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Introduction

Few political philosophies are as misunderstood as anarchism. The term conjures images of disorder for many, even though only a minority of anarchists has advocated the use of violence of any sort. At least three factors have affected how many imagine anarchism. First, anarchism has often been reduced to the terrorist ethos that marked the political movement (namely anarcho-syndicalism or anarcho-communism) during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where anarchist labor activists turned to assassination as a method of social change. Second, many anarchists have been “militant atheists,” often hostile toward religion. This hostility probably reached its height around the time of the Spanish Civil War, where while controlling Spain’s Catalonia (“Anarchist Catalonia”) region from 1936 to 1939, a contingent of anarchists demolished Catholic buildings and murdered clerics. And finally, a third factor shaping the perception of anarchism among many is that some anarchists, such as the egoist Max Stirner, have been proponents of nihilism.

This book is about three anarchists of a different sort. The main interpretive chapters, descriptive ethical case studies, are devoted to analyzing the religious ethics, political philosophies, and social activism of Henry David Thoreau, Dorothy Day, and Bayard Rustin in terms of an anarchist conceptual scheme that promises to elucidate the implications of particular varieties of religious radicalism for the modern territorial state and our normative relation to it. By examining them, I hope to shed light on a highly influential strand of religious ethics and radical activist practice in the modern period, as well as on a variety of anarchism that does not conform to the negative stereotypes of the position.

None of the three religious radicals would condone terrorism. None of them is an atheist or a proponent of nihilism. The reasons they offer for anarchist suspicion of modern territorial states are, I will argue, largely religious in character. Analysis of the explicit and implicit arguments for anarchism extant in the social thought of three religiously inclined, amateur intellectual, radical lay activists will facilitate the refinement of anarchist thought proper; and, employing anarchism as a theoretic or conceptual scheme by which to consider the religious ethics and political philosophies of Thoreau, Day, and Rustin provides a means by which to clarify critical aspects of their social and religious thought and practice, which promises

to reveal that the category of anarchism is broader than is ordinarily assumed, with deep American roots and strong ties to rich, transnational anti-imperialist and anticolonialist traditions, from Gandhian nonviolence to Zapatista radicalism. In particular, with these three radical American exemplars we will see the way in which theologically sourced compassion, emphases on moral responsibility (for oppression and social suffering), and ethics of noncomplicity (Thoreau) or noncooperation (Day and Rustin) with unjust (racist and imperialist) social practices can commend an anarchist posture or attitude that is thoroughly other-regarding.

This philosophically grounded, historically oriented, social theoretically informed study, then, should furnish a deeper understanding of anarchist philosophy, a fuller appreciation of the anarchist dimensions of radical nonviolent activism, and thus a clearer view of how anarchist commitments have combined with and can cohere with radical religiosity and the transnational nonviolent direct action tradition, a tradition to which the three American figures in question have contributed immensely. When taken as a whole, by carefully tending to the religious visions of three American radicals, this book identifies and explores reasons of various kinds that lend support to a single religious-ethical or sociopolitical practice that is recognizably anarchist in its unwillingness to attribute genuine authority to the legal regimes of modern territorial states and undeniably revolutionary in its commitment to fundamentally transforming standing social institutions and power relations, so as to instantiate more just social conditions.

I

Given the negative stereotypes in circulation, it is crucial to provide a preliminary conceptual analysis of anarchism as it will be understood in the interpretive chapters. I should say, first, that I am primarily interested in anarchism as a political philosophy or political philosophical orientation taken by agents in the sociopolitical arena. Anarchism as a political philosophical position or practice can be thought of as a set of claims about and an attendant attitude toward coercion and political authority. To discuss these issues in such terms is to emphasize particular political philosophical questions: What is the proper relation of the individual to a given political entity such as the territorial state? What authority does the territorial state have, as a normative matter, over individual persons? What, if anything, do individuals owe to a standing state or political authority? These questions are pertinent to analysis of anarchist thought in that they direct attention to the most basic dimension of anarchist philosophy. For, it is on the basis of the answers that anarchists deliver in response to the above questions that anarchists can be distinguished from proponents of other political theories.

