



# Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!

*Fredy Perlman*

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## **Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!** Fredy Perlman

His major work, a vast study of the rise of totalitarian lifestyles and a profound affirmation of the struggle to reassert human values. One of the most significant and influential anarchic texts of the last few decades.

## **Against His-Story, Against Leviathan! Details**

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## From Reader Review Against His-Story, Against Leviathan! for online ebook

### zek says

One of those books that completely changes the way you conceptualize things, in this case the narrative of western civilization and progress which completely pervades our understanding of ourselves and our time. Perlman moves in a linear fashion through western history, beginning with the Sumerians and finishing with the eradication of the last free peoples in the Americas. Throughout, the focus is on the development of the monstrous Leviathan, which Perlman figures for civilization (after Hobbes), briefly describing the wide variety of individuals and groups who assisted in its destructive march through time, only to be devoured by it. One of the most interesting points he makes is that civilization is not in a continual state of progress, contrary to the myths of history books. Rather he shows how it is continually *decomposing*, hampered both by continuous resistance and its own death-nature, only to be brought back to life by both domineering zealots and well-intentioned reformers. This aspect of continual decomposition was brilliantly addressed by Alejandro de Acosta in his essay "History As Decomposition", which appeared in the journal *Attentat*. My only complaint is that it requires a fair bit of research on the side for anyone without a strong knowledge of western history, as many groups and their leaders are described very briefly, or only mentioned in passing. It gets a bit dull in the middle section, when Frankish marauders, Vikings, Muslims, and the remnants of the Holy Roman Empire are continually warring, but quickly becomes engaging again once the first nation-states begin to appear and he moves into eras closer to our own. All in all, a scathing critique of the false narratives of history and a sobering picture of the wide variety of free peoples which became little more than gears in Leviathan. You will never see civilization the same way again after reading this.

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### Bart Everson says

A radical history of civilization. Basically, he's against it. No spoiler, that: it's right there in the title. For what is history, as we usually think of it, as we're usually taught it, if not a patriarchal story of conquest and domination in service of empire building? This author makes the case that most everything we laughingly call "civilization" is in fact systematized oppression of humanity and ecological rape of Mother Earth.

It's bracing worldview, to say the least. I think it's just relatable enough that most people — those who aren't blinded by allegiances to nation-state or religion or ideology — would agree with the basic premise. Most people would agree, that is, if we stopped to question the fundamental premises of the society in which we live. Reading the book makes me realize just how rare it is to hear this perspective so consistently and unwaveringly spelled out, page after page, century after century.

This book is highly idiosyncratic, to say the least. It's unlike any history I've ever read. (That's because it's not a history, check the title!) The author starts in ancient Sumeria and takes us all the way to Marxist revolutionaries in the course of just 300 pages, as a more or less continuous narrative. He uses quirky terminology, employs unique metaphors, and never cites a single year. It's not an academic text *per se*, which I'm sure is a point of pride, but neither is it an easy read. (Personally I would have appreciated some chapter headings. An index would have been nice. How about a bibliography? Nope, there's not a single citation.) Nevertheless it's a very scholarly work, in the sense that Perlman is clearly well-read and possessed of an encyclopedic knowledge of human history. More importantly, perhaps, he has heart. The text demonstrates great empathy for the human condition and respect for those who resist oppressive systems.

I found this book hugely compelling and affecting in a way that is difficult to overstate. It has truly

transformed my understanding of the world. At the end, I find myself questioning so much of what I have held to be valuable about civilization. It's a lot to assimilate. I'm not even saying I buy it all, at least not just yet, but he makes a powerful case. I've got to ponder it a while longer.

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### **Evelyn R says**

Unfortunate disappointment. Still has a few solid ideas mixed into the dross, but I had a few huge issues:

1. A fetishization of purity and wholeness that never existed and cannot exist
2. Maternal metaphors for nature that align neatly with #1 and that are often used in a patronizing and Romantic way.
3. Central metaphors of Leviathan, etc., never really move beyond misty abstractions that make for engaging poetry here and there but don't succeed in making the point he wants to.

Read Haraway, read Carolyn Merchant, read *The Mushroom at the End of the World* and other books like that if you want to really get at what kind of changes in our thinking we need to make to suit a more ecologically sound way of life.

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### **aska says**

A poetic anti-history, horrific at times, but offering an alternative mythos for our despondent world.

