The Unabomber and the Future of Industrial Society

T. Fulano
society or any other—that hold the transformative energies we need to carry us through this storm.

If things do fall apart, they won’t need puny bombs and manifestos. Industrialism cannot continue without smashing on reality’s rocks. Ultimately, if we love the living earth, our hope lies beyond even the prospects of our species’ survival. Life itself is more intelligent than either the megamachine or its enemies, and will survive and thrive with or without us. Yet when all is said and done, most of us fight for what we cherish of the world we know. Connected to people and place, we have our feet planted in this world, even if our dreams open thresholds to another. Unlike the Unabomber, who argues that the destruction of technology “must be ... the single, overriding goal,” we have many complex, interrelated aims that cannot be resolved by this mechanistic, monomaniacal determination alone. We do battle, as the taoist sage recommends, “not ... to destroy what exists but to preserve what is perishing.”

That will mean carefully backing our way out of the labyrinth we have helped construct, like the hero following his lover’s thread to sunlight.

ENDNOTES

29 The Tao of Politics, ibid., p. 50.
inevitable. In any case, whoever the Unabomber turns out to be, he deserves pardon on the basis of insanity—an insanity that is more collectively ours than his alone. For how can it be that men continue to make their fortunes by unraveling the very foundations of complex life, reducing millions of years of evolution to rubble? Are they not the ambitious, exercising their convenient power, and the arrogant fools with their sharp instruments, as the wise one in this essay’s epigraph described them—are they not also the prosecutors and police, the judges and good citizens who may condemn to death the one they take to be this bitter doomsayer, this avenging angel?

And so this is also a plea for Ted Kaczynski, now set to take the rap. It is a plea for the Unabomber, whoever he may be. I do not know what should be done to such people or for them, only that this society, with its faceless machinery of murder, should not be allowed to carry out its sanctimonious determination to take his life as punishment for taking life, while continuing its far more grisly business. Surely this society faces far more imperative matters. If there is poignancy in the Unabomber’s final note that his arguments are likely imprecise and even “flatly false,” only “a crude approximation of the truth,” his ominous and ambiguous significance recommends similar humility on our part. Perhaps we can expect no miracles, only catastrophe after all. But we focus on this small parcel of armageddon at our tragic peril.

The unabomber phenomenon, a comet briefly throwing its harsh, weird light across deepening shadows, is a sign that neither business-as-usual nor absolute intransigence, neither this society’s coherence nor any variety of its incoherence, will have predictable results on a vortex that absorbs and neutralizes every opposition. Yet in his fury, isolation and ultimate failure he also reminds us that it is, paradoxically, only those everyday acts—of mutual aid, trust, empathy, and attentiveness to life through which we nurture what is worthwhile in this

Contents

1: Go, Unabomber ............................................. 5
2: Enter Ted Kaczynski .............................. 8
3: Enter The Neo-Luddites ......................... 13
4: Two, Three, Many Unabombers? .......... 18
5: Things Fall Apart ................................. 24
ENDNOTES ..................................................... 27
half century, that it is likely the ship will sink.” In another letter, to his friend Bruno Levi, he wrote, “I have not the heart to tell [people] ... what I actually think about our human prospects unless something approaching a miracle takes place.”

But Mumford still left open the possibility of such a miracle. He believed that if there was to be a successful revolutionary transformation, it would begin at society’s margins in “gestures of non-conformity” and withdrawal. He defended “every act of rebellion, every exhibition of group defiance, every assertion of the will-to-live, every display of autonomy and self-direction, at however primitive a level,” as attempts to stay the leviathan, prevent a cataclysm that a life worth living might not survive. To Mumford it was the anarchist Thoreau, not Marx, who represented the genuine “arch-enemy” of this complex pentagon of power, for his emphasis on disobedience and a life lived deliberately at the margins of society.

But if Thoreau, writing during a time of this civilization’s youthful exuberance, was able to bequeath us some of our wisest and most vivid insights into it, the Unabomber, writing in an era of disillusion, resignation, rage and social decomposition, could only produce a choleric, aridly rationalistic, nihilistic epistle and a scatter of explosions. We need neither condemn nor condone him; his text and his haphazard, deliberate campaign of terror are mostly ominous reflections of how thoroughly we are now pinioned in the gears.

