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Usul of the Blackfoot

Post-Civ!: A Deeper Exploration

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Post-Civ!: A Deeper Exploration
2008

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2008

believe your life is fulfilling without mythology, you're probably a little dead inside.

- *Food Not Lawns*

Heather C. Flores

This is an invaluable and down-to-earth tome of permacultural insight. Encourages the destruction of oppressive city technologies (like the dreaded concrete driveway!) and the nurturing of self-sustaining communities.

- *Tom Brown's Guide to Wilderness Survival*

&

Tom Brown's Guide to Living with the Earth

Tom Brown Jr.

If you can get past Tom Brown's relentless preaching, capitalizing on Native American skills passed down to him for free, and the fact that he works part time for the cops, these books are treasuries of useful information. *Wilderness Survival* is more focused on beginner primitive skills: fire making, short to medium term shelters, tool making, and so on. *Living With the Earth* turns its attention to long-term primitive living, and includes and expands upon the skills in the first. Absolute must haves, just don't pay for them. Go out and steal a copy today!

- *A Steampunk's Guide to the Apocalypse*

Margaret Killjoy & Colin Foran

Contains lots of ideas for scavenging technology and putting it to new use in the just-post-apocalypse world. Pretty civ-reliant, but useful information nonetheless.

wisdom of native New Guineans, and the forest management of Tokugawa-era Japan — in order to give potential solutions to persistent ecological problems facing human societies.

- *Endgame Vols. I & II*

Derrick Jensen

One of the preeminent primitivist thinkers, Derrick Jensen is a superb writer. The first volume explores the abundant flaws and perpetual lack of ethics in the civilized world. The second suggests ways in which people can begin to raze civilization and correct the damages to ourselves and our planet inflicted by civilization.

Web Sources

- en.wikipedia.org
- en.wikipedia.org
(and subsequent links)
- en.wikipedia.org
(and subsequent links)

Suggested Reading

- *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Marge Piercy

The futuristic Mattapoisett, Massachusetts in this novel is, for all intents and purposes, a post-civilized community. The main story — an accurate and frightening exploration of a Chicana woman in 1970s New York — makes *Woman on the Edge of Time* a preeminent feminist novel.

- *The Power of Myth*

Joseph Campbell & Bill Moyers

In the time-honored tradition of the philosophical dialogue, Bill Moyers interviews Joseph Campbell in this book based on a television series of the same name. If you read *The Power of Myth* and still

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This book gives several fine examples of the rottenness of agriculture and agribusiness, and touches briefly on the history of some cultivated plants. It's also an excellent read about our relationship to plants and their evolutionary relationship to us.

- *Silent Spring*

Rachel Carson

Although the information in this tome is dated, the arguments ring as true today as they did in the 60s. *Silent Spring* is in large part responsible for environmental activism, and is a must read for anyone interested in ecology and environmental politics. It provides tons of information on agriculture, pesticides, DDT, ecocide, and the impact of ignorant, irresponsible humans on the ecosystems that sustain us all.

- *War Before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage*

Lawrence Keeley

This book completely extinguishes the popular notion that non-civilized peoples have been and are pacifistic. It also offers a lot of information on those few rare societies that are pacifistic and conjectures as to the reasons why.

- *A Study of History Vols. I-XII*

Arnold J. Toynbee

A series of books that took nearly half a century to write probably takes just as long to read. That's too daunting a task for me, but, for the more intrepid reader, these twelve volumes no doubt supply exhaustive information on past civilizations.

- *The Collapse of Complex Societies*

Joseph Tainter

Provides a different model for comparing and analyzing fallen cultures than *A Study of History*. Examines 24 different societies that have collapsed in the past.

- *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*

Jared Diamond

This book concerns the collapse of societies with an emphasis on environmental factors, and includes examples of collapsed or faltering societies both civilized and non-civilized. Collapse also provides three success stories — the Pacific island Tikopia, the permacultural

very heavily on industry in the development of an anarchist society. Still, those who work toward syndicalism deserve support, and there's no reason post-civ anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism can't work together.

Technology

The practical application of science. Much maligned by primitivists, though usually with little scrutiny or definition. All primitive skills these same people practice are technologies, and to demean technology as a whole shows a great deal of ignorance. Post-civ philosophy embraces technology, primitive and civilized, as long as it's permacultural and isn't used oppressively.

Sources

- *Enduring Seeds: Native American Agriculture and Wild Plant Conservation*
Gary Nabhan
Covers farming by the indigenous peoples of North America, Mesoamerica, and the Andes. It also shows how and why native farmers are able to promote biodiversity and adapt to climate changes using traditional wisdom and knowledge passed down through the generations. *Enduring Seeds* goes on to decry agriculture (and logging) as destroying ecological biodiversity.
- *Indian Agriculture in America: Prehistory to Present*
R. Douglas Hurt
Despite its pseudo-imperialist title, this is worth a read. *Indian Agriculture* wholeheartedly dispels the myth that pre-civilized peoples depend only on hunting and gathering for their sustenance. It also reveals White European policies toward indigenous agriculture, and the campaign to eliminate native horticulture and impose European methods in its place.
- *The Botany of Desire*
Michael Pollan

Introduction

This work builds largely upon the framework established in the zine *Post-Civ!* available for free from Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness. Despite its brevity, it's an excellent zine, crucial to the advancement of anarchist thought. But it is brief.

This, then, is meant to take the ideas found therein and incorporate them with a wealth of other information into a coherent, in-depth look at post-civilized thought and action. It is not meant to be the final or fully comprehensive authority on post-civ theory, but it is intended to set up a solid, far-reaching base to inspire more discussion and a lot more action.

Post-Civilized Anarchism is nothing more than a synthesis between the thesis called Primitive Society and its antithesis Civilization. That is, it's a blend of the good things that have come before. Extracting those good things from the past means leveling mountains of rubbish.

Part I does just that, by offering critiques of primitive societies, primitivists, civilized societies, and the advocates of civilization. Part II takes the good ideas and practices found in past societal forms and weaves them together into the bulk of Post-Civ philosophy. The third part is supplemental, and includes a glossary of terms, list of references, and some suggested reading.

Part I: Lessons from the past and present

A Critique of Primitive Societies and Primitivism

To develop a better society in the future it's vital that we deconstruct societies of the past, adopting the good ideas and practices they offer and tossing out the crap. It seems reasonable to start by breaking down the societies of primitive peoples, and to review the strong and weak points of primitivist philosophy.

The conflicting interests of primitive society and civilized society are a false dilemma. That is to say, the two don't have to conflict; they

both have positive and negative traits. However, we're all taught as we grow up in Western Civilization that everything in the universe (except the absolutes God and State) is dualistic and has its opposite: good against evil, black against white, man against woman, day against night, yin and yang, wealth and poverty, terrorism and democracy. This kind of simplistic thinking (which will be further mocked and torn apart later) leads many anarchists and other anti-authoritarians to believe that because they hate Civilization, they must instead idolize and seek to reestablish Primitive Society. This is logic at its very worst.

Are primitive societies completely bad? No. Is primitivism completely wrong? No. In fact, as the reader will discover, Post-Civ anarchism is much more closely allied to primitivism and general green anarchism than to syndicalism and other schools of anarchism. But there are a number of unresolved problems with primitive societies and primitivism that have no place in a truly egalitarian, oppression-free society.

Let's begin by examining the assertions of anarcho-primitivists. Anarcho-primitivists assert:

- That a hunter-gatherer lifestyle is better and more sustainable than an agricultural one, and that most or all primitive peoples were/are nomadic hunter-gatherers. Therefore, we should seek to be nomadic hunter-gatherers.
- That oppression is inherently caused by and is a symptom of civilization, and that most or all tribal cultures are inherently egalitarian and non-oppressive. Therefore, we can and should seek to end oppression by reverting to a primitive state.
- That hierarchy, warfare, subjugation of women, and patriarchy all arose with the advent of civilization. Therefore, to eradicate these evils we must return to a primitive society.
- That primitive warfare, when it does occur, is less intense, more ritualistic, less lethal, less brutal, less frequent, and less socially devastating than civilized warfare. Thus, primitive societies are more desirable for those who prefer peace.
- That tools and technology (terms which primitivists often poorly define, if at all) are inherently oppressive and should therefore be done away with.

praxis of rewilding in certain respects, and disagrees with it in others. See the main text for more.