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### **Alfredo Bojórquez says**

No me gustó. Siento que simplifica demasiado la historia. La hace blanco y negro, los malos son siempre los de siempre, pero siento que hay más matices. Es casi una lista larga de malvados y pueblos despojados, desplazamientos, pero no problematiza los temas que atraviesan esa historia o lo hace poco. También lo leí en inglés y entendí un 60% o 70%. Sin embargo me gustaría leer sus críticas al marxismo, lo estudió a fondo.

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### **Tommy says**

An odd overview of world history that doesn't take into consideration that primitives might not all have been nice people. It may initially come off as just another addition into the "all white men are racist" variety of historiography but there's a lot more worth criticizing here. This is definitely on the ground floor of the emerging hegemonic anti-civilizational pro-ethnic tribalism narrative.

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### **Tyler Williams says**

Holy shit, man.

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=====D says

Don't be misled by the poetic and mythologizing tone with which Fredy Perlman renders his epic *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* This is an exhaustively researched book. It is also profoundly philosophical, asking questions and suggesting answers you won't find anywhere else. The fact that it is beautifully written in an accessible manner is highly appropriate to its message, as you will see below. The book's style is very much the opposite of dry scientific writing. I think if readers have difficulty with this book apart from getting a hold of it (it's distributed mostly through its publisher, Black & Red), it is because there is virtually no precedent for the combination of style, depth, and content of *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* to this day. There are few works of any kind on the subject, but what few there are mostly take a (pseudo) scientific or essay approach. To my knowledge no one tackles the question of civilization with the background in philosophy, history, economics, anthropology, ethnography, Marxism, political science, etc. that Fredy does. The depth of this background knowledge may not be immediately obvious to the reader in part because of the pointedly un-scientific tone used throughout, but you could (and should, as I would argue) use *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* as an introductory text to a world history class.

*Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* is the history of the world from the perspective of human beings and their communities. It may come as a surprise to some of you that this is very much the opposite of every other history book in existence, that all history books prior to this one were written as histories of institutions and the men (almost exclusively men) who supposedly set them in motion. The difference between these approaches is huge. On the one hand, we are looking at human beings and their concerns: life, freedom, joy, family, community. On the other hand we are concerned with machines and abstractions, undying entities which retool all existence in their image and relate to life only insofar as they need living beings to operate their cogs and levers because they are inanimate themselves.

Fredy Perlman asks the questions which end polite conversations and cause the questioner to be marked a pariah: if civilization is as wonderful as we are told, why did it have to be imposed on each new group of people at gunpoint? Shouldn't its merits be obvious, the material standard of living and so forth? Why did the colonizers of the Americas complain that they can't keep their citizens from running off to join the "savage" tribes, whereas the natives themselves could only be coerced to adopt "civilized" life, and would still revert to "savagery" given half a chance? What is it about the civilized that enabled them to conquer the world? What is it that makes them want to? And where did civilization come from in the first place?

Why against civilization? Why not against capitalists, communists, fascists, Illuminati, Masons, Republicans, Americans, colonialists, warmongers, or just plain assholes? Why not against greed or hubris? There have been many attempts to correct the injustices inherent in all civilized societies. Many people thought that if only their ideology could be given free reign everything would be fine. Every attempt so far failed; none have succeeded in returning to mankind a standard of living enjoyed by our hunter and gatherer ancestors, materially, and more importantly spiritually and psychologically. Studying history reveals that some things are not as new as they appear to us, cut off by our own literacy and technology in time. Consider the following story:

"The leader of a certain city is disturbed by the state of his people. He sees that society is two-tiered, the few rich and the many poor, and that the poor are in dire straits and have little hope for improvement. He remembers, or thinks he remembers, a time when things weren't this way, when everyone had a fighting chance to live happily. He institutes reforms intended to fix the injustices. He decrees that "the youth was not required to work in the (rich man's fields); the workingman was not forced to beg for his bread. The priest no longer invaded the garden of a humble person." If a rich man wanted the healthy donkey of his servant, he

had to pay the servant's asking price in silver, and if the servant refused to sell, he couldn't coerce him. And so on.

The reforms make the poor of his city happy, but seriously piss off the rich. The upper classes conspire to overthrow the reformer and help a ruler more sympathetic to their interests replace him."

