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Wild Times Ahead

Waiting for the End of Civilization with Anarcho-Primitivist Kevin Tucker

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On a Sunday afternoon in Frick Park, Kevin Tucker abandons the trail. He lopes across a trickle of a creek and climbs a scantily wooded hillside, searching for a spot he knows. He crouches beside a rotting log, tipping it to look for the kind of food he hopes to survive on someday.

The lion's mane mushroom can grow bigger than a human head, but what's memorable is its texture: spongy and moist, its fibers oozing with rich golden jelly. Tucker touches it. "It feels weird," he muses. "It feels like some kind of Hostess thing."

Tucker edits *Species Traitor: An Insurrectionary Anarcho-Primitivist Journal*, whose goal is to predict, and promote, the imminent collapse of civilization. Anarcho-primitivism holds that we should respond to that collapse by becoming nomadic hunter-gatherers — the way of life that defined human history until the (relatively recent) advent of agriculture.

Species Traitor advocates that we simultaneously resist civilization and "rewild" ourselves: It reflects both Tucker's prediction that civilization will soon collapse — preferably by choice of the civilized, but otherwise of its own rotten weight — and his zeal for shedding the domesticity of civilized life to reclaim our feral natures. The zine's mix of societal critique, environmental doomsaying and quasi-religious fervor is alternately terrifying, mad and enthralling. Perhaps not surprisingly, anarcho-primitivism is minimally popular even among anarchists. But its followers are scattered widely, and the soft-spoken Tucker, who's 26 and lives near Greensburg, is himself an increasingly prominent writer and speaker.

One way to rewild is to forage for wild foods, and Tucker calls himself a "mushroom addict." He haunts the woods, hunting edible specimens, which he extols for their nutritional, medicinal and environmental benefits: "The strength of a forest can be judged by the kind of mushrooms that grow there."

Crouching by the lion's mane, Tucker smiles. His waist-length dark-brown dreadlocks obscure the photo on the front of his black T-shirt, of a tribal South American boy drawing the string of a bow. "We have seen the world we want to live in," it reads, "and we will fight for it." Tucker designed and screen-printed the shirt, whose back depicts power lines dense against the sky. "The war of wildness awaits us ... After the lights go out, no war but primal war."

Nearby in the trampled vegetation sit a chunk of asphalt, a brown beer bottle, a chainsawed hunk of log. Barks sound from the nearby dog run. Tucker plucks the lion's mane from the log to examine it, then replaces it. It will grow back, he says. "The spores are there. That's what matters."

Walking through Frick Park with a primitivist is a weird, if agreeable, exercise in double-consciousness. We

traverse the dirt path very slowly. As hikers, joggers and dog-walkers hustle past, we stop every few yards, scanning the foliage for mushrooms and other edible plants. They're everywhere. Tucker finds mustard garlic, which tastes like it sounds, and wood sorrel, which resembles clover but with a tiny yellow flower, and a lemony flavor.

Like everyone else on this Sunday in May, we are enjoying the warm, sunny weather.

Unlike everyone else, we are preparing for the end of civilization.

Tucker's partner, a young woman named Yank, is fair-skinned, with an oval face. Like Tucker's, Yank's nose is adorned with an omega-shaped septum piercing. She wears camo sweatpants and an elastic headband, and carries a digital camera. Her arm tattoos — of a human skeleton and tribally stylized fish and lizards — complement Tucker's inkings, which include the motto "We are the weeds in the sidewalk" set against a backdrop of eerie skyscrapers.

Tucker, in jeans and sneakers, carries his field guides in two shoulder bags he made, one from an old bearskin a friend gave him, the other a rigid container of tulip bark, with a strap of knotted milkweed.

"Rewilding is part of the resistance," he says. "It's the active part you can get involved with." Cars hum past on Forbes, visible 50 yards away through the trees. "It's about understanding that wildness exists inside everything."

Civilization, primitivists argue, germinates all our ills: government, which is necessarily repressive; private property, and thus crime; war; social, economic and sexual inequality; environmental degradation; and endless, numbing work routines. Progress is a myth, they contend: We've lost more than we've gained. Modern technology promises fulfillment but delivers isolation, cocooning us from each other, from nature, from the consequences of our destructive, unsustainable ways.