It has not been my intention to reduce to objects of discourse, rather than confronting as subjects, the author of the Unabomber text, or the suspect Theodore Kaczynski, or outsiders known or unknown who might now be expressing our age’s deepest truths, or anyone else. That what I know about the Unabomber has come from the media makes this tendency

to animals, and the idea that individuals have obligations to society and society to individuals. In fact, these represent a mix of modern and far more archaic values, some of them the very intuitions we most need in order to resist and overcome the forces of technological domination.

The Unabomber’s harsh, if naive, politics of catastrophism fails to recognize that the horrific future he predicts if industrialism doesn’t collapse dramatically, rapidly and soon, is already upon us. People in the future, he warns, “won’t be able to just turn the machines off, because they will be so dependent on them that turning them off would amount to suicide.” But people are already dependent; it is precisely this suicide that the Unabomber advocates. As for the potential negative consequences to human beings and even, one must surmise, to ecosystems, he shrugs, “Well, you can’t eat your cake and have it too...” And he proposes that revolutionaries do everything possible to bring about this collapse to avoid technology’s far more destructive triumph. There is something evocative in this of an International Monetary Fund consultant’s recommendation of economic “shock therapy” and starvation of some populations to improve their countries’ laggard economies over the long run. It is the logic of someone who, either because they are sitting in an air-conditioned high rise or hiding in a cave, is somehow not connected to life. A situationist once remarked that the bloodiest revolution would be far less painful than any weekend under capitalism, but the social-ecological disaster into which we are presently sliding, whether it be helped along by “determined minorities” or not, may prove far worse than we can imagine.

5: Things Fall Apart

Toward the end of his life, Mumford confided to Roderick Seidenberg, “I think, in view of all that has happened the last...If one has courage and daring without benevolence, one is like a madman wielding a sharp sword; if one is smart and swift without wisdom, one is as though riding on a fast mount but not knowing which way to go.

“Even if one has talent and ability, if one uses them improperly and handles them inappropriately, they can only assist falsehood and dress up errors: In that case it is better to have few technical skills than many.

“So, the ambitious should not be lent convenient power; the foolish should not be given sharp instruments.”

–Taoist adept, 2nd century B.C.E.

“We aren’t the first to mention that the world today seems to be going crazy...”

–industrial Society and Its Future (the “Unabomber Manifesto”)”

1: Go, Unabomber

Is the taoist master’s advice more relevant to a serial bomber or to the society that engendered him? Now that the Unabomber’s fifteen minutes of fame may be nearly ended, perhaps we can begin to discern his ambiguous significance to the megatechnic system he wants to overthrow.

Clearly, the unabomber struck a chord in the culture, rapidly becoming a perverse folk hero. If most considered his means mad, some of his stated motives received a good measure of sympathy. This must have been particularly true among peo-

---


2 Printed in a special section of the September 19, 1995 Washington Post, under the signature “FC.”

3 This essay does not presume that Theodore Kaczynski is the Unabomber. Though it may be a reasonable premise, given what we can know...
ple physically damaged by industrial processes, or who have seen their livelihoods erased by automation, or been coerced into progressively constricted and surveilled routines by computerization, or witnessed some beloved place bulldozed in the name of progress, or simply felt the crushing burden of a world of machines, noise and dreary offices.

Suppressing a natural compassion for his victims—indeed, in the larger scheme of things, most of them little more than bystanders—some people secretly rooted for the Unabomber. Perhaps they did so hoping he would improve his aim while sharpening his arguments (though few people actually read more than excerpts in the print media, and those who did, ironically, probably got the document off the Internet). In fact, his aim was decidedly scattershot, if he intended to strike effectively and clearly at major policy-makers within the megamachine. But in post-modern pop culture North America, the unabomber seemed to be all we technophobes had; he stood in for a mass movement that few of his secret admirers even noticed was lacking. He was, instead, a slice of mediated saturnalia, a murky Robin Hood who put a scare into the normally smug “techno-nerds” while thumbing his nose at the police.