These events took place in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash around 2300 BC. They are recorded in a cuneiform script on a clay tablet. It is a completely modern story. In fact, Urukagina, the reforming ruler of Lagash, speaks of the injustices in his city as already ancient, though he knows they're wrong. Lugalzagisi, the champion of the rich installed in his place, knows as well as any modern politician where his bread and butter lies. The lesson seems to be that those in possession of wealth and power will tenaciously cling to it. The Sumerians are not yet concerned with dressing up the injustices in their midst with ideologies like "trickle down economics." But the reformers among them err in the same way as reformers will err until the present day: they assume that tinkering with the relative distribution of power and wealth is enough. Perhaps they themselves are heavily invested in the inequality, or maybe they have already forgotten what life outside of the Leviathan looks like. Or they may remember perfectly well what it is they have traded for civilization, but view the loss as already irremediable.

By the time of Urukagina, Sumerians were the inheritors of over 3000 years of increasing social stratification, large scale public works, strongmen, wars, and rapacious commerce. The first irrigation canals in the Near East were created in 6000 BC. Jericho in near-by Levant had 12 foot high walls around 8300 BC. Their world was cosmopolitan: merchants traveled ancient trade routes as far as the Indus Valley to the southeast, the Pontic Steppe (present day eastern Ukraine and southern Russia) to the northeast, Anatolia (Turkey) to the northwest, Egypt and Ethiopia to the southwest. Sumer would not have struck people from our time as incomprehensible. The concerns of a Sumerian were pretty much identical to those of a modern person: sex, stuff, status, work, rest. God(s). But both Sumer and 21st century life would be completely inconceivable to free human beings, those living outside of civilization.

During the period between the adoption of agriculture and animal husbandry around 10000 BC and the beginning of recorded history in around 2500 BC, mankind went through the greatest change it ever has and possibly ever will. For those who went through it, it is no exaggeration to say this was a change from being free human beings to inmates of a compulsory labor camp. For those able to temporarily escape the monster's jaws through flight, life was also permanently changed for the worse. They would have to continue running with every advance of this or that Leviathan, this or that civilization, until nowhere remained to run and just one Leviathan is spread over the whole world. When Francis Fukuyama will announce its final victory in 1990, he will know it as democracy or capitalism.

The few handfuls of humans who still live in what we call a "state of nature" do so today only by the grace or absent-mindedness of the civilized. A much greater number exist in a semi-free state on the margins of society, wherever they can, overlooked for the time being. These groups span the gamut from greater to lesser amounts of freedom, but none of them can be completely free because none have the security necessary to experience complete freedom. For the rest of us, the very meaning of the word freedom is inverted.

*Insist that "freedom" and "the state of nature" are synonyms, and the cadavers will try to bite you. The tame, the domesticated, try to monopolize the word freedom; they'd like to apply it to their own condition. They apply the word "wild" to the free. But it is another public secret that the tame, the domesticated, occasionally become wild but are never free so long as they remain in their pens. p.7*

Instead of being free to develop our humanity to its fullest potential, a process heavily intertwined with the lore and traditions of our communities, we are "free" to create a personal identity based on the kinds of objects and experiences we can afford, largely in seclusion. Naturally, this modern kind of freedom leads to

suffering and confusion.

*The state of nature is a community of freedoms.*

*Such was the environment of the first human communities, and such it remained for thousands of generations.*

*Modern anthropologists who carry Gulag in their brains reduce such human communities to the motions that look most like work, and give the name Gatherers to people who pick and sometimes store their favorite foods. A bank clerk would call such communities Savings Banks!*

*The zeks on a coffee plantation in Guatemala are Gatherers, and the anthropologist is a Savings Bank. Their free ancestors had more important things to do. pp.7-8*

So what is it we the civilized are missing?

Where does one start? The short answer is, everything.

*Even during the coldest winter days, when the branches of evergreens sagged from their weight of snow, the human child was born into a very warm context. The warmth did not come from the walls of the bark lodge, which failed to block all draughts, nor from the fire on the floor, but from the radiant people welcoming the newcomer.*

*The child was expected; she was already an important personage; her arrival completed the community. Soon after her birth, she was ceremonially named, not arbitrarily but very carefully. The Totem, namely the community of the newcomer's kin, possessed a number of names, as the sky possesses a number of stars, and the community was not quite whole, was in fact uneasy, if the names were not carried by living individuals. Everyone attended the naming ceremony because all were enhanced by the newly-named. The names did not run out. The Potawatomi were not committed to what we will know as Population Growth, and it is said that they did not experience the phenomenon.*

*The newcomer provided a missing rhythm. The name expressed the community's embrace of the missing rhythm and also some expectations about the music that might be heard.*

