

Zerzan, John. *Twilight of the Machines*. Feral House, 2008. Pp. 260. \$12 (paper). ISBN 978-1932595314

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Our scientific and technological advances have mostly fostered the kind of ethnocentrism that dismisses past achievements out of hand, especially regarding pre-agricultural humans. From John Zerzan's *Twilight of the Machines* we learn to appreciate better this period of our ancestral past. After all, humans have existed in this pre-agricultural state for a much, much longer period of time (nearly some 2 million years according to Zerzan) than they have in an agricultural, an urban, and, especially, an advanced technological setting. Not only have such earlier band societies passed the test of time, but they were no less intelligent than modern humans and therefore had intelligent, sophisticated, and unique ways of coming to terms with their embodied lives, social arrangements, and particular places. If approached from this charitable and searching standpoint rather than a condescending, Enlightenment standpoint that attributes all sorts of crude and silly notions to these earlier tribal peoples, we may learn from them something entirely fresh and fundamental concerning what it means to live well and live in a good community. Such native wisdom needs to be part of our present conversation. "...[H]uman life appears to have been healthy and authentic... We humans once had it right, if the anthropologists are to be believed" (68).

Zerzan, however, pushes the envelope farther. We will not only feel challenged by these past achievements, but we will also finally conclude that such an achievement of a good life is impossible without entirely adopting what he calls primitivism. In other words, we will turn our heads entirely around and be led out of this illusory cave of civilization.

The reasons for our radical turnabout have to do both positively with the appeal of a more vigorous, wholesome and just life but also negatively in view of the catastrophe of civilization. "As the life-world's vital signs worsen on every level, the best minds should be paying attention

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