What is Anarcho-Primitivism?

Anonymous

2005

Rosman, Abraham, and Paula G. Rubel. (2004) *The Tapestry of Culture: an introduction to cultural anthropology.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. (2001). *On the Inequality among Mankind.* Vol. XXXIV, Part 3. The Harvard Classics. (Original 1754). Retrieved November 13, 2005, from Bartleby.com: www.bartleby.com

Sahlins, Marshall. (1972). "The Original Affluent Society." 1–39. In *Stone Age Economics.* Hawthorne, New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Sale, Kirkpatrick. (1995a). *Rebels against the future: the Luddites and their war on the Industrial Revolution: lessons for the computer age.* New York: Addison-Wesley.

— . (1995b, September 25). "Unabomber's Secret Treatise: Is There Method In His Madness?" *The Nation*, 261, 9, 305–311.

"Situationism". (2002). The Art Industri Group. Retrieved November 15, 2005, from Art Movements Directory: www.artmovements.co.uk

Stobbe, Mike (2005, Dec 8). "U.S. Life Expectancy Hits All-Time High." Retrieved December 8, 2005, from Yahoo! News: news.yahoo.com —

Tucker, Kevin. (2003, Spring). "The Spectacle of the Symbolic." *Species Traitor: An Insurrectionary Anarcho-Primitivist Journal*, 3, 15–21.

U.S. Forestland by Age Class. Retrieved December 7, 2005, from Endgame Research Services: www.endgame.org

Zerzan, John. (1994). *Future Primitive and Other Essays.* Brooklyn: Autonomedia.

— . (2002, Spring). "It's All Coming Down!" In *Green Anarchy*, 8, 3–3.

— . (2002). Running on Emptiness: *The Pathology of Civilisation.* Los Angeles: Feral House.

Zinn, Howard. (1997). "Anarchism." 644–655. In *The Zinn Reader: Writings on disobedience and democracy.* New York: Seven Stories.

Kassiola, Joel Jay. (1990) *The Death of Industrial Civilization: The Limits to Economic Growth and the Repoliticization of Advanced Industrial Society.* Albany, New York: State U of New York Press.

Lee, Richard B. (1995). "Reflections on Primitive Communism." 252–268. *In Hunters and Gatherers 1: History, Evolution and Social Change.* Ed. Tim Ingold, David Riches, James Woodburn. Washington: Berg.

"Life Expectancy by Age", 1850 — 2003. Infoplease. Retrieved December 7, 2005, from www.infoplease.com

Levin, Phillip S., and Donald A. Levin. (2002, Jan-Feb). "The Real BioDiversity Crisis." *American Scientist*, 90, 1, 6–8.

Meadows, Donella H., Jorgen Randers, and Dennis Meadows. (2004). *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update.* White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green.

Moss, Ralph W., PhD. "Cancer: A Disease of Civilization?" Retrieved December 7, 2005, from *New Age Journal*: www.newagejournal.com

Næss, Arne. (1999). *The Deep Ecology Platform.* (Original 1989). Retrieved November 17, 2005, from Nancho Consults: Arne Naess: www.nancho.net

Palahniuk, Chuck. (1996). *Fight Club.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Pearce, Roy Harvey. (1965). *The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins. (Original 1953).

"Primitive Skills Gatherings". Retrieved December 7, 2005, from Traditional Tanners: www.braintan.com

Quinn, Daniel. (1995). *Ishmael.* New York: Bantam.

— . (2000). *A Path of Hope for the Future.* Retrieved December 6, 2005, from Ishmael Community: www.ishmael.org

Ransom, Steven. (2002). "Death by Doctoring, Part 2 of 2." Retrieved December 7, 2005, from Nexus: www.nexusmagazine.com

Contents

Works Cited

Abbey, Edward. (1976) *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. New York: Avon.

About Earth First! (n.d.) Retrieved November 17, 2005, from Earth First! Worldwide: www.earthfirst.org

Anonymous. (2005, Nov 26). "Re: Interview." Personal email to the author.

Bettinger, Robert L. (1991). *Hunter-Gatherers: Archaeological and Evolutionary Theory*. New York: Plenum.

Bose, Atindranath. (1967). *A History of Anarchism*. Calcutta: World.