Sex & Gender

This terms are often used interchangeably in the Western world, but this use is incorrect. Sex denotes whether one is biologically male, female, or intersex. Gender, on the other hand, describes one's perception of oneself as being male or female regardless of biological sex. Most societies also have traditional gender roles. For instance, sewing is considered feminine in our society, sports masculine. A young girl who wants to play football is called a tomboy, and a little boy who likes to sew is called effeminate (or worse). Words like these and the societal gender roles that perpetuate them are the ideas the text is focused on when discussing sex and gender equality.

Society

A group of people who live in close proximity and interact on a daily basis. Society is not the same as civilization. That is, all civilizations are societies, but not all societies are civilized. Societies can also be primitive or pre-civilized and also post-civilized. Hopefully this distinction shows that in calling for the eradication of civilization, post-civ philosophy is not advocating the end of societies.

Syndicalism

The idea that collectives, or syndicates, of workers can weaken then control the whole of industry through a series of united general strikes. Very popular with anarchists and socialists from the late 1800s to present. With the influx of service industry into the "civilized" world and the outsourcing of factory labor to impoverished third-world countries, syndicalism doesn't hold quite the same appeal or power as it once did. As a philosophy it's also devoid of any ecological critical analysis and relies

Primitive

A pejorative antonym of “civilized”, often used to describe peoples, societies, technologies, and ideas. This word is synonymous with “savage” and “barbaric”. Failing to recognize how culturally and technologically advanced most “primitive” cultures are, this word is really best used to describe the inherently racist, obtuse minds of civilized peoples. Throughout this work it is simply used to describe non-civilized peoples neither in a praising nor insulting manner.

Primitivism

This is pretty well covered in the text. Primitivism, including anarcho-primitivism, is the idea that because civilization sucks we should return to a primitive or pre-civilized way of existence.

Religion

Used in this piece, religion is a codified set of beliefs concerning god or gods, faith in said god(s), and morals governing the behavior of those who believe in said god(s). Although religion is used to contrast with myth in the body of this work, the two are definitely related. Religion is made up of myth, but not all myths are religions. It is irreligious myth that this piece encourages, not religion.

Rewilding

A word that primitivists make regular use of to describe the process dismantling civilization and civilized nuances. Rewilding means making ecosystems wild again, destroying cities, doing away with agriculture, and in extreme circumstances, doing away with art, language, writing, time, etc. Rewilding also refers to relearning primitive skills, abolishing our own civilized behaviors, and establishing nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes once more. Post-civilized anarchism agrees with the idea and

- That science is a religion with no foundation in reality (“scientism”), and that we should therefore reject science and its principles.
- That symbolic thought — in the forms of language, writing, art, numbers, time, and so on — is inherently oppressive, and should thus be abandoned.

Every one of these pillars of primitivist thought stands on weak foundations and is easily toppled.

To begin with, the idea that all primitive peoples are or have been exclusively nomadic hunter-gatherers is simply not true. Many non-civilized societies in the past and at present have relied on hunting-gathering to some extent. The !Kung or San of Africa, the Pila Nguru of Australia, the various whale hunting Inuit tribes of Canada and Alaska, the Batek blowgun hunters of the Malay peninsula, and the myriad salmon-dependent peoples of the Pacific Northwest are a few examples.

However, a great many other societies are/were horticulturalists or pastoralists, relying either on cultivated food crops or domesticated herds of animals. Prominent pastoralist primitive societies include the Navajo shepherds of North America, the Khoikhoi cowherds of Africa, and the Maasai also of Africa who keep cows, sheep, and goats. In the Amazon rainforest, the Palikur, Macuna, Tucano, and Yanomamo peoples survive mainly by cultivating plantains, cassavas, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, bananas, peppers, and papayas, in addition to hunting and gathering. Other horticulturalists of note include all the Native North American tribes of the eastern woodlands, whose cultures and religions reflected the importance of the “three sisters” — corn, squash, and beans — in their societies.

Perhaps the most interesting modern comparison of these methods of subsistence comes from New Guinea. This island is home to over a thousand different tribal groups and just as many languages. In a place of such cultural diversity, it’s no wonder all three of the methods of food subsistence we’ve been discussing are in practice. Many primitive New Guinea societies are pig pastoralists, many others hunt and gather their food. Most primitive social groups in New Guinea practice horticulture as their main means of subsistence.

According to Jared Diamond, in his book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, the horticultural practices of primitive New Guineans are among the most complex and advanced permacultural systems in the world. Mulch, crop rotation, tilling, and terraces are all in use, and the native ironwood *Casuarina oligodon* is implemented for fuel, timber, and as a nitrogen-fixer for damaged soil. With these advanced and ecologically sagacious methods, primitive New Guinea horticulturists are able to grow some crops as well as or better than civilized agriculturalists.

Along with their assertion that all non-civilized societies are hunter-gatherers, primitivist thinkers also wrongly assume that these same societies are all nomadic. There are instances of both sedentary and stationary societies within the context of each of the methods of subsistence. The fecundity of Pacific Northwestern North America allowed the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, Salish, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and countless others to hunt and gather food while remaining in stationary settlements. The Khoikhoi pastoralists were both stationary and migratory from time to time. The Yanomamo cultivate crops and hunt from their stationary residences, but move frequently to avoid overusing an area.

Given the evidence above, it's obvious that primitive societies are neither solely hunter-gatherers, nor are they always nomadic. But primitivists also insist (based on these false assumptions) that a nomadic hunter-gatherer existence is more sustainable than a life of civilized agriculture, and we should thus become transient and hunt for our sustenance.

Here again we find a choice between two polar opposites where there is plenty of unexplored middle ground. This assertion also ignores mountains of evidence to the contrary. When hunter-gatherers first crossed the Bering land bridge into North America, the native megafauna were ignorant of human beings and didn't see them as a threat. So, the hunter-gatherer way of life was responsible, at least in part, for the extinction of nearly all of North America's megafauna. By the 1500s CE in New Zealand, all 10 species of the flightless Moa bird were hunted to extinction by the Maori. "Civilized" irresponsibility brings to mind numerous

Oppression

"The act of using power to empower and/or privilege a group at the expense of disempowering, marginalizing, silencing, and subordinating another." This is commonplace in our world. It's damn near impossible to live a day in the civilized world without hearing oppressive speech or witnessing oppressive actions. Oppression affects us all, even those of us with the most privilege. As the saying goes, no one is free as long as some are oppressed.

Patriarchy

The opposite of matriarchy in a binary gendered world. Patriarchy means "father rule" in Greek, and describes male domination over society, family units, commerce, militarism, religion, etc. Feminists and (hopefully) most anarchists struggle against patriarchy as an inherently oppressive, fucked up ideology and practice. Ours is no doubt a patriarchal world, and, anthropologically, has pretty much always been. Luckily, history doesn't dictate the future.

Permaculture

This portmanteau — a combination of "permanent" and "agriculture" or "culture" — was coined by Aussies Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in the 70s. Initially, the word permaculture was used to describe the development and design of agricultural systems that mimic natural ecosystems. The idea has grown and expanded over the past 30 years, and now extends to the development and design of entire social systems that mimic the harmony and sustainability of natural ecosystems. Post-civ philosophy is concerned with implementing permaculture in all facets of life, but most especially small-scale horticulture and other technologies.

