

The Real Religion of Our Times

Ted Kaczynski and the Split War on Technology

The Poor Prole's Almanac

Feb. 9, 2026

After 250 episodes, we are finally tackling the most controversial figure in the history of anti-industrial resistance: Theodore John Kaczynski.

In this episode, we move past the memes to explore how a 16-year-old Harvard math prodigy was transformed into the world's most infamous domestic terrorist.

We dive into the disturbing "multiform assessments" Kaczynski endured under Henry Murray—experiments linked to the CIA's MK Ultra program—and how they may have fractured his mind long before he reached the cabin.

Beyond the bombs, we dissect the 35,000-word manifesto, *Industrial Society and its Future*.

We analyze Kaczynski's signature concepts of the "power process" and "surrogate activities," asking if his diagnosis of modern "learned helplessness" was actually right.

But the story doesn't end in the 90s.

We trace how Kaczynski's "anti-woke" rejection of leftism has allowed his ideology to mutate, finding a new home among modern eco-fascists, Telegram accelerationists, and nihilist terror groups like ITS.

Join us as we attempt to separate the valid critique of technology from the "bad radical violence"—because while we agree industrial society is a trap, we'd really prefer a revolution that lets us keep the penicillin.

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Audio file

Andy: Welcome back to the Poor Pearls Almanac.

This is like our Super Bowl today.

After about 250 episodes, we're finally getting to probably the most controversial subject that most people think of when it comes to ecological defense.

Matt: I mean, unless you're just letting the poor Paul's Almanac feed play, which is like wild, maybe deserving of a medal, you know who we're talking about in this episode because you clicked on it.

Andy: Because you did.

Matt: Whoops.

Andy: It's worth taking this subject with a bit more let's say thoughtfulness than maybe we usually do where we make a lot of jokes.

We still will, but we should probably not.

it's a kind of precarious subject person to talk about, especially in this particular climate, right?

Matt: For sure.

Andy: As we're recording this, We had this supposed eco-terrorist group, Turtle Island Liberation Front.

Have you heard about this, Matt?

Matt: Yeah.

Andy: It's obviously fake by the feds, but it does speak to that very touchy-feely current political climate where even just mentioning a name like Theodore John Kaczynski might not be a great idea.

Matt: So today we're gonna live that bad idea.

Andy: We're gonna live that bad idea in real life, real time.

Join us, embrace it.

Today we talk about Theodore John Kaczynski, better known to the world as the Unabomber.

For those who don't know, the youths who may have just known him from memes, His campaign of what you might call terror spans nearly two decades, but the real legacy that he left behind wasn't the 16 bombs that he sent.

which did kill three people and injured 23 others.

It was the 35,000 word manifesto, industrial society and its future.

We're going to explore a bit about Kaczynski's history, how his actions played out, and in my opinion, more crucially, how his radical anti-technology ideology, which he forced into the mainstream, is being repurposed by political movements both on the left and the right today.

So our goal in this episode is actualizing his work within the narrative that we've created over the last half dozen to a dozen episodes, following this trajectory of land defense and resistance to the centralization of power and the industrialization that has taken place over specifically the last five centuries.

Matt: So like we're talking like a relatively narrow, you know, it's just that little, you know, just.

Andy: Just that.

Matt: So when Kazinski is discussed, it's easy to focus on the sensational details of a lone wolf bomber living in a camp in or what may or may not have happened with his undergraduate involvement with the MK Ultra.

To your point, this discussion isn't to glorify what he did, but to explore why he did it and what tools were employed that made him so effective and how this cultural icon of Uncle Ted came to be for removed in time from the terror of his bombing campaign.

Exactly.

Andy: Kaczynski's actions were inseparable from his message, a point he himself made crystal clear.

But before we analyze the philosophy, we should trace the path of this man who went from basically like an academic genius to America's most infamous domestic terrorist and while I'm guessing most people listening are at least familiar enough with Ted's background, we're going to do a quick rundown and make sure you're not missing anything important and of course, if you don't know who Ted is and you're just like, this looks like a fun historical piece on some guy whose last name may or may not be Russian.