Debord, Guy. (1995). *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone. (Original 1967)

Earth First! (2005, November 15). Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved November 17, 2005, from en.wikipedia.org

Earth Liberation Front (2005, November 17, 18:24). Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved November 17, 2005, from en.wikipedia.org

Goldberg, Carey. (1996, September 21). "Diaries Disclosed In Unabom Hearing," *The New York Times*, Saturday, Late Edition — Final, Section 1; Page 1; Column 5

Houriet, Robert. (1971). *Getting Back Together*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan.

Hunn, Eugene S. "In Defense of 'The Ecological Indian.'" Paper presented at the Ninth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, Edinburgh, Scotland, September 9, 2002. Retrieved September 6, 2004 from www.abdn.ac.uk

Jensen, Derrick. (2000). *A Language Older Than Words*. New York: Context.

— . (2002). *The Culture of Make Believe*. New York: Context.

Kaczynski, Theodore. (2003). *Industrial Society and Its Future*. Retrieved December 4, 2005, from CrimethInc X.tk: www1.shellkonto.se

stay for a few weeks in the spring and summer. "There aren't really rules, except that if anyone new wanted to live there long-term and build a dwelling, the four of us would all have to agree on that." There are also no "economic limits to 'membership'." The group lives on 30-acres of lush land which is owned outright. All of the members have spent time at larger intentional communities, and one member has lived at one.

"We are pretty heavily influenced by many of the same ideas even if we haven't all read the same books. Many of us are into Chellis Glendinning and Derrick Jensen." Clearly, Wildroots is philosophically rooted in anarcho-primitivism. The resident said that Wildroots was not the only attempt at a primitive community and cited two examples in Washington state ("the Institute for Applied Piracy and the Feral Farm").

It should be clear, by now, that there is a reasonably solid canon of anarcho-primitivist philosophy available, which provides the seeds for what could potentially blossom into a movement. Several periodicals (*Green Anarchy*, *Species Traitor*, *Green Anarchist*, *Fifth Estate*, *Live Wild or Die*, *The Final Days*, *Green Journal*, *Disorderly Conduct*, *Cracks in the Empire*, *Do or Die*, and *Quick!*) are dedicated to anarcho-primitivist theory, and the most widely circulated American anarchist magazine, *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, frequently features primitivist viewpoints (Zerzan 2002:3). The Federal Bureau of Investigation apparently sees the potential of a radical environmental movement, since it has deemed eco-terrorism the number one domestic terrorist threat. The small communities currently in existence may represent the budding of this movement or they may not. In either case, the arguments in favor of anarcho-primitivism should be evaluated openly by mainstream society because, if its claims are valid, their implications are immediate and uncommonly far-reaching.

I. Introduction

Anarcho-primitivists comprise a subculture and political movement that, generally, advocates hunting and gathering as the ideal human subsistence method (from the point of view of sustainable resource use) and the band as the ideal human social structure (for its features of egalitarianism). While the goal may seem improbable, a primitivist would contend that more modest goals are either undesirable or unachievable within the system. The past 10,000 years have after all been largely a history of "solutions" to the problems of an agricultural society. This critique of "civilization" inherently rejects less radical ideals and claims to go uniquely to the heart of all social discontent. It is multi-faceted, drawing on several traditions of thought. These include the nineteenth century social speculators, anthropology of hunter-gatherers, situationism, anarchism, radical (deep) ecology, and anti-technological philosophy. The potential problem of implementation is largely solved by a growing consensus that an end to "economic growth" is fast approaching, making revolutionary change inevitable. The direction of that change is the focus of anarcho-primitivist interest.

Anarcho-primitivism is subtly influencing society in several ways. The Unabomber's "manifesto" enunciated many of the central tenets of anarcho-primitivism (e.g. rejection of liberalism and industrialism). Primitivists were among the protesters participating in window-smashing, spray-painting, and other vandalism at the Seattle WTO protests in December 1999. They are probably among those elusive "eco-terrorists" who carry out property destruction in the name of the Earth Liberation Front. The popular novel Fight Club (1996), which became a feature film, portrayed a group of alienated young men who reject consumerist culture and attempt to bring it to an end through massive sabotage. While anarcho-primitivism may not seem worthy of much thought or attention because it falls far outside the mainstream of political discourse, it ought not to be dismissed. It merits substantial attention

solely on the basis of its harmonious integration of several historically disparate lines of thought.