While humor can often be subversive, there was also an unmistakable element of cynicism (and thus resignation) in the comedic response to the Unabomber. Not only is life cheap (as soon as an airplane crashes the jokes start), when the media picks up a message, the meaning implodes. In the Unabomber’s case, his own argument—an astute one, though hardly new, that revolutionary action has unforeseeable consequences—took an ironic turn: his image was emblazoned on bumperstickers (as about the case, Kaczynski faces the possibility of being executed if convicted, based on evidence gathered by the FBI—an agency known to be one of the biggest lie machines in memory. He is a fascinating figure, from what we know of him; but given the charges and the possible repercussions, simple decency compels us to let the bombings, the manifesto and society’s response speak as much as possible for themselves.

The Unabomber text is a tormented scream against an empire whose claims to human improvement cannot conceal deepening domination and the ruination of the natural world. While it contains worthwhile insights, its abstract, mechanistic sociologism informs a survivalist, individualistic notion of freedom and a utilitarian outlook that considers any undertaking other than the most meager grubbing of food, clothing and shelter (but also, tellingly, the pursuit of status or revenge) to be an alienated, “surrogate” activity. This Crusoe’s text, with its pioneer flavor and autarchic notion of autonomy, does not stray far from the classic bourgeois political economy whence it came. In some sense it is a protest against the idea of any society. While it astutely sees through the rationalization and repression of modern civilization’s claim to universality, the text’s rejection of any human universality is an obscurantist idyll. Correspondingly, it rejects what it calls the “most basic values” of this society as “industrial values.” Among the values it rejects—the “official values of our society [because] they are useful to the industrial system,”—it names racial and sexual equality, helping the poor, “peace as opposed to war,” kindness

---

26 The text’s tedious, simplistically psychologistic critique of “leftism”—by which is meant any reform or humanist impulse, or notion of universalism, or altruistic act of solidarity with the suffering or oppression of those other than oneself or one’s closest cohort—is an example of the dubious monadic individualism of the Unabomber. Leftism, he warns, with its identification with victims, its “moralistic tone,” its willingness to work in the interests of others, and its tendency to oppose violence and competition, is “inconsistent with wild nature,” which must therefore be competitive, violent, selfish and without moral significance. Strangely, the terrorist cell FC that the text identifies as its authors evokes the worst kind of clandestine, authoritarian, leftist group.
ple lever to apply the brakes, no fast track to the future. As much as the Unabomber may believe that “active, determined minorities” are the sole makers of history, only majorities can ultimately bring about the social change needed to turn back from extermination. A frightening prospect, surely, given both how “functional” and “dysfunctional” people have been and are becoming in this society, but however different we might wish things to be, a campaign of destabilization to spark industrial collapse (which industrialism seems to be bringing about quite well on its own, thank you very much), will probably only succeed in driving the inmates of industrial society further into the protective embrace of the megatechnic state.

Active, determined minorities and individuals can make a difference and have done so, of course. After all, Thoreau was a relative loner and outsider, yet his influence eventually became immense. And to provide only one contemporary example, anyone who reads radical environmental journals, as the Unabomber recommends, can find evidence of active minorities and individuals who are making a large difference. As planetary life conditions inevitably deteriorate further under industrial capitalism, more isolated acts of hope and despair like the Unabomber’s are to be expected. Nevertheless, we are not likely to find our way through the examples of either lone assassins or terrorist cells. Rather, we must look to communities of people working both within and against this society to transform it for pathways to a new mode of life. The transformation is in fact already occurring in many seemingly unrelated social movements and cooperative endeavors around the world. Whether they are creating alternative institutions, resisting domination, or defending their neighborhoods, people acting as the subjects of their history participate in a kind of Eternal Return, moving beyond history’s limits. Resisting and working together creatively, they fulfill the same necessary role whatever the context or the outcome, recreating and rearticulating not only their faith in the continuity of life but...
Through Ted Kaczynski’s countenance, the media inundated the public with images of the “twisted genius,” disheveled and dirty, eyes unfocused, an inaccessible and furious enigma. But it behooves us to contrast that image with another gracing the magazine and book racks—clear-eyed, stolid, spit-and-polish, a presence both comforting and commanding to the citizens. A retired military leader and former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this person is widely admired and thought to be an appropriate alternative to the national political morass.

