the truth than the Harvard one. Regarding his thoughts and feelings *about the value of wild Nature*, Kaczynski is indeed quite close to some ecocentric branches of environmentalism (more exactly with the most radical and serious conservationists or preservationists, like some of the former Earth First!ers, or even some traditional conservationist individuals and organizations, for example). You seemed to believe that there was a difference between regarding the Earth or "life" (in the holist sense of the biosphere) as sacred or as the most important thing, like many ecocentric environmentalists do, and the stance of Kaczynski who proposes wild Nature as the ideal, but in many cases there is not much difference between them. You seemed to believe that wild Nature for Kaczynski was just an ideal coldly and calculatedly chosen and proposed merely for strategical reasons, but it is not so. For him wild Nature is the wild Earth, and he feels that it is indeed sacred too. (Unlike for ITS, by the way, who use it just as a rationalization for their pathological violent urges). So it can be said that Kaczynski is indeed somehow a radical environmentalist *in this respect* (i.e., his valuation of Nature).

And there are some other coincidences or similitudes with some branches of radical environmentalism too. E.g., he shares with the so-called social ecology the idea that legally or illegally fighting for wilderness areas preservation (conservationism or preservationism) is not enough to preserve wild Nature on Earth, that it is necessary to see the whole system as the cause of the destruction of Nature, and thus to combat the whole system in order to avoid such destruction. The difference is that “social ecology” is an anticapitalist socialist ideology and Kaczynski is not anticapitalist, not even socialist, so his idea of what is the system and the ultimate causes of the destruction of wild Nature is quite different from that of “social ecology”. And besides, “social ecology” is actually an utopian pseudo-revolutionary (reformist) current trying to transform this society into a socialist ecotopia, but Kaczynski is not reformist nor utopian, he just want to destroy this society but he doesn’t want to create any utopia.

And of course, he has also many differences with some other radical environmentalists, like deep ecology philosophers, eco-mystic irrational hippies, and the like.

- Given the above, Bron Taylor is in the clouds. To regard the Earth or “life” as sacred doesn’t necessarily prevent one from taking a violent path in defense of Earth. In fact both things have nothing to do one with another. He, like many other people (environmentalist or not) mixes up what we could call “individual biocentrism” (the belief in that individual lives are sacred and individual deaths are bad) and what we could call “holistic biocentrism”⁵ as the belief that the living part of the biosphere, biological communities or the species taken as wholes (but not necessarily their individual elements taken separately) are sacred. The former could be regarded as logically incompatible with killing (though many of the kills through history have been justified as “defending (individual) lives”), the latter is not (indeed, to kill and to harm is a necessary part of the adequate functioning and perpetuation processes of the biosphere, biological communities and species; death, both individual and collective — i.e., extinction-, is a crucial part of the process of life taken as a whole). By the way, this confusion can have, and indeed has, very serious and dangerous practical implications the discussion of which goes beyond the objectives of this letter.

⁵ By the way, though many people erroneously mix them up, there are some important differences between ecocentrism and holistic biocentrism (beginning with the different focuses of each of them, on ecosystems and on biological collective entities respectively), but I won’t further discuss them here. Let’s then assume extraordinarily in this particular occasion, and just for the sake of the argument, that they are the same thing.

Part III

SF: I would like to ask you some more follow-up questions.

1) You mention¹ several terms that you and Kaczynski use or define differently (or that he doesn't define clearly enough): revolution, leftism, power, environmentalism, and technology. I'm most interested in your understanding of power (especially the power process, if you use that concept). How does your understanding of power differ from Kaczynski's? (If you have discussed this issue in your writings, please direct me to the correct place.)

2) You say that Kaczynski's "stance toward leftism is less vehement, and less clearly and openly opposite to it than mine". (Again, I note your qualifications.)² What is your stance toward the right?

3) You mention that "in some respects, such as political militancy and *direct* knowledge of some radical political milieus", you "probably have more practical experience" than Kaczynski. Would you be willing to say more about your practical experience, or in which radical political milieus you have been involved?

4) You say that you assign "much less importance" than Kaczynski does to the study of past revolutions and political movements. On this point, you seem to be in agreement with Jacques Ellul, who argued in *Autopsy of Revolution* that a revolution against the technological system cannot be modeled on past revolutions. Have you read that book, or anything else by Ellul? If so, what do you think of Ellul?

UR:

1) *I'm most interested in your understanding of power. How does your understanding of power differ from Kaczynski's?*

Well, one thing at a time. First, my notion of "power". It is the most conventional one, I guess. That is, when people speaks or hears of "power" (leaving aside physics and engineering sciences, where "power" is regarded as the quotient between energy or work and time), they normally tend to think about the capacity to make others do what one wants or one's capacity to control their behaviour or living conditions. And this is the way I usually understand "power" too. Secondarily, and much less often, the term "power" is sometimes used and understood as just one's ability to do something or controlling one's own behaviour or living conditions. And I sometimes use it in this sense too — or in both, this and the first one — (for example, in my "Critica a

¹ English version: "Critique to Ted Kaczynski's *Anti-Tech Revolution*" (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19keZrCRRjHETccM4rM6KYKbKDg49Qm3E>).

² Part I. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

Anti-Tech Revolution de Ted Kaczynski”³, or in “Discutiendo de medios, fines, valores organization, estrategia y mas”⁴, both published in my blog), because I think that this sense is clearly understandable in some given contexts, but I think that in case of possible ambiguity it would be preferable, if possible, to speak of “capacity”, “ability”, “self-control”, “self-government”, “autonomy”, “self-regulation” and the like, instead.⁵ Kaczynski also uses the term very often with these two conventional senses (i.e., making others do something or controlling them and being able to do something or control one’s own life conditions). But sometimes he uses it in an ambiguous sense (i.e., sometimes it is not very clear if he is referring either to the capacity to force others to do what one wants or to one’s capacity to do something; or both). Even sometimes he seems to be referring to something else (like, for example, the capacity and efficiency of dynamic complex systems -what he calls “self-prop(agating) systems”- in using the available matter and energy in order to maintain themselves and grow; see my “Critica de *Anti-Tech Revolution*”, point 16). This latter is a very strange sense for the term “power” in my opinion. I think that “power” is not precisely a good term to name the parameters

³ Idem. *Note added later by UR for this post*.

⁴ English version: “Discussing Means, Ends, Values, Organization, Strategy and More” (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19qXUMmOkCj5txuncXObuOb7fRUlIxPuq/view>).

⁵ In fact, as Kaczynski suggests in “Industrial Society and Its Future” (ISAIF) [e.g., in *Technological Slavery*, Volume One, Enhanced Edition, 2022. *Note added later by UR to this post*], this notion of power is quite related with the concept of autonomy in humans, and thus with that of real freedom. According to Kaczynski, to have power or control over one’s own life conditions is more or less the same than to be free or autonomous. Though I can agree to some extent with this, I prefer to define freedom and autonomy in a different way, not so dependent of the idea of power or control over one’s own conditions of life, and more in reference to the possibility of following one’s own internal natural dynamics (i.e., human nature). After all, one’s conditions of life are never completely, not even greatly, controllable by oneself, and indeed they often are highly uncontrollable. First, in a natural environment and in a primitive society it is non-human Nature who mostly “imposes” them; and in a civilized society it is *also* the social system (and in a technoindustrial society, the technological part of the system) who greatly controls them and imposes them on the individual. And the individual can’t do much to avoid or modify them in any of both cases. So the control by the individual (or by small groups) over his conditions of life is very, very limited even in a primitive society, and to identify it with freedom, however much one tries to qualify it, as Kaczynski does in ISAIF, is to open the door to the misleading humanistic notion of “freedom” as human control over Nature and as the elimination of natural restrictions (always substituting them with artificial ones, of course). And second, autonomy or freedom is not always related with conscious and intentional control (implied in the two main conventional senses of “power”). In fact, most of the times and for most people, most activities are not much consciously and intentionally planned and realized. They just happen to a great extent. People do them more or less automatically, basing on emotions and without much reflection, attention or conscious control about what they are doing and much less about the consequences beyond the most obvious and immediate spatial-temporal scale. So to suggest that autonomy and freedom are closely related to intentional and conscious control over one’s own life conditions is also to assume the false humanistic notions of humans as mainly semi-divine, rational, conscious beings and of acting rationally and consciously as requisites for freedom or autonomy. We can be intensely rational and conscious and act this way, of course, but we are and act so only sometimes, not usually, and only with a great effort, not easily. The rest of the time (most of it) we are/act not much rationally, consciously and intentionally.

that explain evolutionary competition and selection in most of the cases of dynamic complex systems, neither in biology nor beyond it.⁶

Anyway, notwithstanding the term used to name it, I think that my understanding of the “power process” is quite similar to Kaczynski’s. Here is a summary of my version of it:⁷ In many species of animals with a highly developed nervous system there is a natural psychological (meta-)need for carrying out activities in general. Usually, in the wild, the activities that those animals need to carry out in order to satisfy their natural basic physical and psychological needs are enough to satisfy also this need for activity. Hence I call it a meta-need (it is a necessity that is satisfied through the process of satisfying other necessities). Any activity has four elements (three successive steps and a condition): setting up a goal, pursuing it through exerting effort, achieving it at least sometimes and to some extent, and doing the three previous steps autonomously. At least in humans, the more important for the individual the (goals of the) activities the more they allow him going through the power process adequately. The most important goals/activities *for most humans and in most times* are those directly related with meeting their physical and psychological, basic, natural needs, that is, those activities/goals that usually imply maintaining or improving their biological fitness or reproductive success, so they tend to be the goals/activities that make the process most fully satisfying. If for some reason (such as a too easy life that causes a lack of exerting enough effort or autonomy in pursuing them; or such as a too restrictive social environment which causes a lack of enough achievement of goals or a lack of enough autonomy in going through the successive stages of the process), those natural basic goals/activities can’t be used for going adequately through the power process, then the individual tends to substitute them with other goals/activities, different from the satisfaction of his natural needs, that allow him going through the power process anyway. These are the surrogate activities.

Through these substitutive goals/activities individuals avoid to some extent the psychological problems that not going adequately enough through the power process causes. Surrogate activities can be pure surrogate activities (when their *stated main* goal is to entertain, having fun, supply something to do, avoid boredom, etc., that is, to go through the power process) or mixed surrogate activities (when, in principle, their *stated main* goals are others different from just having something to do, but indeed they are more or less *tacitly* motivated by the need to go through the power process too; like for example, to work more time and more intensely than what is necessary to

⁶ Could it be a theoretical pollution from anarchism, or maybe rather from postmodernism, theories in which “power” tends to be a central ideological concept that supposedly explains every (social) phenomena? I don’t know, but to me it sounds almost as strange and preposterous as when Marxists try to explain everything referring to “capitalism”, or feminists do the same using “patriarchy”.

⁷ For the sake of brevity I will overlook here some aspects that are important too, like for example that the power process works at different time scales (short, medium and long runs) with different consequences at each scale, both in case of going adequately through it and in case of failing to go adequately through it.

earn a life, most of scientific research, religious rituals, a great amount of the artistic expressions, most of philosophy, etc. Surrogate activities have always existed to some extent and even they are biologically necessary to some extent (e.g., many animals with highly developed brains, especially during their youth, need to play, that is, to carry out “softened” and simplified activities which are surrogates of those real activities they have to carry out in other more life-or-death or crucial contexts).

Traditionally the most obvious pure surrogate activities have been called hobbies, entertainments, pastimes, games, etc. and most people carried them out in their relatively scarce leisure time (i.e., when, for some reason they *sometimes* achieved the satisfaction of their crucial natural needs too easily to feel that they had satisfied their need for activity; then they felt that they have to do something else, and devoted their leisure time to some kind of pastime). But, for the same and other reasons -i.e., an excess of leisure time or also a too high difficulty or even impossibility of pursuing and achieving some crucial natural goals-, at least among wealthy people in past civilized societies, and especially among most people in modern technoindustrial society, the pursuing of surrogate activities (both pure surrogate activities and mixed surrogate activities) has become widespread, too frequent and practiced to a huge extent. In short, today, surrogate activities are the wheels in the cage of the modern human hamsters. They are easily feed and tended, and there is no much more important natural things for them left to do in their cage, so for them life becomes either boring or just a game, a substitute of a life in which they should really exert themselves to directly earn it (that is to satisfy their basic needs by themselves). And, especially in the case of mixed surrogate activities, most of them aren’t even aware of that these activities they think that are so much important actually are but surrogate activities that they carry out mainly to unwittingly try to avoid boredom, depression, anxiety, etc. because now they can’t do anymore what they should be doing and in the way they should be doing it according to their very nature.

I could express perhaps some disagreements, doubts or criticisms to Kaczynski’s way of formulating the power process theory regarding some secondary details of it, like e.g., the name used by him to refer to the important purposes and goals that the artificial goals of surrogate activities substitute for. He called them “real goals” (or sometimes “practical/important/purposeful activities”), but this polysemic “real” is quite confusing.⁸ And regarding to the undefined “practical”, “important” or “purposeful”, what is practical, important or purposeful and what is not? How we determine them? Which are the criteria to define them?⁹ Admittedly, I don’t know well how to

⁸ In fact any attainable goal is “real”, in the sense of “true”, “existent” or “feasible”, be it pursued and achieved through a surrogate activity or not

⁹ Many mixed surrogate activities are undeniably practical and/or important according to some criteria or in some contexts. Kaczynski hasn’t defined explicitly such criteria or contexts, and he should have. And obviously all of them are purposeful -every activity have a purpose or goal, by definition; it is the first step or element of any activity, mentioned above. The purpose can seem either preposterous or

call them to avoid any confusion. In fact, every adjective that I can figure out has its problems too.

This problem of the terminology used is just the point of an iceberg. Under its immediate seemingly unimportant surface there lies a much more serious problem: In fact, despite all explanations in ISAIF, it still is not always clear at all whether some activities are surrogate or not. And I am not referring only to the fact that some surrogate activities are mixed or only partially surrogate (see above). I am referring to another deeper predicament of the power process theory in the way Kaczynski presented it, namely: is devoting oneself to destroying technoindustrial society for the sake of wild Nature a “real”/important goal or is it actually a mixed surrogate activity/substitutive goal? Because, in fact, carrying out this activity and achieving such goal is not a natural human physical or psychological basic need at all, and actually it has nothing to do with our nature (it is not natural for humans to think and show concern about so big, abstract, general and global problems, much less to try to mend them). Yet, some of us feel it as something very important. As important as to devote great part of our free time to it or even to be willing to risk our lives and freedom (or other’s) for it at some point (for example, Kaczynski is in prison for committing terrorist acts for the sake of this cause). So either there are some other important, “real” or “whatever-one-calls-them” goals/activities that aren’t surrogate activities/substitutive goals, and that are beyond the satisfaction of natural basic needs (and that are not explicitly and directly mentioned in ISAIF) or, if there aren’t, ours (Kaczynski’s and that of the people who are ideologically akin to him and are actively working for the cause against technoindustrial society for the sake of wild Nature) is only another case of a mixed surrogate activity. After all other people strongly involved in other surrogate activities, such as many fanatic members of football team supporter groups or many professional athletes, strongly believe and feel that these activities and goals (i.e., to support their team or to full-time practice a sport) are very important and they are capable of investing a huge amount of effort and devoting their whole lives (and even risking them and/or other’s) to pursue these activities while everybody else sees that they are acting like fools and that these activities and goals are but surrogate activities and not so crucial goals. Couldn’t then our cause be something similar? Of course, I am sure that, unlike fanatically supporting a football team or devoting one’s life to practising an sport, trying to preserve the wildness of Nature through attempting to eliminate technoindustrial society is a very important goal/activity in itself (i.e., *objectively*, not just subjectively to me), and that, thus, it is not a surrogate activity. But ultimately I can’t empirically prove it to anyone who doesn’t see this by himself. And this is a serious pitfall in the way in which Kaczynski has presented his theory about the power process and surrogate activities and it makes this theory susceptible

crucial to us, but it exists. What is the criterion to tell which purpose worthwhile which not? He doesn’t tell it us clearly, leaving it susceptible of subjective, sundry and even incompatible interpretations.

to a very difficult to refute objection that some people can make (and do make indeed). Maybe the theory (or at least its formulation) still needs more work and polishing.