Matriarchy

Derives from the Greek for “mother rule”. This is the idea and practice of female domination and rule over society, the family, and all other institutions. It shouldn’t be confused with “matrilineal,” which is the passing on of family name and heritage through women to their children. It is generally accepted in the academic world that no matriarchal society has ever existed. Whether this is true or not, matriarchy is theoretically every bit as oppressive as patriarchy, and in striving for sex and gender equality anarchists and feminists should not seek matriarchy as a replacement to male domination. See also *Patriarchy*.

Mutual Aid

A complex definition of mutual aid is “voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit”. A simpler definition is “helping each other out,” or simpler yet “working together”. This isn’t a difficult concept. We all learned to share and work together in elementary school, and many societies, especially “primitive” ones, have integrated this idea for as long as humans have existed. As a political ideology, mutual aid was first incorporated into anarchism by Proudhon and Kropotkin. It remains a critical part of anarchist philosophy, and if we’re ever going to form a society free from the shackles of civilization, we must work together.

Myth

In the body of this work myth is used to mean fabulous stories that have little or no basis in fact and that often impart some advice or wisdom. Myth is not to be confused with religion, and the two are used in completely different ways. See also *Religion*.

other species obliterated by hunting, like the Red Rail, Passenger Pigeon, Bali Tiger, and the Blue Buck to name a few.

Compared to the callous ecocide of monocrop agriculture, the extinction of a handful of species through hunting seems somewhat less injurious. But hunting-gathering is clearly not without negative ecological repercussions. And these are not the only two options to be considered. We’ll revisit potential answers to this problem later.

To address the primitivist concept that oppression and hierarchy arose with civilization, there is endless media suggesting otherwise. The most common form of government within North American native groups was a chieftaincy, or tribes led by a chief. Many other tribal communities within and without North America have been led by chiefs, patriarchs, elder councils, and shamans, among other types of governance.

Besides governmental hierarchy and oppression, primitivists think that indigenous cultures are without oppression in the societal realm. This, too, is untrue. In many different primitive cultures a rigid traditional set of gender roles exists, often enforcing a sexism similar to that found in civilized cultures. And while women may not be as brutally oppressed and subjugated as they are in civilization, women and men are equally expected to fulfill their pre-established roles in tribal societies. So all people in these cultures, to some extent, are equally oppressed.

Religion often plays an equally oppressive role in tribal societies as it does in the civilized world. Shamans are the most influential decision makers in many non-state communities, reflecting the hierarchy of their work, and they frequently reinforce or establish entirely new gender roles and boundaries. Some societies have preferred exclusively male shamans, some others exclusively women, while some North American and African tribes associate the role of shaman with “two-spirit” people. The idea of two-spirit varies, but it is essentially a queer or trans-person. While elevating queer and trans sexuality to a higher position seems complimentary, it is, in fact, oppressive. That is, suggesting queer and trans folks are different and therefore deserve different roles is still segregational and elitist.

But the most overwhelming and surprising form of oppression found in primitive societies is that of violence and warfare. This brings us to two other primitivist assertions that tend to contradict one another and are

easily disproved: one, that there was no warfare before civilization; and two, that when primitive war does occur, it is less brutal, more ritualized, less harmful to the societies involved, and occurs less frequently than civilized warfare.

In his book *War Before Civilization*, professor Lawrence Keeley challenges each of these notions, examines how and why the myth of the “noble savage” came about, and provides compelling evidence to negate all of these false suppositions. To counter the idea that there was no warfare until the advent of civilization, Keeley begins by examining a number of excavated prehistoric mass graves and fortifications. The mass graves he examines range from Italy to Czechoslovakia down to the Nile Valley, some dating as far back as 35,000 years ago, and some as recent as 12,000 years before present. Each of these mass graves contains convincing evidence of violent death, whether by stone axe to the skull, scalping, or execution shots by projectile weapons. Keeley also looks at the fortifications of early horticultural tribes in Western Europe, some 7,000 to 4,000 years ago. Several of these enclosures offer clear evidence of having been stormed and burned by bow-wielding assailants.

After analyzing prehistoric warfare, Keeley continues by detailing warfare among ancient and contemporary primitive societies. His thorough research covers the bellicose non-civilized peoples of North and South America, Africa, New Guinea, Australia, and New Zealand. He also provides plenty of statistics and information on the warfare conducted by civilized nation-states in order to compare civilized and primitive warfare.

The resulting conclusions he draws are startling but difficult to deny. *War Before Civilization* shows that warfare definitely existed well before civilization. It also proves — with physical evidence and first-hand testimony — that the vast majority of primitive societies war frequently, conduct war and torture with great brutality, devote large portions of their population to fighting, show little compassion in sparing non-combatants, and are often devastated or destroyed by the effects of war. Finally, it reveals that civilized societies are almost always more peaceful than primitive ones.

By understanding the combative nature of primitive societies, and the almost ubiquitous presence of warfare in these societies, it's easy to

focused mainly in large cities. Throughout its use in the English language, the word civilization has been used as the opposite of barbarism and primitive. Proponents of civilization think that it is the highest stage of human development, as compared to the pejoratives “savage” and “primitive”. Its history as a complimentary Western term means that the word itself and the idea of civilization carries a great deal of racism and imperialism.

Feminism

This political and social ideology has gone through many changes since it began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Like anarchism, it encapsulates a variety of schools of thought. At its core, feminism is the struggle for gender equality and the eradication of patriarchy.

Gender

See also *Sex & Gender* below.

Green & Red Anarchism

Green anarchism is a newer school of anarchist theory that focuses on the environment and on the preservation and defense of the world's ecosystems. Red anarchism, refers to class-struggle focused anarchism. Red anarchism is generally more concerned with workers' struggles and with industry as opposed to the natural world.

Hierarchy

A hierarchy is a group of objects, people, values, etc., arranged in a graduated or ranked series. The word hierarchy comes from the Greek *ἱερός* (*hieros*), “sacred” + *αρχω* (*arkho*), “to lead, to rule”. It's no wonder people treat established hierarchies in our society with such reverence when the word itself means sacred rule.

Not all the narrations of the master storytellers are myths. Many are tales of people who acted heroically in the face of oppression, some the tragic histories of people martyred in the struggle against fascism or the fight against slavery.

Many of the new stories integrate reason and wisdom with myth, as in the tradition of Aesop. Animals are personified, given voices, and made to illustrate good and bad ethics, actions, and attitudes to children and adults alike.

Most important of all, the stories told every night often give insight into the adventure and excitement of post-civilized life. Where once a world of inactivity and repression existed, there is now a world of community, coexistence, and thrilling newness. And when the story telling is over this night, the people of this post-civ village will go off to bed, off to stand night watch, off on a midnight trek through the woods, thinking all the while that tomorrow is another day of fulfillment and freedom.

Part III: Supplements

Glossary

Anarchism

As discussed in the body of this work, anarchism stems from the Greek meaning “without rulers”. In its simplest form, anarchism is the rejection of all compulsory governments. It doesn’t exclude people governing themselves. There are quite a few schools of anarchist thought, some compatible with others, some not quite so. Many of these schools are defined herein.

Civilization

Many use this word as a synonym of “culture”, but it is used in this piece to describe complex societies that rely on rural agriculture and are

dismiss the primitivist idea that non-civilized societies are inherently peaceful. It also gives excellent insight into the oppression that primitive peoples commonly encounter.

Another absurd proposition that primitivists stand behind is that tools and technology are inherently oppressive, and we should therefore abandon them. While many tools and technologies can be applied in oppressive ways, there is nothing ingrained in tools or the development of technologies that makes them oppressive.

It seems especially foolish for primitivists to argue this position when the society they advocate returning to is replete with tools and technology. Spears, bows and arrows, stone axes, obsidian knives, cordage, hand drill fires, pottery, totem carving, body modification and jewelry, basketry, hide tanning — these are all tools and technologies employed by primitive societies. Primitivists advocate learning these skills as a part of “rewilding” ourselves and our world, and yet they continue to denounce tools and technology. Seems a little hypocritical, doesn’t it?