Whereas the brilliant “misfit” Theodore Kaczynski, if he is the Unabomber, only managed over a period of several years to kill three and injure 23 people, Colin Powell, hardly brilliant but undeniably competent and well-adjusted, oversaw in just a few weeks the deaths and injuries of perhaps several hundred thousand Iraqi soldiers and civilians. And Powell’s war—against the technological and social infrastructure of the enemy nation—continues to prove effective, consigning its victims to death by malnutrition and disease. While Kaczynski was reviled in the press and thrown into a cell (and may ultimately be executed by the state), Powell’s deadly project is raised as the reasonable actions of enlightened, civilized polity. For his illustrious career in the service of death and destruction, Powell has been rewarded with parades, medals, a handsome pension, book tours and offers to run for public office.

The question “Who is sane? Who is mad?” immediately presents itself to anyone who doesn’t take for granted the dystopian nightmares cooked up daily in industrial capitalism’s laboratories, think tanks and board rooms. Compared to Bush, Schwartzkopf and Powell, with their arsenal of “dumb” and “smart” bombs, the Unabomber’s damage was pitiably

5 According to United Nations reports, more than a half million children have died in Iraq since the end of the Persian Gulf War as a result of continuing sanctions.

It could be argued that there are no innocent “bystanders.” To one degree or another, the rest of “us” participate in the apparatus, earning our daily bread, our own short-term dividends from apocalypse, as workers, functionaries, secretaries, and the like, all dependent on the industrial bribe. But there is no revolutionary short-cut to social transformation, no sim-

25 What, indeed, is sanity and what is insanity at this late day? In his post-apocalyptic satire Galapagos (1985), Kurt Vonnegut writes of the late twentieth century that “human brains back then had such copious and irresponsible generators of suggestions as to what might be done with life, that they made acting for the benefit of future generations seem one of many arbitrary games which might be played by narrow enthusiasts—like poker or polo or the bond market, or the writing of science-fiction novels. “More and more people back then ... had found ensuring the survival of the human race a total bore.
  “it was a lot more fun, so to speak, to hit and hit a tennis ball.”
sized, “that the whole concept of Subjugating nature and replacing man’s own functions with collectively fabricated, automatically operated, completely depersonalized equivalents must at last be appraised.”

Mumford would certainly have been surprised to find the nihilist “shadow twin” carrying out “crazy, criminal acts” in an explicit, calculated war against the automaton “techno-nerds” (as the Unabomber characterized them). It is as if instead of hanging himself, the Savage of Huxley’s Brave New World had decided to start killing the Alphas and Betas. But the bomber is more a symptom of crisis than any model for response. Indeed, rather than the “glint of hope” Zerzan found in the Unabomber’s campaign and manifesto—that, “in distinction to the widespread feeling that everything outside the self is beyond our control, the monopoly of lies has been broken”—the Unabomber’s pathetic one-man war both embodied and reinforced the bleak suspicion that the isolated self is all we have, undermining the contrasting sense that people working openly together may succeed in bringing about substantive change. (Oddly, the bomb-maker’s lonely operations at his work table parallel the solitary hacker in a cubicle, sending a different variety of poisoned gift into the technocratic void—a virus, perhaps, to “promote social stress and instability in the industrial system,” as “FC” urged, or simply to engage in some monad’s notion of dangerous play.) In the end, the bombings mostly left the “monopoly of lies” intact—a monopoly, in any case, that a small but growing number of people are starting to see through without the help of bombs.

No doubt, given the willingness of well-adjusted, well-rewarded automatons to experiment secretly with nuclear materials on human beings for decades, and their recent success

---

of our time,” Robert Wright observes–brings to mind the Unabomber himself. As Wright comments, “The Unabomber is Exhibit A in his own argument.”