II. Aims

The prefix "anarcho" signifies the anarchist rejection of the state in favor of small-scale political structures. Additionally, as primitivist icon John Zerzan (2002:67–68) explains, "I would say Anarchism is the attempt to eradicate all forms of domination." So a key distinction must be made between anarcho-primitivists and anarchists generally because, "[f]or example, some Anarchists don't see the technological imperative as a category of domination."

In the most general terms, they reject "civilization" in favor of "wildness." More specifically, they call for the abandonment or destruction of industrial (and possibly agricultural) technology in favor of subsistence that is not based on the industrial "forces of production" — hence, the adoption of the "primitive" label. This means that primitivists reject even forms of production based on collective management and ownership because any production exceeding immediate subsistence needs is seen as incompatible with long-term sustainability. Derrick Jensen (2000:143) explains:

> Make no mistake, our economic system can do no other than destroy everything it encounters. That's what happens when you convert living beings to cash. That conversion, from living trees to lumber, schools of cod to fish sticks, and onward to numbers on a ledger, is the central process of our economic system.

III. Influences and Precedents

a. Anarcho-primitivism's internal coherence lies in its complementary and self-reinforcing synthesis of several previous modes

connects them. This "community" is only significant insofar as it has the potential to lead to face-to-face interaction, however.

There are some signs of actual emerging communities which advocate and apply (to an extent) the principles of an anarcho-primitivist philosophy. The first large-scale secular movement that exhibited some "primitivist" themes was the outbreak of communes during the late 1960s (Houriet 1971). The hippie subculture idolized the Native American cultures of the southwest like the Pueblo, Hopi, and Zuni (1971:198). Synonymously called the "back to the land" movement, these intentional communities emphasized that the land was true basis for the economy (1971:153, 181). The hippies advanced few of the philosophical and none of the empirical arguments that have become available in the last 35 years as justification for a non-civilized life, and their communities have all but disintegrated. In the early 1980s, the various threads of primitivism began to cohere into the independent worldview outlined above.

Today there are a few groups of people who actively seek out community that approximates (as closely as is feasible) an anarcho-primitivist alternative. Most loosely connected to anarcho-primitivism are so-called primitive skills gatherings, at which attendees camp in an undeveloped area and learn a few skills of self-sufficient survival including bow and arrow making, friction fire-starting, edible wild plant identification, animal tracking, and shelter construction ("Primitive Skills" n.d.). For some, the interest in these meetings may be more hobby-oriented than ideological, but the skills they teach would be of definite use where the necessities of life are not provided by a global industrial economy.

Wildroots is the name of a self-described "radical homestead" in North Carolina. One resident participated in a brief interview (Anon. 2005) providing the following information. It began with only two individuals and the population has since doubled. Two are from the "upper middle class," one from the "middle class, and the other from the "working class." Visitors are welcome and typically

present global rate of extinction is estimated between 100 and 1000 times the (normal) background rate (Levin and Levin 2002). As a result of large-scale logging, less than two percent of U.S. forests were more than 200 years old in 1997 ("U.S. Forestland" n.d.). Every introductory environmental science textbook describes in detail the seemingly endless atrocities perpetrated against the natural world. Fisheries are being harvested at rates far in excess of the maxim sustainable yield. The same chemicals responsible for the human cancer epidemic transform diverse productive land and water habitats into barren waste dumps.

Anarcho-primitivism seeks a return to a wild life free from the culture that seems to be doing its best to destroy the planet, a life that humanity successfully realized for nearly all of our time on this planet (Rosman and Rubel 2004:181). What this entails in the modern context is a small scale society that is independent from the global industrial economy, but said society would also not be restricted by the modern constraints of property and imaginary borders. It would be self-sufficient, subsisting successfully on the local land as well as any scraps which civilization (or what is left of it) provides. It would lack the desire to control or subdue the life forms upon which it depended. But most importantly, such a community would have a visceral sense of and relationship to a physical place.