Alongside tools and technology, primitivists extend their unreasonable witch-hunt to science, which they dismiss as a religion. Yet, the various technologies found in primitive societies are all based on underlying scientific principles, even if they aren’t acknowledged or understood as such. After all, technology is generally defined as the “practical application of science”.

Take, for instance, the firing of a longbow. In order to fabricate the bow, bowstring, arrowhead, shaft of the arrow, and the fletching, one must understand ecology, woodworking, stone or boneworking, methods of binding and naturally adhesive materials, and flight itself. These are all science. The force exerted on the bow by human arms is a scientific principle, as is the tension within the wood and the bowstring. When the string is released, the propelling of the arrow and its flight are both observable scientific phenomena. And precise aiming for vital organs shows a working knowledge of biology.

This single technology, the bow and arrow, represents an immense amount of scientific application. And though the people who rely on the bow and arrow every day might not understand them in terms of science, the science is still there; the arrow still flies, the arrowhead still pierces flesh, and the bodies of luckless targets still die when struck.

Because non-civilized societies rely upon so many technologies, and because these technologies are based on the understanding of science, it's ridiculous for those who encourage a return to primitive life to deplore science.

Even more ridiculous is the final proposal of primitivism, the misconception that symbols and symbolic thought are inherently oppressive. If this assertion were true, it would invalidate the primitivist concept that all pre-civilized cultures were/are without oppression, because so many of these cultures are known to have used symbols. Not only is this contradictory logic, it doesn't make any damned sense either.

It's true that language, *clock* time, and art can be used in oppressive ways, but there's nothing embedded within symbols that makes them necessarily oppressive. Were the creative women and men who first scraped charcoal on cave wall 32,000 years ago oppressing anyone with a line drawing of a bull? Are the tribal herders of Africa oppressing each other when they tell time based on events that have happened? Were North American natives being oppressive when they carved totems in the image of animal-gods or performed ritual dances to encourage corn to grow? Or better yet, are all pre-state peoples oppressing each other every time they have a conversation solely because they're using language?

Taken as a whole, all of these criticisms illustrate why primitivism and the endeavor to recreate traditional primitive societies are both flawed concepts. However, the general focus of this critique has been negative to this point, and there are a number of very positive, beneficial ideas and practices that can be gleaned from primitivist philosophy and uncivilized peoples. These will be reviewed here and discussed in detail in Part II.

Primitive cultures, though imperfect, are typically a hell of a lot better than civilized societies. Hunter-gatherers and small scale horticulturists work much less than their civilized counterparts, and the "work" done in these communities reads like a list of recreation activities for civilized people: hunting, fire-building, fishing, gathering edible and medicinal plants, and so on. This minute amount of work leaves an abundance of leisure time, which in turn leads to increased amounts of art, music, dance, pottery, storytelling, games, and other cultural developments. This cultural development creates societies just as complex and "refined" as civilized cultures, despite the insistence of primitivists that these

talk of some animals as being wise, some mischievous. Some animals are thought to embody human traits, even to speak human languages. Many people look to certain animals for advice or blessings.

Gods, goddesses, and genderless deities are invented and played with daily. Some talk about the god of lost-and-found and scavenged things, while others seek help from the patron deity of fletching. Many see the forest as a living goddess, or the moon as a lunatic trickster god.

Belief in these myths and reliance upon them is by no means a religion, nor is it irrational. The people of this post-civ community still believe in reason and logic, and comprehend that myths aren't the same as reality. They understand that myth or superstition ungoverned by reason causes crusades, evangelical genocide, and religious persecution. But they also recognize that fantastic imaginative thinking is a vital part of human experience, and that reason without myth causes emotional coldness, mental stagnation, and the limitation of human perception. In short, post-civ society recognizes the need for reason and science, magic and myth, and it fosters all of them.

Beyond using physical art to express and embody myth, this village is fond of storytelling. Without television and other huge media keeping the populace pacified and numb, people need an outlet to the fantastic. Many evenings the people of this community gather together and weave tales for their mutual enjoyment.

The village has four storytellers who have given themselves to the art and have mastered it. These four troubadours take turns each night telling all sorts of tales, epics, and odysseys. When they are finished, or on nights when none of them feel compelled to speak, their apprentices and other members of the village take the stage.

The stories told span everything imaginable. All the old myths are told: Norse sagas, Greco-Roman myths, Aesop's fables, tales of Japanese *kami*, parables from native peoples across North and South America, fables from across Africa, Celtic tales, even Christian and Islamic myths. Fantasy, science fiction, cyberpunk, and steampunk written in the civilized world are recounted in a similar fashion. And of course hundreds of new myths, myths that reflect the post-civilized world and its ethics, are told in kind.

scenes of the past, visions of the civilized world and the world of industry, and they act as terrifying reminders of why a society made up of such things is odious and destructive. These images of the poor under the yoke of the rich, of the world being destroyed by industry and capitalist commerce, and visions of women being the slaves of men are used to teach children the errors of the past and to instill confidence in and satisfaction with the world post-civ society is building.

This art also acts as tangible representations of post-civilized ethics and the merit of a society built on such values. Alongside the terrible portrayals of yesteryear, pieces of art in many forms show people of all genders, ages, and races working together, and they show humanity as a positive force in helping a damaged planet to heal.

Art is also used as an instructional tool. Besides printing the results of studies, small presses are also used to publish educational material for those who learn best with visualizations and those who prefer to learn on their own. These materials almost always include illustrations or other forms of art.

Art in post-civilized anarchist society is further used to exemplify the accumulated mythology of its people.

In primitive societies, most people rely singly on superstition, intuition, and mythology or religion. In civilized societies, many people instead rely on logic, science, and mathematics, rejecting and belittling primitive ways of thinking about the world. Post-civilized society embraces all of these ways of thinking, and mythology is of particular importance.

In this post-civ community a number of myths and rites are respected. Each time a fire is made, the maker thanks the spirits of the spindle and hearthboard, and the spirits of fire and oxygen. When plant starts or seeds are sewn into the ground, the planters ask the earth to harbor the new life being placed into it, and they talk to the plants themselves and encourage them to grow strong. When food plants are harvested, the harvesters thank the plants, the soil, the sky, and the earth itself. When weather is dry and the gardens need water, the earth and sky are beseeched to send rain.

The myths of this village don't just involve asking for things and showing thanks. Many people feel kinship to a certain animal. People

things are all oppressive and undesirable and despite the insistence of civilization's advocates that cultural refinement is the exclusive domain of large cities.

Tribal life, whether hunter-gatherer or small scale horticultural, is infinitely more sustainable and beneficial to the earth than civilized life. Many primitive peoples also share an affection for the earth and for all its plant and animal life, and the stewardship displayed by primitive peoples is far better and more deeply ingrained than the hollow "environmental initiatives" and bullshit green capitalism of civilized nations.

Overall, primitive societies are far more communal and community oriented, more openly sharing, less hierarchically arranged, and less impacting on the earth. They've also innovated and preserved the skills to survive without industry — dubbed "primitive skills" by civilized folk — that most civilized peoples have neglected, forgotten, or just don't give a damn about.

By introducing all of these positive concepts of pre-civilized life into anarchist doctrine, anarcho-primitivists have done a great deed. Primitivism has also provided an excellent critique of past forms of anarchist thought, preventing modern anarchism from promoting a noxious, smog-ridden "worker's paradise". Primitivists also advocate rewilding and relearning crucial primitive skills that us civilized folk have lost, an important task for anarchists and anti-authoritarians of every ilk.

A Critique of Civilization

Authoring a critique of civilization seems a bit redundant since there's already multitudes of information on the subject. Plus, it's much easier to perceive what sucks about civilization when we're all exposed to its horrors every day. Nevertheless, in order to fully grasp Post-Civ anarchist philosophy, it's critical to understand the bewildering badness of civilization and the few good things to which it's given birth.

