

# Against “Post-Leftism” - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

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What makes Bob Black’s essay, *The Abolition of Work*, so frustrating is not that it calls for the abolition of work, but that it believes this to be a revolutionary idea to end all revolutionary ideas. Both this essay and Black’s whole career was spent lambasting traditional anarchists, Marxists, leftists etc., and in this essay, his psychology is laid bare.

Did it occur to Black that the abolition of work has been the project of all major anarchist movements and libertarian Marxist ones? Or that Marx’s own son-in-law wrote the infamous *The Right to Be Lazy*? Probably not, and if it did, he would have passed it off as not idealist enough for him. Black’s absurd remark that Marxism doesn’t really seek the abolition of work because “if there is no work, there are no workers” merely reveals his illiteracy on the subject — or maybe, in his view, everyone short of him is a Stalinist anyway.

Black’s essay proposes the replacement of all work with play — but how do we get there? He does not seem concerned with such a question. His only framework for his ideas are hunter-gatherer tribes; he may as well be called a reactionary like John Zerzan. Black and those adjacent to him are the “ancaps of leftism,” in that they have no developed historical or political framework for the realization of their idealisms. Simply throw a few bombs, abolish the state maybe, and boom, you get to live like the Mbuti tribe or whatever. On the contrary, maybe we all band together over shared values and sing kumbaya.

But Black is, of course, not alone. Warzone Distro has published such bangers as *Anti-Left Anarchy: Hunting Leftism with Intent to Kill*, which, in addition to a generally unrelated quote from Baudrillard's *The Mirror of Production*, in three short paragraphs, attempts a full take-down of all of leftism — with its centuries-long history, its endless branches, its trials and tribulations, successes and failures — simply by stating “X Regime did bad thing.”

But these childish “critiques” have material consequences. Chaz Bufe, in the 1980s, was dealing with genuine feuds between his publication *Processed World* and the more “post-left” types, which ended in Black snitching to the police:

During the spring someone began slashing copies of the magazine with razor blades in bookstores in San Francisco and the East Bay. In April, flyers (again bearing no indication of their origin) urging that PW's new office be “torched,” and which listed the new address, were posted in the financial district... On April 19, Black was arrested for physically assaulting a *Processed World* staff member hawking copies of the magazine on the sidewalks of the financial district. His arrest came about in a curious way. After the incident occurred, Black went running to the cops in an attempt to get the PW staffer arrested for assault. But fortunately, several passersby had witnessed the incident and identified Black as the assailant. So Black was arrested, hauled off and booked... Finally, in June, one of the residents of the warehouse in which *Processed World* has its office was returning home from a show at 3:00 a.m., and when he got home he found a person pouring gasoline all over the front of the building.

— Chaz Bufe, *Listen, Anarchist!*

This is not to say we should side with Marxist-Leninists, or Maoists, or the sort. They have, clearly, been the historical enemy to the establishment of anarchist experiments, or really any alternative to Leninist states. It is,

however, to say that the “post-left” strand is not a progression to a project beyond leftism, but a regression into reactionary projects which hurt it. The same goes for the “egoists” and the “primitivists.”

Much of the problem may be simply that many young people are bored of traditional Marxism or anarchism. Revolutionary projects are a ton of work, and in fact can be tedious at times. It is much more appealing to view the work accomplished by such projects, being still unfinished, as simply being failures that require unhinged teenage fervor to re-energize. This issue is particularly exacerbated by techno-capital, which centers on the ego and the instant gratification it can bring; it tells you to live only in the moment in an endless stream of dopamine — in short, “pleasing the ego” in a very Stirnerite way.

But the inherently schizophrenic nature of techno-capital means that every new revolutionary idea which is supposed to supplant the last will suddenly need to be replaced by one even more centered on the moment, and again and again. The slow calculations of Marxism supplanted by the spontaneity of anarchism, supplanted by the insurrections of the ultra-left, supplanted by the unhinged chaos of “post-leftism,” supplanted by the instinctual hedonism of “egoism,” supplanted by the nihilistic insanity of “anarcho-nihilism,” and so on. Each new idea becomes deemed as inadequate within a few years because it’s simply *not fast enough*. Each one is painted as an archaic failure which needs a new philosophy — the one true! The obsession is no longer with the continuation of revolutionary projects, but with the starting of new ones. New, shiny ideologies are traded between young people like baseball cards.

The problem with these ideologies theoretically is that they simply reinvent what was already present in the old, and attach it with new ideas that are harmful. “Anarcho-nihilism,” for example, simply reinvents the idea of insurrection as if it were their own idea, and paints it in a coat of nihilism, whereby all plans, programs, projects — anything that makes an

insurrection successful — are discarded. The same for Black, who takes the abolition of work as something novel, and paints it in a coat of post-leftism, whereby anything sort of hunter-gatherer idealism must be pro-work.

What is needed now is anything but a “new” idea to supplant all the old, broken ones. Rather, we must do the arduous task of picking up the pieces of the old, where we last left off, and forwarding the movement — and doing so for real material reasons and plans, not simply idealisms.