V. Prospects

Much of the anarcho-primitivist community is restricted to the pages of anarchist magazines and websites. This is community in a very loose, virtual sense, but in the modern context this form of "community" is almost surely a prerequisite of any new zeitgeist. These are real individuals writing, reading, and thinking about anarcho-primitivism across the world, and their common interest

of thought. The oldest and most pervasive of these is the romantic idea of the noble savage. This idea, popularized in the eighteenth century by Rousseau (2001), has persisted ever since (recall the Iron Eyes Cody anti-litter advertising campaign). This romanticism was adopted by the nineteenth century transcendentalists like Emerson, Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller (Pearce 146–150). However, these early radical thinkers, while admiring of the "primitives" and favoring social change, did not seek to emulate their societies: "The fact is," Thoreau wrote, "the history of the white man is a history of improvement, that of the red man a history of fixed habits of stagnation." (Pearce 1965:149). The white man's "history of improvement" was the focus of another group of speculators, including Comte, Tylor, Powell, Morgan, and Spencer, who advocated unilineal cultural evolution (Bettinger 1991:1–29). The most prominent of these was Morgan who outlined the progression from savagery to barbarism to civilization. These stages were defined by increasing technological progress (originating with stone-age hunter-gatherers) resulting in a corresponding decrease in reliance on nature and the increasing opportunity for managerial and artistic pursuits (Bettinger 1991:4), but only for an elite class. Although Morgan's categories of society roughly correspond to some of those still in use today, the idea of unilineal evolution is of no more than historical interest to anthropologists today, who no longer endorse sweeping generalizations without significant supporting evidence.

b. It was not until the 1960s that the negative stereotype of "savagery" was challenged. In 1966, the first international conference on hunting and gathering societies (entitled "Man the Hunter") was held in Chicago (Bettinger 1991:48). The significance of this conference was to overturn the longstanding assumption that hunter-gatherers' lives were "nasty, brutish and short," in the enduring words of Thomas Hobbes. Marshall Sahlins famously made the case in his paper, "Notes on the Original Affluent Society," which consolidated brand new ethnographic research from Africa and Australia. He concluded that hunter-gatherers (of the most mobile sort)

could be characterized as affluent on the basis that their few and simple wants were easily met. He called this economy the "Zen way" (1972:29). Although significant problems with his source data are recognized now, his essay is still commonly assigned in introductory anthropology courses because of a lingering sense that he "had a point" (Bird-David 1992:26). Since Man the Hunter, there has been no shift in the scholarly literature back toward the negative stereotypes of hunter-gatherers. (A shift away from stereotypes in general is an obvious trend, however.) Richard Lee, a co-organizer of the 1966 conference, still publishes work propounding the study of the "primitive communism" phenomenon (Lee 1995). Participants in this revolution of hunter-gatherer studies certainly were and are aware of the romantic stereotype of the noble savage, and, if only unconsciously, they had brought it up-to-date with modern scholarship, giving it significant credibility. This primitivist trend attracted many to the study of hunter gatherers, and certainly formed a foundation for the appearance of anarcho-primitivism in the ensuing decades.

c. In a novel critique of modern society that we would now recognize as postmodernism, Guy Debord expressed in The Society of the Spectacle (1995) the vacuity of life within industrial society in terms of "the spectacle" — his term for symbolic representation run amok. In Thesis 1 he says, "All that once was directly lived has become mere representation." (1995:12). Debord was part of a revolutionary French art movement of the 1960s, Situationism, which rejected the substitution of representation for direct experience. Like previous art movements had done, Situationsists sought to bridge the divide between art and everyday life. Primitivist Kevin Tucker (2003) makes clear that, in the decades since Debord presented his critique, the dominance of his "spectacle" has grown exponentially with the development of audio-video recording technology and the internet as mediums of communication ("medium" is a key word here, suggesting "mediate") that replaces the direct interaction of individuals. As in the early primitivism of the Transcendentalists,

The more common response among primitivists reflects this urgency and calls for direct action that will bring an end to the destruction wrought by industrial technology as quickly as possible.

A legitimate objection to destruction of the infrastructure of industrial society is that it would inevitably lead to the deaths of millions. Aside from the high probability that such a scenario will eventually occur, if current trends continue, without any help from saboteurs (Meadows, et. al. 2004) and that the sooner that catastrophe occurs the less "disastrous the results…will be" (Kaczynski 2003:3), an anarcho-primitivist would argue that such objections exhibit naïveté about the reality of technological progress.

> You can't get rid of the "bad" parts of technology and retain only the "good" parts. Take modern medicine, for example. Progress in medical science depends on progress in chemistry, physics, biology, computer science and other fields. Advanced medical treatments require expensive, high-tech equipment that can be made available only by a technologically progressive, economically rich society. Clearly you can't have much progress in medicine without the whole technological system and everything that goes with it. (Kaczynski 2003:121)

The increasing incidence of cancer is probably the most ironic consequence of this "progress." In terms of the human health that modern medicine ostensibly improves, the cancer epidemic provides a striking wake-up call to advocates of medical technology. It generally agreed that cancer is a disease caused primarily by the lifestyle of Western Civilization (Moss n.d.; Ransom 2002). All the same, life expectancy has increased in the last 100 years ("Life Expectancy" n.d.; Stobbe 2005). This begs the question of which is more important, quantity or quality of life.