It's largely accepted in academic circles that civilization as we know it began in Mesopotamia with the rise of Sumer. Sumerians were not the first to build and live in cities, although they were the first to rely solely on year-round agriculture for the sustenance of their population.

As a small portion of the populace produced all the food needed, others began to specialize their skills and take up non-food-producing trades.

Sumerian civilization was only the beginning. From Sumer, people migrated outward in all directions, taking with them the yoke of civilization. Shortly after the Sumerians developed writing, the first Pharaoh ruled over a nascent Egyptian kingdom, and the Elamites had just begun an empire of their own. The Indus Valley Civilization, the first empire of what we know as India, also began in this period. This cancer upon the earth continued spreading until all of Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia Minor and Asia Major were all blanketed with civilization.

And now, here we are 5,000 years later, still plagued by the problems implicit in “the most advanced stage of human development.” It’s difficult to pinpoint the foremost or most appalling problem with civilization simply because there are so many and they’re all nearly universal. Every civilization that has ever existed to this point has had most or all of the following attributes in common: imperialist warfare, genocide, domination of an elite minority over a subservient majority, intense patriarchy and brutal commodification of women, exploitation of natural resources, vicious treatment and exploitation of animals, reliance on unsustainable agriculture, totalitarian government, complex economic systems, mind-numbing religion, intertwining of religion and government to varying degrees, city-centric majorities reliant on a rural agricultural minority, propaganda and censorship, violence, bigotry, xenophobia, oppression of uncivilized indigenous peoples, appropriation of past or concurrent cultures, and slavery (yes, even within contemporary Western Civ).

If you’re reading this, you’re most likely an anarchist or some kind of political dissident. So, there’s not much point in elaborating on the odiousness of each of these things and detailing, ethically, why they’re undesirable. There’s more than enough material already published on ethics, particularly anarchist ethics, detailing why such things are abhorrent. It’s sufficient to say, then, that if all of these things are awful, and that civilization as a social structure always embodies these traits, then civilization itself is dispensable.

Understanding the vastness of civilization’s fucked up contrivances leads one to the question: what good has come out of the civilized world?

Glass jars are extremely useful, and are among the most abundant items scavenged from the old world. They are used for storing medicinal herbs, tinctures, harvested grains, seeds for planting, water, honey, beads, foodstuffs, etc. The village brewers seek out and use one-gallon glass jugs and five- to ten-gallon carboys for making booze. While they rely on these artifacts of the old world, they learn pottery or glassblowing in order to replace these vessels when there are no more to be found.

Tins are equally useful and as highly sought after as glass jars. They’re used for making and storing char-cloth, storing percussive fire making supplies, storing needles and thread or sinew, and for storing and preserving many other things. In time these containers will erode and become useless, but will be easily replaced by those who can work bone, wood, stone, metal, bark, and even grass and reeds.

On a larger scale, old vans and large trucks are used now as houses or as storage closets, or they’re converted into huge solar dehydrators. Many building materials from the civilized world are also scavenged and put toward new uses. Bricks, concrete chunks, wood, metal supports and beams, and even plastic are given new purpose in the post-civ world. As these things slowly decay and become scarcer, people in post-civ communities learn to fashion a plethora of shelters from natural materials: adobe hogans, long-term debris huts, tipis, wikkiups, and scavenged debris cabins.

Besides scrounging old world materials for building and storage, people frequently put these materials to use in artistic creations. The importance of art in post-civ society can’t be overestimated. Interspersed throughout the village’s sprawling permaculture gardens are countless sculptures and murals, mostly made from recycled old world rubbish. Paintings, found object art, sculptures, and statues can be found in the communal food hall, the village meeting hall, and in most homes. On the east end of this village there is also a small amphitheater that acts as an open air historical gallery.

In the civilized world art is thought of as the domain of the bourgeoisie and the wealthy, and is thought to be abstract and incomprehensible to most. In the post-civ world art belongs to and speaks to everyone. The giant metal sculptures and multitude of paintings and tapestries in the village play several important roles. Most of the art in the village portrays

arises, and when it is suggested as a solution to certain problems, the entire village meets and must reach consensus on the issue. Only one person has ever been exiled from this village, after showing over a period of many months he had no interest in community, anarchist politics, or post-civ ethics.

However, the man accused of stealing is still interested in being a part of this community, like most people who act unethically. He has promised to make up for what he's done. No one will hold him to this and no one dictates the terms of his recompense. Because he is handy at fixing broken things, he has decided to mend several things in disrepair owned by the friends he wronged. And to show the entire community he's sorry for acting poorly, he's decided to spend an extra half-day scavenging useful items from the past.

This is a prudent choice, one he knows the larger community will appreciate. All post-civ communities, to some extent, make use of the almost inexhaustible supply of resources that can be harvested from the wasteful civilized world. All manner of discarded and forgotten tools and objects are recovered from the ruins of civilization. The benefits of scavenging and recycling the waste of the old world are twofold. It is first beneficial to the planet, as recycling and reusing old waste helps reduce the amount of trash polluting the world's delicate ecosystems. It also allows post-civ communities and individuals to relearn sustainable, permacultural, non-industrialized ways of making all the tools and technologies they need and have forgotten.

There are hundreds of examples of scavenged and recycled goods in this post-civ village alone. Upon the walls of the communal food hall are scores of cast-iron pans and steel pots, which will last indefinitely if properly cared for. In the event the village does need new dishes, the individuals who have learned metalworking, woodworking, glassworking, and pottery can easily make them with minimal impact on the earth.

Throughout the village huge quantities of medicinal and edible plants are grown in old tires and raised beds made from disassembled shipping pallets. Ancient dumpsters are used to cultivate potatoes and sunchokes. As with the cast iron they'll last almost indefinitely. By the time the tires and pallets eventually rot back into the earth, craftspeople will have made many replacement planters and raised beds.

The answer, sadly, is: not a whole lot. The few positive contributions that have been made, however, are monumental.

The first of these that comes to mind is Anarchism itself. Community, individual happiness, peace, freedom, ecological harmony and permanence, the abolition of oppression and class and capitalism, and equality regardless of race/sex/gender/age/mental or physical ability — would the awareness of these high-and-mighty ideals have been possible without civilization? Could anarchism reach so many people, bring so many disparate strangers together, without the media and writing created within civilization? Perhaps these ideas would have evolved in non-civilized societies, but that's not the way things turned out. So, we at least have the horrendous atmosphere of civilization to thank for inspiring revolutionary thinkers in many eras past: the anti-authoritarian words of the Taoist philosophers, the slave revolts incited by Spartacus in ancient Rome, the Diggers and their short-lived communities in England, and countless others.

Another philosophic innovation developed during civilization's reign is Feminism. This vital philosophy gets as much torment as anarchism, and the two are historically, ethically, philosophically, and politically intertwined. Feminism calls for equality for women, men, and people of other genders, and it seeks to end discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. These ideals are simple and just, but for some reason continue to invoke vehement resistance from patriarchal apologists. Nevertheless, the contributions of feminism and their relevance in building an equal society cannot be understated. So here again we find something developed within civilization worth hanging on to.

Civilization has also given us the alphabet, writing, and printing. Alphabets and writing were initially created for the purpose of keeping economic records and in general for bolstering complex economic systems. Printing was first made common in ancient China for record keeping and artistic purposes. These technologies, while used unethically and harmfully throughout the ages, are not intrinsically bad or undesirable inventions, as primitivists argue they are. This is not to say they are without drawbacks: large-scale paper manufacturing is devastating to forests, modern chemical inks are toxic to plants and animals, powered presses waste large amounts of resources, written and printed matter

can be used as propaganda, and writing and reading can usher in elitism if taught only to a few and kept from the masses.