Cool.

This is going to be fun for you.

Now, Ted Kosinski was basically understood to be an intellectual prodigy.

He graduated from Harvard in 1962, earned a PhD in mathematics from the University of Michigan in 1967, and even served as an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

Matt: And the thing is, everyone wants to talk about the cabin or the bombs, but no one wants to talk about boundary functions or Laplace's equations.

So That's why we're here to change.

Andy: It's true.

I spent a lot of time on this episode.

I know way too much, more than I should, but not enough for the feds.

I don't know enough.

Matt: Yeah, the next hour will be a deep dive on bounded harmonics.

So I don't know what you guys were sort of open for.

Andy: Yeah, we studied different books.

So anyways, in 1969, our buddy Ted He resigned and sought a self-sufficient life.

He just wanted to go to the woods and he built himself a little one room log cabin in rural Montana.

Matt: Right and it wasn't just like dropping out.

It was a physical rejection.

Like this move, it was like a personal rejection of industrial society.

Later he like severed ties with his family and society at large.

A thing you can do with a one room log cabin in rural Montana.

This was like a factor that psychiatric experts later connected to his diagnosis of schizophrenic paranoid subtype.

Andy: Yeah, that psychological diagnosis became a major point of contention later on and the case has been made that this psychological break came from experiments run at Harvard, which Matt has alluded to.

The psychological experiments that Ted participated in while at Harvard University as an undergrad were officially conducted under the title, in quote, multi-form assessments of personality development among gifted college men.

Or the map that could come, as some call it.

Matt: The what?

Andy: It was the acronym, man.

Keep up.

Come on.

Chop, chop.

Now, Kosinski was one of 22 undergraduate students who participated in these studies, which began when he was 16 and spanned from the fall of 59 through the spring of 62.

The research was overseen by a Harvard psychologist named Henry Murray, who had previously worked for the OSS, or the Office of Strategic Services, basically the pre-CIA, or as I call it, the pre-IA.

during World War II.

Matt: Nice.

Andy: Right? It's amazing.

I just come up with this as I go.

It drives everyone crazy.

Not sure if it's good or bad.

Matt: Bad.

Andy: But crazy.

Yeah.

Parentheses bad.

Yeah.

So this guy, Henry Mario, was doing this really fun stuff, right? And he was developing methodologies for interrogating prisoners of war, which is a really great thing to do on bright, high potential college kids.

Matt: Yeah, I think just like to put a fine point on it, he was at Harvard at 15 or 16 in 1959 doing math though.

Andy: Not vulnerable or anything as a 16 year old in a college.

Matt: Right.

Andy: So yeah, this study, the objective of this project was to assess personality and to predict future behavior by studying how these college students would react to, in quote, aggressive and highly stressful attacks on their beliefs and values, which again, interesting the way Ted's life went, right? Now, due to the unethical nature of studying human subjects without their informed consent to psychological trauma, the experiments have been described as, quote, disturbing and, quote, ethically indefensible by some other researchers, and I think like a large portion of society.

There's A considerable amount of circumstantial evidence linking these studies to the CIA-sponsored MK-Ultra program, as Murray's stress experiments resembled those run by the OSS and were conducted at a time when top secret government agendas at universities.

So while we don't know for 100% sure, we got a pretty good idea what was going on.

Right.

Matt: And like one more being like a participant or some might say victim in these experiments has also been used to both defend and dismiss all his later attacks.

Yeah.

Andy: Kaczynski articulated his anti-technology philosophy over a number of years.

His core position, which he derived partly from the French philosopher Jacques Ellul, was that modern technologies is an unstoppable autonomous force that has become a disaster for the human race.

He argued that we are living under conditions and quote, radically different from those under which the human race evolved, end quote.

Matt: So he wasn't just like railing against like a single issue like pollution.

His core concern was fundamentally anthropological, like psychological.

we weren't meant to be living like this and obviously this was the 1980s, which by like today's standards of data centers and a much clearer view of the changing climate feels like almost like a simpler time.