2) *What is your stance toward the right?*

Well, first of all we should ask, what is “the right”? Because in my opinion, too often what is called “the right” now is not precisely the same (not even similar or the heirs of) what was called “the right” at the beginning of the use of this expression, in the French Revolution (in the National Assembly, if I am not wrong). Then the conservatives (those that had a traditionalist stance -i.e., royalists and clericalists-) sat on the right of the president of the assembly, and the progressives or liberals (i.e., republicans and anticlericalists) on the left. The terms of “left” and “right” used in politics come from this time. But later, with the rise of socialism (a heretic schism within liberalism), and the gradual weakening or disappearance of the real conservatives or traditionalists from the political-social spectrum, the socialists appropriated the term “left” and “progressive” to call themselves and, in contrast to it, the liberals were then called the “right” (or even “conservatives” when they defended, in a folkloric manner, some minor, traditionalistlike issues¹⁰ -always together with important *progressive* issues¹¹-,) though they actually were the direct heirs of the old left, the early progressives. This general process was somewhat different in the US than in West Europe.¹² But surely, being a political scientist, you know much better all this historical process than me.

So, the currently so called “right” is basically and actually another kind of left, i.e., it is liberal non-socialist progressivism, with more or less of a shallow and unimportant traditionalist-like ideological varnish layer over it in some cases (the currently so-called “conservatives”). And the old early right, that which was constituted by the old real conservatives or traditionalists, has gone virtually extinct. So you can guess what I

¹⁰ I.e. issues such as anti-abortion stances, traditional Christian religion, traditional attitudes about sexuality, patriotism, and the like, which in fact are *relatively* unimportant issues for the maintenance and development of the technoindustrial system. Certainly, the system develops itself better and faster without the restrictions imposed by some traditional religious and moral beliefs, like some traditional restrictions about sexuality or some traditional ideas about sexual roles and divisions of labor in society, but these ideas, like any other idea, play a secondary role in determining the course of the development of technoindustrial society anyway. The technoindustrial system can perfectly bear that some minority part of its population somewhat theoretically adopts and defends this kind of traditional relatively unimportant beliefs, especially if they end up acting and even thinking like everybody else in the important issues (i.e., those practically and materially related with maintaining and developing modern technology and the rest of the material infrastructure). And, besides, on the long run the rest of the objective and material factors that determine the system’s development (i.e., the really important factors) end up gradually making even these kinds of minority, relatively unimportant traditional ideas die out.

¹¹ Like the assumption and defense of economic or technological development.

¹² E.g., unlike it usually happens in Europe, and probably because of the somewhat different origins of the US democracy -previous to and independent from the influences of the French Revolution-, among other reasons, in the US the actual presence and weight of pseudoconservative liberals (the currently so-called “conservatives”) has always been bigger in the social-political arena, the weight of socialists has always being smaller, and because of that the openly non-conservative liberals are usually rightly regarded as leftists there.

think of the current “right”: Since they are actually progressives (that is, they always defend some kind of idea of progress¹³, and they always assume and defend at least economic and technological development) and leftists (non-socialist liberals), and since I reject both the idea of progress and leftist values (like democracy, rights, equality, solidarity beyond natural reference groups, victimism, etc.), I don’t like them either.

But, leaving all these Whigs aside, what about the old right (those real old conservatives or traditionalists)? I don’t like them too, even though they were neither progressives nor leftists at all. They always took as reference or ideal some kind of civilized (that is, big, complex, state) society. They usually defended traditional religion (Christianity in West Europe), whose ideas and values are not only unacceptable for someone who like me takes a materialist, naturalistic philosophical stance, but they also, to a great extent, were the base on which leftism was built later. They usually were humanists too, that is, they took humanity and its works (including God) as the only or main reference, disregarding the non-human world to an unworthy, secondary or even inexistent background. And usually their notion of status was quite preposterous, mixing up practical hierarchies and authorities with social-economic status, taking traits, like the amount of wealth and material possessions, conspicuous consumption and other externals which actually haven’t necessarily any relationship with practical utility or prowess, as criteria for setting up one’s status and authority, etc. Though this feature was/is not always exclusive of rightists. I can’t help hating this notion of status.

Anyway, psychologically I think that I lean towards conservatism, because I am quite skeptic towards innovation, change, “the new”, etc. I don’t tend to automatically think that something new is better just because it is new. I think that too many times the case is quite the opposite: innovations tend to be worsenings which imply negative, often unforeseeable, consequences (of course, always for wild Nature, both human nature and non-human Nature). Too many times the old things replaced by innovations worked or were “better” (i.e., less bad for Nature) than the innovations. When something works already “fine” (i.e., not too badly for Nature), why to replace it with something new and thus risk to end up worsening things (for Nature)? I think that this way of “conservative” thinking/feeling is not something rare in humans, as often the popular culture shows: for example, in Spanish we have a saying: “Mas vale malo conocido que bueno por conocer” (literally “Better the evil you known than the

¹³ By the idea of progress I mean any belief that social, economic, technological development — i.e., growth in size, quantity and/or complexity- or even too often cosmological or biological evolution, is generally an improvement process. To believe in progress is to believe that social, economic and technological development is absolutely good, than the past is worse than the present and the present will be probably worse than the future. Since I take the wildness of Nature (both non-human Nature and human nature) as the main value, and put it above collective or individual human well-being, and since social and technological development unavoidably increasingly destroys or subjugates wild Nature (i.e., non-human wildness and the autonomy of the expression of human nature or real freedom), I am irreconcilably at odds with any idea of progress.

goodness you don't know").¹⁴ On the other hand, I don't think that traditions and old ways/things are necessarily always "better" (less bad for Nature) and should be always preserved at any cost. Generally they are, if only because unlike new things they are time-tested through a long process of selection, and this should be always taken into account (and nowadays it isn't many times). But sometimes they aren't. When traditions or old cultural and social traits probe themselves to be bad (for Nature, not for the development of the social system), they should be changed. But this doesn't imply that this change is necessarily going to be always for the better (i.e., a progress); it only means that the situation is so bad and extreme that then it is worth taking the risk of changing and betting for the possibility of improving it, however remote this possibility is. In Spanish we have another say for it: "De perdidos, al río" (literally "When losing, to the river"; that is, if you are losing a battle and are going to die at your enemy's hands -or, more generally, if you are in a very bad and desperate situation-, then it is worth taking the risk of drowning and launching yourself to the river trying to escape).¹⁵ All this can be roughly called prudence. And progressives greatly lack it. They cheerily defend to make important changes and take great risks without enough justification and disregarding human nature, natural limits, time-tested traits and potential negative consequences.

3) *Would you be willing to say more about your practical political experience, or in which radical political milieus you have been involved?*

Mine was an example of those people that Kaczynski sometimes have written about, who aren't psychologically naturally leaned to leftism, but feel that they don't like the technoindustrial system because it destroys and subjugates both non-human Nature and human nature. And not finding any group or movement that exactly and properly rejects and fights the technoindustrial system, they end up approaching radical leftist ideas and milieus, which seem to be critical and "revolutionary", trying to find an outlet for their discontent with this society.

Basically, in my "youth" (from around 18 years old until I was around 30 years old), I was involved in some small leftist groups (all of them of the anarchist or anarchist-like type). In the last 90s, I also was a member of the MOC (Movimiento de Objecion de Conciencia),¹⁶ an anti-militarist group that fought the mandatory military service in Spain in those years. And, more or less, at the same time I was member of the Asamblea anti-TAV,¹⁷ an "anti-development", anti-capitalist group that fought the construction of a high-speed railroad through the Basque-Country.

¹⁴ It seems that there is a similar expression in English: "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't", but the sense would be even more similar to the Spanish one if one replaces "angel" for the second "devil".

¹⁵ An English expression with a similar sense would be; "There's nothing to lose" (we have it also literally in Spanish: "No tenemos nada que perder").

¹⁶ Contentious Objection Movement.

¹⁷ Anti-HSR Assembly. Where "HSR" ("TAV") means "High Speed Rail" ("Tren de Alta Velocidad").

I never felt really comfortable in such milieus and always felt deep down that they weren't my place. Since the mid 90s I became increasingly aware of that my main problem with them was leftism (I was greatly helped by the reading of ISAIF, which expressed in words and quite clearly many of the things I already have experienced, intuited and concluded by myself about leftism). Eventually, I completely left leftist milieus.

Now, in retrospect, I regard all those years spent in leftist milieus and having assumed and defended leftist ideas as a huge and unfortunate ideological, psychological and existential loss of way, generated and maintained by the naivete of youth, the psychological unrest caused by stressful and unnatural living conditions in a big modern industrial city (Bilbao), and the affective links with some leftist people that I built. I learned a lot about leftism in such years, but at a very high personal cost.

4) *You seem to be in agreement with Jacques Ellul, who argued in Autopsy of Revolution that a revolution against the technological system cannot be modeled on past revolutions. Have you read that book, or anything else by Ellul? If so, what do you think of Ellul?*

In principle it could seem that, roughly speaking, I agree with Ellul, but I don't reject completely the idea that maybe sometimes something useful could be extracted from the study of past revolutions. It is only that I am skeptic about the need to study them and about the importance of this study. I doubt whether in many occasions this study is as important as Kaczynski seems to think. Moreover, some of the useful things that I think that sometimes one can extract from this study could well be very different from those that Kaczynski is thinking about. I am thinking, for example, of Bolshevism and the communists. Kaczynski recommends, among other works, the reading of Phillip Selznick's *The Organizational Weapon*, supposedly because he thinks that the wannabe "anti-tech revolutionaries" could learn and somewhat emulate many things about strategy from Marxist-Leninists, but what I mainly learned from the reading of this book was that communists are very dangerous, unscrupulous, treacherous and untrustworthy political partners even for their own comrades, much more for the rest of people. They basically violated virtually all the six principles of fairness that Kaczynski states in "Morality and Revolution"¹⁸¹⁹ (and probably some others). Therefore, for any movement, the farther from communists the better. And besides, even with all their political and organizational strategic skills, dirty tricks and "moral flexibility" (what Kaczynski seems to take as a reference to emulate in many cases) they weren't so much efficient and successful always (at least not in the USA and Western Europe during most of the twentieth century, which are the places and time the book is mainly about).

¹⁸ See *Technological Slavery*, Feral House, 2010, pp. 233–245.

¹⁹ So if, according to Kaczynski, we have to take their way of acting as a reference, we also should be ready to forget about these six principles. In practice and regrettably, this would render greatly useless, toothless and even absurd this article of Kaczynski.

And, finally, I suspect that at least in some occasions to focus too much in the study of historical revolutions and social or political movements and taking them as references could be even counterproductive (from a waste of time and energy that could be better invested in other more practical and useful tasks to the real risk of taking as reference and mimicking some aspects of those movements that are not good at all, through to encourage and reinforce the ambiguous and vague way of thinking and expressing that is in too many cases characteristic of social-”sciences” and humanities).

But, in sum, I am not completely against learning about history in general and about historical/contemporary revolutions and social and political movements in particular. Simply I don’t regard it as important as Kaczynski does (and probably I use other criteria than him in choosing what historical phenomena are worth of learning about).

I have not read almost anything by Ellul. Once I tried to read a Spanish translation of *The Technological Society*, but it was so much boring and the style of writing so much abstruse that I decided that it was not worth continuing reading after some few pages; and I recall having read, in another occasion, some other sort article by him about cars.

I am not completely happy with the part about rightism of my answer above. I mainly referred in it to the moderate “right”, but I overlooked the so-called “far-right”. For my opinion about the far-right, see my exchange of correspondence with a Korean person (Aram), about the supposed attraction of some extreme-rightwingers towards Kaczynski’s ideas “Some adapted fragments of several correspondence exchanges XII: On right wing extremism and its relationship with the struggle against the technoindustrial system” (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NAQOj0BDzWjTghyYnGU2vFIILJ812VIF>). I hope it will serve as a complement to my answer.

I am not very happy with the part about “power” either. I wrote it in a hurry and I forgot to say some things in it, so I am going to add some things here:

- I don’t like much the expression “power process” (because the ambiguity that the polysemy of “power” implies and because it deflects attention from the need for the autonomous realization of activities to the ambiguous idea of “power”). I would have called it simply and directly “need for activity”, “activity process” or something like this. But given that Kaczynski was the first person who named this psychological need, and that he chose the expression “power process” to denominate it, I respect this fact and accept the expression as its name.²⁰

²⁰ In fact, one could object that the English zoologist Desmond Morris had already described and named such need, to some extent, in his book *The Human Zoo*, and he had called it the “stimulus struggle”. However, Morris described this need in a quite more rudimentary way than Kaczynski, without taking into account all the fundamental elements that actually take part in such process. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

- The power process, like any other natural human psychological need, tendency or capacity, doesn't appear equally in all individuals. Some can have an intense need for it, others not so much. What I said in my answer was just a generalization.
- The fact that I said that Kaczynski was not enough clear or precise regarding some aspects of the power process theory does not mean that I currently know how to be clearer or more precise regarding all of them.

SF: I've thought quite a bit about why some "rightists" are attracted to Kaczynski. (For the purpose of this discussion, I'll use "right" and "rightist" broadly, though I recognize the careful distinctions you have drawn above.) I agree with you that, contrary to what Aram seems to suggest, Kaczynski's ideology does not have a natural affinity with the right. Instead, rightists are attracted to Kaczynski for the two very superficial reasons you mention -namely, he criticizes leftists and is sometimes politically incorrect. I would add a third, equally superficial reason: rightists tend to misinterpret Kaczynski's concept of the power process. Aram's observation about a Korean ultra-nationalist who liked that concept is not unique. As we both know, the power process refers to the human meta-need (as you've called it) for purposeful or goal-directed activity. But when rightists read the word, "power", they immediately think of Nietzsche's "will to power" and the idea that human beings have a natural desire to dominate others. Kaczynski tries to guard against this misinterpretation in ISAIF. For example, in paragraph 94 he says, "Freedom means having power; not the power to control other people but the power to control the circumstances of one's own life." And later, in paragraph 175: "Very repellent is a society in which a person can satisfy his need for power only by pushing large numbers of other people out of the way and depriving them of THEIR opportunity for power." It's obvious that when Kaczynski says that people need power, he does not mean that they have a need to impose their will on other people. This reinforces a point that you make in your clarifications: "the power process" is not the ideal phrase to describe what Kaczynski means; as you suggest, something like "the activity process" would have been less ambiguous.

I also think you are right to be skeptical of articles, such as Jake Hanrahan's (in Wired magazine, 1 August 2018), which suggest that a large number of rightists have latched onto Kaczynski. (Another such article has just been published, and it is equally dubious: <https://www.lawfareblog.com/why-right-wing-extremists-love-unabomber>). But I believe there *are* quite a few rightists who have (again, for superficial reasons) latched onto Kaczynski; Breivik and Golden Dawn are only two examples. Since these two examples are from Europe, let me list some further examples from the United States.

1) Augustus Sol Invictus (formerly known as Austin Gillespie) created the popular YouTube audiobook of ISAIF: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TkFmmdmk50>. He is a self-described white nationalist who regularly appeared on the podcast of David Duke (a former Ku Klux Klan leader) and was a speaker at the August 2017

Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. When I spoke to David Skrbina in June 2019, he told me that Invictus (who is a lawyer) visited Kaczynski in prison and offered him legal advice. But Kaczynski apparently declined, not wanting to be associated with someone such as Invictus.

2) The alt-right “Godcast” hosted a two-hour discussion of Kaczynski featuring Unite the Right organizer Jason Kessler. See *The Godcast*, Episode 56: The Unabomber Manifesto, 28 January 2018, https://archive.org/details/jan-28-2018_episode_FINAL

3) In an opinion piece for Fox News, Keith Ablow argued that “Kaczynski, *while reprehensible for murdering and maiming people*, was precisely correct in many of his ideas” (emphasis in original). See Ablow, “Was the Unabomber Correct?” *Fox News*, 25 June 2013. This suggests that *some* segment of the “mainstream” American right has warmed to Kaczynski; otherwise, it would have been impossible to publish an article like this in Fox News. In the 1990s, the mainstream American right often tried to portray Kaczynski as a leftist, so this marks a significant reversal.