Indeed, while there are varieties of anarchism, as a general matter, anarchist theory and praxis begin with criticism of or opposition to the predominant existing political organization, namely the modern territorial state. In particular, anarchist opposition to certain existing political institutions entails denying that those institutions possess legitimate authority.

To possess legitimate “political” authority is to be entitled to impose obligations on persons designated as political subjects and to enforce compliance or to penalize noncompliance with those obligations. All existing modern territorial states assert that they possess legitimate political authority. Modern territorial states also claim to be sovereign authorities in relation to some territorial space. Following Max Weber, we can say that territorial states are “ruling organizations” that “claim a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.”¹ And, more to the point, with Robert Paul Wolff we can say that territorial states *claim* that they *actually* have the right to command and the right to be obeyed.² It is precisely this claim that anarchists take issue with, as this kind of claim conflicts with the related ideas of moral autonomy and voluntarism that most anarchists embrace.

To exercise moral autonomy (in the non-Kantian, nonmetaphysical sense) is to act on the basis of reasons that one understands to be the right reasons for action in particular cases. This connects to the idea of voluntarism. Central to the idea of voluntarism in question is the idea that, in certain domains of social and political life, persons can become subjects owing certain moral duties to persons or institutions *only* through voluntary submission or consent. Significantly, anarchists reject nonvoluntarist conceptions of *political* obligation.³

This last point is essential and directs attention to one of the most important issues that I will address in this book. It is often assumed that to be an anarchist one must reject all possible forms of political organization or association. And there are in fact anarchists who, a priori or even in theory, deny the possibility of a morally acceptable political organization.⁴ Yet there are anarchists who with Proudhon, the first self-declared anarchist, maintain that some form of government is or would be morally acceptable. To that end, anarchists Bakunin, Paul Goodman, and Murray Bookchin, for example, all proposed one form of governmental organization or another. They preferred smaller-scale, local-level political organization, and often described the ideal social situation as one in which there is decentralized power or organization. Such anarchists accept and will only accept (what is often referred to as) unanimous direct democracy as a legitimate political procedure or procedural system. This is because, in practice, only consensus or unanimous direct democracy, where all rules governing a given society are consented to by each person who is to be subject to those rules, is compatible with the idea of moral autonomy that these anarchists endorse. Any other political authority lacks legitimacy from their vantage point.⁵ Accordingly, for such anarchists, commitment to voluntarism or the idea of

moral autonomy counts as a reason to deny the legitimacy of the modern territorial state.⁶ But, once again, a commitment to voluntarism or the idea of moral autonomy does not entail the rejection of political organization as such. Insofar as one *does not* embrace conceptions of moral autonomy or voluntarism that prohibit promising or contracting per se, then one might regard consent-based political organizations as morally acceptable.

Just as it is sometimes assumed that anarchism entails a rejection of political organization as such, persons committed to individual moral autonomy or voluntarism are often characterized as egotistical, selfish, or individualistic in the pejorative sense. My analysis should undermine this assumption by showing the way in which assertions of autonomy—that is, an insistence on moral autonomy—or voluntarism can be and have often been motivated by other-regarding concern about social justice. To put this differently, autonomy has been expressed as morally grounded refusals to participate in the subjugation of oppressed “others,” a way to resist doing the dirty work of oppressive agencies and agents.