Andy: Yeah, I mean, as an elder.

Matt: For sure, you're old, for sure.

Andy: Well, where I'm going with this, just give me a second, okay? Now hearing that younger people yearn for the era that I grew up in, more like the early aughts for college, like, you were around a hipster, like the 2000s and blah, blah, blah.

Like it was such a simpler time and it was comparatively and I'm like, if you feel that way about the early 2000s and yeah, the 80s, it's like that is antiquated compared to today and to think that he felt that way about that time really kind of puts a lot of this in perspective, I think and it was his ideology that he kind of created from the synthesis of anti-civ of those critiques from Jacques around technology with concepts that derived from a British zoologist named Desmond Morris, as well as an American psychologist named Martin Seligman.

This led to some of his, what we might call signature concepts, like the power process and surrogate activities.

He argued that humans need to undergo a four-part power process, which was having a goal, having effort, achievement, and gaining autonomy, which I don't think are things that anyone would really disagree with.

I think we all need these types of things.

We need that self-determination, self-sense of purpose, right? He ultimately argued that, when technology is making our lives too easy or too controlled, that process itself is frustrated and I think this is something that we're seeing a lot more research pointing to that like autoimmune diseases are part of this whole, like our body needs something to fight.

It's designed to fight something.

When it doesn't have anything to fight, it fights itself.

So like there seems to be a lot more evidence that's come up to support this idea since he wrote it 40 years ago and what he says is that since we can't do these things anymore, society offers what he calls surrogate activities, which are artificial goals, which he says are things like excessive scientific research or activism, which replace these real needs of autonomy and goal setting and purpose, right? Kosinski basically suggested that modern people are suffering from an epidemic of learned helplessness, believing they couldn't control their own fate.

Matt: I mean, I think it's important to consider here that this is like a pretty sympathetic argument to a pretty wide, I mean, certainly in his view, a pretty wide selection of the population that feels helpless controlled and like angering confused towards various aspects of the both the scientific and the activist messaging of the day.

Andy: Yeah and today we see a similar explosion of consumable examples of his concerns.

like ice baths, like I'd mentioned, like there's this sense of understanding of this idea, right? And ice baths are a really great example where it's like, we don't have any way to resist, like we don't have any excuse to need to go in cold water.

So we're literally being like, by going in cold water, it makes me stronger.

Matt: Right and like when you take this view of it, really like reframes, well, certainly how he his violence.

He believed that like a lack of real struggle or control was doing modern people psychological harm.

So what was the solution he proposed, Andy.

Andy: Oh, this is good.

So the only goal he felt was worthwhile was that there must be, in his words, in quote, complete and permanent destruction of modern industrial society.

Matt: That little thing.

Andy: That little thing.

The ideal social structure he put forward was that of a nomadic hunting and gathering society and again, this goes back to this more anthropological perspective on technology and its role in how humans have evolved, right? And he explicitly called for a revolution under the anarcho-primitivist banner.

This episode brought to you by beef jerky.

Womp, womp.

Matt: By the USPS.

Andy: Yes.

They'll mail you that jerky.

You work for that jerk.

Kaczynski's radical activities played out across 17 years, targeting individuals associated with universities because of probably their research roles at universities as a general.

The people he targeted were for different reasons.

We're not going to get into that and he also was very concerned about airlines.

So by 1995, his goal was pretty singular, and it was just to get his message published.

He sent his manifesto threatening to intensify the bombings if the New York Times or the Washington Post didn't comply.

Matt: So basically, he anticipated that the conventional media would never publish his ideas and he viewed his ideas as an attack on the, quote, real religion of our times technology and unless he could do something to force others to publish his ideas, the philosophical underpinnings of his bombing campaign would be ignored.

Andy: Exactly.

He argued that if he had submitted his writings conventionally, they likely wouldn't have been accepted or if published, they would be forgotten amidst the amount of content that just gets published.

In his words, he wrote, in order to get our message before the public with some chance of making a lasting impression, we've had to kill people.

