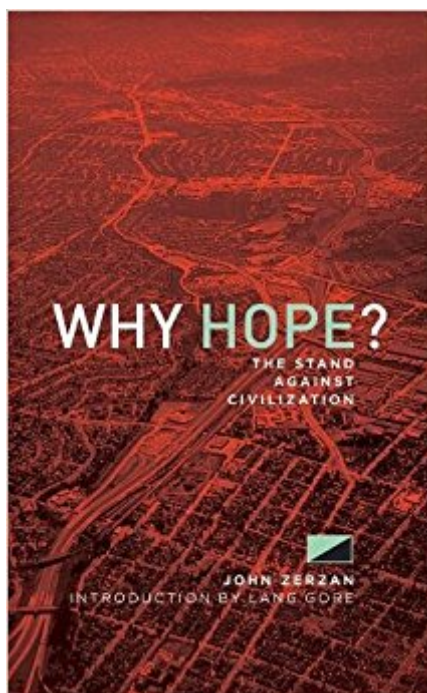


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Why Hope?: The Stand Against Civilization



Synopsis

The infamous eco-anarchist John Zerzan whose books have resulted in recent interviews by Vice and Believer magazines, checks in with further provocative articles about the chaotic results of civilization and technology. Says novelist Lang Gore in his introduction: "The present collection of essays continues the overarching thrust of John's scholarship, unveiling the post-apocalyptic nature of our times by noting the apocalypse was yesterday, several thousand years ago, to be precise, and that nothing produced by civilization can ever redeem the systematic attempt it has undertaken these (very) few millennia to destroy or alienate any human connection with the earth." In fact, when civilized Europeans imposed themselves everywhere on Earth, they created a terminal crisis for themselves by their very contact with indigenous societies. Suddenly, those with eyes to see and ears to hear could recognize that patriarchy, property and authority, and certainly slavery, were neither necessary nor desirable, let alone determined by 'human nature.'"

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Zerzan (born 1943) is an American anarchist and primitivist philosopher and author. His works criticize agricultural civilization as inherently oppressive, and advocate drawing upon the ways of life of hunter gatherers as an inspiration for what a free society should look like. Some subjects of his criticism include domestication, language, symbolic thought (such as mathematics and art) and the concept of time. Lang: Lang Gore has played at many occupations over the decades, including secretary, cab driver, treeplanter, pamphleteer, forest-fire fighter, bouncer and logger. He is the

author of Hunting Seasons

If you've read Zerzan before, then you know what to expect. If you've never read him before, I'd probably recommend you start with Elements of Refusal, his best collection. This is one is also very good. As is typical of Zerzan essays, expect lots of quotations and footnotes. The style makes the essays dense in ideas and make for slow reading. The book is only 132 pages, but don't expect to zip through it in an afternoon. The first two essays are a little slow and abstract, but my favorite stuff comes in after these. The essay on the Bronze Age, on the crisis in Rome and on the Luddites were all worth reading and form the best parts of the book in my opinion. I read Zerzan because I like how his ideas challenge the mainstream view. Some of the later, shorter essays are just okay and there's a short interview that you can skim through that isn't much, but were enough interesting bits to keep me going. A solid collection.

To give the man his due, John Zerzan is the most trenchant social critic of his time. In his weekly college radio show, and in his writings, Zerzan is a principled, brilliant, indefatigable dissector of the various social ills wrought by our supersystem. Yet he is a hopeist, as deluded in his absurd fantasy of "primitivism" as the Japanese soldier who continued to fight World War II for decades after it had ended. Humans are not going back to buckskins and haruspicy. Using "force" in the service of noble ideals begets nothing positive, and long, pointless jail terms and deaths for would-be martyrs. In these pedantic essays, Zerzan, ostensibly a "primitivist," reveals lifelong monkdom enraptured with the texts of high culture classicism, a Thoreavian exercise in abjuration and scholarship of the non-"primitive" variety. Yet he is far more credible in his views than the posings of the Jensen & Hedges (give me, a nobody reviewer, credit for that formulation, at least, please?) crowd he smacks around. The last mini-essay on "hope" is preposterous and wan, demonstrating that the nihilists he claims to abhor are the rationalists of the species, but humans are decidedly not in favor of rationalism. They cling, ferociously, to lost causes and irrational leaders and speakers.

Should be helpful in relieving the pain of an ingrown bougie brain. Worked for me.

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