

Ted's Revolution And Why It Will Fail

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March 10, 2023

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Ted Kaczynski

Ted's personal solution is a destruction of the technological system. This is not all technology, rather large scale technology. In *Anti Tech Revolution: How And Why* he argues that society cannot be subject to rational human control. Keep in mind, he does not say that humans cannot make solutions to problems. Rather, it is very hard for someone to implement an idea with all of its intended goals.

He argues it is better to make simple short term goals than long term. With this, he argues that *the objective should be to "kill" the technological system or at least make it defunct, impaired by attacking communication networks, transportation systems, power grids, computer systems*

After, he argues that the system will destroy itself. However, he states this is more speculative. I won't touch on this part.

To sum up his idea for revolution and how to go about it

Rule 1: Clear and precise objective – eliminate technological system.

Rule 2: Change should be irreversible – major destruction of the system or its part should make it impossible to resurrect it for at least hundreds of years.

Rule 3: Organize a movement for action – this part is elaborated on later.

Rule 4: Exclude unsuitable people – some means to do that would have to be found.

Rule 5: Achieve goal fast, before the movement becomes corrupt – destruction is much faster than construction, so it should be possible.

However, my opinion is that the idea of a revolution to overthrow technology will not be successful. People may very well attempt it, but it will not succeed.

Here are reasons I and others believe so. This will assume the revolution will be that akin to the communist revolution, not a non violent revolution to persuade those in power to dismantle the system.

1. In order for the revolution to succeed, it needs to happen globally, and within a very short period of time. There has never been a global revolution in history. Given Ted uses historical events to back up his claims, using his own logic, this is already flawed.
2. Ted argues that it only needs to be destroyed in places like the US in order to collapse globally. But this is not concrete and one could argue that it may very well *not*. Self assurance could backfire hugely here.

3. Any minor slip up will be disastrous and stop the revolution dead in its tracks.
4. Places like China have many tools to survey people. Any attempt to overthrow the system which gives authoritarian governments their power will move heaven and earth to crush such a revolution. A small and dedicated movement will not be any threat to militaries.
5. Counter revolutionaries will also attempt to destroy a revolution, for example the White army. This could lead to a global war between ideologies, causing unforeseen destruction and ecological disaster.
6. A revolution on such a scale probably requires revolutionaries to communicate to tell others to start it in their respective area. If using the internet, how does one avoid detection from counter terrorist organisations? How can revolutionaries communicate so quickly if such technology will be destroyed or impossible to use without said revolution being discovered?
7. The anti tech movement is heavily fragmented. For example I have looked at archives of 4chan's /tkg/ (Ted Kaczynski General) and they reject the idea of violence, disagree on the possibility of revolution, ignoring the "glowies" and prefer to encourage self sufficiency and living off the grid as much as possible. Then you have those who try and search for other would be revolutionaries, green anarchism and ideologies that Ted rejects such as anarcho primitivism and eco-fascism. Of course there are even more.¹ Then there is point 5, in which infighting (akin to the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) is bound to take place.
8. It has to be said that during my research on 4chan archives, I found times where "tedposters" infiltrated other areas of 4chan such as Brit/pol/ and some there outright rejected them for their fanatical devotion to Ted. I hold the belief revolutionaries will go down the path of leftism in peoples contempt for their close mindedness and their ideological "purity spiral". Some posts on /tkg/ worried about such a thing happening.
9. Revolutions fail more than they succeed. Need proof, simply look on Wikipedia for all the attempted coups or revolutions. A successful revolution is the exception, not the norm.
List of revolutions and rebellions - Wikipedia
10. The Russian and French revolutions were political revolutions in one nation. Teds revolution transforms the very fabric of society globally. This is not a simple revolution.

¹ My research was very brief as I must admit my interest in such ideologies is very low. Perhaps it would be of good use for someone to go over ideologies properly.