Just, you know, happens, I guess, or so he thought.

The FBI recommended publication and the Washington Post ran the manifesto in September of 1995.

Matt: The publication, of course, was what led to his identification and arrest in 1996 after his brother David recognized his writing style and the content.

But so how was the manifesto, like the substance of his argument received? Like when all those Washington Post readers got a hold of it.

Andy: Pre-Bezos readers.

Matt: I mean like did society grapple with this anti-technology critique that he successfully got in front of all of their eyes?

Andy: So generally speaking, no, but this is kind of interesting.

So the media and intellectual community largely ignored the core arguments of his manifesto, arguing instead on irrelevant aspects of his kind of difficult writing style or lack of originality, or most commonly that clearly this guy is mentally ill.

Now the Time Magazine cover story published the week after his arrest contained in quote, not a word on the substance of his thinking.

Matt: So they like effectively used the spectacle of the crimes and the like psychological diagnosis as a way to kind of whole hand safely dismiss this manifesto.

Andy: Yeah, I mean, if we think about what's going on today with Palestine, I think is a really good example of a way to divert critique away from legitimate criticisms.

They focus on superficial or trivial attacks because as other writers of the time wrote, he had legitimate concerns and criticisms.

For example, Bill Joy, a co-founder of Sun Microsystems, a tech company, admitted that despite finding Kaczynski's actions murderous and insane, he, in quote, saw some merit in the reasoning, in quote, in his writing, which is like, if a tech guy is like, you got a point, not saying everything's right, but there's like, there's something, there's a real conversation to be had, right? Another prominent political scientist of the time, a guy named James Q.

Wilson, referred to the manifesto as a, in quote, carefully reasoned, artfully written paper, end quote.

Matt: So it wasn't necessarily that people didn't read it and agree with it, but there was like a strong drive by the authorities to at least make it seem like his ideas were like universally rejected.

Andy: Yeah, but with that said, with what we've covered on this show, concerns about state overreach and tech development weren't uncommon at this point in 1996 when he was arrested.

Ruby Ridge, for context, was in 1992 and the Waco massacre, which we've also talked about, was in 1993.

There was a really active movement of people who were concerned about the development and direction of technology and specifically the corresponding government overreach that even if they didn't necessarily agree with Ted's conclusions about what society should exist as, they fully agreed that the reach of the state and the personal alienation of participating in the industrial system existed and that's why there is such a draw to return to the land.

Matt: I mean it's important because it allows us to see how Ted's actions weren't necessarily seen as a like radical left response but instead an anti-state or anti-tech response first and allowed both left and right to engage with these ideas without fully claiming his actions.

which is fed into a lot of strange fringe politics we see today around Mr.

K.

Political expression that at least in part justifies and at worst celebrates the bombings.

Andy: Exactly and we kind of talked about this last week with Edward Abbey, right, where we said he was very explicit about his belief in nonviolence and then in his last book, he kind of challenged that own belief and basically everyone kind of went with it where they wanted to go and Ted is like one of those examples, right? And to get back to Ted, who also said that Edward Abbey was a huge inspiration, the mainstream really focused on Ted Kaczynski, the man who did actions, right? And not Kaczynski, the philosopher with a philosophical reasoning or underpinning.

It wasn't about murdering people, even though that's a kind of a complicated subject.

It was about trying to make this message clear and to try to make meaningful change.

Now prosecutors actively challenged the notion that Kaczynski was motivated by a love of nature or concerns over technology and basically said that this was motivated in hatred and personal revenge.

It reminds me a lot of George Bush talking about going into Iraq and saying they were freedom haters, right? It was because they hated us that we had to go in there for some reason and like it's a very similar line that's always like that you can see play

out in all these political discussions when anyone ever challenges like the autonomy of the state.

Kaczynski recognized this argument against him and he countered this arguing that by discrediting him personally, the government was attempting to discredit his political ideas and making that explicitly clear to anyone listening.

Matt: Whoops.

Andy: Whoops is right.