There may indeed be a little of the Unabomber in us all, as numerous mass market publications have so cleverly noted. But judging from the pattern of bombings and the text, it’s also apparent that the bomber shared not only his understandable luddite frustrations with modern society but that inchoate rage pervasive in today’s mass psychology, expressed in every possible response from passive withdrawal to shooting up schoolyards. Despite the fatuous idea voiced in one anarchist flyer lauding the Unabomber, that “it’s just a matter of listening to your own rage,” most people understand that such rage frequently turns out to be a large part of the problem.

There are countless men exhibiting a combination of smoldering rage and technical dexterity nowadays; they have generally been more likely to blow up their coworkers with the boss—or their ex-wives. Generally blind to ambivalence and nuance, rage by itself can engender a Unabomber, perhaps, but rarely an authentic revolutionary, who—if I may, at the risk of seeming ridiculous, quote one of my boyhood heroes—is “guided by great feelings of love.” Leaving aside his rightful sense of urgency, the Unabomber’s enterprise was less a reasoned response to a world gone mad than simply one more of the myriad dangers we who live in mass society must negotiate daily—hostages not only to the murder, mayhem and dysfunction issuing from the powerful institutions that rule this pathological

8 Robert Wright, “The Evolution of Despair,” Time, August 28, 1995. Of course, we should not forget that the definition of sanity and insanity is a complex question of power, representation and consent. Modern civilization’s medicalization and sordid treatment of psychic difference is one more measure of our alienation. Many expressions of what we now tend to consider madness should have a place, as there seems to be in some cultures, to play a legitimate role in the spectrum of human expression and experience.

9 See John Zerzan, “Whose Unabomber?” from AAA, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440.

10 there would only have been honor in his decision if it did. On January 20, 1969–the day of Richard Nixon’s presidential inauguration—he resigned from the university of California-Berkeley math department and, emulating Thoreau, left to live his life deliberately at society’s margin.

At the time Kaczynski dropped out of the university, Lewis Mumford was finishing his landmark work, The Pentagon of Power, a book that could have easily been titled Industrial Society and Its Future. In that great, dark jeremiad, Mumford described two contrasting characterological types in megatechnic society. In one we find a Colin Powell: what Mumford called the “Automated, or Organization Man: he who takes all his orders from the system, and who, as a scientist, engineer, expert, administrator, or, finally, consumer and subject, cannot conceive of any departure from the system, even in the interest of efficiency, still less for the sake of creating a more intelligent, vivid, purposeful, humanly rewarding life.”

This automaton—perhaps a timber lobbyist or genetics researcher—this “limited, docile, scientifically conditioned human animal, completely adjusted to a purely technological environment,” was nevertheless “not born alone.” Rather, this personage has come with a twin, a dark shadow-self: defiant, not docile: disorderly, not organized or controlled: above all, aggressively destructive, even homicidal, reasserting the dammed-up forces of life’s crazy or criminal acts.” Though Mumford considered the aim of this “subversive” type to be the destruction of “higher attributes... whose gifts of love, mutuality, rationality, imagination, and constructive aptitude have enlarged all the possibilities of life,” he was not positing an argument for more control, more damming up, more technology, more adjustment and passivity. “It is in the light of [the megamachine’s] impending negations and destructions,” he empha...
the personality are exactly the same as those of enemy propaganda..."20

Naively hoping to “make a lasting impression,” even to destabilize industrialism, the Unabomber only managed to provide titillation (and further official pretext for harassment and surveillance of activists). His deadly “lasting impression” has faded with yesterday’s newspapers, and his bombs—weapons which a century or so ago anarchist revolutionaries praised as “great equalizers” against authority—are now almost imperceptible in a landscape where bombs of every magnitude and variety, in the service of every ideology and grievance, have become ubiquitous.21 (and bombings, of course, are only one manifestation of an endless array of modern disasters. It no longer matters whether an airplane crashes because of terrorism, corporate cost-cutting or the inevitable systems-errors of complex technology. In the mass society we inhabit, the first two causes are categories of the last.)

4: Two, Three, Many Unabombers?