*But the specific rhythm of the newly-named could be foretold no more than the final shape of a tree can be foretold from a seedling. The child was placed in no school to stunt her growth to the expected size and shape. On the contrary, the girl-child as well as her newborn brother were left free to emulate, or ignore, uncles and aunts, cousins among the animals, everyone and everything under the Sun, not excluding the Sun.*

*The grownups watched, not to close doors, but to open doors, to let the children wander where they would unharmed.*

*By the time the Potawatomi children were old enough to have expectations of their own, they were prepared to be their own guides. Dream lodges were set up in the forest, one for the girl, another for her brother. The youngsters fasted until a Totem spirit visited them. The spirit usually appeared in the form of an animal, and was usually not the same spirit whose name the child wore. The spirit promised to guide the child along a specific path, namely to give the child an individual rhythm, and the spirit offered the child certain powers with which to achieve the rhythm, powers with which to light the path.*

*Henceforth the children were on their own, bound neither by laws nor by the community's expectations. Their own dream spirit helped them decide whether or not to live up to the ancestor whose name they carried. If they decided not to, they would be renamed after the first act that revealed the children were*

*determined to follow distinct paths.*

*The boy, carrying his guide's offerings in a beautifully adorned bag, and knowing that he could call on his guide simply by fasting, set out on his own to face a cosmos whose grandeur and mystery will be inaccessible to our imaginations. We will know something of his feats as a hunter or a warrior, as a long-distance walker, as a lover. We will know less of the depth of his friendships with kinsmen or strangers, and almost nothing of his friendships with wolves and bears whose tracks he followed, whose signals he tried to grasp, whose universe he tried to understand. And we will know nothing at all of his fasts on mountain tops or alongside green mirror-like tree-surrounded lakes, of the journeys he undertook with his guide across and through the water to the place of life's origin, of his flights on the guide's wings to the sunset land where his ancestors gathered.*

*We will know that he eventually returned to his Totem with meat and with numerous stories, and that he married his beloved's sister because his beloved had in the meantime married a youth who had not stayed away for so long. We will know that he spoke of his exploits and his voyages to his children and also to his sister's children, the nephew and niece whose dream lodges he built in the forest.*

*We will think that his strength left him when he gave up warring as well as hunting, when he became a peacemaker, storyteller and lone wanderer.*

*We will not know that he revisited a mountain top he had known in his youth, fasted until his guide came for him, flew to the land beyond the sunset, joined his beloved, he as youthful as on his first trip, she as beautiful as on the day he first saw her, and traveled with her alongside him across and through water to the place of Life's beginnings.*

*If we knew all this, we wouldn't ask why the man resisted encasing himself in our linear, visionless Order. Isn't it our longing that expresses itself in a story about a European called Faust who turns his back on respectability, on the esteem of his colleagues, on law as well as religion, so as to have access to a personal guide and personal powers available to every Potawatomi?*

*The man's older sister, in the meantime, created a music that will sound less 'romantic' to our ears. She too followed her own dream, but she found it possible to fulfill her own guide's expectations as well as the community's. She lived up to the Totem ancestor whose name she proudly continued to carry. She threw herself into the Totem's activities, perhaps reacting against her lonesome brother; perhaps she, too, thought him excessively 'romantic'.*

*Like her name-ancestor, she turned bark of birch trees into canoes and winter lodges and tree-sugar baskets; she turned the skins of animals into cloaks, skirts, moccasins and medicine bags. Her own spirit inspired the colorful quilled symbolism with which she finished everything she made.*

*Like her ancestor, she was one of the preparers of the ceremonial welcoming of spring's new shoots, and after her marriage she was also a preparer of the ceremonial expulsion of Wiske, but the words she sang and the steps she danced were inspired by her own spirit.*

*Like her ancestor, she gathered herbs and became familiar with their general uses, but when her son was attacked by something he ate, she had to learn from her own spirit how to combine and administer the herbs while singing him back to health.*

*Her son as well as her daughter later took after her lonesome younger brother, but she was neither disappointed nor surprised; she knew that the children were following their own dreams, as she herself had.*

*Her dream had guided her to the center of the festivals and ceremonies, to the village council and the*

*medicine lodge. Nothing her kin did or knew was alien to her.*

*Yet some of us will pretend to be honest when we ask why she was so vigorous in expelling Wiske from the ceremonial circle, why she would have been repelled by the prospect of becoming a housewife in a Civilized household, even the Archon's.*