This was an important lesson for the US government as it learned how to deal with radicals on a national stage and has found its way into the framing of national arrests today.

Matt: Okay, so not to be like, let's categorize, but like the human mind can simply not help it.

How did Kaczynski define his political thought within the larger field?

Andy: So Kaczynski sincerely identified as an anarchist in the 1990s, at least initially.

His first letter to the media in 1993 began with, we are an anarchist group calling ourselves FC, meaning Freedom Club.

The manifesto itself discusses, our particular brand of anarchism.

Matt: So since the manifesto largely targeted industrial society and technology, concerns shared by some environmentalists and anarchists, how did these movements receive him?

Andy: So there was a really mixed reception to him because I mean, despite all of the constant talk about like revolution, right, nobody really actually likes bloodshed.

So there was a lot of discomfort with like, we asked to start the revolution and then somebody murdered somebody.

So there was a lot of like, oh wait, do I actually want this? And there was also a sense of like sympathy that existed on the fringes.

John Zerzan, a prominent anarcho-primitivist and anti-civ writer, was immediately attracted to Kaczynski's message and corresponded with him after his arrest in 1996.

Zerzan believed that the critique of technology resonated greatly, especially among young people in Eugene, Oregon, where he was located and Zerzan thought the activists who chose to run for cover when confronted by journalists about Kaczynski were, in his words, and quote, pathetic.

Matt: I mean, it's kind of in a way like the eat the rich slogans of today.

if anyone did it, becomes like a litmus test about what's acceptable, even when the actions follow what the acceptable literature tells us to do.

It's like, yes, we agree with this thing, but also actually don't do it.

Just like talk about how you want it done.

Andy: Yeah, and I think that's like the really uncomfortable part about TED in general is like, if we think that capitalism is destroying the planet and we have a right to defend ourselves, What does that actually look like if it's not that? Ted is a really

interesting parallel for someone like Luigi, right? It's really hard to sympathize with his target.

So I think despite having very different political ideologies between him and Luigi, it articulates a really interesting way to engage with this concept of violence in a way that's digestible for a lot of mainstream society.

The reason why I'm bringing this up is because it's really important to understand, like you said, this idea of the litmus test, right, about what radical action looks like and if there's good radical violence and bad radical violence and how this is a massive shift away from someone like Edward Abbey, who we covered last week.

Kaczynski had relationships with radical environmentalists.

He read the publications that were influenced by Abbey and knew the people writing in them.

publications like Earth First and Live Wild or Die and acknowledged selecting at least one murder victim after reading one of those magazines and felt that was what drove him to choose that victim.

He commented approvingly on the violent exploits of groups like the ELF, who we talked about last week, and supported their arsons.

At A 1997 Earth First gathering, an anonymously produced flyer proclaimed Free Ted Kaczynski.

Matt: So at the time, the violence wasn't like a deal breaker for everyone and where did the left-leaning radicals draw the line then?

Andy: So the real split ultimately came when Kaczynski disdained what we might consider like a modern leftism today, right? He viewed many of the traditional radical causes that were growing in the 90s and into the 2000s, things like feminism, gay rights, animal rights as what he considered dangerous distractions from the singular goal of destroying technology.

Again, kind of the old school concept of anarchism with like the worst interpretations on things.

Now, Paul Rogers, an editor of the UK Green Anarchist Magazine, stated that they eventually, quote, fell out principally over the issue of leftism in the sexual politics, end quote.

Kaczynski continued to critique the left using concepts like over-socialization, arguing that these over-socialized intellectuals tried to gain a vicarious sense of power through mass movements, engaging in what he called and what he took from Jacques Ellul, useless revolt.

Matt: I mean, I feel like we see this argument over and over again when coalitions are taken for granted because of a single, albeit far-reaching issue.

I'm thinking of like the class reductionist tendency, especially in like white men in left-wing political spaces, or like on the legislative side of things, like policy advocates that try to like draw a pencil thin line between like economic and environmental justice as if like you can untangle those things.