The consequences of modern technology are certainly far greater for nonhumans, as they are not its intended beneficiaries. The

left of mankind will retreat to empty zoos and lock itself in cages as protection against the bears and big cats and wolves that pace and watch us from outside the cage bars at night...

[Y]ou'll wear leather clothes that will last you the rest of your life, and you'll climb the wrist-thick kudzu vines that wrap the Sears Tower... [T]he air will be so clean you'll see tiny figures pounding corn and laying strips of venison to dry in the empty car pool lane of an abandoned superhighway stretching eight-lanes-wide and August-hot for a thousand miles. (Palaniuk 1996:124–125)

The above quotation from the popular novel *Fight Club* is a vivid description (some might say caricature) of a world in which industrial civilization has been survived by the kinds of small-scale societies to which anarcho-primitivists aspire. There are two modes of thought on how people can affect this outcome. The first, advocated by Daniel Quinn (2000), is that it can only be accomplished through the dissemination of a new "vision" through society, which will inevitably result in the radical transformation of civilization necessary to end the destruction of the natural world. Quinn feels that without first "changing minds" all other efforts will be fruitless. However, this strategy has been criticized for a lack of urgency. Derrick Jensen (2000:182) conveys this urgency well:

Many perceive the pain of denuded forests and extirpated salmon directly in their bodies: part of their personal identities includes their habitat — their human and nonhuman surroundings. Thus they are not working to save something out there, but responding in defense of their own lives. This is not dissimilar to the protection of one's family: why does a mother grizzly bear charge a train to protect her cubs, and why does a mother human fiercely fight to defend her own?

Debord's situationism implied a desire for social change, a desire that he makes explicit in a preface to a recent edition (1995:10). The above quotation of Thesis 1 also illustrates Debord's primitivism. In lamenting the loss of a perceived past in which direct experience was universal, he paved the way for anarcho-primitivism, which would paint a clearer picture of that implicit alternative. Debord and his contemporaries were aware of political movements that had historically exhibited similar critical attitudes to social and political norms ("Situationism" 2002). Among these was anarchism.

d. Anarchism, also called libertarian socialism, has a long and complicated history beginning in Europe approximately 200 years ago "in the climate of reason" that simultaneously gave rise to libertarian and authoritarian socialism (Bose 1967:77,379). At the end of the nineteenth century, it was taking hold in the US and Europe among organized laborers. It was at this time that the stereotype of the bomb-throwing anarchist was born, fueled by events such as the Haymarket Affair (Bose 1967:253,392). However this stereotype does injustice to the idealistic motives of anarchists as explicated by its numerous philosophical proponents. The chaos they are so frequently accused of desiring is arguably the antithesis of their true motives: the widespread (socially accepted and internalized) disorder of war, oppression, greed, hunger, depression that stalks hierarchical societies is the object of anarchists' assault. As Howard Zinn (1997:644) explains,

It is these conditions that anarchists have wanted to end: to bring a kind of order to the world for the first time. We have never listened to them carefully, except through the hearing aids supplied by the guardians of disorder — the national government leaders, whether capitalist or socialist.

The ultimate aim of anarchists is hardly different than that of other idealists throughout history. But anarchists' optimism —

their faith in the ability of human beings to voluntarily cooperate with each other — sets them clearly apart from all the others, who unfailingly require some authoritarian class for the maintenance of "order."