We may never know if Ted Kaczynski is the Unabomber, but he clearly shares an enduring hatred for technology and love for nature with the author of the text. And though there is little evidence that high tech genocide in Vietnam directly influenced his decision to drop out (as some have suggested),

the Unabomber does, in fact, have his enthusiasts—including a not entirely tongue-in-cheek “fan club” on the West Coast (though in post-modern radicalism, irony and gravity inevitably commingle), Green Anarchists in England (not much irony there), and an anonymous flyer showing a color reproduction of Kaczynski with the cut-out, ransom-letter style legend, “Be like Ted.” In Berkeley, California, a punkish anarchist told a San Francisco Chronicle writer, “We all think he’s pretty great ... I totally know where the guy’s coming from. Everybody’s just kind of laughing. They’re hoping he blows something up in Berkeley so they can see it. I wish they’d start..."


11 This flyer is probably also available from AAA, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440. See also “Prominent Anarchist Finds Unsought Ally in Serial Bomber,” The New YorkTimes, May 1, 1996. While no one at the Fifth Estate was willing to speak to the media, that doesn’t automatically invalidate Zerzan’s decision to speak to the Times and several radio stations—despite his well-known explicit rejection of all compromise and his notion of “the drastic as the minimum response toward health.” (Future Primitive and Other Essays [New York and Columbia: Autonomedia/Anarchy, 1994], p. 137) In an open letter distributed to anarchists, he answered those who criticized him for speaking to the press by questioning “deliberate self-marginalization [that tries] to put forth ideas to change an insane world while at the same time disdaining all contact with that world.” He adds, “Is it manipulative to want to break out of our tiny ghetto and connect with universally suffering human beings?” (The letter is probably available from the above PO Box.) Actually, in the interview with the Times, Zerzan comes off as honest, thoughtful and unpretentious. His reasoning for speaking to the media suggests that however complex and ambiguous the problem of addressing others through mass society’s means, the spectacle is never absolutely hegemonic, and, given how terrible the times are, it might make sense to try. That our situation is dire does not automatically tell us which desperate measures might therefore be appropriate. Apparently, even intransigence may sometimes require compromise. The relationship between principles and strategies is not clear cut.


21 The New York Times reports that the country is currently witnessing “a proliferation of a sort of garden variety bomber,” leading to arrests of mostly white suburbanites, for example, in Georgia, Arizona and Washington State. Bombings and attempted bombings increased by more than 50 percent in the last five years, and have nearly tripled over the last decade. “The number of criminal explosions and attempts went from 1,103 in 1985 to 3,163 in 1994,” according to the article. See “Terrorism Now Going Homespun As Bombings in the U.S. Spread,” August 25, 1996.
selling T-shirts that said, ‘I love the Unabomber,’ because that would be kind of funny.”

In a New York Times interview depicting him as a “prominent anarchist” and “guru of sorts for anti-technology leftists,” John Zerzan judged the FC text to be a “pretty thoroughgoing critique.” In the flyer cited above, he extols the Unabomber’s “profoundly radical vision” of “a return to ‘wild nature’ via the complete and permanent destruction of modern industrial society,” and in another he praises the Unabomber’s “critique, in acts as well as words.” “I see in the eyes of Ted Kaczynski a sorrow reflecting what we have lost,” Zerzan writes. “But the Megamachine has not eradicated all resistance … And at the very least we have seen the courage and honor of one who would not buy into this fraudulent society, who fought the Brave New World with pen and sword.” But the eyes of another sometimes reveal to us what we are most predisposed to find. Reading Zerzan, one almost forgets how obscure most of the Unabomber’s victims were.

