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## **The Anarcho-Primitivist case for Straight Edge: *Against His-Story, Against Alcoholocaust!***

Originally written and distributed by Crimethinc

Warzone Distro  
WARZONEDISTRO.NOBLOGS.ORG  
2024

*The history of civilization is the history of beer.* In every era and area untouched by civilization, there has been no beer; conversely, virtually everywhere civilization has struck, beer has arrived with it. Civilization — that is to say, hierarchical social structures and consequent relationships of competition, unbridled technological development, and universal alienation — seems to be inextricably linked to alcohol. Our sages, who look back and ahead through time to see beyond the limits of such pernicious culture, tell a parable about our past to explain this link:

Most anthropologists regard the beginnings of agriculture as the inception of civilization. It was this first act of control over the land that brought human beings to think of themselves as distinct from nature, that forced them to become sedentary and possessive, that led to the eventual development of private property and capitalism. But why would hunter/gatherers, whose environment already provided them with all the food they needed, lock themselves in place and give up the nomadic foraging existence they had practiced since the beginning of time for something they already had? It seems more likely — and here, there are anthropologists who agree — that the first ones to domesticate themselves did so in order to brew beer.

This drastic reorganization for the sake of intoxication must have shaken tribal structure and lifeways to the root. Where these “primitive” peoples had once lived in a relaxed and attentive relationship to the providing earth — a relationship that afforded them both personal autonomy and supportive community as well as a great deal of leisure time to spend in admiration of the enchanted world around them — they now alternated periods of slavish hard labor with periods of drunken incompetence and detachment. It’s not hard to imagine that this situation hastened, if not necessitated, the rise to power of masters, overseers who saw to it that the toilsome tasks of fixed living were carried out by the frequently inebriated and incapable tribespeople. Without these chiefs and the primitive judicial systems they instituted, it must have seemed that life itself would be impossible: and thus, under the foul auspices of alcoholism, the embryonic State was conceived.

### **Enough History! Let The Future Begin!**

Perhaps so much talk about faraway times and peoples leaves you cold. Sure, history can be dead — and the history of triumphant armies and mass-murderer Presidents is indeed a history of death. All the same, we can learn from this past, as from each other, if we apply our imaginations and a keen eye for pattern. Professional historians and their fellow slaves of slaves might call this account subjective or biased, but then — which of *their* histories isn’t? We’re not the ones whose salaries depend on corporate sponsorships and patronage, anyway!

Even if you do decide that this history of alcoholism is “the” truth, for heaven’s sake don’t waste time looking back into the past for some long-lost state of primitive sobriety that — for all any of us know — may not even have existed. What matters is what we do in the present tense, what histories our actions create today. History is the residue — no, better, the excrement — of such activity; let us not drown in it like yeast, but learn what we must and then leave it behind. Let nothing stop us, not even alcohol, as ingrained in our culture as it is! Those drunken despots and beer-bellied bigots may destroy their world and smother beneath their history, but we bear a new future in our hearts — and the power to enact it in our healthy livers.



flood of alcohol immobilizing the masses. The world now waits for a temperance that can defend itself, for a radical vision unclouded by drink, for a revolutionary sobriety that will return us to the ecstatic state of wild.

### **Our Anti-Authoritarian Heritage: Teetotalers Fighting Totalitarianism**

It's not widely remembered that strict vegetarianism and abstinence from drink have been common in radical circles for many centuries. One need only thumb through the history books to amass a long list of heretics, Utopians, reformers, revolutionaries, communitarians, and individualists who adopted these lifestyle choices as essential elements of their platforms. We'll leave that list-making to the enthusiastic reader or obsessive critic — let it suffice to say that examples range from old white guys like Friedrich Nietzsche, who eschewed even caffeine while extolling the kind of ecstatic bacchanalism described herein, N. Vachel Lindsay, the visionary hobo of Springfield, Illinois who traversed the early United States to share his poetic appeals for temperance and willful unemployment, and Jules Bonnot and his fellow anarchist bankrobbers, who invented the getaway car together, to Malcolm X (of course), and the ezln — who prohibit alcohol as per the counsel of Zapatista women fed up with mens' bullshit. (The capitalist government of Mexico has tried to undermine revolutionary activity by importing beer into villages like Ocosingo; in that city and others; Zapatistas have responded by setting up barricades and fighting the soldiers who would enforce this “free trade” upon them.) One of Public Enemy's best songs attacked the role of alcohol in the exploitation and oppression of the African-American community. You can bet anarchist Leon Czolgosz was stone cold sober when he shot us President William McKinley to death. Oh, and — could we forget? — there's always Ian McKaye.