*Can we not recognize that in the fullness of development of universal human capacities she exposes the immiseration of the shamefully stunted products of Civilization? Can we not see that this Potawatomi matron who excels as Architect, Shoemaker, Shipbuilder, Furrier, Dramatist, Painter, Composer, Dancer, Druggist and Doctor already surpasses the many-sided Genius, the notoriously flexible Renaissance Man?*

*Shouldn't the question be inverted? Shouldn't we ask why we are fascinated by a Da Vinci, instead of asking why she is repelled? Is it because Da Vinci dangles from Leviathan's neck like a cowbell, whereas she stands on ordinary dirt?*

*Why does a Da Vinci gleam for us among the beast's innumerable cowbells? Is it because, after all the stunting and spirit-breaking that makes us Civilized, we still want to be what she was, but can no longer become even what he was, can only applaud what Leviathan becomes instead of us? pp.242-245*

The idea that civilization is a good thing is, to most people, so true it is self evident and needs no proof. For most people born and raised inside of Leviathan, with no notion that there even is an outside, questioning civilization is among the hardest mental exertions. But as Fredy Perlman shows in this book, this wasn't always the case. Once it came into being, civilization conquered or co-opted every group of people it came across, but it took a long time and the "progress" was far from uniform. From the very start, humans have resisted the supposed bounty of civilized life whenever they had the chance.

Much of *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* is concerned with tracing this history of resistance to civilization. People did not willingly trade their freedoms in the state of nature for the garb of a civilized worker and consumer. Such conversions mostly only take place once no other alternatives exist. The focal point of the resistance has shifted from those on the exterior of Leviathans in the beginning to those already inside it more recently, as less and less yet un-civilized space remained. It seems like the mountains are always the place where resistance is fiercest, from the first barbarians who descended on Uruk from the Zagros mountains to the unconquerable Pashtuns or Kurds of today.

In the past, the average person was "convinced" to become civilized at the point of a sword. Today, we are persuaded that we are the beneficiaries of the best, most advanced and satisfying way of living ever through more advanced mechanisms, but perhaps the biggest factor in favor of civilization these days is the fact that it has swallowed all alternatives to itself. Still, a staggering amount of work goes into convincing a completely captive audience that they should want the thing that is supposedly so wonderful it is self-evident.

Without a prompt re-evaluation of our beliefs and priorities, we are facing an impending disaster on a global scale. It's bizarre to live in a country where reality has been completely discarded in favor of a fantastical narrative of heathen enemies at the gate and god-given rights to plunder and profit from everything in sight. This story may have been current for some nation somewhere 3000 years ago, but it's hard to imagine it being anything other than self-serving even then. Now, when we desperately need to acknowledge our unique predicament as a potential scourge of all creation, the bullshit issuing from the loudest available channels is deafening and disorienting, which is likely exactly the effect it is supposed to have.

FULL review [HERE](#)

## wombat says

It took me a year and a half but I finally finished Against His-Story!! Now I need to re-read it 3 times or so.

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## Shaun says

Most of the time I was reading this, I felt like I was just pulling myself through the text because I had told myself that I would finish it. By the time I did finish it, I didn't regret the time spent - but I put it down twice as I succumbed to the allure of books with more immediate intrigue (actually I put it down the first time almost nine years ago). Overall this was a haunting essay, but one that I at least appreciated for its voice.

I've been trying to wrap my head around Perlman's text for awhile, while immersed in it and in the aftermath of finishing it. The book's major failing for me is that it gives one the feeling you might get from reading a phonebook: a continual stream of names and references with very little context except within assumed relation to each other by categorization (alphabetization or, in the case of *AHAL*, chronology). Rather than ebb and flow with revelations, key points, rehashing of original points to create a flow, and maybe an illustrative anecdote here or there, *AHAL* is kind of like riding a slow rollercoaster down a continual grade with the brakes on. It's slow going, and when Perlman does hit the nail, the experience is almost buried in a mulch largely generated from his own metaphorical vernacular. It has been suggested that perhaps the bulk of the book wasn't accessible to me because I lack a particular education in older civilizations, which is fairly true. This could explain why the tail end of the book picked up a little bit for me - maybe I just understood the references better as the book approached the last 300 years or so.