The benefits of these technologies far outweigh the downfalls, especially if used sustainably and with responsible safeguards against the previously mentioned misapplications. These are the tools of knowledge, and knowledge, as they say, is power. Its at least partially by writing and reading that we learn midwifery, herbal medicine, primitive skills, anarchist philosophy, good arguments to annihilate our political foes, how to work leather, historical precedents to modern anarchism, how to fix bicycles, and an unending cornucopia of other empowering information. Without civilization's need for economic accounting, we wouldn't have these powerful tools.

Perhaps the final positive contribution of civilization is not any one thing, but a series of technologies that, like writing and printing, can and have been used in atrocious ways, but aren't necessarily horrible. A short list includes metalworking, glassblowing, simple machining (like making primitive lathes and manual printing presses), brewing and distilling, composting, permaculture/horticulture, the scientific process and science itself (without the religious adherence to it), and many others. This isn't a complete list, and the idea of borrowing technologies from civilization will be revisited later.

The Collapse of Civilizations

This idea is nothing new, nor is it fantasy. Many people firmly enraptured in the glister and gleam of Western Civilization seem to think that it can never fall. These are probably the same people writing the dictionaries that define civilization as "the stage of human social development and organization that is considered most advanced."

It seems odd that those who consider themselves "civilized" so rarely study events and peoples that have come before. Even the quickest mulling over past civilizations will reveal that they have always fallen. Always. Sumer collapsed, even with the supposed might and wisdom of Gilgamesh. After years of defending against slave insurrections and

She is neither judge nor jury, certainly not a cop, and the hall itself is nothing like a courtroom. Stealing is considered wrong and unnecessary in post-civ communities because all necessities are shared. The village has common tools, common food stores, common clothing for those who can't make or scavenge their own, common medicinal herb stores, and housing for everyone. All people have access to these things at all times.

Most people still keep personal property; not in the sense of land or resources, but belongings with emotional meaning and objects people make themselves. It is personal belongings the person is accused of stealing: a necklace made for one of the accusers by a friend, a bow of exceptional quality made by the owner, and a cedar vest made for the third accuser by his mother. If the thief had taken any of these items from the communal caches, no one would have noticed, let alone cared. But these were all taken from individuals and have personal meaning to each of them.

Under the wise guidance of the mediator, the group comes to several conclusions. The accused admits to stealing these items, and explains that he has done so because he feels neglected by the others. They are all good friends and the thief felt ignored, unappreciated, and hurt, and didn't know how to express his feelings. The three friends all pledge to be more mindful of his feelings and show him their love more often in the future. He apologizes, promises to return their things, and pledges to make amends for stealing from members of the community.

In post-civ mediation there is no punishment as in the civilized world. More often than not, people care so deeply for their friends and community that they feel intense shame when they act unethically. When people are called out for mediation, every person involved states what they'd like to see happen as a result of the situation. In the case of the thief above, each side in the discussion has made promises to amend certain wrongs. In the interest of improving themselves and their community, the people involved will most likely keep these promises.

Mediation doesn't always work, because it relies on the willing participation of all parties involved in conflict. In this post-civ village, as in most, the penalty for continued oppressive behavior toward one's friends or community or continued disinterest in solving problems with mediation results in exile. The need to invoke this penalty almost never

kinds of pests and their waste acts as fertilizer. In similar fashion, the goats are useful to the forest rewilders and ecologists because they can survive exclusively on invasive plants.

Besides goat cheese and eggs, these villagers occasionally consume animal flesh. The goats and chickens die eventually, and the villagers sometimes come across a fresh corpse in the woods. On such occasions these folks eat animal flesh and harvest animal bodies for bones, sinew, and hide. In our world these people would be called freegan.

The rest of the villagers keep a traditional vegan diet. They make up a small minority, but everyone respects their opinions about veganism and their right to a vegan diet. These folks consume nothing but food grown in the permaculture gardens. Because of their increased reliance on the gardens, they typically put more time and effort into maintaining them.

The peaceful coexistence and cooperation among all of these people, regardless of their dietary choices, is a result of the anarchist governance of the village. The village has meetings whenever they're necessary, and its small population ensures that everyone truly has a voice and that every opinion matters. The consensus process — that is, reaching a decision everyone agrees upon — is on many occasions slow and tedious. However, the people of this community have plenty of time for talk and mediation since their “work day” consists of so few hours. Almost everyone in the village attends meetings, understanding that the freedom they enjoy is bound to the responsibilities of voluntary politics.

The communal hall in which village meetings are conducted also doubles as a mediation hall. Mediation is the process by which personal disputes are settled and minor infractions of community “law” are remedied. Today, in the early afternoon, five people enter the hall to begin a mediation. They all sit together in a circle — no one superior to or more authoritative than anyone else — and begin. One of the people in the room has been accused of stealing by three of the others present. The fifth person is a trained mediator and empath. She has devoted most of her life to learning the ways in which various people interact, the ways people express emotion, the ways people reserve emotion, the meaning behind certain emotions, and how to help dissimilar people interact without violent or oppressive speech.

the encroachments of other peoples, the wealthy and expansive Egyptian empire collapsed. The Olmec, Mayan, Aztec, and Incan empires all collapsed. The Indus Valley civilization disappeared, as did the Minoans. And the Greeks, and Babylon, and the Khmer empire, and the Tokugawa shogunate, and the Holy Roman Empire, and the Norse, and on and on. There can be no doubt that contemporary Western Civilization will collapse too.

A more in-depth look at past societies reveals that when they fall, it is usually not caused by one paramount catastrophe but by a variety of disasters. Our civilization is beset by a plenitude of difficulties: ever-expanding and always destructive consumerism, a generally declining economy, reliance on monocrop agriculture, addiction to constantly diminishing oil reserves, recent devastation by a natural disaster, the planned-obsolescence of car culture, and generation-spanning warfare.

In his colossal 12-volume magnum opus *A Study of History*, historian Arnold Toynbee analyzes 30 of the world's past civilizations. He shows that they all pass through the same stages of development: genesis, growth, time of troubles, universal state, and disintegration. Universal State in Toynbee's model can also be read as Decay. Taking together the myriad problems listed above, and factoring in the many others not listed, there can be no doubt that our civilization is in the universal state or decay stage of its existence.

Another poignant example comes from historian and anthropologist Joseph Tainter in *The Collapse of Complex Societies*. In this work he establishes that collapsing civilizations fall into one of three categories: dinosaur, runaway train, and house of cards. Societies in the Dinosaur category rely on resources that are being depleted at an exponential rate and nothing is done to rectify the problem. Leaders in this category refuse to change and adapt, often deny that consumption is a problem, and commit more resources and energy into their current projects. Runaway Train category function only Societies in the Runaway Train category function only when growth is present, whether from military, financial, or religious conquest. Societies in the House of Cards category are structured with too much complexity to continue functioning. Western Civilization analyzed under this model fits into all three categories!

So, again and with emphasis, *Western Civilization can and will fall!* It's only a matter of time.

Post-Collapse Rebirth

Unfortunately for those that hate civilization, when these complex societies fall they most often play phoenix, rising from the ashes of their own failure into another, equally abhorrent civilization. A few have simply died and disintegrated, but the ordinary situation is that civilizations fall and new civilizations rise. This is troublesome.

Knowing this, we must ask ourselves: How do we avoid another oppressive civilization rising up when Western Civ falls? There's no easy answer to this question and only a little historical wisdom on how to avoid such a catastrophe.

When civilizations have fallen in the past, the societies that take their place are often emergent civilizations in their own right that simply seize the opportunity to take power. Or, small and/or repressed civilizations sometimes besiege and destroy empires in decline, like the Vandals sacking Rome. Even in these cases, the remnants of past civilizations remain. There are people still loyal to their former master or state, art and writing that preserve the heritage of fallen civs, and of course the subsequent civs that often assimilate old beliefs and customs into their own.