On the other side of the coin — can you imagine how much more progress we would have made in this struggle already if anti-authoritarians such as Nestor Makhno, Guy Debord, Janis Joplin, and countless anarcho-punks had focused more energy on the creation and destruction they loved so dearly, and less on drinking themselves to death?

Such a pathetic way of life could not have been appealing to the peoples who neighbored the aboriginal alcoholic agriculturists; but as every historian knows, the spread of civilization was anything but voluntary. Lacking the manners and gentleness of their former companions in the wild, these savages, in their drunken excesses and infringements, must have provoked a series of wars — wars which, sadly, the lushes were able to win, owing to the military efficiency of their autocratic armies and the steady supply of food their subjugated farmlands provided. Even these advantages would not have been enough, if the brutes hadn't had a secret weapon in their possession: alcohol itself. Adversaries who would otherwise have held their own on the field of battle indefinitely fell before the cultural onslaught of drunken debauchery and addiction, when trade — one of the inventions of the agriculturists, who also became the first misers, the first merchants — brought this poison into their midst. A pattern of conflict, addiction, defeat, and assimilation was set in motion, one which can be traced throughout history from the cradle of civilization through the Roman wars for Empire to the holocaust perpetrated upon the natives of the New World by the murderous European colonists.

But this is just a story, speculation. Let's consult the history books (reading between the lines where we must, as these books come down to us from yesteryear's conquering killers and their obedient slaves ... that is, historians!) to see if it lines up with the evidence. We'll start in the early years of agriculture, when the first tribes settled down — in the fertile lands around rivers, where wheat and barley were easy to grow and ferment in mass quantities.

### **The Domestication of Man — By Alcohol**

*Enkidu, a shaggy, unkempt, almost bestial primitive man, who ate grass and could milk wild animals, wanted to test his strength against Gilgamesh, the god-king. Gilgamesh sent a prostitute to Enkidu to learn of his strengths and weaknesses. Enkidu enjoyed a week with her during which she taught him of civilization. Enkidu knew not what bread was, nor had he learned to drink beer. She spoke unto Enkidu: “Eat the bread now, it belongs to life. Drink also beer, as it is the custom of*

*the land. ” Enkidu drank seven cups of beer and his heart soared. In this condition he washed himself and became a civilized being.*

—The first written narrative of civilization, the Epic of Gilgamesh written in 3000 bc, describes the domestication of Enkidu the Primitive by means of beer.

The oldest authenticated records of brewing were fashioned over 6000 years ago in Sumer, the oldest of human civilizations. Sumer also had the first known state-organized religion, and the official “divine drink” of this religion was beer brewed by priestesses of Ninkasi, the Sumerian goddess of alcohol. The hymns of Ninkasi were brewing instructions! The first collection of laws, the Code of Hammurabi of Babylon, decreed a daily beer ration in direct proportion to social status: beer consumption went hand-in-hand with hierarchy. For example, workers received two liters while besotted priests and kings got five. [For an interesting thought experiment, ask yourself how much alcohol — and of what grade — you get now, and what that says about your position in society.] Historians pondering the primacy of alcohol in these ancient lawbooks have even conjectured that the original function of hierarchy was to permit some men to hoard mass amounts of alcohol while ensuring that a sufficient labor force —*pacified by their meager alcohol rations to discourage revolt or escape* — was always at hand to keep farming and brewing. Kings used golden drinking straws to sip from giant containers of beer, a tradition that has been preserved in plastic throughout the Western world. The pivotal role of alcohol in this first hierarchy is easy to recognize, even from a cursory reading of these records: as in every authoritarian regime, “justice” was a cardinal concern, and the punishment decreed for all who violated any of the laws governing beer was death by drowning.