11. Cutting off power grids and such will only hamper the system for a while. Keep in mind people will still live in cities or towns and so will cooperate to gain food and such quickly. One could argue that large scale tech (This does not necessarily mean our tech, more large scale tech using remaining small scale tech or tech that wasn't destroyed) returns within decades, so therefore fails rule 2 of *Anti Tech*. This also obliterates any hope of "destroying civilization" as if there was any chance of that.
12. Civilization exists as long as humans interact with each other. As mentioned, cities and towns will still exist. The tech will no longer exist, but our houses and such will still remain. Humans are inherently social animals and if one looks at humanity, one can see that small groups combine or are conquered, making bigger and bigger groups. Regardless of whether technology is there or not, ambition, lust for power, desire to go down in history, or simple necessity will lead to this.
13. You can burn as many books or information as possible, it will survive some way. See the collapse of Rome and the Byzantine Empire.
14. Destroying modern technology will most likely bring back agricultural society in most areas. Think something akin to the 17th or 18th century. But the system will still live on. The industrial revolution did not happen at once. The centuries before it lead to the seeds of it. You will still have firearms, explosive grenades, pressure cookers, and steam engines. Ted argues that steam engines won't be any benefit to people after the revolution, preferring animals for transport, however I disagree somewhat.
15. If the idea that changing the social structure will not change technological advancement, in a way that alters its course, is true, then it may be true that authoritarian regimes and everything else from the times of agriculture may indeed be from agricultural technology itself, therefore, while destroying modern tech will solve those problems, it will reintroduce problems from agriculture or any other form of society.
16. Most importantly in respect to freedom, such attempts to halt technology will require authoritarian measures to do so, either by government or by force. Thus, the desires of Ted and those who believe in freedom will be for naught. This also completely ignores the fact that revolutionaries will force people to use an amount of technology or to live a way of life that some may object to.
17. Authoritarian attempts to stop innovation and change, which humans have a natural tendency to do as security and comfort are human needs, the same as freedom, could lead to over socialization. Propaganda will force people to think a certain way against technology, which may not be true.

18. To conclude, a revolution to destroy the industrial technological system will not be damaging enough, and may, if too ideologically fanatical, could lead to revolutionaries implementing the same stresses onto people as the current system is claimed to be doing to us.
19. Like Marx before him, Teds proposed revolution will likely, in attempting to free people, instead be yet another failed experiment which achieves nothing, and puts stress onto people and their freedoms similar to what primitivists and neo luddites claim to be the case now. Any attempt to go further than industrial society will also fail as Ted has mentioned. You'd need to search everyone for small scale technology and by then you'd already be heading towards authoritarian means.

David Skrbina

So I reject Teds revolution. How about his pen pal David Skrbina?

David proposes a gradual end to the system which will bring us to medieval technology. It goes something like this.

1. The UN comes together and decides to phase out modern technology
2. Over the course of however long, each bit is phased out until we reach the level of medieval technology.
3. The phasing out of technology will happen whenever the human population can feed itself in order to reduce suffering.

Already the idea that the entire United Nations will agree to a certain amount of technology is improbable at best. Other than that, I would say if we really do need to cut off technology, then I would be in agreement with this as it is far less painful or abrupt than Teds revolution.

There are other ideas and such as to fixing the technological problem, such as E.F Schumacher in *Small is Beautiful* which argues that economics is the global driving force, above technology, but I have not looked at it yet. I have looked at Dmitry Orlov's *Shrinking the Technosphere* and I think he may have some good points in which to focus on tech that is sustainable and doesn't affect freedoms. Lewis Mumford also holds similar views in which to accept or reject tech, but again, I have not read his works yet.

Jacques Ellul

Now we go onto Jacques Ellul, probably the biggest influence on Ted. Many claim that Ellul offered no solution to the problem. This is untrue. In *Autopsy of a Revolution* Ellul proposed revolution. However, despite Ted treating his works as his “Bible” he fails to understand that Ellul’s revolution was not literal, physical revolution. The issue Ellul states is not technology itself, but the mindset of technique. Technique is the mindset of efficiency above all else. His revolution is a revolution of the individuals thinking.