Tucker and Yank don't know any other primitivists in the Pittsburgh area. Those they do know — including a young primitivist couple from Australia who visited them in June — they mostly contact via Internet. But they belong to a loose national, even international network whose heart is in the Pacific Northwest. Writer John Zerzan, widely regarded as the godfather of primitivism and a good friend of Tucker's, lives in Eugene, Ore., where he co-edits *Green Anarchy* magazine (circulation: 8,000). This past April, Zerzan joined Tucker and Derrick Jensen, a prominent Northern California-based anti-civilization writer, on a speaking tour that included Wilson College, in Chambersburg, Pa., and Erie's Mercyhurst College.

Tucker also wrote the preface to the new edition of Zerzan's keynote anthology, *Against Civilization*. "Overcoming domestication is a massive undertaking," his essay declares, "but our souls and our lives are at stake."

Tucker grew up in suburban St. Louis, watching sprawl devour the woods. He got into activism at age 12, working on causes from animal rights to protesting Shell Oil's incursions upon Nigerian tribal lands. Anarcho-syndicalism — which advocates worker control of society — attracted him early, but the doctrine's inherent industrialism never fit with his radical environmental concerns. "I started wondering where things *started* going wrong," he says.

Something that cemented him in anarcho-primitivism was life on a farm. It was an animal refuge where he worked with Yank, a few years after they had met, in 1998, as teen-agers at a punk-rock show in Columbus, Ohio. Tucker watched the farm's handful of cows trample a stream into a muddy gutter — domestication destroying wildness. Out in the barnyard, some rescued chickens roosted calmly in trees. But confined in a pen (to protect them from foxes) they went berserk, bloodying each other.

"It's like cities," he says of the chicken pen. "It's just like us."

Tucker subsequently studied anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, graduating in 2004. While he can

be thoroughly analytical about civilization's failings, he describes his relationship with nature as spiritual. He feels a particular kinship with morels. "Morels not Morals," reads one of his T-shirt designs. (Another deadpan, "Will Hunt and Gather for Food.") Morels turn up in the oddest places. "They do whatever they want," says Tucker. "Nothing always applies all the time." They are an anarchist's kind of shroom.

We spend a couple hours in Frick, identifying, photographing and collecting plants and mushrooms. Back at the trailhead, we stop behind the charred shell of the park's Environmental Center, which burned a few years back.

"We've got so much of our lives taken from us. It's powerlessness," Tucker says. "The idea that you can go out and do something on your own — it's empowering."

Yank surveys the grounds teeming with green. "A lot of plants are good for cancers, a lot of wild plants," she says. She recalls from childhood seeing an old man in her backyard, gathering dandelion to treat his cancer. She thought he was crazy.

"Now we're the wingnuts!" says Tucker.

Tucker regards conservation and alternative energy as false paths, insufficient to save a civilization not worth saving anyway. Civilization's collapse, he says, will have many causes, and it'll be gradual, a drawn-out process: "It's not like you're going to wake up one day and the power grid will be off."

"I wish," mutters Yank.

To most, calling for civilization's collapse is like demanding to repeal gravity. But radical critiques of civilization, its ideology of ceaseless labor and material excess, boast a long intellectual heritage.

In the 1850s, for instance, Thoreau lived simply for his 26 months at Walden; he mocked the telegraph and proclaimed, "The most alive is the wildest." Subsequent "rebels against the future" (as one of them, neo-Luddite Kirkpatrick Sale, put it) included Lewis Mumford (*The Myth of the Machine*), Ivan Illich (*Toward a History of Needs*) and Theodore Roszak (*Where the Wasteland Ends*).

Looming over such discussions are two opposing views of humankind. In his 17th-century classic *Leviathan*, British philosopher Thomas Hobbes famously argued that life in a state of nature was "nasty, brutish and short," and that we require authorities to rein us in and ensure humanity's progress. In the 18th century, French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau espoused the ideal of the noble savage. "The example of Savages ... seems to confirm that the human Race was made to remain in it, the state of Nature, always," he wrote. "[F]or the philosopher it is iron and wheat which have Civilized men and ruined the human race."

Hobbes won. Or at least, while many still romanticize the noble savage, it's agreed that this is the age of the policeman, the CEO and the IT guy.

But in recent years, primitivism has found an unlikely ally: modern science.

In 1968, anthropologist Marshall Sahlins presented a paper titled "The Original Affluent Society." Drawing on recent field research among surviving hunter-gatherers including the !Kung Bushmen of South Africa's Kalahari Desert, Sahlins proposed that foraging was in fact a rather attractive way to live.