4) Some American libertarians have apparently taken a liking to Kaczynski as well. A libertarian podcast called “Free Man Beyond the Wall” recently did five episodes about ISAI: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/free-man-beyond-the-wall/id1263295815>.

I could continue listing examples, but I believe these are sufficient to make my point: there are quite a few rightists, of several types, and on both sides of the Atlantic (and, from what Aram says, South Korea as well), who are attracted to Kaczynski. Since you’ve already addressed the question of what ought to be done to repel rightists (in your letter to Aram), I won’t ask you to repeat yourself. I simply wanted to point out some examples of the American right’s attraction of Kaczynski, which you may or may not already be aware of.

UR: Thank you for the information. I was not aware of the four examples you mention (Invictus, Godcast, Ablow and the American libertarians). However, I have never said that there aren’t or couldn’t be some “rightists” (or some people conventionally regarded as “rightists”, like American libertarians) who feel attracted by Kaczynski. I simply think that *so far* they have not been many and that they have had not much influence. But maybe from now on this could change.

By the way, the opinion of Ablow about Kaczynski that you quote is true, however much “rightist” Ablow can be. Kaczynski was right in many of his ideas. Moreover, although, for practical motives, “rightists” should be repelled from a movement against technoindustrial society for the sake of wild Nature, and although virtually all the tendencies that are called the “right” have many aspects that are completely incompatible with an ideology against technoindustrial society and in favor of wild Nature, some of them can also have some other aspects or ideas that are compatible with or even similar to Kaczynski-like ideas (for example, American libertarians put a lot of importance on individual freedom, just as Kaczynski does). But these are mere coincidences and shouldn’t be used to imply any relationship between Kaczynski-like ideas and

the “right”. What is really important are the differences and incompatibilities not the anecdotic similarities.

Your point about how the “misinterpretation” of the term “power” by “rightists” (perhaps because of the unconventional use of it by Kaczynski) can certainly be a reason why some of them feel attracted by Kaczynski. “Power” is conventionally a too loaded term to try to use it with not so conventional meanings. By the way, I recall that there is a letter from Kaczynski to Skrbina²¹ in which Kaczynski explicitly denies any relationship between his idea of the “power process” and the Nietzschean “will to power” and says that he is not interested in the latter.

²¹ Letter from TJK to David Skrbina, August 29, 2004.

Part IV

SF: Do you see your critique of technology as scientific (or social-scientific)?

This question requires some background and explanation. In your response to Question 2 from my previous letter, you say that you take a “materialist, naturalistic philosophical stance”.¹ In your response to Question 4 from the same letter, you criticize “the ambiguous and vague way of thinking and expressing that is in too many cases characteristic of social-‘sciences’ and humanities” (I note the scare-quotes around “sciences”), and you express dislike for Jacques Ellul’s “abstruse” style. Your philosophical stance and your emphasis on clarity of expression seem to suggest an affinity with the “analytic” tradition in philosophy, as opposed to the “Continental” tradition (if you’ll allow me to use these imprecise labels for a moment). In any case — beyond the issue of labels — your critique of technology seems fundamentally different from those of most other critics of technology. Your materialist, naturalistic stance stands in stark contrast to the idealist, humanistic stances of Ellul, Martin Heidegger, Herbert Marcuse, Lewis Mumford, etc. (Rene Dubos, a French biologist, is one notable exception. His critique of technology in *So Human an Animal* (London: Rupert Hart — Davis, 1970) is largely based on the idea that human beings are evolutionarily maladapted to the artificial environments of modern cities.) You also use a precise, analytical mode of expression that is very different from the discursive, “dialectical” mode of expression used by many other critics of technology (again, Ellul and Marcuse are good examples). It appears that Kaczynski differs from these other critics of technology in the same ways that you do — first in philosophical disposition, and second (possibly as a consequence) in mode of expression. To put the point very crudely, you and Kaczynski develop what looks like a “scientific” critique of technology, as opposed to the “cultural” critiques of technology developed by Ellul and others.

Please forgive my use of so many imprecise and undefined terms, including in the question itself (e.g., “analytic”, “Continental”, “cultural”, “scientific”, even “critique of technology”). I am not only interested in the mere terminological question of which *labels* you would use; I am more interested in the *substance* of your ideas and how they differ from those of other critics of technology.

UR: First of all, the answer to your question depends on what you mean by “scientific”.

In your explanation of the question, you mention some authors and “traditions” as examples of idealist, humanistic stances (as opposite to the materialistic, naturalistic

¹ See Part III

way of thinking), and of vague and ambiguous ways of thinking, supposedly because this traits are the opposite to science. Well, though I don't regard myself as a member to any "tradition",² you are not intuitively misguided. Precision in defining concepts and using adequate terms to refer to them is crucial to make oneself correctly understood and to avoid misunderstandings, and it is a basic requirement of science. And non- scientific authors (humanistic, idealistic authors, and generally, men of humanities or arts³ and many social "scientists"⁴) usually are less interested in being precise in defining, naming and expressing the basic concepts they handle, and to develop a clear and logically consistent theory than natural/hard scientists are.⁵ And humanities, arts and social "sciences" tend to be humanistic, that is focused on studying or being mostly interested on the human (i.e., human beings and their works) and leaned to regard the human as the only or most valuable thing. And they tend to be idealistic, to be more leaned to mainly use and adopt non-material subjective/cultural factors to explain phenomena, probably *in part* because the phenomena they study and are mainly interested in are social, cultural or historical (that is, human; and, in their intellectual/academic "traditions", humans — both individually and collectively — usually are regarded as mainly acting as completely conscious and intentional beings with clear and defined purposes).⁶⁷

And you also are right in that Kaczynski also differs greatly from the humanistic critics of technology, both in philosophical disposition and in mode of expression.⁸

But to point out similarities and differences is not the same as to explicitly define what one means by "science", so I don't know what you meant by it when you asked your question. However, I will say what I mean by it in order to answer this question.

² If only, because I think that, at least sometimes, looking for ideological/theoretical genealogies is quite wrong. Usually those who look for the ideological ancestors (or "traditions") of somebody forget a very common phenomenon: convergent evolution (of ideas in this case). Many authors, thinkers and people I general, don't take/derivate *some* of their ideas from others', but they do reach to them independently by themselves through their own experience, observation and thinking.

³ Like most philosophers, writers of literature and poetry, and artists of all kinds.

⁴ Like most historians, and many psychologists, sociologists, etc.

⁵ They do so at least in their scientist formal papers. In more informal and popular articles and essays about their scientific matters of study, they can be, and usually are, much more imprecise, in the belief that less precision, and the relative brevity it implies, improves the accessibility and understanding of the text by the general public.

⁶ Hence the quotation marks I put in "scientists" in the expression "social 'scientists'".

⁷ Though too many natural/hard scientists are also too influenced by humanism and humanistic ideas and values, at least in their personal sphere, and this too often affects (negatively) their scientific work (and especially and most ostensibly their informal and most popular scientific work), if only (and usually not only) in choosing their matters of study and the goals of their studies.

⁸ Though, as I said above, he doesn't state as openly and clearly his commitment to materialism and naturalism. And he also usually regards as more preferable not to be much precise in defining and expressing his ideas, for the same reason commented in footnote 6: the belief that, in order to make a text understandable, the relative brevity and simplicity that one can attain by not trying to be much precise in defining and expressing ideas overcomes the risk of misinterpretation. I disagree.

By “science” I basically mean the way of looking for knowledge based on the “scientific method”. And by “scientific method” I mean the empirical method based on testing the correspondence (or the non-correspondence) between objective, physical reality and the theory about it through the observation of facts,⁹ and the subsequent logical improvement or rejection of the theory. “Facts” or “evidences” are everything that is observable and useful to logically infer the correspondence (or noncorrespondence) between reality and theory, and basically it refers to any aspect of the objective material (i.e., physical) phenomena¹⁰ that is perceptible directly by the senses or indirectly through measuring tools, which logically implies this correspondence (or the lack of it).¹¹ Hence the need for precision in defining and expressing concepts. Theory has to be unequivocally clear in order to be possible to empirically test it.

So, according to this definition, is scientific my¹² criticism of technology? Well, it is greatly based on science and inspired by it, but in my opinion, *it is not scientific and it can't be scientific*. Why? Basically, because:

1) Though I think that any serious theory against technoindustrial society should be as much based on empirical facts, and thus it should be based as much on the available scientific knowledge as possible, I also have to admit that this is not always possible. Sometimes I simply don't know some facts or scientific data, or I lack access to them, or they are ambiguous (i.e., scientific unsolved controversies), or they simply don't exist for the moment, and I have to rely on my own observation, reflection and intuition, which can be far from meeting all the requirements to be properly called scientific. I certainly *try* to be precise, clear, rational, realist, sensible and objective, to take as much *reasonable* perspectives, factors and aspects into account as possible, to be down-to-earth, etc. when developing theory about the modern technological system but, is this enough to be properly called scientific? I think it isn't, if only because I am human, and even when consciously trying to do things this way I could fail, at least sometimes. In order to be properly called scientific, my thought should be only based on data extracted from strictly systematized and controlled scientific observations, and thus (among other negative implications) it would be unfeasible to develop any theory

⁹ “Observation” here means roughly the search for physical evidences of this correspondence (or of the lack of it).

¹⁰ Including those phenomena that, though not been material in themselves (like e.g., the mind or information), are dependent on matter and energy and thus are ultimately subjected to physical laws.

¹¹ At this point, I regard necessary to make it clear that “science” or the “scientific method” is not the same as “what scientists do in the name of science”. Given that scientists are human beings living and acting in a society, their work is too often flawed, biased and highly influenced by non-scientific factors alien to the logical correspondence between facts and theory (subjective, economic, political, moral, ideological, etc. factors) that make what they do be not scientific enough. Most people get “science” (taken as the “scientific method”) mixed up with “what scientists do”.

¹² Here I am going to answer just on behalf of myself. I suppose that Kaczynski would agree that most of what I am going to say for my own theory about technology could be applied to his own theory too, but I could be wrong supposing this, so I prefer not to answer on behalf of him. If you want to know about his opinions about this matter ask him directly.

to the necessary degree: it would require an investment of time, resources and means in direct scientific research or in indirect documentation about other's scientific research that are not available to me; even if available, this would deflect excessively the focus of attention towards strictly meeting scientific methodology, from the goal of pursuing the elimination of technoindustrial society. In sum, to strictly meet these requirements, I actually should completely devote myself to science and scientific documentation instead to the cause of promoting the destruction of the technoindustrial society for the sake of wild Nature. This is neither feasible nor practical.

2) A criticism always implies value judgements, and value judgements can't be logically inferred from empirical facts,¹³ so they actually can't be scientific, by definition. In fact, the descriptive part of my theory can be and tends to be as science-based as possible. That is, I respect and accept science as a source of data about how reality *is and functions* (in fact, at least in my case, I regard science as the most reliable source of data about this), and whenever and to the extent it is possible, I try to base my theory on it. But, since science has nothing to do with values, the evaluative and normative part of my theory (i.e., that part that says what is valuable, and what is wrong or evil in reality; and subsequently, what has to be done) can't be properly called scientific. In fact it is *moral*, like any other theory based on value judgements. And any criticism (or, more generally, any theory that goes beyond the mere empirical descriptions of phenomena) is based on value judgements.

With this I am *not* saying that the values on which the evaluative/normative part of my (or any) theory is based are always necessarily subjective and lack any objective existence. In fact, to defend this subjectivist stance wouldn't be scientific either, for the same reason: you can't empirically prove it. I just say that if they had objective existence in any occasion (and I think they sometimes had it), it couldn't be empirically proved (or disproved). It is a metaphysical matter, not a scientific matter. It is something similar to what happens with the existence of God; or even with the very existence of objective reality (which by the way, somewhat paradoxically, is the metaphysical assumption on which science is based).

SF: I'm interested to know more about your understanding of the relationship between metaphysics and values.

1) Here is my first question: How do you justify the value of wild nature on metaphysical grounds?

As far as I am aware, Kaczynski does not address this question. To the best of my knowledge, the closest he gets to a metaphysical conception of nature is in his 1999

¹³ This is one of the several possible formulations of what some call Hume's law. Descriptions are not the same as, have no logical causal link with, and it shouldn't be got mixed up with value judgements and moral duties (i.e., moral evaluations, ethics, etc.). From the "is" one can't logically derive the "ought". From the descriptive one can't logically derive the evaluative, prescriptive or normative. Values (and the judgements and duties they imply) can't be logically justified just basing on empirical facts, one needs always to refer them to other values, which are equally impossible to infer from empirical facts and, again, they would need to be justified basing on other values, and so on *ad infinitum*.

essay, “A Fantasy” (Labadie Collection, Box 65), where he discusses the relationship between “the life-force” and freedom: “The priceless gift that the life-force has given us is that of freedom. To do what we will, to follow our God-given instincts. All animals have this freedom. So did early humans — the forest pygmies of Africa, for example” (pp. 2–3). But at the end of this essay, he distances himself from these thoughts: “let it be remembered that what I’ve written above is only a record of some ideas and feelings that came to me when I was in a drowsy state. I do not claim that they make any sense or that they are consistent with other things that I’ve said or written” (p. 6). However, he says in the Preface to the second edition of *Anti-Tech Revolution* that he plans to discuss the value of wild nature in a future essay, “Is There Such a Thing as Wilderness? Is There Such a Thing as the Balance of Nature?” I do not know whether he got around to writing this essay.¹⁴

Deep ecology provides one example of an attempt to justify the value of wild nature. But the metaphysics of deep ecology (under some interpretations) seem to be incompatible with the scientific method as you and I understand it (i.e., as you explained the scientific method in your previous letter). For instance, as Bill Devall writes in his influential 1980 article, “The Deep Ecology Movement,” in *Natural Resources Journal* 20 (2): “*There is an objective basis for environmentalism, but objective science in the new paradigm is different from the narrow, analytic conception of the ‘scientific method’ currently popular.* Based on ‘ancient wisdom,’ science should be both objective and participatory without modern science’s subject/object dualism. The main *value* of science is seen in its ancient perspective as contemplation of the cosmos and the enhancement of understanding of self and creation” (p. 311, emphasis in original). This passage is very muddled, and I do not understand how it is possible to have “objective” science (or any sort of “objectivity”) without the distinction between subject and object. But that is largely beside the point. My point is simply that many proponents of deep ecology seem to reject the empiricist, value-neutral understanding of science that underpins the “descriptive” part of your theory.

2) This leads to my second question: What is the relationship (if any) between your criticism of technology and deep ecology? In particular, how does your understanding of wild nature differ from that of deep ecologists?

UR:

1. “*How do you justify the value of wild nature on metaphysical grounds?*”

Well, at first glance, this question seems quite strange to me, because, at least to me, to justify something on metaphysical grounds sounds like an oxymoron. Metaphysical matters can’t be grounded on empirical reason (in the sense of being logically inferred *from empirical facts*). As I said for value judgements in the footnote 50 in my previous reply, one only can logically refer metaphysical matters to other metaphysical matters (i.e., to matters that in turn can’t be based on logical inferences from empirical facts,

¹⁴ In fact, there is a draft of this essay, but it has not been published so far. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

such as values or supernatural beings and forces), and thus one ultimately has to rely on emotions, faith, and similar non-rational aspects of the mind. In my opinion, metaphysical matters can't be empirically justified, so in fact they can't be justified at all. They only can be stated and defended as if they were valid, important, true or real, but actually they can't be (empirically) justified. Any attempt to justify them would only kick the can down the road, so to say, transferring the problem to another metaphysical issue equally (empirically) unjustifiable. Or in other words, you certainly can logically infer a value from just another value, taking for granted the latter as a true premise, a postulate or axiom for logically inferring the former, but then the validity of this axiom can't be proved, unless you refer it to other axiom, and so on.