It was perhaps a lapse in this long-standing faith, stemming from the lost optimism of the 1960s, that led some anarchists in search of a historical basis for their convictions — a search that led back to the origins of the first states — that is, to the beginning of "civilization" itself. These primitivist themes began to appear in anarchist publications in the 1980s, and they explicitly referenced the 1960s anthropology of hunter-gatherers (e.g. Sahlins 1972); the egalitarian band structure seemed to exemplify the anarchist solution to social disorder. The environmental movement also flourished into the 1970s, and this is reflected in the anarchist-leaning fiction of Edward Abbey.

e. Abbey's 1975 novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1976), centered on a small group of radical, mostly young individuals dedicated to sabotaging the infrastructure that allowed for the taming of the "wilderness" of the American west. They are sympathetically portrayed as the underdogs in a country where political power is held by no-good despoilers of nature. The uncompromising sentiment for "eco-defense" (a novel concept itself) expressed by Abbey reflected a radical environmental ethic that was totally new and would become known as "deep ecology." This ethic is summed-up well by its recognized founder, Arne Næss: "The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value. The value of non-human life forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human purposes." (1999) It was in this context of Abbey's advocacy of "monkey wrenching" and Næss's eco-philosophy that the name "Earth First!" was given in 1989 to a new movement dedicated to defending the natural world by any means necessary ("About Earth First!" n.d.; "Earth First" 2005).

Derrick Jensen (2000:188) expresses "the central question" that environmental activists face: "What are sane and appropriate re-

IV. Synthesis

John Zerzan (1994,2002) adds the most academic voice to the chorus. While his writing style is the least accessible, his critique is by far the deepest. He seeks the root of all domination, and this path leads him deeper into prehistory than even the origins of agriculture. Art, language, number, time, and even symbolic thought have been subjects of Zerzan's interrogation. For him, each of those serves to mediate humans from the direct experience of the world that Guy Debord elegized. Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* (1995), is undoubtedly the most widely read book questioning the basis of civilization. It is a novel that revolves around a Socratic-style dialogue in which the reader learns how civilization came to be and what humanity has forgotten as a result. Derrick Jensen provides a uniquely psychological analysis of modern civilization, drawing on the work of R. D. Laing and Erich Fromm. He uses his own experience of child abuse to show how the same types of relationships are manifested on a larger scale throughout society (2000). He also assesses the psychology of hate groups in terms of its relationship the dominant culture (2002).

All of these individuals agree that civilization was a mistake that has had disastrous consequences for human and non-human life, and it will continue to wreak havoc until people decide to stop it or until it collapses under it own weight. After one of these events occurs, the planet will finally be able to begin recovering from 10,000 years of human domestication.

> Picture yourself planting radishes and seed potatoes on the fifteenth green of a forgotten golf course. You'll hunt elk through the damp canyon forests around the ruins of Rockefeller Center, and dig clams next to the skeleton of the Space Needle leaning at a forty-five degree angle. We'll paint the skyscrapers with huge totem faces and goblin tikis, and every evening what's

to present the environmental crisis as a whole and show that it required a systematic response (Kassiola 1990:17).

Resource shortages have become a serious concern in recent years among limits-to-growth theorists. By far, the most popular and far-reaching of the theories of resource depletion concerns petroleum. "Peak oil" refers to the point at which total oil extraction (in a particular oil-field, a region, or the planet) reaches its highest point along the slope of a bell curve. From that moment on, supply begins to drop while demand persists. This phenomenon has been observed for decades, but the global economy has been able to sufficiently redistribute oil to regions where the supply has long been exhausted (e.g. Texas). The consequences of the global peak of oil extraction are only recently being considered: when global supply is unable to meet global demand, oil's market value will begin rising ever-faster. Anything and everything that depends on oil (try imagining some aspect of out society that does not) will become increasingly expensive, and eventually industrial society will grind to a halt. It must be added, few if any of the scholars who promote limits-to-growth critiques are excited about the end of "civilization" they foresee (most hope to avert it), but, for an anarcho-primitivist, their scenarios provide a near-panacea.

The seven influences outlined above are by no means universally recognized among all anarcho-primitivists, but they are clearly visible throughout the available "anti-civilization" literature. The key writers, including John Zerzan, Derrick Jensen, and Daniel Quinn, all come from different backgrounds — the labor movement, the environmental movement, or entirely non-political — but they each synthesize elements of the above influences and add their own unique contributions.

sponses to insanely destructive behavior?" He continues, "So often environmentalists…are capable of plainly describing the problems…, yet when faced with the emotionally daunting task of fashioning a response…, we generally suffer a failure of nerve and imagination." Earth First! reflected the first attempt to overcome this failure of nerve, but the challenge drove others to take more extreme measures. The large-scale property destruction (glorified in Edward Abbey's novels) of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) was one response to the ineffective "reformist" measures taken by many activists. The first actions claimed by the ELF occurred during the 1990s in the UK and US. Examples include the 1998 arson of the Vail Mountain ski resort, the 2003 arson of a San Diego condominium construction site, and multiple examples of vandalism at car dealerships, particularly of sport utility vehicles ("Earth Liberation Front" 2005).