He delivers direct criticism of Ted’s would be revolution and his revolutionaries.

Organizing a mass revolutionary party, a nucleus operating by manipulation, a vanguard; using the coup d’etat as The Focus of Revolution (prescribed by Malaparte, Trinquier, or Luttwak, or the revolutionary strategy of Lenin—any one of those merely reinforces the technological system: although opposed to society, such a movement still serves technology, has not altered the over-all orientation, and will be forced to restore society through technology and by rebuilding its power—and the revolution will not have happened at all.

He doesn’t stop there.¹

It is one thing to hunger spiritually for revolution and to risk one’s life for it in an absurd gamble; it is something else to believe in it, to rave about it, to wrap oneself in a dream of it, to talk of nothing else, to join a handful of others in stirring up the fires of hatred and violence; or else to regard it as the most obvious, banal, and ordinary fact of life and a theme for sociologists.

Ellul’s *Autopsy of a Revolution*, simply put, is an answer to those who call for smashing up and destroying technology. It is ironic that revolutionaries recommend Ellul’s *Technological Society*, only for he to put out a book which completely dismantles their ideas for destruction.

¹ A few more quotes from *Autopsy Of A Revolution* which I couldn’t fit in.

“If revolution contests the fabric of technological society, that is not because technology is innately evil (an absurd notion, which I have never suggested); the issue is not technology per se, but the present structure of society.”

“If revolution is to be human, inspired by man s passionate defiance, if its essence is to permit man to exist even for the brief instant of his glory, that alienation (not the alienation Marx defined a century ago) is what revolution must assail, and that dehumanization (not the version cited by those who deride the system of objects and the consumer society and who are rather short-sighted)”

In the same way that those who disagree with Ted's solutions state that moving technology back is futile, because technology cannot be stopped, Ellul believes that a revolution against physical technology will do nothing, because it is not the true issue. We will be trapped in an endless and horrific cycle which we'd have to do many infinite times. He argues, it simply plays into *technique*. It is not a true revolution against technological society.

A true revolution, will be to change our course of history. One could argue that Ellul, criticises Ted and his revolutionaries by being slaves to "objective" history. The idea that we have no way of changing history and that it goes in a simple one way route.

Reevaluating Reform

Throughout this article, I have criticised Ted. But I believe that Ted brings up something which I think may very well bring solutions to our problems.

In a letter to Skrbina in *Technological Slavery*, Ted challenges one of Skrbina's colleagues about the idea of reform, arguing the difficulty of such. But one part is very intriguing.

Even if you believe that adequate reforms are possible, you should still favor the creation of an effective revolutionary movement. It's clear that the necessary reforms—if such are possible—are not currently being carried out. Often the system needs a hard kick in the pants to get it started on necessary reforms, and a revolutionary movement can provide that kick in the pants. Further, if it is an error to attempt revolution—that is, if adequate reforms are possible—then the error should be self-correcting: As soon as the system has carried through the necessary reforms, the revolutionary movement will no longer have a valid cause, so it will lose support and peter out. For example, in the U.S. during the early part of the 20th century, insufficient attention was paid to the problems of the working class. Labor violence ensued and provided the kick in the pants necessary to get the government to pay attention to the problems. Because adequate reforms were carried through, the violence died down.

This is not just the only time he mentions such a scenario.

Admittedly there is a gray area: Sometimes a reform is in the interest of the system only because conditions are so hard on human beings that they will rebel if there is no alleviation. E.g., the government acted to solve the labor problems of the early 20th century only after violence by workers made clear that it was in the interest of the system to solve the problems.

This is personally, the best case scenario out of all of those which Ted has thought of. The System, in facing an existential threat from a revolt, protest or strike, realizes it must adapt or die. If you aren't fully convinced by this historical example (which Ted himself admits he can't verify) he does have plenty of which this does happen.