Some of us believe/feel that (the autonomy of) wild Nature has intrinsic value (in the sense of inherent importance), i.e., that it is important in itself and by itself, independently from us, humans (even if it were bad for us, even if every of us regarded it as valueless or even bad, even if nobody feels awe and respect towards it, even if there weren't humans to evaluate it, we believe/feel it would be important in itself and by itself). But, we can't empirically justify this (belief in its) intrinsic importance, we can't empirically show that there is something out there that is Nature's value. But, this happens with every other (intrinsic) value. As Howie Wolke said, "I cannot absolutely prove the idea of the intrinsic value of wilderness (nor can I prove the intrinsic value of Grandma)".¹⁵

So the value (i.e., the importance) of (the autonomy of) wild Nature *can't be* empirically (and for that matter, scientifically) justified. It just can and should be stated and defended as true, but without any empirical justification. That's all. Any other attempt to justify it logically referring it to other values will anyway remain in the realm of metaphysics.

Of course, one can logically refer the value of (the autonomy of) wild Nature to other values in order to try to make other people see its importance, but, as shown above, any of those attempts of relating it to other values would be equally empirically unjustifiable. For example, you can say and try to show that wild Nature is necessary for other species, but you can't empirically prove why other species are important. You can only refer their importance to another value, equally empirically unjustifiable, and so on. You also can try to show that wild Nature is necessary for human survival, health, freedom, etc. or that it causes a sense of deep awe and respect in many people, but all these are also either values, so they can't be logically inferred from empirical facts in turn, or just emotions that had nothing to do with reason and logic. One can't empirically justify why human survival, health, freedom, etc. or, for that matter, awe and respect are so important, so ultimately one ends up like at the starts. Even if one argues that these other values or feelings are much more conventional and thus most people accept/feel them as valid and important, and thus relating Nature's wildness

¹⁵ "Wilderness: What and Why?", in *Keeping the Wild: Against the Domestication of Earth*, George Wuerthner, Eileen Crist, and Tom Buttler (eds.), Island Press 2014, page 204.

with them could supposedly make many people see and accept the value of it, first, one wouldn't be actually justifying its value (i.e., logically on empirical grounds), but only referring it to other values, and second, one actually would be deflecting the value from wild Nature to human survival, health, freedom, awe, etc. That is, one would be moving from an ecocentric view to an anthropocentric one. Thus, the value of wild Nature would become secondary or dependent on humanity's value. This perhaps could be practical or strategical in some occasions, but in fact, it implies diminishing the intrinsic value of wild Nature.

Note that the fact that any conceivable value (because ultimately and in practice any value either is taken and applied as intrinsic or it is not actually regarded as a value at all) can't be empirically proved doesn't mean that every value is always a completely subjective, cultural, socially constructed, etc. notion and thus that every morality is always absurd, relative, etc. As it happens with any other metaphysical issue, one can't empirically prove the objective (i.e., intrinsic) character or existence of the values, but equally one can't empirically disprove it.

So in my opinion, if one really believes/feels that (the autonomy of) wild Nature (i.e., wildness) has intrinsic value (i.e., importance) or even that this value is the main value to which any other values are subjected, one should just firmly state it as if it was real and objective, without any further justification. Because any attempt to justify it wouldn't ultimately be empirical, rational or valid to many other people. So just state it!

However, notwithstanding everything above said, there could be some non-empirical but rational (that is, purely logical, based on axioms, but not in facts) or practical reasons to regard some metaphysical issues as true or valid and others as untrue or invalid. And perhaps they could be regarded as something similar to indirect "justifications". For example, Ockham's knife (i.e., among the several possible adequate explanations of a phenomenon, one should choose the simplest one, i.e., that which explains the phenomenon using the least number of elements, for it probably will be the most close to the truth, because of the fact that the unnecessarily complex explanations usually raise many other theoretical problems in turn)¹⁶ and/or the fact that some metaphysical assumptions make our life and actions simpler and easier in practice, while others would greatly complicate and make them too difficult if actually assumed and applied in practice. Some metaphysical assumptions and approaches are the simplest way to practically deal with everyday life issues, so they are preferable to other equally metaphysical, opposite approaches or to the purely empirical uncertainty, because the assumption of any of these would raise many more practical problems. The assumption of the existence of objective, material reality is a good example of this. Even the most intellectually recalcitrant subjectivists and idealists, or

¹⁶ Note that the assumption that the simplest explanation is always the best (i.e., the closest to the truth) is not itself empirically justifiable either. It has to be taken as an axiom or postulate. Empirically, it usually seems to be true, but sometimes it could be untrue or just impossible to prove.

simply skeptics, regarding the existence or inexistence of reality, act most of the time on a daily basis in their everyday lives as if they actually and unconsciously accepted that there is a reality out there, because it is the only practical way of acting and living normally and even surviving. This, by itself, is not an empirical proof of the existence of objective reality (in fact, this can't be empirically proved -or disproved-) but it is a good reason to *assume* it as if it were true and to *believe* that much likely there is an objective physical reality out there. On the contrary, the idea of God (in the sense of the existence of somebody out there who has conscience and intentionality and who created and/or rules the universe) implies much more theoretical and practical problems than the simple idea of its inexistence (that is, the explanation of the reality and its phenomena without resorting to God as a cause). And the issue of the existence of the intrinsic value of some things, such as the value of (the autonomy of) wild Nature for example, is similar to that of the issue of the existence of objective material reality. It greatly simplifies and makes things easier, both theoretically and practically. In my opinion, to reject the intrinsic value of (the autonomy of) Nature, would raise many more theoretical and practical problems than to accept it. Again, this is not an actual empirical proof of its intrinsic value, but it is a reason to prefer to assume it rather than to reject it (or to remain dubious about it).

So this is another "justification" for assuming the intrinsic value of (the autonomy of) wild Nature that I can figure out now. And probably some other rational or practical justifications could be figured out, but none of them will be actually empirical.

I also would like to point out two things, as corollaries of all the above about this issue of the justification of the value of wildness or (the autonomy of) wild Nature:

(i) The fact that there is not possible to empirically justify values (or, for that matter, any metaphysical issue), renders useless any discussion about values (or metaphysical matters) with people whose values (or metaphysical foundations) are very different from those of one (that is, with people whose values or metaphysical bases can't be easily logically related with those of one). In fact this means that basically any discussion about values between people with very different basic values, is theoretically unsolvable and useless in practical terms, however much rational and willing to try to understand each other and to achieve an agreement they are. So one just should state his values, but should not enter discussing them (in the sense of arguing why they are true, valid, important, etc. or why others' aren't).

Discrepancies about metaphysics never get solved through rational discussion, but ultimately through physical force, through the material imposition of the implications derived from the metaphysical position of the party who physically prevails and enforces it. At least regarding metaphysics, force is the ultimate judge.

(ii) One can take some time to explain all the above, but not more than necessary. I mean that one should neither engage in metaphysical debates about whether values are really justifiable or not, nor attempt to empirically or rationally justify values (that is, either trying to use empirical facts or logically referring them to other values). It is a waste of energy and time that could be used in a more practical way.

Regarding “A Fantasy”, I know the text, and I don’t like it (and I think that Kaczynski doesn’t take it very seriously either). It is an example of many of the things I just have explained above: references to other empirically unjustifiable values and emotions, unwitting transference of value from wild Nature to humanity while trying to do the opposite (i.e., to justify Nature’s value), etc.

2. *What is the relationship (if any) between your criticism of technology and deep ecology? In particular, how does your understanding of wild nature differ from that of deep ecologists?*

Only ecocentrism, *at most*.¹⁷ I don’t regard the rest of the ideas that usually are associated with the label “deep ecology” akin to my ideas. Of course, *in principle*, it could also depend on what one means by “deep ecology”. Deep ecology is generally regarded as the philosophy derived from the ideas of Arne Naess.¹⁸ And, when understood in this sense (which I think is the most usual and proper), I regard deep ecology as leftish-hippish crap. In my opinion, deep ecology is very influenced by postmodernism, counterculture, New Age, oriental religious-philosophical woo-woo, leftism, humanism, etc. The fragment by Devall that you quote in your letter is a good instance of this. It’s nothing but nonsensical fashionable postmodern verbiage (note the almost mandatory mention of the expression “new paradigm” -the typical, ubiquitous, progressive, and more than questionable reference to Thomas Kuhn’s theories-, the rejection of dualism -i.e., the rejection of some dichotomic oppositions or differentiations like the distinction between object and subject or between the human and the natural-, etc).

Some more concrete and detailed implications of the above general description of deep ecology as leftisf-countercultural rubbish are (they are just the main ones I can figure out now):

- Deep ecologists tend to be too irrational (even irrationalist; i.e., they regard reason as bad and greatly reject it).
- They usually are utopian too, that is, they want to reform tecnoindustrial society to transform it into (or create) a new society built according to the principles of

¹⁷ Taking “ecocentrism” just in the sense of regarding the value of wild Nature on Earth (i.e., wild biosphere, wild ecosystems, wilderness) as the most important thing, and thus, regarding all the rest of values and ideas as either secondary and dependent on it or unimportant, or even bad/wrong, depending on the case. But unfortunately many adepts of “deep ecology” (and not only them) don’t share this notion of “ecocentrism” and they mix ecocentrism up with “biocentrism” (i.e., to take “life” as the highest value), and subordinate it to humanistic and leftist values. But ecocentrism and biocentrism are not the same and can even be incompatible stances, and an “ecocentrism” that is not the central or main value itself and is subjected to humanistic and leftist values is not actually *ecocentrism*.

¹⁸ He invented the expression “deep ecology”. Indeed, Arne Naess and George Sessions formulated the “Deep Ecology Eight Point Platform” as a mean to roughly “determine” if a theory or proposal can be regarded as deep ecology. I write the quotation marks in “determine” because many of those points are at least too vague and sometimes even quite questionable or clumsily formulated, but anyway the fact is that, as far as I know, their authors were the first persons to define deep ecology, so in my opinion, deep ecology is what they said it to be.

deep ecology. Which is basically to be totally unrealistic, because they don't take into account the fact that societies (like any other complex system) are inherently unpredictable and uncontrollable beyond a very restricted limit. So the course of the development of any society can't be consciously and intentionally controlled and directed towards the realization of a previously planned model of society. This always fails and the results always are very different from those originally wanted and expected. Usually quite worse.

- They assume and defend as fundamental some of the ideas and values that are basic and typical in the modern society they pretend to be rejecting (e.g., concepts like "rights", "equality", "justice", "well-being", or "diversity" and "flourishing" as values in themselves).
- They are idealistic, that is, they believe that technoindustrial society causes harm to Nature mainly because it has a wrong ideology based on wrong values, and that thus in order to change society, according to them, the only or main thing one has to attain is to change these "wrong" attitudes, ideas and values of the people. But societies, their development and its consequences are mainly determined by objective material factors, and not so much by subjective ideal ones. For example, the cause of our impact on wild Nature is not as much our anthropocentrism (however bad and wrong such attitude can certainly be) as it is the material fact that modern technology or overpopulation (or the combination of both) inherently imply a great impact just because their mere existence requires a huge quantity of energy, matter and space and unleashes some autonomous, unavoidable, uncontrollable, emergent and mechanistic social dynamics greatly alien to human wills, attitudes or beliefs.
- As a consequence of their idealism and voluntarism, they don't actually reject modern industrial technology; they just want to make it "appropriate", "sustainable", "green", and too often, they seem to think that even this deceptive change ("green" modern technologies are not actually compatible with wildness) will happen more as a result of a change in the ideas and values of the people, than as a result of a material change in the technologies themselves. It seems that to them it is enough to expand their worship of "Goddess Earth" or "Mother Nature", to make a real and profound change in the society. The truth is just the opposite, what is essential is to change deeply (rather to eliminate) the material conditions on which technoindustrial society bases itself, regardless the beliefs and ideas of the people in general. An anthropocentric very small primitive tribe will always cause a much, much smaller ecological impact than a huge technoindustrial society constituted exclusively by a vast population of ecocentric believers in deep ecology using "green" advanced technologies.

Certainly, some few people, like some of the earliest EF!ers, and also many of the humanistic foes of deep ecology, seem to regard "deep ecology" mostly as a mere syn-

onym of “ecocentrism”, but I actually think that this restricted sense of “deep ecology” is wrong, because deep ecology has never been just ecocentric (indeed, many times it has never even been ecocentric at all, but biocentric at most),¹⁹ but, as said above, a set also constituted by many other ideas totally unrelated with ecocentrism and which I deeply reject.

In fact, because all of this, I always avoid making myself publicly related to “deep ecology” and never use this label to call myself and my ideas.

Regarding the differences between my idea of wild Nature and that of deep ecologists and other similar people who in principle seem to highly value Nature, they are mainly two:

- **My moral valuation of Nature:** Because of their leftism and hippish irrationalism, deep ecologists and the like tend to regard as good, and thus to exalt, those aspects of wild Nature that fit their soft values and unrealistic worldview, and to regard as bad, and thus to overlook or understate, those aspects that don’t fit well their ideology. E.g., they see Nature as a mostly cooperative, mutualist system where cooperation overcomes competition, peace overcomes aggression, pleasure overcomes pain, life overcomes death, etc. And, of course, they regard all this as unquestionably good. And when they can’t overlook or deny those aspects of wild Nature that collide with their bland leftish-hippish values, because those aspects are too much evident, they anyway try to justify these facts using their soft and pusillanimous values and ideas, even if it requires denying or making up reality (e.g., they regard them as unavoidable -so they suggest that they would prevent them from happening if they could-, or as minority and rare exceptions -so they instantly try to shift the focus to those aspects that are compatible with their viewpoint leaving aside those that don’t-).

I don’t regard wild Nature as generally pacific, mainly cooperative, mostly pleasant, etc. Indeed, it is usually quite violent, competitive, unpleasant, ruthless, harmful, painful or deadly too. But unlike those hippies I regard all this uncomfortable traits *of wild Nature* as valuable (exactly as valuable as when it is peaceful, cooperative, pleasant, harmless, healthy or lively).²⁰ I know that they are necessary for wild Nature to actually remain wild. They are a necessary part of wildness (included real human freedom). Moreover, some of the seemingly cooperative, harmless, and soft aspects of Nature in fact imply competition, harm and hardships if seen more widely, at a different space-time scale. Or vice versa.

¹⁹ By the way, ecocentrism in fact is not the invention of deep ecology. It was more or less explicitly and congruently defended previously by some other people completely independent from Naess and his followers. For example, by many people in the American conservation movement.

²⁰ Note that I am referring here exclusively to the evaluation of these supposedly negative traits when they appear in wild Nature. When they appear among or inside human societies, they usually could and should be evaluated in a completely different way and according to different criteria, which doesn’t mean that they are always necessarily bad either.

For example, the strong cooperation among some social animals in the groups they constitute, could make one think that in Nature is all peace, love, sharing and mutual caring, but this cooperation inside the group can imply, and usually does imply, that this group thus can outcompete (often violently and destructively) other rival groups, can capture preys more easily and efficiently or can defend itself from, or even attack and eliminate more toughly, its natural enemies (predators, rival species, unfavourable conditions in the environment, etc.).

Furthermore, most of these sanctimonious do-gooders don't even realize the ultimate logical consequences of their biased worldview: that the exaltation of only the agreeable traits of Nature (i.e., those traits that fit well the hippish-leftish values of most deep ecologists) and the rejection and overlooking of the disagreeable ones (i.e., those traits that don't fit their weak values), if actually put in practice seriously, would not result in the utopian stupendous world they seem to think/suggest, but in a great ecological disaster and a huge hellish prison.

I value and love Nature as it is, and it is the way it is, not the way that seems more beautiful, pleasant or comfortable to us, humans.