Perlman pulls out a lot of questions early on about the very nature of what we assume to be the intentions or lives of past peoples through our current framework of (Civilization-justifying) historiography and (grave-robbing) archaeology - and this is still my favorite part of the whole text. Despite feeling like I was dragging myself through the book much of the time, what I enjoyed about *AHAL* is that it IS different from the relatively focused, anecdotal history I usually read, where microcosmic stories are told that extrapolate upon much more epic themes - *AHAL*, in simple terms, is the opposite. History is shared in many different ways, and a river of facts and relational information is only one way of history-telling (usually the other ways get dismissed as Mythology). In *AHAL*, Perlman tells the history of the slow grind of civilization as a weird, partially metaphorical rant, wherein a faceless, emotionless tide of ancient names with redundantly greedy (but very occasionally not) motivations drives his point home to the reader in a style that I can only assume was fueled by his intense passion. My guess is that Perlman was talking about the most horrible of monsters in as calm a manner as he may have been able to. If his intended follow-up to this book had ever been finished, I would tackle it.

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## Jay says

if you want to understand the "splinter in your mind"---this is the red pill.

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## Ty says

Holy hell. This is a fucking wild romp.

## **Aonarán says**

I'd been told by a lot of close friends with good book tastes that I should definitely read this at some point, and had tried two or three times before but couldn't get past the first few pages (Perlman quotes yeats and blake and all these other poets, and try as I might throughout the years I've never really been able to understand most poetry). So I just skipped the first three pages worth of poems, and got into it pretty fast.

Perlman does get a little heavy into the-world-was-a-wonderful-utopia-before-civilization talk every now and again and his willingness to get so far into the back-when-women-healers-were-in-charge-everything-was-perfect gets a little obnoxious from time to time too - not to mention surprising coming from someone so into situationist ideas, like the totality.

About 1/3 to 1/2 through the book it gets kind of repetitive and formulaic, but if you can make it to about half way when the vikings, frankish knights and muslim merchants are all twisted together, it gets pretty sweet.

This book also talked about some concepts in a way I'd never thought of before and was surprised by that. For example, Perlman talks about until Rome, most deity-based states actually believed in their gods, something I'm not 100% in agreement with, but the idea of it does make me think. He also says that until the Frankish Knights most Europeans were not interested in commerce, that exchanging surplus (commodities) was only really done in terms of pillaging and plundering - in the form of spoils - and that rulers may enslave people to the fields, but the thought of making them work hard enough to produce an abundance of something like cloth is something one would only do to one's enemies. I would just never think of history in those terms.

It really is an amazing step by step narrative of the birth and development of civilization, written back before this sort of story was so over-told and cliché. Perlman also does a wonderful job talking about some of the more complex situationist ideas in a real down to earth, understandable way.

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## **Ryan Mishap says**

This anthropological/historical breakdown of Leviathan (power, control) is unique and amazing. Anarchist writing at its best.

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## **Dylan says**

This is likely the only historical survey of western civilization that I'll ever read with genuine excitement and interest, and my most naive wish after reading it was that it could become a standard introductory text for students of world history.

It goes without saying that Perlman's essay is not "objective". In other words, it is no candidate for perpetuating the business of progress, which is the unspoken agenda of "objectivity". This account of His-Story is openly disparaging of the He's which constitute and write it as well as the Leviathans which they run. It is an account that is zealously life-affirmative. And it is written in conscious contrast to the libraries of

historical literature that demean life and freedom by glorifying the abstract, artificial constructs of Progress, Civilization, and production.

Some readers might find the author's linguistic liberties and central analogy peculiar, but they are critical devices for shifting the reader's perspective outside the historical narratives we're accustomed to learning. He uses "Levaithan" prominently as a synonym for the state and civilization and "zek" (actual slang from The Gulag Archipelago for inmates in Soviet labor camps) for worker, slave, or proletarian. The Leviathan is depicted visually as a monstrous mechanical worm and conceptually as Thomas Hobbes's formulation of the state as a head (the king) and a body (the citizens), all zeks--human beings incorporated into the beast.

Compared to the somber prose of Frederick W. Turner's equally critical *Beyond Geography*, Perlman's is straightforward yet full of passion. Turner's style suits his tragic work, while Perlman wrote what feels like an unfinished hero story, the hero, Ahura Mazda, the light, life, community, and freedom struggling against Ahriman, darkness, death, hatred, and enslavement. This history is no uninformed polemic; it is a thorough, exhaustive, informative polemic that spans from the origin of the species to the present, looking forward to the end of Leviathan and the return of the light.

Despite my wish, although it is as valid as any standard account, I know that this book or one like it could never be accepted as a valid account of history anywhere Leviathan functions, which, at present, is the whole planet. If this account of history became widely accepted, Leviathan would face its end.

[Check out the first chapter here](#)

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