Be that as it may, we can dispense with the labor movement for present purposes. The revolt of American black people (the “civil rights movement”)

of the 1950s and 1960s can serve to illustrate the points I tried to make on page 345 note 121 and pages 322-323 of this book. And it's easy to give other examples of cases in which popular revolt, short of revolution, has forced governments to pay attention to people's grievances. Thus, the Wat Tyler Rebellion in England (1381) failed as a social revolution, but it impelled the government to refrain from enforcing the poll tax that was the immediate cause of the revolt. The Sepoy Mutiny in India (1857-58) was ruthlessly crushed, but it caused the British to drop their effort to impose westernizing social changes upon Hindu civilization.

I will add probably the best possible example I know, the British monarchy. Over time, the monarchy has adapted to the British peoples needs, otherwise as the English Civil War proved, it is abolished.

Essentially, the system needs a symbolic gun in its face. A gun in its face will then prove to the system that it is humans in control, not the other way around. The system will do everything possible to correct this for its own sake.

And because the threat is existential, it *is* beneficial to the system to implement reforms. These reforms will most likely be short term to calm the revolt and so therefore can be predicted better than long term. Afterwards, anything can be ironed out. I cannot say whether these reforms will introduce new technology that is small scale and replace current large tech or whether it will eliminate technology which is most damaging, or give us easier access to the power process.

In Summary

Given that technology usually becomes smaller (computers being more powerful and smaller for example) it may be plausible that local smaller scale tech could be introduced which makes the large scale tech obsolete, therefore rendering revolt or anything more extreme pointless. But again, I'm not sure. The main point is that the system will attempt to reform to save itself.

And because it is a reform of the system, in regards to increasing freedom without destroying technology completely, it also plays into Ellul's call for the changing of our perception of technology and the rejection of *technique*. These reforms will damage efficiency and so *technique*.

Already the conditions for such an event may already exist. Many of the concerns from Ted are ones that pretty much everyone, regardless of their opinion of tech, has.

Plenty are disillusioned with the current way of things and so eventually people will desire something different. Fear of losing the benefits of technology will strive people to find ways to increase freedom while keeping as much technology as possible. Eventually, something will stick.

One could argue that Ted, like he argued with Marx, put down what was in the air at the time and like Marx, while his personal solution will ultimately fail, or fail to come to fruition like Platos philosopher king, will bring about something which solves the problems he brought up.

It is usually the way of philosophy that philosophers will bring up issues or ideas that they themselves do not have the answer to. This could very well be the case here.

I may very well make another article in which I'll discuss various scenarios in regards to the issue of technology. To end this one, I will explain more why I think the reform scenario is very plausible.

1. The anti abortion movement has been somewhat successful in implementing change despite such a change being against *technique* and the system. This proves that such a scenario is possible in today's society and that we *can* alter the course of the system as well as reject *technique*.
2. The populist movement is critical of big tech and big government. While not against technology completely, it is still supportive of individual responsibility and against the "nanny state" and welfare, therefore against *technique* and the system.

3. Rejection of NFTs, and other such ideas leads to less advancement of the system and *technique*
4. The eugenics movement of the early 20th century was cast aside after WW2. Eugenics are absolutely beneficial to the system. Even those who propose for genetic modification or eugenics call for sensible use of it, in a way that is ethical and retains human dignity as much as possible, hindering the systems complete control of humanity.
5. A popular opinion in regards to Teds views is “I agree with his diagnosis, I disagree with the remedy”. As I have explained, Ellul, Mumford and others who are critical of technology call for far less extreme methods than Ted. Ted’s views are the exception in regards to intellectual discussion of technology.
6. The anti tech movement is an existential threat to the system. So therefore to alleviate this, it will implement adequate reforms. The reformist movement or any movement that is for increased freedoms, such as the populist movement will encourage Elluls ideas in sensible advancement of technology to solve significant problems that come up in our society.

The Ted K Archive

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