The !Kung inhabited marginal lands — the most fruitful real estate having been seized by agriculturalists — and lacked electricity, metal tools and permanent homes. But Sahlins argued that they were affluent because all their needs were met. The !Kung spent only a few hours each day gathering food. The rest of

the time they played, socialized or slept.

“The research suggests that the more complex socially organized society you live in, the more you have to work,” says Pitt anthropology professor Richard Scaglione, who in the 1970s spent a year-and-a-half living among the Abelam people of the New Guinea highlands.

Scaglione says the Abelam have a pretty sweet life. They’re not pure foragers, practicing slash-and-burn horticulture and living alongside free-roaming, semi-domesticated pigs. They also have some (imported) metal tools, including machetes. Yet the Abelam have little sense of time and don’t distinguish between work and play. They just live. Their health is good and their life expectancy comparable to ours — minus, of course, artificial life support.

“There’s not a heckuva lot that they have, but there’s not a heckuva lot that they need,” Scaglione says. And best of all, “It was really nice to live in a truly egalitarian society. ... There’s nobody who can tell you what to do.”

At its simplest level, primitivism merely touts the life for which we evolved: in open air, moving around a lot, eating wild foods. “The healthiest quality of food we’ve ever known is probably Stone Age food,” says Mark Nathan Cohen, an anthropologist at State University of New York. Foragers have none of the maladies we associate with poverty or “primitive” lifestyles; those ailments in fact result from urban slum life, starchy modern diets or proximity to domesticated animals. According to research by Cohen and others, farmers and city folk were shorter and sicker than foragers well into the 19th century (at least).

In a 1987 article in *Discover* magazine, Jared Diamond — later a Pulitzer Prize-winner for *Guns, Germs and Steel* — called agriculture “the worst mistake in human history.” For the first million or two years humans and their ancestors walked earth, “Hunter-gatherers practiced the most successful and longest-lasting life style in human history. In contrast, we’re still struggling with the mess into which agriculture has tumbled us, and it’s unclear whether we can solve it.”

Of course, foragers too consume resources, multiply and spread out. That fact likely explains the invention of farming: Eventually people could feed their growing numbers only by cultivating crops which — despite their inferior nutritional value — supplied more calories with less land. It was quality for quantity.

And contemporary Stone Age living isn’t perfect, either. Among the Abelam, reports Scaglione, problems included endemic malaria, troubles with ringworm, and high mortality from accidents, especially among the young. Moreover, contend skeptics of the noble-savage idea, there’s historic evidence of serious warfare between foragers.

But primitivists say the “primitive” people indicted for warfare and ecological ruin are actually horticulturalists — subsistence gardeners, like the Abelam — or agriculturalists. Nature, they contend, could easily fix whatever damage foragers might do with stone tools, low numbers and nomadic feet. Even Harvard archaeologist Steven LeBlanc, author of 2002’s *Constant Battles: The Myth of the Noble Savage*, acknowledges that war and environmental degradation got much worse with the advent of settled, complex, hierarchical societies.

And if the primitivist worldview is part prescription for the good life, it’s also part prediction ... a forecast supported, once again, by history and science. Diamond’s 2005 book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, for instance, offers case studies ranging from the Maya to modern Rwanda, each demonstrating how societies can doom themselves by living beyond the means their environment can support.

Modern societies face problems including global warming, the end of cheap oil and shortages of drinkable water. If we don’t address them, writes Diamond, such problems might get resolved, as they have before: with “warfare, genocide, starvation, disease epidemics and collapses of societies.”

Diamond is skeptical about technology, which in attempting to solve old problems tends to create new ones. He thinks we have “a few decades” before a reckoning. In other words, a Pulitzer-winning scholar’s concerns echo those of primitivism.

Collapse joins a recent spate of books sounding similar alarms. *The Party’s Over*, by Richard Heinberg, cites our utter dependence on fossil fuels and focuses on “peak oil,” the idea that the time of maximum world petroleum production is imminent. It’s not just a matter of running out of oil: As energy becomes harder to find, it gets more expensive, and competition for it intensifies. And as large, less developed countries such as India and China industrialize, demand will only accelerate.