This leads us to another metaphysical issue, related with the one discussed in answer 1, the notions of goodness, badness and moral neutrality regarding wild Nature. The notions of absolute goodness, badness or moral neutrality are equally empirically unjustifiable (there can't be inferred from empirical facts), so here I am just going to briefly and roughly present my own ideas about them, and I won't discuss them further because I regard it useless and unpractical. In sum, I don't believe in the existence of absolute good, I just believe in the existence of absolute evil in some occasions, and in the absence of absolute evil (i.e., moral neutrality)²¹ in others. So there are things that are bad and things that simply are non-bad (or morally neutral). Things can only be bad or non-bad. Some things can have (positive) value or importance,²² that is, they can be desirable or valuable. They have (positive) value when they are the way they must be.²³ Some things can have *negative* value, that is, they can be undesirable, when they

²¹ Hereafter I will omit the term "absolutely" before "bad/evil", for the sake of brevity, though with "evil/bad" I am going to refer always to the notions of absolute evil. The non-absolute or relative morality (i.e., the reference to relative goodness or relative badness), would be a completely distinct moral realm which I am not going to discuss here.

²² Here by "value" or "valuable" and "importance" and "important" I will always mean intrinsic value/importance, although for the sake of simplicity I will omit the term "intrinsic".

²³ I regard the notion of "to be good" different from that of just "to have positive value". Something "good" is not just something that is as it has to be (i.e., something valuable), but something else. According to any of the moralities based on the belief in "goodness", there is never enough quantity of "goodness" or of "good" things, so one always must try to increase it (it is the idea of improvement). Any good thing can and should always be (made) better and more abundant. I don't believe in this, but I believe that there are things that are already as they have to be and they don't need to be improved, just to be let alone, and that when they are not as they should be, this is bad (that is, it is because of something that makes them not to be as they should, so this thing is bad), and the only thing one must

interfere in the way valuable things have to be. Some things can also lack any value, that is, they can be unimportant. Bad things have negative value. Non-bad things can have positive value or can lack any value, depending on the case. Bad things should be eliminated. Non-bad things that are valuable should be respected and let be as they have to be. Non-bad things that are unimportant, don't deserve any moral consideration, they are just things without *intrinsic* value.

I think that wild Nature is morally neutral or non-bad, that is, it is neither good (recall, I don't believe that anything is absolutely good), nor bad. Wild Nature is valuable. Indeed, it is the most valuable thing. In fact what makes wild Nature valuable is its autonomy or wildness. Nature is like it has to be when it is wild. So wildness is the most valuable thing. Everything that doesn't harm or is compatible with wildness is non-bad. It can be valuable or not, depending on if it is wild (i.e., both natural *and* autonomous) in turn. Everything that harms wildness or is incompatible with it is bad. Technoindustrial society unavoidably harms wildness, so it is bad. So technoindustrial society should be eliminated.

- **My idea of the relationship between the human and the natural:** According to most deep ecologists and other similar people who in principle seem to value wild Nature, the human (i.e., human beings, human works, human societies and cultures, human ideas and beliefs, etc.) is part of Nature, there is actually no ontological difference between the artificial and the natural, and thus everything is natural. To them, human/Nature dualism is an error (in fact, given their usual idealism they tend to regard it as the main error of humanity, the main cause of the destruction and subjugation of Nature by humans). I completely disagree.

I, instead, think that humans and their works (the human or the artificial) are not part of (wild) Nature. I define Nature precisely as everything that is not human-made (i.e., everything that is not artificial).²⁴ *Wild* Nature is everything

do is to eliminate the bad thing that prevents them from being as they should, so that they can be as they have to be. And then, once they are as they have to be, that is all, they can't be (made) better and should be let alone to be what and as they has to be.

²⁴ I know that "Nature" can be also understood as just "everything that is or exists physically"; as the synonym of "the reality", "the cosmos", "the universe" or "the (material) world"; or as the antonym of "supernatural". But this alternative notion of "Nature" is *currently* actually quite infrequent. It is only taken into account by some professional philosophers and only while they are working (and usually not even always congruently). The rest of people, in the rest of the occasions, mostly think of "Nature" simply as that which isn't artificial.

Those who reject the so-called human/Nature dualism usually base their arguments in that notion of "Nature" as synonym of "reality" ("Nature is everything, so everything is natural"), but they actually do it quite clumsily because they usually (unwittingly?) mix both notions in the same theory and speech, leaping from one to another at their own convenience (like when many of them regret the destruction of "Nature" by humanity and regard destroying or subjugating "Nature" as bad and unnatural -how can humanity act against Nature, if according to them, everything that we do is natural too?-). In fact,

that is not artificial *and* is autonomous. By autonomy I mean the capacity of any complex system to develop and follow its own dynamics and behaviour.

The only aspect of humans that is part of Nature is their nature (those human psychological tendencies, capacities and needs that are determined by genetics and have been evolved through natural selection over our whole evolutionary past),²⁵ but human nature is not the same as actual human beings and their works. Actual human beings are now greatly (and always have been partly) the product of their social-cultural circumstances, so they are (partly) artificial themselves. We are not (completely) natural — i.e., (totally) non-artificial — anymore (since at least many, many millennia).²⁶

More important, this dualistic view of the relationship between man and Nature is, in my opinion, a much more congruent and less problematic view than the monistic one (i.e., “humans are part of Nature, there is no difference between the artificial and the natural, they are both the same thing”).²⁷

And there would be some more practical problems with such monism too, like the one of how to protect the remaining Nature if we take at face value that people and their works are and must be part of Nature? Should the wilderness and other natural quite strictly protected areas be opened to people without any restriction in order to let them to completely and freely “be part of Nature”? Should the current masses of humans be encouraged to “be part of Nature”? What would be the impact of millions or billions of humans “being part of Nature”, that is hunting, fishing, gathering, taking firewood and making fires, getting materials for building shelters and inhabiting (if only primitively) in the current remaining wild natural areas? Or even just temporally hiking and camping in them (even without taking anything from them)? Should these areas be open to at least some “traditional”, “green”, or “sustainable” human uses, given that humans and all what we do is supposedly natural too? At least here in Europe, we should already know what all this humanistic environmentalism that equates Nature and culture (or more

this people only recall the “Nature equals everything” notion when, for ideological reasons, they want to make us believe that the humans and ours works are natural. The rest of the time they seemingly completely forget about it and adopt the “Nature is only that which is not artificial” notion too. Like virtually everybody else.

²⁵ One could also include in the notion of human nature the physiological processes and biological structures (i.e., the parts of the body and its autonomous functioning) which are also the result of the genetics of the species. Because certainly they could also be regarded part of Nature to a great extent. Anyway, usually, when people speak of “human nature” they tend to think mostly or exclusively about the psychology, not about the body, so this is the sense I use normally.

²⁶ Obviously, we once emerged from Nature, but gradually, through the making of culture (including especially technology) ever more complex, we got ever more differentiated from the natural (i.e., non-artificial) world, until we became already something essentially different from it (i.e., greatly artificial).

²⁷ See above, in footnote 61, the last parenthesis in the second paragraph for an example of the theoretical problems that the monistic approach can raise.

exactly subjects Nature to culture in practice) has produced regarding protected “natural” areas: most of them are not as “natural” as “cultural”, so they too often are not much wild.²⁸

So those deep ecologists and the like should think twice before continuing defending that humans are part of Nature and/or that there is no difference between the natural and the artificial. Because they are shooting themselves in their own feet. Unfortunately most of them tend to be too much emotional and to look more for psychological self-gratification through inconsistent mystical mantras like these than rational, practical people expressing themselves sensibly.

The above dualist view doesn’t imply to deny the fact that, given that we are basically material beings, have a physiology, have physical needs, and even our mind and its products depend on a material brain to exist and work, the human (i.e., human beings and their works) depends on wild Nature to exist (at least so far). Human beings need air to breath, water to drink, food to eat, and many other material “resources” to make many things (they even need some of them for their own subsistence) that ultimately come from wild Nature one way or another, and the wild ecosystems and the wild part of the biosphere still do many things (some call them “ecosystemic services”) for us that we need to be done in order to be able to subsist (e.g., photosynthesis to renew the air, the water cycle to renew the water, etc.) so we and our works materially depend on wild Nature (at least so far). But to be material or real (i.e., to be part of reality) is a thing and to be natural (i.e., to be part of Nature, that is, part of the non-artificial part of the reality) is another. And thus “to depend on” wild Nature does not necessarily imply “to be part of” it or “to be the same than” it, and this notions shouldn’t be mixed up.

²⁸ Here I am not suggesting that humans should be maintained completely apart from (or decoupled from) wild ecosystems, even if it were physically possible (which is not), in the sense of the eco-technoutopian crap that some modern environmentalists seem to defend (see, for example, Roderick Nash ““Island Civilization. A vision for the planet Earth in the year 2992” in *Wild Earth* 1, no 4, Winter 1991/1992: 2–4.; or the Epilogue “Island Civilization” to the Fifth Edition of his famous book *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Yale University Press, 2014, pages: 379–385). I think that we shouldn’t try to eliminate the ecological impact of the technoindustrial society, physically isolate this society from Nature and make it “sustainable”, “ecofriendly”, “decoupled”, etc. because, first, it is physically impossible to achieve it, and second, even if it were possible, it would be undesirable to sustain this kind of society. Technoindustrial society should only be destroyed. I also think that in order to really and correctly value wild Nature one has to have intimate real contact with it and thus that to isolate people from it is not a good idea. But to have contact with Nature is not something that could be adequately made at a massive scale. And thus it shouldn’t be encouraged as something that masses should do.

And, also, we should always recall that, even in very scattered small primitive groups, humans will never be completely natural and totally integrated in Nature. Of course, these kinds of human groups would be the least bad for Nature of human societies because, with their primitive technology and small numbers of people, they couldn’t do it as much harm as other bigger and more complex societies. But this is not the same as to be part of Nature or to be completely integrated in it. No human individual, group or work can be natural or wild.

Finally, I already have commented to some extent most of these matters in my blog. See:

- SOME ADAPTED FRAGMENTS OF SEVERAL CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGES III (Part II): On Nature.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gmSWzh7UuSollXPMJwZ8YT-W9Vzb94V_/.
- SOME ADAPTED FRAGMENTS OF SEVERAL CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGES IV: On the feasibility of creating a movement and fighting the technoindustrial system, and on morals.
(<https://drive.google.Com/file/d/1iJJYcRLstaCkO7p1LqM94878nmJMKtEy/view>).
- SOME ADAPTED FRAGMENTS OF SEVERAL CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGES V (Part II): On Nature and primitive humans.
(<https://drive.google.eom/file/d/1vUmz2-yLu79ODd2bByL1HykzIr9N0mv/view>).
- SOME ADAPTED FRAGMENTS OF SEVERAL CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGES VI (PART I): On interesting books, metaphysics and more.
(<https://drive.google.eom/file/d/1OhEEw-CL4u8Ji4UaObsS-A46Y41ilwWC/view>).
- SOME ADAPTED FRAGMENTS OF SEVERAL CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGES VI (PART II): On Nature, thermodynamies and determinism.
(<https://drive.google.eom/file/d/1uNeGyVOZCTIyOSrQagD0WGZL92VmL2nd>).

I also commented something in my critique of Skrbina's book *Metaphysics of Technology*.

Exchange on an interview

that Sean Fleming gave on the Anti-Tech Collective's *YouTube channel*²⁹

²⁹ Adaptation of a correspondence exchange between Fleming and Último Reducto that took place between December 17 2022 and February 17 2023. © Copyright 2023, Último Reducto, for the fragments originally written by U.R.

Ultimo's critique

Note: For a right understanding of this exchange, it is advisable, although not necessary, to have previously listened to the interview this exchange is about¹.

Último Reducto: First of all, despite my following criticisms, I think that, notwithstanding the obvious mental confusion, verbal rambling, and lack of focus of the interviewer, your intervention in the interview is very clear, concise, interesting and that you hit the nail on the head and pointed out very important facts in several occasions. Now, the criticisms.

Generally

- In this interview, you pretend to seem impartial, for example avoiding to chose explicitly between two opposite parties (Ellul vs. Kaczynski; Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje (ITS) vs. Kaczynski), but you are not so much actually. The problem is not to be impartial, but to pretend being impartial. Nobody really concerned about or interested in an issue is or can be impartial or neutral regarding it, and to pretend the contrary is either hypocrisy or stupidity. Another very different thing is to be objective. But both things aren't necessarily related. It is obvious that you like Jacques Ellul too much. I don't share your liking for him. Ellul was too much a humanistic idealist (and thus too little a scientific materialist) as to be a good reference for anything practical.²

¹ "Full Conversation with Sean Fleming, PhD (audio only)", Anti-Tech Collective, *YouTube*, August 28, 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcX9K1sIpg0>.

² Now, you could object: "How do you can criticize Ellul if you haven't read almost nothing by him?". Well, I think that I have read and heard enough from reliable secondary sources as to have a quite accurate general impression about him. E.g., what you say about him in the interview seems to be an accurate source to me.

- You are on the right path in pointing out that the opposition between materialism³ and idealism⁴ is crucial and has a lot to do with the differences between Kaczynski and Ellul (or the rest of humanistic-idealistic critics of technology). In fact this is not just another specific difference between them. It is “The Difference”; it is the root of virtually the rest of the differences between them. I will come once and again to this subject in the following points.
- Kaczynski isn’t anthropocentric, nor does he love human race, as you already know.⁵ Ellul was/did. This is one important difference between Kaczynski and Ellul. Kaczynski is not a humanist⁶, deep down he is actually a non-humanist (an even to some extent misanthropic as you have seen⁷), not only because he takes Nature instead of humanity as his main value, but also because his cultural background and training, innate intellectual attitude, mindset and leaning, and his natural philosophical and psychological dispositions are mostly scientifically oriented, not the typical from humanities. This, in principle, makes him to tend to focus his attention primarily on physical phenomena in general (that is, on reality

³ By “materialism” I mean the metaphysical stance that assumes that everything either is physical (that is, it is constituted by matter or energy) or has a material base (that is, it depends on matter and energy to exist –i.e., it is determined and limited by physical factors-); that nothing is completely independent from (i.e., undetermined or unlimited by) matter and energy. Even ideas, minds, information, “spirits” or whatever other immaterial entities are ultimately dependent on matter and energy, and subjected to them. And those entities that supposedly are not dependent on matter and energy, simply don’t exist at all. [“Energy” here is used exclusively in the sense that physicists use the term, as the ability of doing a work or induce changes in material objects, in their location or in the interactions between them; and “matter” in the sense of that what is constituted by atoms, and ultimately by subatomic particles].

⁴ By “idealism” here I mean “anti-materialism”, i.e., the metaphysical view which is just the opposite to “materialism”. That is, the stance that assumes that there are at least some things that are completely independent from matter and energy and that material things (if they exist at all) are ultimately dependent on those immaterial ones. Idealism regards the “spiritual”, mental, ideational, etc. elements of human individuals and social groups as independent from the material elements of them, as prevalent over them and as determinant of them.

⁵ See “Some adapted fragments of a correspondence exchange between Sean Fleming and Último Reducto (Part I)”: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OQN09_hUMJRM0pPKkMZG5R164e7CYeJd/view?usp=sharing.

⁶ By “humanism” I mean the anthropocentric attitude of *consciously* focusing only or mainly on “the human” (i.e., human works, human ideas and human beings) and regarding the rest of reality as if it was at least secondary, or even just inexistent. This exclusive or main focus on the human virtually always implies views that are idealistic, voluntaristic (i.e., to regard human will as much more important and powerful than it actually is) and indeterministic (i.e., to regard that at least some phenomena, specially those social or psychological ones, are not determined by anything else; they come from the blue or self-generate, or at best come from other social or psychological phenomena, which in turn come from other social or psychological phenomena, and so on). Humanism is the typical attitude on which humanities are based, but it is actually much more widespread among humans.

⁷ “Some adapted fragments of a correspondence exchange between Sean Fleming and Último Reducto (Part I)”.

far beyond humanity) and not only or mainly on human works, social phenomena and ideas. As far as I know him, I would say that (and note that it is only my opinion and maybe he wouldn't agree completely with it; you should ask him directly in order to undoubtedly know his exact stances) if he currently writes a lot about social phenomena is due to practical reasons (i.e., because he regards it necessary in order to understand and thus effectively combat technoindustrial society, *for the sake of wild Nature*) not because he actually feels any personal, real and natural inclination or interest towards these kinds of phenomena. I would bet that, if possible, he personally would prefer to mostly focus his attention on non-human Nature than on human issues and human environments and that he would prefer to do material practical things than to think or write about anything (much less about social issues).