Andy: Yeah, absolutely and by the 2000s, Kaczynski formalized this distance, publicly breaking with anarchism in 2006 and further disavowing the identification in 2019.

He wrote an essay, *Eco-Fascism, an Aberrant Branch of Leftism* in 2020.

Matt: I mean, it seems Kaczynski wanted to focus single issue revolution.

Once the environmental or anarchist movements included other justice goals, they became just like leftist distractions and ultimately were like rejected by him.

Andy: Yeah, I'm under the impression that he felt that once you got rid of technology, everything would like just magically get fixed and that was really what drove him in his politics, whatever you want to call his politics and it wasn't just his political limitations that turned the left and specifically the eco-left away from him, but also his feelings about what nature was and this is where he really shifts hard away from like an Edward Abbey.

Like for example, he wrote that in quote, I don't even believe in the cult of nature worshippers or wilderness worshippers.

I am perfectly ready to litter in parts of the woods that are of no use to me.

I often throw cans in logged over areas or in places much frequented by people.

I don't find wilderness particularly healthy physically.

I don't hesitate to poach, end quote and again, this is wildly different from someone like an Edward Abbey or a Henry Stevens Salt or any of the figures really we've talked about to this point, right? And their idea was like to defend the landscape from development, not to like just let it be a litter space, right? For Ted, it really wasn't about saving nature.

It was about saving humanity.

Nature was just simply what made us human, as long as it wasn't framed within this consumptive and industrial development component of society.

Now today, Kaczynski is arguably more relevant than ever, particularly within the anti-tech and far-right circles online.

His manifesto, which defies easy categorization, has become kind of what some have called a magnet for radicals of different stripes.

I believe that's out of a news article.

Matt: So given this like initial like anti-industrial anarchist rhetoric, how far has his ideas migrated to like the far right?

Andy: So being so anti-woke as we might say today, he had that contingent and his attraction to violence I think was very attractive to some of the like what we might consider today like alter-right perspectives on an eco alt-right or whatever you want to call it, right? And I think that really met what people are looking for in these reactionary movements.

He even noted in his manifesto that racial conflict was a form of stress on the system, which he appeared to hope would continue growing.

So it was like, hey, here's one more reason to help break down the system because of racism.

Sweet.

This influence was particularly visible in terrorist action and ideology.

So for example, A guy, a terrorist in Norway named Anders Revik extensively plagiarized Kaczynski.

Matt: Boo, write your own manifesto.

Andy: We're getting into the manifesto period.

The Greek neo-fascist party Golden Dawn also published a translation of his manifesto in 2018.

Matt: And I mean, this is like, especially among like younger extremists, right?

Andy: Yeah, again, I think there's that distance that makes it so much more digestible and also I think growing up in a post-9-11 world is kind of like, we'll just do that to you.

But one thing I do want to bring up though is I think the real key to how a lot of right wing, as we think of right wing today, is very different than the right wing of 40 years ago is an understanding of, like, you know, you talk like, why do people today on the right not trust vaccines? Big pharma.

It's a secret cabal of super rich people that are trying to poison us or whatever, right? So there is this strangely anti-consolidated power that exists on the right.

They just haven't realized that it's very anti-capitalist, but it's there and that triggers into that homesteading movement of 40 years ago, right? Of why were people moving away? You know, the big government, obviously, but also like the role of big tech companies and all these other bigger companies and their relationships to power.

That still exists or that exists in a much more confusing way today.

So there's like this very discreet realization, I think, on the right of like the dangers of consolidated power of like a handful of companies and then of course, their relations to the government and so on.

So like there's this really interesting like dynamic of power on the right that also touches closely with like Ted's ideas and then when we get into younger people, folks like on platforms like Telegram, Ted Kaczynski has become kind of a meme.

It's kind of like this cornerstone of a worldview by self-described eco-fascists who are basically preparing for social collapse, that society is collapsing, that we can't do anything about climate change or ecological catastrophe and all you can do now is prepare, right? And these far-right primitivists see industrial society as the root cause of the world's problems, that we've created all this ***** basically and there's nowhere to go and this leads into this really fatalistic politic of all that is left is to escape in the woods and this has created these really unique anti-tech terrorist groups, most notably ITS in Mexico.