Though it was yet newly-invented, beer influenced every single facet of emerging human civilization. Before the invention of money, beer was used as the standard item of barter — a money before money! In Ancient Egypt, a keg of beer was the only proper gift to offer to the Pharaoh when proposing marriage to his daughter, and kegs of

was immediately applied by Carl von Linde to enable artificial cooling, allowing those with the infrastructure of civilization to brew anytime, anywhere. Contrary to popular belief, Louis Pasteur invented pasteurization for *beer-making*, and only later was it adopted by the dairy industry. Yeast, which is found naturally in the air, is no longer even used in that state by modern brewing, as scientists have isolated a single yeast cell and induced its artificial reproduction for brewing. Following the invention of the assembly line, beer has come to be mass-produced on an ever larger scale. Over the two centuries since, the alcohol industry — like all capitalist industries — has been consolidated by a few major companies controlled feudally by families like the infamous Anheuser-Busch beer syndicate (infamous for its connections to right-wing groups and religious fundamentalists). As for other links between alcohol and far-right/fascist activity — perhaps the reader will recall where Hitler initiated his takeover of Germany.

### **Resist Capitalism — Desist Drinking**

It’s no exaggeration, then, to say that alcohol has played a key role in the epidemic of fascism, racism, statism, imperialism, colonialism, sexism and patriarchy, class oppression, ungoverned technological development, religious superstition, and other bad stuff that has swept the earth over the past few millennia. It continues to play that role today, as the peoples of the whole world, finally universally domesticated and enslaved by global capitalism, are kept pacified and helpless by a steady supply of spirits. These evil spirits squander the time, money, health, focus, creativity, awareness, and fellowship of all who inhabit this universally occupied territory — “work is the curse of the drinking classes,” as Oscar Wilde said. It’s not surprising, for example, that the primary targets of advertising for malt liquor (a toxic by-product of the brewing process) are the inhabitants of ghettos in the United States: people who constitute a class that, if not tranquilized by addition and incapacitated by self-destruction, would be on the front lines of the war to destroy capitalism.

Civilization — and everything noxious and baleful it engenders — will crumble when a resistance movement appears that can dam the

*the appointed means. It has already annihilated all the tribes that formerly inhabited the sea coast.*

—Benjamin Franklin who was, primitivists take note, the “discoverer” of electricity, among other things — though folk scientists will protest that he discovered electricity no more than Columbus discovered America. Perhaps “domesticator” is more accurate a term? Anyway, back to our story

As imperialist European civilization began its cancerous spread across the world, beer loyally led the charge. The first merchants, the Hansa, exported beer as far as India. The colonization of the United States began when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, instead of further south as planned, because they ran out of supplies: “especially our beere.” The founding fathers, including Washington and Jefferson, as well as being slave-owning aristocrats, were all brewers of beer. Coincidence?

The foundations of colonial genocide bear the stench of a long and protracted alcohol-induced nightmare — nearly every indigenous culture the Europeans encountered was destroyed by European alcohol and disease. The spreading of *firewater* among indigenous populations of North America went hand-in-hand with the distribution of lethal smallpox-infested blankets. Many of these cultures, without the experience of thousands of years of civilized alcoholism to draw upon, were even more subject than the Europeans to the ravages of “the civilized brew.” Between alcohol, disease, commerce, and guns, most of them were quickly and utterly destroyed. This process was not unique to North America — it was repeated throughout the world in every European colonial endeavor. While the drug of choice varied (sometimes it was opium, for example, as in the “Opium Wars” Great Britain waged to control China), alcohol was judged in many countries to be the most socially-acceptable tool of pacification.

The Industrial Revolution was hastened by the prospect of brewing beer yearlong, since the temperatures needed for brewing occur naturally only in winter. The steam engine invented by James Watt

beer were sacrificed to the gods when the Nile overflowed. As civilization spread, so did beer. Even in regions as remote as Finland, beer played a crucial role from the moment civilization struck: the *Kalevala*, the ancient Finnish epic poem, had twice as many verses devoted to beer than to the creation of the earth. Brewing could be found wherever civilization was, from the rudimentary villages of German barbarians to the god-emperors of ancient China. Only those human beings that still lived in harmony with wilderness, such as the indigenous peoples of North America and some sectors of Africa, remained alcohol-free — for a time.

The “classical civilizations” of Greece and Rome were as soaked in alcohol as they were in blood — the entire ancient world was lost in a collective hangover. This must have helped the nobles and philosophers to gloss over the fact that their “enlightened democracy” was based on the subjection of women and masses of slaves. The greatest work of “classical” literature, the *Symposium*, details a drinking party starring Socrates, whose claim-to-fame as a philosopher was ... augmented by his inhumanly high tolerance for alcohol. Studying his glorifications of the abstract over the real — *provided these weren't falsely attributed to him by his mendacious pupil, Plato* — one can still catch a whiff of the sour breath of a drunk.