The reason why, using your own terms, Kaczynski's explanation of the human maladaptation to modern technology is biological and Ellul's is cultural has much to do with the above. Kaczynski mostly tends to be a science-minded non-humanistic materialist and Ellul is an unscientific humanistic idealist. Despite their apparent similarities,⁸ deep down their natural inclinations, worldviews and attitudes are ultimately opposite and irreconcilable.

- At this point I have to say that Ellul, you, the interviewer and many other people (including Kaczynski to some extent, regrettably) mix up science and technology, though they are not the same, nor do they even have always necessarily any mutual relationship. Moreover, none of you refer always to the same thing when uses the term "technology" and, even worse, you tend to define and even use it in highly unconventional senses. For example Ellul's notion of "Technique"⁹ (incorrectly translated to English, and regarded as the same, as "technology"), or even Kaczynski's notion of "technology", aren't exactly the same as the conventional notion of "technology", because both notions include techniques or methods. None of you (not even Kaczynski), nor many other people, define adequately "technology" in my opinion, nor even none of you always stick to your each own definitions (if ever you give one at all) in practice when speaking or writing about technology. More could be said about these specific issues but I am not going to explain them in detail here. Just for you to reflect on them: science is just a method of obtaining knowledge and it is not the same as its applications (i.e., engineering and techno-science) or than technology (individual tools and the systems constituted by them). Conventionally (that is, as usually the term is and tends to be understood and used) "technique" is not the same than "technology" either

⁸ In my opinion, a more detailed analysis could perhaps show that even many of the seeming similarities between Ellul and Kaczynski discourses could be regarded in fact as greatly superficial.

⁹ Not to mention his odd and arbitrary use of the term "technology" as "the discourse of the technique". Who the hell, beyond perhaps a few pedantic idiots in some office in the depths of some faculty of Arts or something like this, does usually understand the term "technology" as such?

(the former is typically understood as the method, the steps for doing something, the know-how and the process to do it, while the latter is typically used and understood by common people as just the material tools, machines, devices and the systems constituted by them¹⁰). So your (of all of you) notions (or definitions, when they exist) are quite unconventional. This is a serious practical error which complicates the correct understanding of what any of you try to say, and promotes misinterpretations. You call apples “pears” and besides you expect that others know what you are talking about.

And I suspect that somehow these flaws regarding the use of language have a lot to do with the humanistic-idealistic mindset.

- Notwithstanding his natural intellectual leanings (commented above), I suspect that *in practice* Kaczynski is not as much materialistic and scientific as pragmatic and eclectic. I think that he will seemingly embrace and openly defend any particular idea or stance that he thinks that can be *practically* useful for pursuing his goal at some given moment, however much *theoretically* nonsensical and logically incongruent with his other ideas such idea can seem to him privately. He *rarely* commits *openly*, *strictly* and *a priori* with any theoretical party in the typical general metaphysical dilemmas (materialism vs. idealism, determinism vs. indeterminism, mechanism vs. voluntarism, monism vs. dualism, etc.). I think that if he seems in practice to be, for example, more scientific and materialistic than humanistic and idealistic, it is *greatly* because “coincidentally” it happens that to him many specific cases of materialistic- scientific stances *usually* seem to be more efficient and practical to achieve his goal (at least at some specific moment). But he doesn’t reject *a priori* any concrete idea just because it is not enough materialistic or scientific, and I think that, if he finds it useful at some moment, he can embrace, without any qualms, idealistic or humanistic specific stances that actually enter conflict with the rest of his usually materialistic and scientific concrete stances. As far as I know, he usually doesn’t regard as practical anything beyond a quite direct, concrete and relatively immediate usefulness, and he virtually is not interested in anything else (at least publicly or “politically”).

And, closely related with this, he is highly eclectic, as I said in one of our previous exchanges.¹¹ He looks for and picks up ideas from here and there without any concern about their philosophical background -i.e., without any concern about the big theories or tendencies to which each of these ideas are part and from which they come-, and thus about the deep implications they can have below

¹⁰ Though, admittedly, “technique” is sometimes used and understood with the same meaning than “technology”, that is, as the material tools too. But this relatively common meaning is less usual.

¹¹ “Some adapted fragments of a correspondence exchange between Sean Fleming and Último Reducto (Part I)”.

the surface and beyond their seeming immediate utility. He only shows concern about their direct, practical utility for the cause at this moment. But many times these concrete ideas actually belong to and imply more general and mutually incompatible philosophical stances. So if one scratches the surface of Kaczynski's rhetoric a little, some deep contradictions will emerge. And this also can have serious *practical* implications, especially beyond the most immediate aspects. For example, these notions could (and do) attract people who actually are quite philosophically, ideologically and psychologically incompatible with Kaczynski and his goal, and who at some point could become a serious problem for his cause. I am thinking of all those idealistic-humanistic (or simply mentally chaotic) fans of Ellul who seem not to be aware of the deep and insurmountable incompatibility between both, Ellul and Kaczynski, and who, if allowed, will ruin the potential movement turning it into an irrational, unrealistic and inefficient failure (both because of their own incompetence and/or following Ellul's idealistic mandates). But in this and other similar cases, Kaczynski seems to be more interested in attracting people who seemingly can in principle effectively help him *now* to advance towards the creation of a movement for the destruction of the technoindustrial system than in noticing, taking into account, and avoiding these deeper and longer run, but also practical, negative implications. Not only leftists and rightists are undesirable members of the movement.

And some other examples of his myopic, pragmatic eclecticism could be pointed out. For example, his defense of taking past revolutions and some other radical political movements as *vague* references for current practical action could and probably will also imply to unwittingly get much deep ideological pollution in turn.

More specifically

- Regarding the idea of freedom, as I think I already told you too, one has to take into account that there are always unavoidable determinants, limitations and constraints to our existence and behaviour. The humanistic and idealistic idea of "freedom" as the complete absence of external, natural or physical determinants, limits and restrictions, or as the ability to resist or escape from them (e.g., like Ellul's "freedom" as "resisting necessity" or your verbiage about resisting the "enslavement" or the "pull" by both Nature and technology), is plainly a nonsense. Many natural (i.e., non-artificial) or material determinants and restrictions simply can't be avoided. The physical laws of gravitation or thermodynamics, for example, are not only fundamentally unavoidable, inescapable, but also indispensable, necessary for us and the world to merely exist. They simply can't be resisted. Other natural/material limitations and determinants to our behaviour, such as many environmental or biological determining/limiting factors or forces,

perhaps can be sometimes, somehow and to some extent defied, modified, inhibited or even avoided, but it usually can't be done without paying a too high price and without causing/suffering serious problems in turn. So, to fall in the trap of this abhorrent humanistic-idealistic idea of a completely abstract (i.e., totally independent from physical causes and limitations) "freedom" and to suggest that natural limitations or conditions are "enslavement" and that we should resist or escape them, is not only unfeasible, it is also perverse and misleading. Because to try to escape natural restrictions and determinants always implies to (usually unwittingly) embrace some other artificial (i.e., social and technological) constraints and determinants in turn (plus the negative consequences derived from forcing both our nature and the rest of Nature to adjust to them).

There is no such thing as the humanistic-idealistic-voluntaristic abstract "freedom", a freedom without restrictions or conditions, coming from the blue, purely "spiritual" and based only or mainly on willpower and "free will". This widespread abstract notion of "freedom" as the total absence of restrictions/conditions is a product of the humanistic idea that humans are (or should be) ultimately above and independent from non-human Nature (and also that we are mainly "spiritual" entities which thus are not subjected to physical determinants or restrictions). But we aren't. We (even our "spiritual" part, our minds, our ideas, our social superstructure, call it as you like) depend materially on non-human Nature; we have a human nature that is product of such non-human Nature and restricts and determines us in *all* aspects; and we are always subjected to physical laws and limitations. And our will has very restricted power and scope and it is not independent from material factors at all; on the contrary, it is ultimately caused, determined and limited by them too.¹²

¹² Note that the notion of humanistic "freedom" discussed in this paragraph, as the ability to resist or escape natural or material determinants, in fact would imply the also problematic notion of "freedom" as "power" or control over circumstances too. Circumstances are precisely always determining and/or limiting, and to try to escape or resist some determinants or limitations always implies trying to exert control over the same or other determinants or limitations. At the very least, "freedom" as escape from or resistance to determinants and limitations implies individual (self-)control over the internal biological determinants and limitations "imposed" by our nature, and usually control over many other external factors too. For example, to resist the influence of some natural psychological tendency, like aggression, would basically equal to exert (self-)control over it. And to collectively resist the influence of a material external determining/limiting factor like the availability of food (which would determine if we live or die, limit our population and make us, as a society, look for other sources of food or ways to intensify the current production of it), would imply to be able to modify the degree of its influence on us either through the control over the natural sources and over technological means of production of such food or over human demography (or over both). And, as we know, effective control over complex systems (and virtually everything is more complex than it usually seems at first glance), such as minds, societies, ecosystems or the reality, is greatly limited and too often impossible beyond a very restricted scope. So both humanistic-idealistic notions of "freedom", as escape/resistance and as power/control should be regarded as closely related and thus, the criticisms to them I make here are actually very related too. Basically, these notions of "freedom" disdain and ignore the degree to which (physical) reality and

So, contrary to what Ellul and you seem to think, *the only freedom that can exist is in Nature*. The only real freedom is to accept the fact that we are totally subjected to natural limitations and determining factors, and accept them. The only real freedom consists in being able to autonomously express our nature. Real freedom has nothing to do with resisting or avoiding every determining factor, limit or restriction, but with accepting natural determinants and restrictions, and *thus* rejecting the artificial ones, which pretend to replace them. The rest is either “smoke” (abstract “freedom” from any determining factor or restriction) or a trap (to exchange natural determinants and restrictions, to which we are optimally evolutionarily adapted, for artificial restrictions, to which we are quite evolutionarily maladapted and which thus end up enslaving us).

- You comment, and seem to embrace, the idea that humans (and their works) are part of Nature (let’s call it “ecological monism”¹³), and its complementary rejection of the idea that humans are not part of Nature (let’s call it “ecological dualism”). Ecological monism is widespread among the people who put a great value on non-human Nature. Ecological monism is, at first glance, a seemingly attractive and enjoyable idea for those unaware of its real implications, but in fact it is a very deceiving, dangerous idea that has not only deep problematic philosophical implications, but negative practical implications too. I commented some of them in one of our exchanges,¹⁴ but there are more. However, the detailed discussion of this philosophical-practical problem would imply much more time and effort than what I want to invest in this occasion. In that same exchange, I gave you the references of some of my texts where I have discussed it to some extent. Here I only will say that, basically, such monism about Nature-humanity relationship is based on negligently mixing up some different basic notions like identity, relationship, dependence, provenance, etc. as if they were all the same, and on thoughtlessly mixing up the two most used and very different notions of “Nature”: Nature as the whole physical world vs. Nature as only “the non-human (world)”, i.e., the other-than-human part of reality. And from such

human nature actually determine and limit our behaviour; and, with it, they greatly overrate our ability to exert control over such behaviour and over our milieu.

¹³ Some environmentalists and philosophers use the term “holism” in the sense of absence of ontological distinction, and thus as a synonym of “monism”. But “holism” has a very different possible meaning too: it is the general view or understanding of a whole as opposite to those restricted views focused on or limited to only some of its parts. This notion, in principle, has no relationship with that of ontological identity. Although I think that the idea this other meaning of “holism” suggests -the complete view of a “whole”-, is important and should be adopted and defended, I prefer not to use the term “holism” at all, because, in any of its two senses, it is historically and culturally loaded. It has typically been abundantly used by counter-cultural and New Age influenced authors, so if it is used, it probably will be associated with such “hippieish” tendencies by the public.

¹⁴ “Some adapted fragments of a correspondence exchange between Sean Fleming and Último Reducto (Part IV)”: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZdML6_oW21FjyJGBDN03UNwoYw4H-VFj/view.

confusions many extract the conclusions that there is no difference between the natural and the artificial (or the cultural, or the social, or the human) and that everything humans do is natural. But then, these conclusions are ultimately incompatible with any stance that defends the preservation of non-human Nature or the destruction of modern technology for the sake of wild Nature. So those environmentalists, and other people, who greatly value Nature (included, regrettably, many of the so-called “anti-techs”), who are assuming and echoing such monism regarding Nature-human relationship are actually committing ideological and practical suicide and ultimately going against what they say to love the most: non-human Nature. Those who really regard (wild) Nature as their main value, including those who want to destroy the technoindustrial system for the sake of wild Nature, should avoid to fall in such trap.

- Ellul’s notion of “technical thinking”, and his statement that we should avoid or resist it, is again humanistic-idealistic bullshit. His idea that “rationality” (whatever he means by this), efficiency and pragmatism are at the base of the technological system, or even more, that they are basically equivalent to the “technological society” itself (or whatever he calls it; or whatever he refers to with the term he seemingly uses to call it – “Technique”-), and that to combat “it” we should only or mainly reject this ideas or mindsets, is to show a complete nonsensical disdain for (physical) reality — for Nature, for our own evolution and nature (see below), and even for the way concrete real things really are and work. Efficiency (i.e., to do things successfully using the minimum matter and effort and saving thus the maximum matter and energy) and pragmatism (to try to ensure efficiency in doing things) are crucial in Nature regarding managing the access to and use of matter and energy by living things. Living beings have evolved continuously to be more efficient and to behave pragmatically. Humans too (at least concerning life-and-death issues). Natural selection, which wired us (i.e., produced our nature) is greatly based on competition, and competition (in a wide sense; not just as a direct violent clash between rivals) is ultimately about being as efficient as possible in accessing and using energy and matter in order to self — perpetuate and grow (either through expansion or reproduction). So to go against pragmatism, efficiency, etc. is to go against Nature generally, against our nature particularly and ultimately against reality. What does exactly mean to avoid “rationality”, efficiency and pragmatism? What would it actually imply? The consistent and strict implementation of Ellul’s proposal (if it were feasible, which isn’t) would lead us not to a society like the Ancient Greek one or the late Middle Age or Renaissance, with a supposedly “elevated” and “lofty” culture and a putative rejection for efficiency, but much probably to a mess full of lazy, incompetent, disastrous people behaving in a foolish and harmful way trying to avoid “rationality”, efficiency and pragmatism, or even doing nothing at all.

Or even, most probably, to extinction (what is ultimately a great irony for a humanist like him).¹⁵

In sum, the problem is not “rationality”, efficiency and pragmatism in themselves, but the goal for which they are applied now (for perpetuating and developing the technoindustrial system). They are not means for assuring our survival and biological fitness in Nature anymore, but for assuring the survival and expansion of the technoindustrial system. Anyway, they are always means, not ends, by definition.

Moreover, Ellul was deathly wrong about Ancient Greeks and the real causes of their supposed disdain for technological development. They didn’t technologically develop much not because they didn’t want it and thus consciously, voluntarily and heroically resisted the pull of this development; they didn’t developed much technology nor used some machines like steam engines (even though they knew them) just because they didn’t need to do it under their material circumstances, given that they had slaves, who were *efficient* enough to do the necessary work under such circumstances, and thus their material conditions didn’t push them to further technologically develop their society. And even in the case their circumstances had pushed them to further technologically develop their society. And even if their circumstances had pushed them to technologically develop their society more, it is also quite possible that they eventually couldn’t have materially developed it further in such circumstances anyway. In short: they didn’t much developed their technology and society because they didn’t need it and also because they most probably couldn’t have materially developed them ultimately anyway. Natural and material conditions and factors always ultimately *cause and limit* cultural, social and even “spiritual” phenomena. We always ultimately do (willingly or not) what material circumstances make us do and, in any case, we can only do what they allow us to do. And even when we think that we do or don’t do something just because we want to do or don’t do so, even the reason for wanting it is ultimately determined by some material factors. One doesn’t want what he wants but what circumstances ultimately make him want, and one doesn’t do what he wants but what the circumstances allow and ultimately make him do. Idealistic people are in the clouds!