Matt: Right.

So we talked about individualists tending to the wild on the last episode in sort of their relation to Edward Abbey and as a reminder, we talked about how this like philosophy of non-violence toward people in sabotaging environmental destruction sep-

arated Abbey from those like Kaczynski who were unafraid to kill in the name of what's superficially the same cause.

Andy: Right.

ITS emerged in 2011 and targeted scientists and researchers with lethal force and explicitly employs Kaczynski's signature vocabulary, the technological system, the power process, surrogate activities, and a rejection of like that woke leftism.

Matt: So ITS essentially claims to be a direct philosophical error, but they do not follow Kaczynski's blueprint for revolution, right?

Andy: No, they are much more explicitly reject any left vocabulary of anarchism, such as oppression or solidarity, class struggle, inequality, injustice, or imperialism, like anything that like goes beyond technology is destroying the planet.

Matt: I mean, that sounds like the ban words list for federal research grants.

Andy: I mean, I think that's actually where they pulled it from, to be completely honest.

Matt: What the establishment truly fears.

Anti-woke MAGA ITS.

Andy: Yeah, so ITS argues that Kaczynski's vision for revolution is idealistic and irrational, and that's their words, and bound to fail.

Instead of seeing violence as a means to achieve revolution, which is Kaczynski's basic argument for why he was murdering people, ITS views violence as a way to affirm or reclaim our own wildness, believing that in quote, a significant amount of violence is a natural part of human life, end quote.

So do that as you wish.

Kaczynski in turn condemned ITS for misappropriating his ideas and promoting an attitude of hopelessness.

This complexity and criticism from Kaczynski being like those people are too far gone basically shows the role Kaczynski had and also the complexity in his ideas and his ideology, right? His philosophical critique has continued to be picked up by like anti-tech apostles or the Indomedistas who translate and analyze his writings as well as what he considers heretics like the ITS who diverge on doctrine and tactics.

Matt: Maybe it's more than the left that splinters.

Andy: Yeah, Kosinski's central claim was that technology is driving humanity toward either eradication or a biologically psychologically engineered existence.

Something like a brave new world scenario, which if you're not familiar with, go take a read, really just take a few years off your life.

It's worth noting that even modern defenders of human enhancement like Nick Austrum, for example, share some of his fundamental concerns about existential risk posed by unchecked technologies like AI and genetic engineering, which is just a really fun time to be alive right now.

It is interesting that you'd see someone like Kosinski sharing the same fundamental concerns with tech as the people who advocate for tech.

Not great.

Matt: Yeah, when the like arch Luddite lines up with the futurist.

Andy: Yeah.

Matt: Horseshoe, horseshoe.

Andy: The worst horseshoe.

Matt: The difference, however, I mean, like, is there a solution to this problem? Kaczynski lived in the woods and mailed people bombs and Austrum is like an academic and public speaker.

Kind of remains to be seen.

Andy: Yeah, while the futurists suggest stronger institutions and moral enhancement, whatever the **** that means, and that's from Austrum, Kaczynski demands total destruction.

His proposed solution, destroying factories, burning technical books, and basically executing or brainwashing anyone with advanced scientific education, is, brutal and highly impractical.

But academic analysis does suggest his justification rests on profound ethical premises, that technology is automatically bad and non-technology is automatically good.

Because of this ethical asymmetry in his world, any bombed out world is considered superior to any potential future technological civilization, which may be greater than any of us could ever imagine.

Matt: So there's two points that I really want to pick on here before we finish.

The first is that I think this fetishization of a like re-primitivized world is like far from unique to the anti-civ perspective.

I think that this phenomenon holds a special place in the human psyche and I think that we can see examples of it on the extreme ends of all sides of the political conversation.

Andy: The past was always better.

Like MAGA, that's literally the point of MAGA.

Matt: Right.

Andy: The past was better.

Matt: And you know what, I've put a meme.