If applied to the hypothetical collapse of Western Civilization, these lessons from history begin to reveal what the post-collapse atmosphere will be like and what can be done to avoid the rise of another, equally oppressive nation-state.

The first insight is that the staunchest supporters of this civ will stick around a while. These obnoxious patriots of Western empire embody the horrible traits for which it is known: racism, homophobia, sexism and the subduing of women and trans-people, fear of foreigners, nationalism, techno-worship, irrational impulsiveness, and violence. Naturally, these gung-ho cowboys and survivalist roughnecks will be the first to try to seize power or try to restore the standing socio-political structure. The post-collapse civilization they would build or rebuild brings shivers to the spine.

The results of this particular test are a long way off. As the participants alternate between spindles and hearthboards and record their findings, other people pursue a variety of tasks. Outside the village proper, the woods are teeming with human life where long ago saws and cranes and logging trucks decimated the ecosystem. Here instead, a crew of ecologists busy themselves with reforesting the area. This is an intimidating, generation-spanning goal, taken one step at a time. Today, most of the crew is concerned with the removal of invasive non-native plants, especially English ivy and Himalayan blackberries. A few others survey the area, looking for species of plant and animal life that indicate the health of the ecosystem.

Not too far from the ecology crew, a small group of hunters track a deer that they've been after for hours. When the opportunity comes, they'll kill the deer and take it back to the village to be skinned, butchered, and eaten. They've also recovered and killed three hares and a raccoon from their traps.

Not everyone in the community agrees with the taking of animal life. In fact, there are many opinions in this post-civ village regarding people's relationship with other animals. Some people, like the hunters, think that hunting and killing animals for all the resources their bodies provide is perfectly fine. They represent a minority in this specific village. Although they kill, they never do so excessively or for sport; these hunters possess formidable knowledge about ecology and understand their impact on a damaged but healing ecosystem. They only use bows, spears, and traps they've made themselves or salvaged from the old world. They never use tree stands or other lazy industrial abominations, for their prowess at stealth and tracking is extraordinary. And when they do kill they show reverence to the animal and to the forest, and they guarantee every part of the animal is used.

A majority of people in the community disagree with the hunters. These people survive almost exclusively on crops grown in the village's ubiquitous permaculture gardens and supplement their diets with food they scavenge in the wild. Though this majority is opposed to killing other animals, they don't exclude animal food from their diets. This comes mainly in the form of eggs and goat's milk cheese. Chickens are a crucial part of the vast permaculture gardens because they devour all

and transfer seeds and plant starts into the ground, singing songs all the while. A few others take soil samples. They'll take the soil to a makeshift lab — probably in one of their homes — where its pH levels will be established. The pH paper they'll use is made from dried cornhusks died purple with the juice of cabbages.

This homemade litmus paper is but one example of high-tech/low-tech the community employs. Nearby, the folks working the garden utilize all manner of manual tools designed to put out maximum efficiency with minimal effort, maximum durability with minimal impact of the environment. Elsewhere in the village, a woman works one of the community's primitive lathes. Though an advanced technology, skilled woodworkers make these by hand with tools they've also fashioned themselves. They're then used by a number of people for a wide variety of applications: wood and metalworking, pottery, glassworking, and drilling among other things.

In another area of the village, a group of people is conducting an experiment with spindles and hearthboards. Fire is an extremely important tool in post-civ life, as it always has been for humans. But the desire to live in harmony with the earth and to avoid tremendous resource consumption means that fires are once again made without electricity or lighters. This still leaves many "primitive" options in fire making, but the people of this community typically rely on hand drill and bowdrill fires. So, a few of the most skilled fire makers and a handful of physicists have gathered together to determine the best spindle and hearthboard combinations. To be thorough, they've made spindles from a living and a dead sample of 20 species of native plants, and they're using these to try and achieve a coal on each of 6 different hearthboards.

Similar experiments have been done to determine the native woods best suited to bow making, and to find out which plants in the area yield the strongest and longest-lived fibers. The results of these studies are all printed on a very small scale using a manual press, plant inks, and paper either salvaged from the civilized world or made from pressed plant fibers. Once printed, these results are shared with neighboring communities. These communities reciprocate with their results in other fields.

If the collapse were caused by war, it's more likely another civilization (like the rightfully-furious Arabic world or communism-gone-wrong China) might take control of the Western world and begin reforming it. Western Civ could also continue losing power and influence until it is eventually assimilated by another culture. By their nature, all civilizations are terrible, so this path also sucks.

If either of these hypotheticals were to come to fruition, building a new society becomes a nigh impossible nightmare instead of an improbable daydream. If there's any hope of building a truly anarchistic society that doesn't get crushed in its beginning stages, it must be built now while Western civilization is declining, not after it falls.

This is common sense. But the lack of action in building anarchist communities is frustrating. The word community here is not used to imply that no anarchist kinship exists — far from it. It is used in a more tangible sense; that is, anarchists need a land base and a concentrated population. No society has ever grown without land, so how can we form a society if we are scattered and disjointed? How can we grow and scavenge our own food, reclaim and repair damaged ecosystems, recycle civilized technologies for permacultural applications, and teach each other defense techniques and melee combat if we are unfocused and spread out? Moreover, how can we defend ourselves and our land base from those who would maintain civilization if there's only a handful of us?

It's equally frustrating that anarchists have no concrete philosophy on how to solve these problems and how to live and thrive in a post-collapse world. Ever more frustrating is the constant bickering between anarchists and anti-authoritarians of different schools. The rest of this work is meant to establish the philosophy needed for building a post-civilized society by integrating the previous critiques of primitive and civilized society with the admirable traits of past schools of thought. Hopefully the following discourse will also lay the groundwork for future refinement of post-civ anarchist theory.

If there's any hope of building a truly anarchistic society that doesn't get crushed in its beginning stages, it must be built now, while Western civilization is declining, not after it falls.

Part II: Post-civilized anarchism, thoughts and actions for a new type of society

Basic Premises

In the previously mentioned zine *Post-Civ!*, post-civilized anarchism is introduced with three basic premises. To begin a deeper exploration of post-civ thought, it's necessary to reiterate and broaden these three principles:

- All civilizations, from their foundation, are destructive, oppressive, and unsustainable. The bad in civilized social structures far outweighs the good, so civilization is undesirable.
- Because of civilization's impact on the world, it is impossible to return to a pre-civilized state of being. Pre-civilized societies are also flawed and oppressive in many ways, and are therefore undesirable. Taken together, returning to or creating a pre-civilized society is undesirable and impossible.
- It is therefore desirable and necessary to imagine a post-civilized philosophy and enact a post-civilized society based on the principles therein.

Premises 1 and 2 are pretty well covered in Part I of this text and by a number of other sources listed later. Elaborating on the third premise and building a solid base of ideas begins with a set of core values.

Core Values

After the three basic premises of post-civ thought come the core values. These concepts are based upon the information gleaned from critiquing primitive and civilized societies. They are meant to be a means of avoiding the pitfalls and nurturing the benefits of each societal structure.

These are:

to specific problems that have burdened both civilized and primitive cultures.

Portrait of a Post-Civilized Community

The use of a fictional post-civ society is meant only to show post-civilized solutions to the persistent problems of past societies. Although many of the things listed below would no doubt exist in a tangible post-civ community, this is by no means a strict formula for the creation of such a community.

With that in mind, imagine a dawn. The sun is just beginning to cast its first rays, a welcome bit of warmth on a chilly spring morning. The night watch volunteers are elated to see the day shift coming to relieve them. Theirs is a necessary but dangerous job, for those who would conquer and oppress are still a force to be reckoned with. The thought of violence doesn't please or excite them, but they are more than prepared to defend their homes and community with lethal force.

Others are just beginning to stir. The village is coming to life. Many meet up in the communal food hall for a shared breakfast. Laughter and jovial conversation carry out of the food hall and down to the river, where several groups and individuals eat their food. Some others eat in their homes, preferring solitary quietude to the company of others so early in the day.