True, Zerzan did not wholeheartedly endorse either the method or the manifesto. He argued that more than industrialism would have to be eliminated to achieve freedom, and judged mail bombs “too random,” their potential “collateral harm [a military term that came into use during the Persian Gulf War] not justifiable.” According to Zerzan, Kaczynski’s “betrayal … at the hands of his brother reminds us that pacifism, in its smug cowardice, is always, at base, the defender of what is.” But life is more complex than the pithy utterances on flyers. There is more than one kind of cowardice, just as there is more than one variety of courage and honor. If we can approve of some of the Unabomber’s motives without supporting all his means, it seems fair to grant the same consideration to David

12 Zerzan criticizes the Unabomber text for its excessive emphasis on industrialism; actually, he argues, agriculture is a deeper, far more serious impediment to freedom. Will someone now start bombing soybean farmers? No more tofu?
and then to name the Fifth Estate (which is clearly in this tradition and which quotes extensively from it) as the unabomber’s most probable influence, seems a rather studied, if indirect, pot-shot. As a long-time F.E. reader, Sale had to know that neither the Unabomber’s language nor his strategy resembled the F.E.’s work, that at best we share with him what Sale shares with him—a sense of urgency about technological catastrophe and a jaundiced view of industrialism’s false promises.

Sale added nothing to his discussion by mentioning the F.E., just gratuitously tossed it in as an aside without the least substantiation. There is something utterly irresponsible, even contemptible, in offering such speculations, with the cops standing by, at a time when the FBI was harassing and investigating eco-radicals on the West Coast and obtaining subpoenas for the membership records of scholarly organizations such as the History of Science Society and the subscription lists of journals such as the left-wing Critical Sociology. (The manifesto was hand-delivered to him by FBI agents, most likely as part of their strategy to enlist journalists and academics to analyze the text for clues.)

Contrary to Sale’s volunteer detective work, we found no evidence that the Unabomber was on our subscription list. Nor did anything like the Unabomber text turn up in our files of rejected manuscripts, though if it had, it was too long, too badly written and too confused for us to have accepted it. Sadly, if the Unabomber couldn’t expect his text, despite its urgency, to be published in an anarchist antitech journal like the Fifth Estate, one can understand his sense of desperation. After all, the issues he raises—the destruction of wild nature, technological domination, genetic manipulation and ecological apocalypse—however confused their elaboration and whatever his shortcomings as a writer, are pressing. And if it takes a madman to tell us in his own mad way that our world is mad, then so be it. Truth be told, industrial capitalism is tattering the complex web of life to the point of global collapse, and legions of func-

David Kaczynski, who likely knows him better than anyone, came to believe that his older brother was the Unabomber (and thus that he himself had, by giving his brother money, unknowingly subsidized some of the bombing campaign). Judging by what the younger Kaczynski had to say, if his brother was responsible, he was motivated by more than high principles and heroism. “The truth from my point of view,” David told The New York Times, “is that Ted has been a disturbed person for a long time and he’s gotten more disturbed.”

Actually, if his brother were responsible for the bombings, the desire to publish his manifesto and to stop killing people could have meant Ted was becoming less and not more disturbed. (Curiously, the plaint in one communiqué against the tedium of making and testing bombs suggests that even criminal intransigence in the name of revolution can become an oppressive routine.) That the Unabomber could examine his own actions and try to articulate a more coherent perspective on modern society’s discontents offers some hope that others, seemingly incapable, may also be able to change.

3: Enter The Neo-Luddites

A form of “Name the Unabomber” inevitably occurred in the media, too. When he was shown the manifesto, Kevin Kelly, executive editor of the fashionable digerati magazine Wired, snorted, “If I didn’t know better, I’d say he sounds a lot like Kirkpatrick Sale.”

13 According to his interview in the April 26, 1996 Times, he tried to communicate with his brother when he began to develop suspicions, but was rebuffed.

14 See the extensive coverage in the May 26, 1996 Times.


16 See the particularly smug and stupid article by Bob Ickes, “Die, Com-
Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution, and his recent performances smashing computers (an instructive stunt which anarchists have practiced for several years), have earned Sale the media role of an official neo-luddite spokesman, in another serviceable media scenario of "techno-nerds vs. neo-luddites."17

For his part, Sale argued in the pages of The Nation that the newspapers should agree to the Unabomber’s offer to stop killing people and publish the manifesto. Publishing it would likely preempt more deaths, and newspaper editors “needn’t worry about the propaganda effect” of the text, he pointed out, “since it is a woodenly written term paper, full of academic jargon and pop psychology, repetitive and ill-argued, that will keep only the most dedicated readers awake beyond its opening paragraphs.”