## **BREW AND STATE**

*In life be I called Gambrinus, King of Flanders and Brabant, who first have made malt from barley and so conceived of the brewing of beer. Hence, the brewers can say they have a king as the first master brewer.*

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The patron saint of beer was a *monarch* of course.

The Roman Empire finally collapsed, as all empires eventually do (including this one, damn it!), after a generations-long drunken orgy of decadence and degeneration. The two most influential survivors were beer and Christianity. Brewing had once been the domain of women — but with the rise of the Catholic Church the monastic

orders seized that domain for themselves, destroying one of the last bastions of primal matriarchy. Monks, wasting away in prayer, relied upon the drink to ease their miserable religious fasting — and so, not surprisingly, the consumption of beer was not considered a violation of their vows of non-consumption. Beer consumption in monasteries reached unheard-of levels, as monks were allowed to consume up to five liters of beer a day. Both the popes and early emperors such as Charlemagne would personally supervise the brewing process, hoping to create the perfect drink to obliterate both their consciousness and the consciousness of their subjects.

The birth of capitalism and the nation-state began with the commercialization of beer. The monasteries, overflowing with more beer than they themselves could consume, began to sell it to the surrounding villages. Monasteries doubled by night as pubs, and these men of God created some of the first well-managed profit-making enterprises. With the weakening of the power of the Church and the rise of the modern nation-state, kings and dukes moved in to close the tax-exempt monasteries. They began licensing out brewing to the rising merchant class, imposing a heavy tax that hastened the centralization of power and wealth in these nations. Beer became the focus of every night and the mainstay of every celebration. Christmas “Yuletide,” for example, derives from “Ale tide.” To pacify women on their wedding night, an extra-potent “Bride Ale” was made, and so our word *bridal*. Everywhere the triumph of drunkenness, everywhere the triumph of God and State.

### **Her-Story and Hop-Story**

*Herewith shall brewers and others not use anything other than malt, hops, and water. These same brewers also shall not add anything when serving or otherwise handling beer, upon penalty of death.*

—Beer Purity & Eugenics Laws of Bayers-Landshut

While the monasteries were commercializing beer and the nation-state thriving off it, a secret sisterhood of brewers remained in the peasant villages, fermenting strange and miraculous drinks for the

poor and excluded of medieval society. These “witches” would ferment juniper berries, sweet gale, blackthorn, anise, yarrow, rosemary, wormwood, pine roots, henbane — each with effects unique and potent. For example, while drinks based off the “vile weed” hops were sedatives, many other fermented drinks would heal the sick, calm the angry, and give hope to the hopeless. Peasants would gather in their villages and drink sacred drinks brewed with yeast their grandmothers had passed down through generations. As they consorted and consumed these wild and varied drinks, all the degradations the priests and kings had heaped upon them would rise to their consciousness, and they would rise in revolt against their rulers. As these revolts were especially frequent and ferocious in the Holy Roman Empire, the various German nobles conspired to destroy the cultures that nourished them. The Duke of Bavaria, Wilhelm iv, passed the Beer Purity Act to quash all subversive diversity of fermentation. From 1516 onwards, beer was to be brewed only with the sedative hops: henceforth all alcohol was homogenized, and whatever medicinal or restorative fermentation technology had existed was lost. Hops-based brew causes a lack of coordination, an inability to think clearly, and eventually a slow death — all qualities needed to make both German peasants and modern temp workers incapable of revolt.

The women who had formerly been the respected brewers of the peasant villages were hunted down and burned at stake as “brew witches.” To this day, witches are rarely imagined without their brewing cauldrons. Burnings of witches on the grounds of heretical brewing processes continued until 1519. With this slaughter, the last independent and creative brewing centers were destroyed, and women prostrated before the drunken God of the repressed monks and greedy brewmasters. Through alcohol the common folk were subdued, and what passed for life in the Middle Ages became nasty, short, brutish, and — above all — drunk.

### **Globalize Alcoholism**

*Indeed, if it be the design of Providence to excavate these savages in order to make room for the cultivators of the earth, it seems not improbable that rum may be*