If civilization stops growing, primitivists point out, it dies. But if it keeps growing, it kills — plants, animals, entire ecosystems and less powerful people

Yet modern consumers must be kept in a constant state of desire, and deterred from considering consequences. Those consequences, to paraphrase Al Gore, are an inconvenient truth. In terms of sheer energy consumption, North Americans are the richest and most wasteful people ever. But our consumer society is only a few generations old, a tiny fraction of a much poorer world. Petroleum has been history’s greatest inheritance, and for 150 years we’ve been spending it like Paris Hilton on a Rodeo Drive shopping spree. Still, we keep thinking it’ll last forever.

Some argue that surely we’ll keep the party going. Surely we’ll find — or invent — new sources of energy. Optimists cite the “Green Revolution” in agriculture: In the face of warnings about overpopulation, new technologies enabled the global head-count to double from three billion to six billion, between 1960 and 2000. But what enabled such growth was the chemically dependent modern agriculture that has meant soil depletion, runoff that poisons and clogs waterways, and the plowing under of wild lands — not to mention oceans of fuel for shipping crops across hemispheres. New solutions always have new costs.

In *The Party’s Over*, Heinberg writes, “There are now somewhere between two and five billion humans who probably would not exist but for fossil fuels.” A post-fossil-fuel future suggests large population drops. For a world of hunter-gatherers, the earth’s “carrying capacity” — the number of people the environment can support — would be much smaller. And quality of life would depend on keeping those numbers low. In forager societies, pregnancies are more widely spaced, and some foragers have also practiced infanticide.

Given the body count we now accept as the price of civilization, Tucker, for one, is OK with that. “I don’t think every child born should live,” he says.

If everyone were a forager, Tucker estimates, 500 million people could survive. That’s probably wildly optimistic: The last time world population was that low, it was the late Middle Ages, with most people already living off agriculture.

Tucker and Yank live in a small duplex in a dog-eared residential community outside Greensburg. In the tiled foyer, a deerskin stripped from a roadkill carcass, scraped of flesh and fur, leans stiffly against one wall awaiting tanning, preferably with the brains of another roadkill deer. The adjoining kitchen is airy and spotless, with a small gate to keep their two big dogs, a rot mix and a pit-bull mix, off the living room’s pristine white carpet. (When I ask Yank how she spends her days, she answers, “I clean.”) Full-color posters of edible plants and mushrooms are stapled to the walls. In the living room, a computer table holds a monitor and keyboard.

Tucker’s second-floor study is lined with hundreds of books: *The Foraging Spectrum*, *The Coming Plague*, *John Henry*. But this morning, because I had asked him to demonstrate primitive skills, Tucker is sitting outside on his kitchen steps, trying to make fire with a bow drill.

Under one foot he clamps a large wood chip with a divot for an upright cedar dowel that's looped crosswise by a synthetic orange cord attached to a bow. With one hand, he anchors the dowel-top with a folded butterfly knife; with the other, he saws the bow, spinning the dowel for friction.

Tucker's *Species Traitor* — the latest issue is a handsomely bound softcover — includes carefully worded articles (both credited to “MaCro Magnon”) describing the successful disabling of electrical substations and the vulnerability to sabotage of railroad lines. The zine (www.primalwar.org) also features Tucker's account of his correspondence with Ted Kaczynski, now serving life for the Unabomber crimes committed in the 1980s and '90s during his solitary campaign against modern technology. I ask Tucker about the articles describing sabotage.

“It's not rhetoric at all. I want civilization to be taken down as soon as possible,” he says, working the bow drill. “A small group of people can really get things going, if they're so inclined.”

“By physically targeting that infrastructure,” he continues, “the intent is to —”

“Did you feed the dog this morning?” Yank yells from the kitchen.

“Yeah — destabilize that and show how unstable it is.”

Tucker and Yank believe they're watched by the government as part of the “Green Scare” crackdown on sabotage conducted in the name of animal liberation and environmentalism. In January, the FBI's Operation Backfire resulted in federal indictments for 11 people allegedly acting on behalf of the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front. The accused were charged in connection with 17 attacks out West dating to 1996, including the burning of a Colorado ski lodge and the destruction of a high-power line in Oregon.

It was the latest in a series of arrests for what the FBI calls “domestic terrorism.” But some radical activists say it's not terrorism if you hit only property, as Tucker claims the ALF and ELF have. “Our targets aren't people,” he says. “It's political power and the whole society. You don't have to kill people to take that out.”

“There's a question whether ELF arsons are even effective,” he adds.

“Yeah, they are,” says Yank, who's listening in. “Just more people need to start doing it.”