To understand how assertions of autonomy can function in this manner we only need to consider the issue of promise making from another angle. While the anarchists that I am interested in are not morally opposed to promise making per se, they do maintain that there are certain promises that one must not make. Religiously motivated anarchists such as Thoreau, Day, and Rustin hold that one ought to refrain from making general, that is, open-ended, promises to adhere to decisions of bodies that might prescribe actions that would entail the violation of a given moral principle, rule, or value. That is, they maintain that one must not issue promises when doing so might commit one to the performance of a particular act that from one’s own moral vantage constitutes an immoral or wrongful moral act.⁷

Most persons implicitly accept this condition on promise making, yet do not spend that much time reflecting on its political philosophical implications in the context of the territorial state, where persons are expected to promise to comply with laws or commands in advance of knowing what practices they will be required to participate in or support. In the chapters that follow, I will discuss how a commitment to noncomplicity or noncooperation with injustice leads Thoreau, Day, and Rustin to reject the authority of the territorial state on account of territorial states’ exclusive decision-making processes and due to the fact that territorial states so often enact laws, implement policies, and engage in practices that are morally problematic. In the light of this, I hope to show that Thoreau, Day, and Rustin offer religious-ethical reasons that support an anarchist ethic and ethos. Anarchists insist that insofar as one has not explicitly consented to the rule of a given territorial state or its officials, then one is under no *moral* obligation to obey the commands of its officials. Those officials lack legitimate authority and their commands lack moral force.

This connects to a final distinction that warrants being mentioned. Throughout this book I will take for granted that one's stance with respect to the legitimacy of the territorial state, and the concomitant issue of whether one bears a moral duty to comply with rules or laws announced by the state, can be separated from the question as to whether one bears duties to defy, withdraw from, or seek the elimination of the state. Consequently, denying the legitimacy of the territorial state does not necessarily entail subscription to the additional duties just mentioned. To that end, while some persons (generally regarded as anarchists) contend that there is a duty to withdraw support from existing states, others (generally regarded as anarchists) do not.⁸ In view of this, I will distinguish between these two groups of anarchists as follows: A *weak* anarchist is one who denies the legitimacy of existing territorial states and so holds that individuals do not have moral obligations to obey the laws or commands of territorial states.⁹ A *strong* anarchist is one who rejects the idea that there are moral obligations to obey state authorities as such and additionally argues that individual persons have a moral duty to "oppose"¹⁰ and, "so far as is possible," eliminate the state.¹¹ So both weak and strong anarchists deny the legitimacy of territorial state authorities and reject the idea that there is a moral duty to obey territorial state laws and commands. What differentiates the two is that the strong anarchist (*pace* the weak anarchist) further contends that one ought to oppose or seek to eliminate existent states.

Adopting a stipulated definition of anarchism will put us in a position to appreciate the profound political implications of the radical religious and social thought and praxis of Thoreau, Day, and Rustin, as it will be evident that each of the three commends an attitude toward political authority that is consistent with the principles of anarchism, or one of its varieties, as it has come to be understood in recent decades among theorists and philosophers. One might doubt the significance of the type of principled rejection of political obligation and the state's political authority that I have designated as weak anarchism. But the import of even the weak anarchist's stance will be easier to appreciate if we keep in mind the fact that there is a limited range of normative postures that one can assume in relation to the modern territorial state—especially the state's claims regarding its own sovereignty and authority—meditate intently on what it means to reject that authority, and consider carefully the importance that dissenting activists, carried away by the spirit of weak anarchism, have historically played in major social movements. Weak anarchism represents an attitude toward authority that has fostered vital resistance to domination and my turn to a figure such as Rustin with this language in mind should facilitate a better appreciation of what is necessary for achieving substantive social change, challenging those who would celebrate past radical activism to more candidly assess what we must do to resist the modes of domination that mark our era.

II

This book is divided into three chapters, with each chapter focusing respectively on Henry David Thoreau, Dorothy Day, and Bayard Rustin.

In Chapter 1, “The Conscience on Fire: Thoreau’s Anarchist Ethic,” I concentrate on the writings and social action of Henry David Thoreau. What interests me is Thoreau’s conscientious struggle to determine how he should relate to his neighbors and to the modern territorial state in the light of what he understood to be the implications of the Protestant Reformation, the European Enlightenment, the English, American, and French revolutions, and the religious-ethical principles to which he was committed. Thoreau reached conclusions about his duties that ruled out his embracing constitutional democracy. By the end of Chapter 1 it should be clear that Thoreau’s theologically motivated conception of moral rightness, when combined with his theory of the state, generates an anarchist ethic and situates him among a transnational group of mid-nineteenth-century figures that responded to the emergent territorial state and its racial supremacist, imperialist practices with an anarchist ethic.