When breakfast is finished people mill about, heading to a number of destinations. The bulk of the villagers make their way to various permaculture gardens. It is here that the village produces almost all the food it consumes. Work in the gardens is necessary but isn't difficult. The damp nature of the area provides enough rainfall so that watering is mostly a non-issue for six to eight months of the year. And in the drier months, water that has been collected and stored is fed to the food crops by recycled metal pipes and newly fabricated ones made of bark. So, most of the work in the gardens is weeding, composting, mulching, and harvesting, which isn't very much work at all.

Early spring is a time for planting, a time for encouraging new life as the winter crops are dying out. People dig holes, fill them with compost,

forms, ensuring that our actions don't harm the planet, and fixing what damage has already been done.

It sounds arrogant to assume that we know what's best for the planet, that we can make it better. The exact opposite is true: we know what's horrible for the planet, and we're doing it and have been doing it for thousands of years, always at an increasing rate. But we're also aware that we are the cause of the earth's demise, and we can and must take steps to heal the injuries we've brought about.

However, an injury once inflicted cannot be uninflicted. In the same way we cannot revert to a primitive society having gone through civilization, the planet cannot return to its virgin state having endured a pox of ignorant humans (at least not for a very long time). Plastic, radioactive waste, a depleted ozone layer, the shells of cars, the skeletal frames of cities will all remain as visible scars on the face of our once pristine rock.

To forestall further wounds and further scarring, we must adopt the sixth core value, *permaculture*. Permaculture doesn't mean installing raised garden beds in front of our plastic, petrol-dependent houses, or shopping exclusively for fair-trade, organic produce imported half way across the world. It doesn't mean the shallow farce called Green Capitalism, either. Permaculture means true sustainability.

In the spirit of the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois, permaculture means thinking about and acting for the wellness of seven generations into the future. It means instilling all of the core values in our society and our children, so that they too will think and act for the wellness of future generations. Permaculture is being aware of the consequences — good, neutral, and bad — of every action we take, or don't. It is founding communities based on these principles and being prepared and willing to defend them against those who would exploit and conquer. It means producing our own food, clothes, and tools, and only what we need. Permaculture is ecological and cultural permanence.

These six core values stand alone as the majority of post-civ anarchist philosophy. The way these values are applied to specific situations and dilemmas makes up the rest. The remaining section in Part II creates a fictional post-civilized anarchist society governed by the six core values. It also illustrates how post-civ society applies these values as solutions

- Synthesis
- Scavenging & Adaptation
- Anarchism
- Sex & Gender Equality
- Ecological Harmony & Stewardship
- Permaculture

In the introduction, Post-Civ philosophy is described as a *synthesis*. The first of the core values again describes it as such. Synthesis means that Post-Civ philosophy takes the positive traits of the cultures, technologies, and ideas of the past and present and combines them into a definitive philosophy for the future. Primitive skills, sustainable horticulture, scavenging, bows, shovels, composting, candle making, herbalism, deep affection for the earth, anarchism and feminism, metalworking, cobbing, science, the power of myth — these are but a few of the ideas and actions Post-Civ philosophy assimilates.

Synthesizing past and present ideas also means doing away with traditional dualism in our collective thinking. This is dualism in its original sense: the idea of binary opposites. Thinking about things in terms of *this* versus *that* has been the cause of oppression in primitive and civilized societies, and would be just as oppressive in a Post-Civ society if allowed to persist. There is no opposite of grass or twig. There is often a gray area between black and white. Primitive Society and Civilization are not the only two options. Science and myth can complement each other rather than compete. There are more genders than male and female. Hitchhiking and train-hopping are both valid forms of travel in our waning capitalist society.

Understanding the fallacy of universal dualism is essential to bettering the way we think. And teaching ourselves how to think critically and to make the best choice from a variety of options is equally important. Otherwise, we're doomed to repeat the mistakes of past societies.

If Synthesis is the theory of combining good ideas of the past, then the second core value, *scavenging & adaptation*, is the practice of taking advantage of the good ideas and objects at present. Fostering our abilities to scavenge and to adapt means we can go anywhere, survive on anything we find, and deal with any unexpected disasters that come

our way. Building a society based on these principles gives it the same advantages. Many cultures have failed and dissipated in the past because of unexpected circumstances, from natural disasters to the appearance of belligerent foreigners. If we expect to build a society with any kind of stability, it must be able and willing to scavenge and adapt.

Scavenging doesn't just apply to edible wild plants and roadkill; it implies cultures and technologies as well. And adaptation isn't solely focused on handling natural disasters, but extends to the ability and willingness to change tactics and ideas when necessary. Dumpster diving is practical scavenging for now, but the waste in dumpsters won't last forever. What we build with dumpsters when Western Civ falls is adaptation.

The third core value is *anarchism*. Contrary to popular belief, anarchism isn't just a circle-A patch or pop-punk album you can buy at the mall. Neither does it stand for nor encourage the destruction of all order. Despite negative media attention and scape-goating at the hands of the rich and powerful, anarchism is a cohesive set of political and social ethics. Etymologically, anarchism comes from the Greek “άν or *an*” and “άρχων or *archon*,” which means “without leaders”. At its core, anarchism is simply the idea that people can govern themselves without being commanded or forced to think or act a certain way.

The roots of anarchism are varied, rising from such minds as the Chinese Taoists, the Greek Cynics and Stoics, Christian communalists in medieval Europe, and the ivory tower gentlemen and ladies of the 18th century Enlightenment. Over the years anarchism has embodied many ideas, but is perhaps most closely linked with workers' movements of the 19th and 20th centuries and the liberation of the working class. Some other movements include communalism and individualism, Christian anarchism, anarcho-communism, anarcha-feminism, green anarchism and anarcho-primitivism.

As a core value of Post-Civ thought, anarchism is a synthesis of all of these ideas. It means the eradication of institutionalized government and the eradication of all forms of hierarchy and oppression. It means the sometimes-violent defense of our communities against oppressors, and it means the building of a society based on mutual aid, free association,

non-coercion, respect for the individual, community togetherness, and equality. True Freedom, but not without its twin Responsibility.

The natural extension of anarchism into the domain of sex and gender is *feminism*. Feminism doesn't mean matriarchy, or female rule and domination. Rather, feminism is a blanket term for a number of schools of ideology, just as diverse and divided as the many schools of anarchism.

Integrated into Post-Civ philosophy, feminism can be read as sex and gender equality. This means equal inclusion, opportunity, treatment, and respect for all people regardless of their biological sex, their chosen gender, and their choice in sexual or romantic partner(s). It also means establishing a society free from sexual bureaucracy and gender-based hierarchy. Civilized and non-civilized societies have failed in these respects, and Post-Civ society should look to correct their mistakes.

Perhaps the greatest mistake made by civilization is its universal destruction of our planet. Primitive societies, in this regard, have been much more responsible and intelligent. Although capitalists often dub anyone who cares about the earth's ecosystems a hippie or treehugger, the logic to justify affection for the planet is straightforward. Earth is our home and we, as animals, depend entirely upon the earth's ecosystems to sustain us. We are destroying the earth. Therefore, we are killing ourselves and our only means of sustenance.

And for what? For profit? For convenience? The list of ways in which the environment is being ruined could span pages, but there are already innumerable books, articles, and internet sources corroborating the annihilation of the natural world. The point is that we — as a species — and our planet are dying. Nothing is being done to remedy the problem, only to make more money.

In hopes of combating such atrocities, the fifth core value is *ecological harmony & stewardship*. To prevent the catastrophic mutilation of our beautiful planet in the future, we must ingrain in ourselves, our children, and our society that the earth is something to be cherished and taken care of. Ecological harmony implicates that every action we take must be at least environmentally neutral, at best beneficial to the environment. Stewardship means cultivating an attitude and atmosphere of deep affection for the planet, for all its animate beings and inanimate