Andy: You're the one sharing memes and discussing them on the podcast now, Matt.

You've done it.

You've become me.

Matt: Well, when I was pulling this off, I was also thinking of that like Alex Jones clip.

I got a meme around here somewhere and it just, man, it really just says it all.

Have you seen this one before?

Andy: Yes.

Obviously I've seen it, Matt.

Matt: Come on.

Yeah, okay.

So it's like four different people and they're all thinking, I can't wait for society to collapse so my ideology can rise from the ashes.

But I like to think that when we talk about process of collapse on this podcast, we're coming at it from a perspective that aims to like provide solutions and perspectives that may blunt the impacts of social, environmental, economic calamity.

from the people that are most vulnerable in the face of its breakdown and in no way accelerate it in the name of clearing the way for something better.

Ultimately, I like want to live in a world where children have ready access to pasteurized milk and low rates of tuberculosis, which leads me to the like second point that I just want to swing on, which is this.

One of my main problems with Kaczynski's philosophy, my main problem being the murder, is the lack of nuance toward this incredibly broad idea of technology.

Andy: Chicken.

Matt: And when you look at this argument from like an anthropological perspective, you can see how absurd this philosophy is.

The type of person that's lifted is this ideal, this like pre-civilized gatherer hunter.

has like the same drive to improve their conditions through tools and methodology that all humans innately possess and that's why I think we've talked about this idea of appropriate technology so much on this podcast.

Not only is it a lens to be like critical of development and refinement of tools for the sake of that alone or like the sake of the market alone, but also like what a gift and a birthright that appropriate technologies and I mean, technologies that permit a more complete flourishing of the human life, really are for humankind.

Andy: Yeah, we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors who sacrificed to develop the things to be able to do those, to create those technologies, right.

Matt: I want to be on the shoulder with the penicillin, you know.

Andy: Give me the penicillin guy.

Matt: Like, I want to be on the shoulder so that when my appendix gets inflamed, I don't die.

Andy: Right.

Matt: I'd be dead several times over.

Andy: I think a lot of us would, which is a reminder of like, despite all of the flaws of technology, there are things we can take away and what is more human than to learn to discern the differences between appropriate technologies and unnecessary or inappropriate technologies?

Matt: Right.

Andy: So yeah, that's Ted in a nutshell.

Matt: Good thing we're human.

Andy: That's a Ted in a pro show.

Matt: For sure.

Andy: So hopefully you guys are not inspired at all by anything ever again.

Don't do things, don't be happy.

Next week we're going to go into the modern eco defense movements and kind of focus on the right instead of the left.

So I feel like the left gets a lot of attention.

Maybe we should give the right a little attention on this one.

So yeah, we're going to be back with more of this and I know you guys are just so excited for it.

It's so much good content.

So excited.

Matt: Yeah.

Oh yeah.

Oh yeah.

Andy: That's all I got.

If you want to support us, jump on Patreon or Substack or any of those fun things.

We're almost done with this mini series.

We're almost there.

Getting close.

Matt: What's coming up next, Andy? I'm ***** jazzed about it.

Andy: Wetland species.

Matt: Let's ***** go.

Andy: From Kosinski to Wapato.

We do everything.

Matt: Wetland, wetland.

Andy: So back.

Okay, we're done, bud.

Matt: We are so back.

The scientific and the activist messaging of the day.

Andy: That was fun.

Matt: You're right.

Andy: Sorry.

Matt: Andy just made the funniest face I've kind of ever seen him make.

Andy: My power cord thing just like dropped off the desk randomly and I was like, is everything going to stay plugged in? And it did somehow.

So it's amazing.

Okay, let's try that again.

We'll just put this back where it belongs.

Don't fall again, you ***** ** *****.

Matt: Look at this man railing against technology.

Andy: Again, this is how it begins. It starts fighting back and next thing.

The Ted K Archive

The Poor Prole's Almanac
The Real Religion of Our Times
Ted Kaczynski and the Split War on Technology
Feb. 9, 2026

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