But there is more, the litany about “technical thinking” acts as a mechanism for humanistic idealism entrenching itself. Any criticism that points out the ineffi-

¹⁵ Because, whatever all these idealists say, at the end of the day they actually don’t resist efficiency and pragmatism (or “necessity”) much when they are hungry or cold, for example. Instead of voluntarily and “spiritually” starving or freezing to the death of their bodies to resist natural and material “enslavement and impositions” and to show that the soul and the will are “free”, independent from the body and from the material world constraints and “above” them, all of them act efficiently and pragmatically and eat when hungry and look for heating or clothing when cold in order to survive one more day and be able to keep on saying idealistic bullshit!

ciency, lack of pragmatism, irrationality, vagueness, etc. of humanistic-idealistic stances or simply any theory against the technoindustrial system that tries to base itself on empirical and material facts; gives importance to precision in expressing and articulating ideas; defends rationality; tries to be efficient and practical (which virtually always means adopting a materialistic stance in practice); etc. is usually branded as “technical thinking” (or other similar expressions accompanied by a pejorative attitude) and disdained and rejected as part of the problem/system by the humanistic-idealistic “critics” of “technology”. This creates a vicious circle that can’t be broken.

- At the end of the audio, you talk about Illich (here is another one of the same kind as Ellul!) and you say that you regard as correct his idea of “building a future” without designing grand schemes or plans, because it thus avoids utopianism. But Illich’s proposal to “build a future”, and at the same time reject plans and schemes, is inherently contradictory: presumably, someone like Illich would not be satisfied with just any “future”, whichever one come out, but at least would have certain prior notions of what he wanted to “build” and what he did not, based on his ideas and values. So Illich’s proposal, like utopianisms of any kind that try to build future, perfect, pre-designed societies, and also like any proposal to consciously and voluntarily steer society “backwards” to a particular predetermined level of social and technological development (like Skrbina’s “creative reconstruction”, for example), is still based on *building* an ideal future society on the basis of previous guidelines, ideals, values or goals, however vague they may be; i.e., on wishing to direct the course of society’s development in a given direction (and not in others) and towards certain goals (and not others), even if it claims to avoid large-scale and long-term planning. And, therefore, it is equally unfeasible, precisely because it is impossible to control the course of a society’s development and its results beyond a very limited spatial-temporal scale. So, if I have understood correctly, you are, quite illogically, greatly ignoring for Illich’s proposal what you have just objected to Skrbina’s and to utopianisms.

In fact, the only thing we can and should do as a movement (if any movement ever arises) is to try to physically *destroy* the technoindustrial society as soon as possible, not to try or aspire to build anything (else). Neither future ideal societies in a big way, nor current (or immediately future) small communities that try to put into practice our ideas and values. The only proposal we can and must put forward is not constructive, but *destructive*: to destroy the technoindustrial system. Nothing else. Constructive proposals on the social are always unfeasible because of the principle of history that states the great unpredictability/controllability of social systems and processes (which is but a concrete case of the broader physical principle of the great unpredictability inherent to complex systems). And furthermore, constructive social proposals, because of this

principle and other defects usually associated with them, are counterproductive (not only they do not work, but they tend to mess things up and end badly).

- You also seem to defend some kind of alliance between the different kinds of people who currently or in the near future could seemingly reject or radically criticize “technology” (those that allegedly reject modern technology for environmental reasons, those that do it for social justice reasons, those that do it for the sake of “freedom”, those that do it for “bioconservative” reasons, etc.), all of whom you cheerily shove into the imprecise “anti-tech” ragbag. Well, here it also applies what I said above about Kaczynski’s short-sighted pragmatism: if one overlooks the deep differences in the worldviews, basic values and basic attitudes that each of these (groups of) persons have, and tries to make an alliance of all or some of them, one will actually end up with a hodgepodge of mutually incompatible people who sooner than later will enter conflict with each other, deflect the focus from the destruction of modern technology and the social system it determines and uselessly waste a great amount of scarce time, energy and resources in secondary or unimportant issues (or just internally fighting one another); and most probably will corrupt the cause against the technoindustrial system irreversibly, even ruining forever further possible attempts against it. In fact, I suspect, it is quite possible that this is already happening to some extent, for example, among some of those who regard themselves close to Kaczynski’s ideas and are currently trying to create a movement under the inadequate “anti-tech” label.

Alliances between people with very different basic worldviews, values and ideas maybe could work sometimes for some struggles with very concrete and localized goals, such as stopping a particular development (e.g., the construction of a dam or a landfill) or even promoting the passing of an environmentally important law by a parliament, but for more general or wide goals, as the elimination of the whole technoindustrial society, they are not only useless, but also counterproductive and inadvisable. In such case, the most advisable attitude is strict selective sectarianism, however much it could sound as anathema to the tolerant ears of today’s people, who are brain-washed by progressive indoctrination.

- The adoption or influence of humanistic idealism in fact acts as a disabling mechanism for those people and groups who could be prone to deeply question the technoindustrial system and modern technology. It keeps them busy and focused on combating/preaching ideas, attitudes and “spiritual” issues believing that these ideational features are the ultimate and primary causes of the technological system and of the problems it implies (or the solution for them), so they invest their time and energies in useless idealistic efforts, and thus the technological system can keep on growing without any real and effective (that is, *physical*) friction or resistance. Humanistic idealism makes them harmless, toothless, and even happy with being so. Just the same thing that Ellul accurately said about leftism (that

it is useless revolt), could be said about his own ideas and proposals (and also about those of the rest of humanistic-idealistic anti-industrialists and critics of “technology”) in practice. The effective destruction of the technoindustrial system by a group of people opposite to it can only have a chance to be attained if they show and apply a strict materialistic (i.e., anti-idealistic, anti-voluntaristic –i.e., mechanistic-, deterministic) and anti-humanistic stance to their struggle. Otherwise they will sooner than later miss their path and end up doing wisps of metaphysical smoke, hitting where it doesn’t hurt and acting as fools.

And even more specifically

- What the interviewer, in a typical example of the imprecise way of expression of many humanistic idealists, calls “fatalism” is actually defeatism (and you seem to assume “fatalism” as a valid term to call it too). Fatalism is something different: it is to believe that there is nothing we can do to change future possible events because future events are predetermined, they are “the fate” so they won’t change, no matter what we do in order to change them, *and that we indeed know what these future events will be*. Fatalism can be understood as a kind of defeatism derived from an incorrect understanding of determinism through a logical fallacy (see italics above); it basically assumes incorrectly that to be predetermined is the same than to be foreseeable or predictable. And defeatism is simply to give up and not to try because — for any reason, not necessarily the belief in a beforehand-known fate- one has no hope for attaining a goal. So not necessarily all defeatisms are due to fatalism. And ITS’s defeatism is not as much due to fatalism as simply due to their feelings of learned helplessness¹⁶.
- I don’t know if the following is an error of you or of Desmond Morris (I don’t remember exactly what he said in *The Human Zoo*; I read it many years ago, and I am not going now to review the book for finding it out), but the struggle for stimulation is not exclusive of omnivores. If you have ever been in an old zoo and seen how a caged big cat goes back and forth constantly inside its cage, you should know it. Big felines are not omnivorous, but strictly carnivores. In my opinion, the struggle for stimulation, or for that matter the power process or the need for activity, is to a larger or smaller degree, at least typical of any vertebrate with a minimally developed brain, be it omnivorous or not. And it probably even works somehow at least in some specially intelligent invertebrates, like cephalopods.
- Finally, you recommend reading Ellul as an “antidote” to Kaczynski, as if Kaczynski (or rather his ideas) were poisonous or bad. I think that it is just the other

¹⁶ See Seligman, Martin E. P., *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death*, W.H. Freeman & Company, 1975.

way around: Ellul readers who are interested in efficiently combating “technology” should read Kaczynski’s work as an antidote¹⁷ to Ellul and other humanistic critics of “technology” (because they, with all their idealism and humanism, are indeed very poisonous for the cause against technoindustrial society). But I also think that this advice will be useless. Most of those who are fans of Ellul, Mumford, Illich, Skrbina and the like probably are already impossible to cure, either they read Kaczynski or not..

[Other Comments]

Apart from the interview, I also want to comment something on René Dubos, given that once you told me¹⁸ that you regard him as one of the few people who have criticized “technology” from a scientific-materialistic point of view. Well, in spite of his seemingly materialist-scientific background (which could even be questioned ultimately in practice in light of his proposed solutions for societal problems), he was actually too much a humanist. In fact, he wanted a completely humanized, domesticated and controlled world, without any wildness at all. Which is a totally abominable goal. Notwithstanding the renown he possesses among many environmentalists, Dubos should actually be regarded as an enemy by all those who love wild Nature.¹⁹

An, by the way, regarding the idea of Dubos about considering the lack of correspondence between the ancient conditions where human nature evolved and the modern conditions of life, as the source of many of the current problems of humanity (what you call the theory of “maladaptation”, or something like this), this theory has been defended by many other people too. Virtually all human ethologists (apart from Morris, I would mention especially those from the Konrad Lorenz’s school of thought, like Lorenz himself or Irenaeus Eibl-Eibesfeldt), all sociobiologists (or “evolutionary psychologists”, as they like to call themselves now), some (paleo)anthropologists, even some historians (at least some rare historians with ecocentric inclinations, as the Croatian Tomislav Markus who followed the ideas of the ecologist Paul Shepard in this respect), etc. have also defended this idea with diverse names (“mismatch” theory, “biosocial discontinuity” theory, etc.), and probably at least some of them have arrived to it independently

¹⁷ Though in fact Kaczynski is an imperfect and mild antidote, given his own flaws (some of them related with humanistic-idealistic pollution in turn).

¹⁸ “Some adapted fragments of a correspondence exchange between Sean Fleming and Último Reducto (Part IV)”.

¹⁹ By the way, since you are interested in looking for possible references and historical ideological sources for the ideas of Kaczynski and other Americans who criticize the techno-industrial society and take wild Nature as a reference, you can read Edward Abbey. In this particular case, “Thus I Reply to René Dubos”, in Edward Abbey’s book *Down the River* (Plume, 1991, pages 111–121). It is a critique of Dubos’ humanist attitude, and although it is excessively ambiguous, weak and flawed, (as were many of Abbey’s stances) in some parts it was pretty much on the right track (as were many of Abbey’s stances, too).

from Dubos. Many authors, scientists and thinkers somehow assume it currently, although most of them tend to sweeten their notion of human nature, i.e., making it fit the current political correctness (portraying it as mostly peaceful, altruistic, prosocial, compassionate, egalitarian, etc.), and they don't extract all the ultimate logical conclusions one should extract from the theory (that our nature and modern living conditions inherent to the technoindustrial system are incompatible). And thus they usually illogically and cowardly try to make their conclusions somehow compatible with the maintenance and survival of (modern) civilization.

On another front, maybe you would find interesting Marvin Harris' book *Cultural Materialism*²⁰, if you still haven't read it. Harris was an American anthropologist, but this particular book is more about materialist philosophy applied to anthropology than about specific anthropological issues. I disagree with some points of Harris' basic ideas (like his denial of the existence of a human nature), but some others are very worth taking into account. Especially his view of societies and cultures as organized in three levels: infrastructure (material base), structure (organization) and superstructure (immaterial aspects), and that infrastructure prevails as a determining factor over the other two (i.e., ultimately determines them, and so the whole society and culture). I think he took this idea from a similar but much more simple and inaccurate view of Marx.

²⁰ Random House, 1979.

Sean's Reply

Let me simply acknowledge your points about impartiality versus objectivity, fatalism versus defeatism, Kaczynski's alleged anthropocentrism (which we've discussed at length before), Kaczynski's pragmatism, the concept of freedom, and ecological monism. In the interest of keeping this brief, I will focus on the points where I think I have something worthwhile to say, and where I might be able to persuade you.

1) You say: "It is obvious that you like Ellul too much. I don't share your liking for him. Ellul was too much a humanistic idealist (and thus too little a scientific materialist) as to be a good reference for anything practical."

I agree with the third sentence, if by "anything practical" you mean large-scale societal change rather than individual self-improvement. Ellul is one of the writers Kaczynski has in mind when, at the beginning of *Anti-Tech Revolution*¹, he laments the fact that anti-tech literature has become a kind of therapy. Ellul's idealism often strikes me as sociologically naïve. Here is one especially egregious example from *The Technological Society*: "The [industrial] revolution resulted not from the exploitation of coal but rather from a change of attitude on the part of the whole civilization".² At best, Ellul overstates the importance of ideas and culture in shaping the course of history. At worst, he greatly understates the importance of material factors. Coal-based industry did not come to dominate nineteenth-century Britain simply because people in that society had "attitudes" that were receptive to this sort of industry; coal-based industry came to dominate because it physically *out-competed* and *displaced* other forms of industry. To use another well-worn example, agricultural societies came to dominate the world because they physically displaced and out-competed hunter-gatherer societies. I see this process of competition and displacement in material terms.

Ellul's overemphasis on ideational factors seems to me to be a coping mechanism. If the technological system is "in our minds," then overthrowing it is only a matter of changing our minds—we could all wake up next Tuesday and decide to abandon "technique." But if the system is primarily a material phenomenon, then it seems far more difficult to get rid of it. We can't simply "change our minds" and watch the system wither away. The factories, transportation networks, and surveillance systems aren't going to vanish into thin air. Further, these material facets of the technological system have shaped our minds (i.e., our mental habits and thought-patterns) so much that

¹ Fitch & Madison, 2016, page 1.

² *The Technological Society*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, page 44. [In this text Fleming makes reference to the English version, but in fact the title of the original French version was *La technique ou l'enjeu du siècle*. Note added by UR for this post].

other ways of life have become almost unthinkable for most people. “The technical mindset,” in my view, is largely a *product* of the material environment that modern technology has created.

You describe Ellul as a “humanistic idealist.” This label is useful in that it highlights the most fundamental way in which Ellul differs from Kaczynski (and from you); it also highlights the philosophical assumptions that he shares with many other twentieth-century critics of technology, such as Lewis Mumford, Martin Heidegger, etc. But this label omits one important facet of Ellul’s worldview. He is a *Christian* humanistic idealist. Although he says little about Christianity in his work on technology, his theology is central to his worldview (e.g., of particular importance, his position on violence). Ellul’s programme of action (insofar as he has one) is based on a specific (radically Protestant, highly individualistic) interpretation of Christianity. For this reason, very few people—few of his fellow humanistic idealists, even—would be willing or able to accept his overall worldview. I will discuss the importance of this fact later on.

Do I “like Ellul too much”? I take him much more seriously than you do. However, as you can see from what I’ve said above, I’m also quite critical of him. You’re certainly right that Ellul does not offer a viable programme of practical action. But the fact that he is wrong about many things (including many important things) does not mean that he is wrong about everything. The fact that you do not share his fundamental philosophical positions does not mean that none of his ideas can be of any value to you.

Kaczynski himself illustrates my point. He showed that many of Ellul’s ideas (maladaptation, the technological system, propaganda, and the critique of leftism, among others) could be detached from his Christian-humanistic idealism and grafted onto a materialist worldview. Even Kaczynski’s idea of revolution—at first glance, the polar opposite of Ellul’s—is heavily indebted to Ellul’s *Autopsy of Revolution*³. Almost every passage of “Industrial Society and Its Future”⁴ contains echoes of Ellul, though with the Christian-humanistic parts muted or omitted. Many of *your* ideas are also indebted to Ellul, if only indirectly. Isn’t it possible that you could find more valuable ideas by going back to the source? If your friend has found several nuggets of gold in a particular mine shaft, it’s probably worth going back to see if there are any more to be found. Sure, the rocks might be laden with arsenic, but your friend has already shown that the gold can be separated from the arsenic.

If I am guilty of liking Ellul too much, then I believe you are guilty of dismissing him too quickly— of “throwing the baby out with the bathwater,” as the saying goes.

You say in footnote 3 that you “have read and heard enough from reliable secondary sources as to have a quite accurate general impression about him.” Your general im-

³ Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

⁴ The original version was published in 1995. Last version available in *Technological Slavery, Volume One (Enhanced Edition)*, Fitch & Madison, 2022.

pression of Ellul is indeed quite accurate—again, you’re right that his worldview is fundamentally incompatible with yours. But it is nonetheless possible that some of his *specific* ideas could be valuable to you. I don’t see how you can discount *that* possibility without reading him.