I ask Tucker if he's ever committed sabotage. He invokes activist “security culture” boilerplate: “If it were true, I couldn't answer you honestly.”

Meanwhile, he's not having much luck with the fire. He knows people who can spin the piston between their palms and get sparks in seconds. Tucker likes the hands-only method. “I prefer it to the bow drill just because it's simpler,” he says. Doing it by hand, he adds, “doesn't require as many parts. But it's harder.”

Yearning for the Stone Age, but born into the Microchip Age, Tucker knows his life bulges with paradox. He works full time, pushing an ink squeegee over hats and T-shirts at a Murrysville screen-printer's; he drives there in a Mazda mini-van, which he and Yank have lived in briefly from time to time, and which is useful for transporting their dogs or cartons of *Species Traitor*.

“I'd love to be a hunter-gatherer,” says Tucker. “I don't want to go to work every day. It's just a necessity. Especially if you want to get the word out.”

Indeed, even to study primitive skills these days takes a lot of driving. So when I invite Tucker to an afternoon of spear-throwing, we spend half the day in our cars, getting to and from the Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Museum of Rural Life. Located an hour west of Pittsburgh, the Avella site played host to the World Atlatl Association one weekend in June.

The atlatl is Stone Age technology that functions as an extension of the human arm. It's made of wood or bone, with one end notched to hold a long slender dart and throw it at wild game. Tucker already owns one.

He, Yank and I take turns hurling darts at a paper target pinned to a bale of hay. The bull's-eye circles a squirrel the size of a dishwasher. The darts are 7 feet long, and most are made of aluminum, with copper heads and plastic guide-feathers. From 15 meters out, we throw dozens of times each before we graze the bale.

"We can't even hit the prehistoric squirrel," I say.

"I can't aim right. That's my problem with everything," says Yank. "I bowl like that, too."

"I see why these things are used for massive mammals," says Tucker. "You can get like 20 squirrels an hour with traps."

"Imagine an auto-load atlatl," says Yank. "K-p-*chew!*"

"You miss the point," says Tucker.

One of the dozen or so atlatl enthusiasts offers some tips and shows us his club's photo album. Above a picture of a man hurling a dart there's a motto, presumably inspirational, reading, "One cannot change the past, but one can ruin the present by worrying over the future." We're told that one participant, a wiry silver-haired guy in a red ball cap, once killed a wild boar with an atlatl.

"I used to practice bow and atlatl every day, but the police put an end to that pretty quick," Tucker tells me.

"It was a little park," says Yank. "We used to skin animals out there."

The first animal Tucker ever skinned was a roadkill fox, behind a Giant Eagle. "I learned a lot," he says, adding that the process was instinctive. Though roadkill infuriates them, Tucker and Yank scavenge it, for meat and hide. Still, he prefers peacefully tracking animals through the woods, trying to learn what they eat and how they see the world.

He also dabbles in flint-knapping — manually flaking stone for spear points and blades. "I suck at it," he says, as we peruse a display of hobbyist-knapped points. "Whenever I do it, it actually dulls it down."

Tucker has considered going off to live in the woods somewhere — the option Yank prefers — but for now he's committed to spreading the primitivist word. He's found a kindred spirit in Cathy Pedler, a former archaeologist who heads the office of sustainability at Mercyhurst College. Pedler booked April's talks by Tucker, Zerzan and Jensen at Mercyhurst and Wilson College. The crowds of 100 people each included students who didn't know they were in for anti-civilization depth charges. "It was really stimulating for them — almost in a traumatic way," says Pedler, 40, who also identifies herself as an anarcho-primitivist.

At Mercyhurst, Tucker met a guy who was creating biodiesel out of sewage waste. "I said, 'Yeah, I hope there's no sewage system in a hundred years,'" Tucker recalls. "It was kind of uncomfortable because I was staying at his house."

Most primitivists scorn mainstream environmentalists as "reformists": people who think wind turbines, hybrid cars and recycling will save us. And Tucker says many of his listeners share his concerns. They tell

him, “I agree with you, I just don’t agree with where you take it.” (Yank’s relatives in Greensburg are an exception. “Her family is rednecks,” says Tucker. “They’re really supportive and respectful of everything we do.”)