The radical environmental movement was compatible with primitivist ideas, as the popular portrayal of Indians as ecologists demonstrates. "Primitive" people, especially mobile hunter-gatherers, are directly dependent on the land for their subsistence and, presumably, have a more "ecocentric" worldview than is possible in modern industrial society. There has been some dispute over this point in recent years from scholars who seem "intent on demonstrating that it is 'human nature' to be environmentally destructive" (Hunn 2002). Eugene Hunn attempts to put the debate into perspective concluding, "by the excellent condition of the continent when the first Europeans arrived," that Native Americans had done something right. He continues,

> That the continent was not 'pristine wilderness' is undeniable, since it had long been home to millions of Indian peoples. That Indian peoples had cared well for this land, had conserved its biodiversity, is also undeniable. To dispute the reality of 'The Ecological In-

dian'...is to blind us to the damage done since, in the name of progress and of profit.

Thus, environmental problems came to be seen as a symptom of the far larger problem of "civilization," which has demonstrated unconcern for any limits to "growth" to the detriment of the natural world. One individual responding to some of the same concerns with a more anti-technological focus was Theodore Kaczynski, widely known as "the Unabomber."

f. A 34,000-word paper entitled "Industrial Society and Its Future" was published in September 1995 by the *Washington Post.* The Post was complying with an anonymous offer from the "Unabomber" to stop his 17-year bombing campaign in exchange for the publication of his revolutionary treatise. Sixteen mailed bombs were sent by Kaczynski, resulting in the deaths of three and injuring 23 more (Goldberg 1996). The "manifesto," as the media called it, decries the ever-increasing dominance of technology within modern society. It calls for a revolution, not against political structures, but against "the economic and technological basis of the present society" (Kaczynski 2003:3). This tendency to aggressively challenge technological innovation can be traced back to early eighteenth-century England when advances in textile manufacturing technology threatened to make obsolete centuries of tradition. These detractors of technology, popularly called Luddites, from 1811 to 1812 sabotaged this new machinery creating an uproar in English society (Sale 1995a). Their name derives from the mythological figure, Ned Ludd, whose name served as a pseudonym in their letters of threat of and explanation for their vandalism (Sale 1995a:77–78).

Modern philosophers including Jacques Ellul, Lewis Mumford, and Chellis Glendinning — so-called neo-Luddites (Sale 1995a:237–240) — continue to promote the skepticism toward "progress" that has surely existed as long as technological innovation itself. The difference between neo-Luddites and their predecessors is that, in the nineteenth century, new technologies were only a social threat,

whereas today technology threatens the biological systems that form the basis of human existence (Sale 1995a:266–267). Kaczynski's text is very clearly informed by neo-Luddite thought, although he does not cite the influence of any previous thinkers within it (Sale 1995b:305). Elsewhere he has said, "Technology, above all else, is responsible for the current condition of the world and will control its future development." The ideology of the Luddites and their modern counterparts provides a crucial pillar of anarcho-primitivism.

g. A final pillar supporting the primitivist ethos demonstrates the unsustainability of industrial society. This body of work refutes those arguments that claim science will provide the solutions necessary to sustain current First World living standards in the face of massive resource degradation and depletion. It also provides anarcho-primitivists a safe, simple answer to the challenge, "How are you going to get there?" The 1972 book, *Limits to Growth* (LTG), was the first systematic assessment of the sustainability of modern society. More than a decade of environmentalism still had not popularly integrated ubiquitous environmental problems into a coherent message for public consumption. Earlier works like Erlich's *The Population Bomb* and Carson's *Silent Spring* had focused on specific bite-sized issues. LTG offered a satisfying, yet disturbing complete picture. It was the product of a research project commissioned by the Club of Rome, an international, informal group of "businessmen, statesmen, and scientists" (Meadows, et. al. 2004:ix) who wanted an assessment of the sustainability of the overall course of human society. The final report predicted that unless widespread measures were taken to reduce consumption and pollution sufficiently early, human society would overshoot global carrying capacity and ultimately face a collapse, defined as "an uncontrolled decline in both population and human welfare" (Meadows, et. al. 2004:xi). The research group reached this conclusion through the use of a computer model which was able to factor in multiple variables and the interaction between them. LTG was the first attempt