2) You say: “Ellul, you, the interviewer and many other people (including Kaczynski to some extent, regrettably) mix up science and technology, though they are not the same, nor do they even have always necessarily any mutual relationship.”

Here is an example of my preceding point. The interviewer and I are indeed guilty of using the terms “science” and “technology” quite loosely and interchangeably, but Ellul is not. If you got that impression from the interview, it is my fault. In fact, Ellul insists on a distinction between “science” and “technique.” And despite your objections to the ways in which Ellul uses the terms “technique” and “technology” (here too I tend to agree with you), I think his distinction between “science” and “technique” is quite helpful—at the very least, as a point of departure for developing a clearer distinction. See *The Technological Society*, 7–11.

Here is another example of a potentially useful set of ideas you can find in Ellul’s work.

Kaczynski uses a variety of different terms to designate the kinds of social complex in which modern human beings live: “industrial society,” “technological society,” “industrial system,” “technological system,” “industrial-technological system,” “technoindustrial system,” etc. Ellul, on the other hand, draws distinctions between “society” and “system” and between “technological” and “industrial” (see the beginning of *The Technological System*). I won’t try to summarize all of these distinctions here, but I think the distinction between “society” and “system” is an important one. Whereas the technological *system* is the interconnected set of all artefacts and techniques (i.e., “organization-dependent technologies,” in Kaczynski’s terms), the technological *society* is the form of social organization in which the technological system is embedded. This distinction is intended to emphasize that not every aspect of society has yet been standardized and mechanized; there are still vestiges of an organic society (and of human nature), and hence potential sites of resistance against the technological system.

Maybe you would reject Ellul’s distinctions between “industrial,” “technological,” “system,” “society,” etc. I think you would object to many of them, but I also think it would be a mistake to discount them from the outset. Kaczynski rejected almost everything that Ellul said in *Autopsy of Revolution*. But the process of engaging with and rebutting Ellul’s arguments—and borrowing a few pieces along the way—helped him develop his own theory of revolution. Similarly, although Kaczynski rejects psychoanalysis (for obvious reasons), reading psychoanalytic work helped him to develop his critique of leftism (again, from a “core” that he derived from Ellul).

I want to mention two more parts of Ellul’s work that I believe are worth serious consideration. The first is his critique of “economistic” understandings of modern society – i.e., the argument that “technique” rather than “capital” is decisive. I found the chapter of *The Technological Society* on “Technique and Economy” to be quite in-

sightful. Here Ellul offers a penetrating critique of both Marxism and liberalism in one fell swoop. The second is his critique of “the political illusion” – i.e., the illusion that fundamental social change can be brought about by (democratic) politics. The chapter of *The Technological Society* on “Technique and the State” is, again, quite insightful.

I suspect that one of your main reasons for dismissing Ellul is that his meandering, hyperbolic, and free-flowing style irritates you. It irritates me as well: my background is in analytic philosophy, and I greatly prefer prose that is precise and concise. When I first read Hegel’s *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*⁵, for instance, I dismissed him as a charlatan. I still think most of what Hegel says in this book is garbled, confused, bombastic nonsense. But I did find some kernels of insight along the way (e.g., his understanding of constitutional monarchy made a surprising amount of sense to me). The same point applies to Ellul, though he is far less obscure and, in my view, far more insightful: if you put aside your distaste for his style, you might find some ideas that are worth considering. I find Ellul to be thought-provoking, even though he is often unpersuasive.

I think the issue of whether you should or should not bother reading Ellul (or any other text) boils down to this: time is finite, and it must be used wisely, especially if one’s efforts are going to yield any practical results. This is why I don’t think Hegel is worth reading. It was simply not worth wading through hundreds of pages of obscure prose to find a few, meagre glimmers of insight. Reading Ellul’s *The Technological Society*, on the other hand, is well worth the time and effort—and, as I have argued above, that is true even if you reject his humanistic idealism. Kaczynski apparently thought it was worth reading several times, and worth re-reading years later and making detailed annotations in the margins. The signal-to-noise ratio is quite good. Although you may disagree with much of the book, very little of it is irrelevant to your interests and goals.

At the very least, reading Ellul would help you better understand the rhetorical appeal of humanistic idealism—and isn’t it always a good idea to know your enemy?

3) You say: “The adoption or influence of humanistic idealism in fact acts as a disabling mechanism for those people and groups who could be prone to deeply question the technoindustrial system and modern technology.”

In general, I believe you’re right about this. People who begin to question modern technology often retreat into some sort of spirituality, largely as a psychological defence mechanism. But I suspect that the idealism rather than the humanism is more to blame—just look at the more esoteric stands of Deep Ecology.

The types of “tech critical” idealism are too numerous to list, many of the boundaries are blurry, and my labels are admittedly very rough and imprecise. But I think these are some of the most important types: (1) Skrbina’s “creative reconstruction,”

⁵ Title of the original work in German: *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, 1820. [Existen diversas ediciones en castellano con el título de *Elementos de la filosofía del derecho*. Nota añadida por UR para este post].

which combines some of Kaczynski's ideas with panpsychism and Henryk Skolimowski's "ecophilosophy"; (2) Martin Heidegger's phenomenology;

(3) Herbert Marcuse's "great refusal"; (4) media ecology—e.g., Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman; (5) Deep Ecology; (6) Illich and the "appropriate technology" movement; (7) "Ellulism"; and (8) anarcho-primitivism. (Despite some appearances to the contrary, I consider anarcho-primitivism to be a form of idealism—e.g., Zerzan's critique of "symbolic culture" is derived from Lewis Mumford, another influential idealist critic of technology.)

I don't know which types of "tech critical" idealism are most likely to co-opt and disable deep questioning of modern technology. But I think "Ellulism" is one of the least likely to do so. As I said above, very few people can accept Ellul's worldview as a whole. This is because it is not rooted in a generic kind of humanistic idealism (i.e., the sort that one often encounters in an undergraduate philosophy or sociology class), but in Christian theology—not just any Christian theology, but a highly contentious and idiosyncratic variety that few other Christians would accept. For this reason, *almost no one* who reads Ellul—few Christians, fewer humanistic idealists, and even fewer people of a pragmatic disposition—will be persuaded by his worldview as a whole. It now occurs to me that "Ellulism" is a rather poor term, because it is so difficult to create an "ism" or an ideology out of Ellul's work.

People who read Martin Heidegger (Kaczynski's brother, David, for instance) or Herbert Marcuse can easily become devoted adherents. The esoteric prose and pseudo-profundity of these writers seem "radical" to many people, which is precisely why they tend to co-opt and disarm "anti-tech" impulses. Ellul, by comparison, seems old-fashioned and conservative—like a stern grandfather who wags his finger at you and tells you to do your homework and go to church. Just look at the composition of the International Jacques Ellul Society: they're mostly Christian theologians. None of these people were ever going to be serious opponents of the technological system.

In short, Ellul's worldview is so unappealing to anyone except a few Christian theologians that his type of humanistic idealism is powerless as a "disabling mechanism." Many people who read Ellul's *The Technological Society* are persuaded by his criticisms of the system. But people who are eager for practical action find Ellul deeply unsatisfying, and they are driven to seek out other sources— and Kaczynski is the obvious next step, because the fact that Ellul influenced Kaczynski is now well known. Whereas Heidegger, Marcuse, Mumford, Zerzan, etc. tend to disarm "anti-tech" impulses, Ellul tends to funnel these impulses toward Kaczynski. If Ellul is your enemy, then he is the friendliest foe you could ask for.

Thank you for the recommended readings. I already was familiar with many of the works on "maladaptation" (or call it as you like) that you mention, but I have not read Harris' *Cultural Materialism* nor Abbey's reply to Dubos.

Ultimo's Reply to the reply

Following the order of your reply:

1) You seem to give importance to the fact that Ellul was a Christian. To me this is secondary. The important thing is that he was a humanist and an idealist. Christianity is just a particular kind of humanistic idealism. As far as I know -and throughout my life-time I have known many, many humanistic idealists, probably most of them Christian (Catholic)-, the basic assumptions of all of them, Christian or not, are quite similar: their mainly or only focus is on humanity and its works (in the case of Christians and many other religious humanists from other faiths, (the idea of) God is just another of those human-made things, though they usually don't acknowledge it), and they regard the human (i.e., human beings and human works) as the most or only important (or even existent) thing and act consequently, thus they focus their attention mainly or only on social and cultural issues and regard the non-human world as secondary (if they actually take it into account at all). Hence humanities and social/sciences tend much more to be humanistic than natural/hard sciences, merely because of their respective matters of study (human society, history or culture vs. physical reality in general, and non-human Nature in particular).

Moreover, humanism goes usually together with idealism. Why? I guess it is because humanism needs to be ultimately reinforced with idealism (i.e., in order to keep on the focus on the human one has to end up focusing in what supposedly is ostensibly an exceptional, or at least the most apparent and distinctive feature, in our species: our mind, our "spirit", our ideas and intentions, our non-material culture, etc.). So, if you ask me, I even would regard humanism as the root of idealism, in most if not all cases. Or in other words: the problem is ultimately humanism, even before idealism (this is just a consequence of or a requisite for supporting humanism).

Anyway, it is not important to determine what is worse or what was first, idealism or humanism, because they usually (or even virtually always) go together, at least *in practice*. They are not the same thing, but tend to go together. You mention Deep Ecology as a supposed counter-example of putative non-humanistic idealism, but one could seriously raise the question of to what extent Deep Ecology is not heavily polluted with humanistic ideas and attitudes. Recall, for example, Kaczynski's criticism (in his letter to an anonymous person of 1st July, 2003) of Naess' contradiction about his acknowledgement of the supreme value of Nature's "welfare" on one hand and his statement of the duty to respect humanity's welfare anyway on the other; or his comment about the "leftist aroma" (leftism is a modern kind of humanism) of Deep

Ecology (in the same letter).¹ Another supposed counter-example could be Marxism, which in principle is humanistic and materialistic, but in fact, again, at the end of the day, virtually all Marxists end up being more or less idealistic in practice and even in theory (dialectics is idealism; Marxists are in fact just heretic Hegelians). So, as far as I know, idealism and humanism usually (if not always) go together, both usually in theory, and especially in practice. But I could be wrong and be ignoring or overlooking some valid counter-examples. If you know of any, please let me know.

You surely are right in that “the fact that Ellul is wrong about many things (including many important things) does not mean that he is wrong about everything

... The fact that you do not share his fundamental philosophical positions does not mean that none of his ideas can be of any value to you ... it is nonetheless possible that some of his *specific* ideas could be valuable to you. I don’t see how you can discount *that* possibility without reading him”. Certainly, there is virtually nobody who is always wrong about everything. But this is just a truism that does not prove anything or gives a reason for nothing. Anyway, I don’t discount completely the possibility of reading Ellul some day. But other factors should be taken into account too, besides the possibility of finding some useful ideas in Ellul’s work, before deciding if to read him or not. See below for some of them.

Regarding the saying: “throwing the baby out with the bathwater”, curiously, recently someone told me the same popular saying regarding my rejection of Naess and Deep Ecology.² My main answer to this is that sometimes is not practically possible³ or advisable to try to separate both the baby and the dirty water, so you have to choose whether to take both, however dirty the water is, or to throw both away, however much lovely the baby is. Recall the case of the “good” parts (the baby) and the bad parts (the water) of technology. You can’t keep the “good” ones and just eliminate the bad ones. This case is somehow similar.

It also has much to do with what I said above about eclecticism — taking ideas from here and there just for their seemingly practical immediate utility — and the unwitting potential contradictions and theoretical pollution it can imply. And anyway, even if one could invest all the time and effort necessary to carefully and conscientiously select what is valuable from what is not in Ellul’s writings, in order to avoid adopting such unwitting deep contradictions and theoretical pollution, one should seriously wonder

¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iDM0tBTbACdErQ4zro3NoL8LDm8OME5R/view>.

² “Adaptation of a correspondence exchange XVI (Part II): On deep ecology, irrationalism, and more”: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CUdy1EvLaJkkvV1cczUo3GuF4NoDCjuS/view?usp=drive_link.

³ By practically impossible I mean that even though it could be sometimes materially or technically possible to do something theoretically, it could be too costly in time, energy, resources, etc. or too demanding for one’s limited capacities or have too serious negative effects. As you say “the issue of whether you should or should not bother reading Ellul (or any other text) boils down to this: time [and energy, capabilities, and gains I would add] is finite, and it must be used wisely, especially if one’s efforts are going to yield any practical results”.

if the effort is worthwhile, if what one gains on one hand is more valuable than what one has to pay for it in the other.

“Isn’t it always a good idea to know your enemy?” Of course, but besides what I have just said above, it is not necessary to read anybody’s work to know how humanistic idealists (or for that matter Christians in particular) think and act. As I have said, I have been all my life surrounded by them; they have been constantly bombing my mind with their worldviews, ideas, theories, attitudes, etc. They have tried since I was born to indoctrinate me in their beliefs and feelings about things. So I already know them very well. In other words, reading is not the only way of getting knowledge (either about your enemies or about many other things); direct experience, observation and reflection are also very important, even better. And besides, no one can read everything of everyone in order to properly know about him, but this doesn’t imply that what one knows and thinks about others without directly having read their works is necessarily wrong. Second and indirect sources can be (and indeed are) also another way of getting knowledge that *if one is intelligent, insightful and critical enough* (which admittedly too often is not the case) could be quite an acceptable way of getting proper knowledge.

And with all this I am not saying that nobody should read Ellul ever, or that it could not be useful to some extent *if one can do it correctly* (that is, carefully and critically), what I am saying is just that it is not necessary, and that it could be better to read or do other things instead. Plus pointing out the fact that most people won’t be able to read him correctly (i.e., carefully and critically enough) and thus extract the adequate conclusions without getting trapped in a humanistic-idealistic tangle.

2) You say that Ellul doesn’t mix up science and technology (or, in this case, would it rather be “technique”?). OK, given that I have virtually not read his work directly, I can neither ratify nor refute what you say and I have to assume that what you are telling is true. Anyway this is not important. What is important is the fact that many people, included most of those who criticize “technology” do mix them up, and that this is not good, neither theoretically nor practically.

Regarding your distinction between “society” and “system” I think I know what you mean, though I don’t agree with much of it. To me a society and a social (or cultural or social-cultural) system are the same thing. The set formed by the technological devices is just a particular subsystem in such a social system taken as a whole. Just like people (i.e., the human beings or organisms) constitute another subsystem or constituent element in such system. The technoindustrial system (or modern industrial system, or modern society) is the name given to the currently prevalent kind of society which is based on and mostly determined by modern technology. And, by the way, I think that the “technoindustrial system” and the “technological system” are not the same thing (the former is the system that contains the latter -a mere subsystem of the former-).⁴

⁴ Here I have to admit that until recently I also have sometimes used the expression “technological system” when I should have said “technoindustrial system”. This probably was due to Kaczynski’s influence, who certainly often conflates both concepts. *Note added later by UR for this post.*

There could be much to say about the notion of the “system” and how it should be understood and how it shouldn’t, but not now and not here. 3) You say: “I consider anarcho-primitivism to be a form of idealism”. Of course. Who could doubt it? Zerzan and his ideological companions are constantly denying and making up physical reality (specially the parts of it that clash with their ideology), assuming that ideational factors and human intentions are the main or only causes or driving factors in history, and the like. It is obvious that they are idealists.

The Ted K Archive

Ultimo Reducto

Adapted Fragments of a Correspondence between Sean Fleming and Último Reducto
Part 1 was published January 15, 2023. And parts 2–4 were published on March 8, 2023.

<https://ultimoreductosalvaje.blogspot.com/>

The excerpts are not in chronological order: Part 1 includes fragments from between September 17, 2021 & October 5, 2021.

Part 2: September 5, 2022 to September 15, 2022

Part 3: October 25, 2021 to November 28, 2021.

& Part 4: November 25, 2021 to January 24, 2022

Exchange on an interview occurred on December 17, 2024

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