Visits to primitive-skills gatherings, and to a Wisconsin primitive-skills school called Teaching Drum, have honed Tucker’s understanding of what distinguishes tools from technology. Once discarded, a Stone Age tool can sift back into nature; technology, however, transforms a natural material irreversibly — changing ore into metal, say. Technology also requires division of labor, which primitivists consider as bad as agriculture. The test, Tucker says, is “Can you do it yourself or do you need a whole society? If you lost it, could you do it again?”

I ask Tucker what separates anarcho-primitivists from survivalists — the right-wing-identifying guys holed up in the hollers with bear traps and cases of ammo. “People go to survivalism for the same reason people go to this,” he says. “They’re looking for something.”

Finished atlatling, we wander to Meadowcroft’s famous Rockshelter, where archaeological evidence suggests human presence dating back 16,000 years. A tour ends, and the guide joins Tucker, Yank and I by Cross Creek, which runs past the rockshelter. The guide says a big blacksnake hangs out here. He adds that he doesn’t like snakes.

“They’re awesome creatures,” Yank responds quickly.

“They’re needed,” the guide admits. “I tell them, ‘Go, make my garden good.’ I just don’t like to be surprised. But they probably don’t like to be surprised, either.”

“Then we have something in common,” says Tucker.

The big post-collapse die-off idea is a big turn-off to primitivism’s critics — who include, it’s fair to say, almost everyone who hears of anarcho-primitivism. Even other anarchists scoff.

“It’s a perverse pessimism, that we’re doomed, that most of humanity will perish,” says Alex Bradley, a local political activist and anarchist. “*Mad Max* was a really great movie, but I don’t want to base my future on it.”

Tucker contends that history’s only viable anarchistic society has been Stone Age life; he rejects revolution, which would just put different people in charge of the same lousy system. Meanwhile though, most anarchists hate capitalism, they appreciate modern technology and believe it can be made to serve human needs rather than corporate profits. Moreover, Bradley won’t underestimate the system he abhors: Echoing the belief that we can invent our way out of trouble, he says, “I don’t think that capitalism or the state will allow itself to be destroyed.”

Bradley, a member of the Pittsburgh Organizing Group, agrees that many anarchists share primitivists’ environmental concerns. But with their collapse scenarios, he says, “I think [primitivists] share a lot with religious fundamentalists: ‘You’re doomed anyway, and this is your only solution.’”

Primitivism does unavoidably suggest a near-remake of the Bible. It has its own Eden, its Fall (perhaps after eating the fruit of Technology) and its End Time (starring civilization as the Whore of Babylon), followed by return to a flowering paradise. And as countless books and disaster movies attest, eco-pocalypse is as irresistible as it is terrifying. Since we are all complicit, a Big Do-Over feels like both a deserved comeuppance and a rebirth. Forced by eco-pocalypse to live differently, perhaps we’d be different.

But eco-pocalypse is based on more than reading tea leaves in Revelation. Rain forests and polar ice caps

really *are* vanishing. Fisheries and petroleum reserves really *are* drying up, while sea levels and environmental toxins rise. Of the hottest 20 years on record globally, 19 have come since 1980. The Worldwatch Institute estimates that to protect the environment and promote economic equity, rich nations “may need to cut their use of materials by as much as 90 percent over few decades.” *The Party’s Over* author Richard Heinberg suggests that to stave off the worst of coming cataclysms we should adopt small, radically decentralized, semi-autonomous communities living off sustainable energy.

And even if warnings of eco-pocalypse sound religious in tone, isn’t that just the flip side to the faith that technology will fix the problems technology created in the first place?

Tucker says primitivism is not an ideology, let alone a creed; he calls it “a critique with implications.” While he was raised Jewish, he and Yank eschew religion.

“A lot of people who believe in God, they really don’t care,” says Yank. “They just care about God and going to heaven.”

“No allegiance to this planet,” says Tucker.

One on level, what’s unnerving about primitivism is the suggestion that once we literally planted the seed of civilization, most everything since — all we value about it, right along with all we loathe — has only taken us further along that same disastrous path. But Tucker views it positively: What humans built, they can unbuild.

A return to foraging, he acknowledges, might not come to pass until generations after the collapse. “I have a lot of faith in humans,” he says. “We’ll see more reasons to work with each other than to kill each other.”

“You can’t run away from civilization,” Tucker said during our visit to Frick Park. “I can’t run away from the fact that this forest is going through the same struggles I am.”

“This isn’t some martyristic thing,” he says later. “I just feel a personal obligation.” He just wants to spread the word — “while I still have time.”