“Which,” Sale continued, “is a shame,” since the Unabomber’s main point, that industrialism has been a “disaster for the human race,” is “absolutely crucial.” The greatest flaws in the document, Sale averred, were its manipulative idea of political change, its lack of a genuine ecological perspective, and its failure to cite or trace its origins to “the long Luddistic strain in Western thought” or “the great modern critics of technology such as Lewis Mumford, Jacques Ellul,” and others.18

Sale’s exposition on the Unabomber text, while one of the better discussions I saw in the press, is alternately insightful and pedantic, his reading peevious and occasionally inaccurate. His criticism of the text’s “appeal to nature [as] entirely utilitarian,” and of the Unabomber’s “faintest grasp of the principles of ecology,” lacks nuance and attention to the text. For example, according to Sale, the Unabomber “gives only a passing glance to the multiple environmental disasters the system is producing for itself and never mentions the likelihood … that the complex industrial house of cards will not hold.” In fact, after writing in paragraph 5 that his text does not go into the question of “environmental degradation or the destruction of wild nature, even though we consider these to be highly important,” the Unabomber nevertheless returns to technologically-caused ecological catastrophes several times, and clearly argues the possibility that industrialism may collapse on its own. Sale seems mostly annoyed that the Unabomber doesn’t properly acknowledge deep ecology ideas, but, if anything, the Unabomber’s implied approval of “the idea that wild nature is more important than human economic welfare” places him close to deep ecology, if only to a misanthropic, catastrophist variety of it.19

According to Sale, the text’s reference to “anarchist and radical environmental journals” reveals that the unabomber knows “something about the current [technology] critics,” and he adds parenthetically, “If I had to guess which has been most influential on him, I’d say the Fifth Estate, a feisty antitechnology paper published out of Detroit for the past thirty years . . .” To describe the Unabomber as somehow both “prescient” and an “incoherent” fanatic of mediocre intellect, and to censure his lack of identifcation with the “long Luddistic strain” in the Western tradition and his failure to quote from this tradition,

17 Rebels Against the Future (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995) provides a vivid account of the luddite revolt, and a sloppy, theoretically deficient discussion of the history of technological discourse and the recent emergence of revolt against mass techincs.


19 A certain primitivist catastrophism can be found among some deep ecologists, anarchists and others, expressed for example by Christopher Manes’ idea, in his Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), that “the time to make the choice between the natural and cultural world has come” (p. 248), whatever that conundrum is supposed to mean. For a discussion and critique of ecological catastrophism, see George Bradford, “Return of the Son of Deep Ecology,” and related essays, in the Spring 1989 Fifth Estate.
1: Go, Unabomber. Is the taoist masterâ€™s advice more relevant to a serial bomber or to the society that engendered him? Now that the Unabomberâ€™s fifteen minutes of fame may be nearly ended, perhaps we can begin to discern his ambiguous significance to the megatechnic system he wants to overthrow. Clearly, the unabomber struck a chord in the culture, rapidly becoming a perverse folk hero. Industrial Engineering in the Industry 4.0 Era: Selected papers from the Global Joint Conference on Industrial Engineering and Its Application Areas, GJCIIE 2017, July 20â€“21, Vienna, Austria. 276 Pages: 2018â€“5.33 MBâ€“4,309 Downloads New! on Industrial Engineering and Its Application Areas (GJCIIE), held in Vienna on July 20-21, 2017. They off Komâ¼nist Manifesto - Karl Marx. Read more Society 5.0: industry of the future, technologies, methods and THE LEAD WITHOUT A TITLE MANIFESTO - Robin Sharma. 107 Pages: 2011â€“614 KBâ€“29,900 Downloads. Lead without a title manifesto by international bestselling author robin sharma helping you lead Can I still have my carphone? Industrial society and its future. J. The Unabomberâ€™s Manifesto. Aiui-Authoritarians Anonymous Po Box 11331 Eugene, Oregon 97440 U$. Anti-Authoritarians AioiiMius. TO Box 11331 Eugene, Oregon 97440. Introduction. 1. 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 psychologi