This reveals the fact that Thoreau should be distinguished from certain other racial and social justice activists who endorsed political disobedience and nonviolent direct action. Take, for example, Martin Luther King Jr, who Thoreau greatly influenced. Thoreau and King both embraced a rigorous deontological ethic that is incompatible with an idea that an individual ought to comply with the law in virtue of its being the law, even when the source of the law in question is a democratic procedure. In addition, they both maintained that noncooperation with evil or unjust practices represents a viable way to undermine those practices. But carefully analyzing Thoreau’s political essays shows that, in contrast to King’s ostensibly ameliorative disobedience, Thoreau provides a recipe for eliminating the modern territorial state: he aimed to abolish it rather than reform it. In my chapters on Thoreau, I will endeavor to show that Thoreau is best described as a *strong* anarchist in that he denies the authority of the legal regimes of modern territorial states and argues that individual persons have a duty to withdraw from, to oppose, and to disobey certain laws and commands of territorial states. Emphasizing this point will put on display the grounds that make it appropriate to classify Thoreau’s political philosophy as an expression of *strong* anarchism.

Thoreau’s political philosophy can be properly understood only if we appreciate the metaphysical-theological-ontological assumptions that undergird it, as Thoreau’s conception of moral rightness, the human person, and individual moral responsibility are grounded in his theological commitments. To read Thoreau’s work carefully is to see that there is an unmistakable religious aspect to his social and political philosophy and there is a mystical dimension to his spirituality or religious practices. He

meditates. He watches nature. He reads religious scripture. He might be a lay monk. And his sojourn at Walden's Pond is as much a spiritual retreat as it is anything else: "*Walden* is a book about spiritual renewal at a sacred place."¹² As Alan D. Hodder notes in *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness*, Thoreau's contemporaries "generally conceived him in spiritual terms . . . even if as an unorthodox [religious] figure."¹³

And so, in the early sections of Chapter 1, I spell out the terms of Thoreau's religious ethics, focusing on two of Thoreau's classic book-length manuscripts, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (*A Week*) and *Walden*. Beginning with a consideration of Thoreau's religiosity, and considering his idea of conscience and the doctrine of noncomplicity in relation to his theology, puts up front a component of his thought that is not always discussed in relation to or as a basis for Thoreau's normative political commitments. I then connect his religious vision to his political vision. While the features of Thoreau's religiosity that I will present are not necessarily or inevitably reason(s) for the adoption of an anarchist philosophy, the direction that Thoreau takes these features—the way in which he interprets them—ends up entailing an anarchist ethic.¹⁴ I argue that Thoreau is best regarded as an anarchist in the light of the fact that he rejects the legitimacy of the modern territorial state, and this includes representational/constitutional democracy, for religious-ethical reasons.

In particular, my analysis in Chapter 1 shows that he agrees with anarchists who claim that, empirically speaking, there is hardly reason to suppose that any actual territorial state will have laws which do not themselves become instruments of arbitrarily exercised power. For Thoreau, the actual state is a vehicle of domination and so cannot in good faith be presented as an effective means by which to protect persons from various kinds of domination. To demonstrate all of this, I will give acute attention to Thoreau's explicit references to and criticisms of the territorial state, law, authority, and political action, as these references and criticisms appear in *A Week*, *Walden*, and the essays "Resistance to Civil Government," "Slavery in Massachusetts," and "A Plea for Captain John Brown."

Thoreau's prophetic thought can be summarized as follows. First, Thoreau embraces the idea of divine immanence and asserts that each human being has the divinity or divine power within. Second, implicit in Thoreau's thought is a rejection of the divine right of kings, the idea that God has appointed standing (earthly) authorities to their positions so that they can be said to rule by divine right. Third, Thoreau posits the existence of an objective moral order that is accessible to a human faculty—conscience or reason. Fourth, he calls for a moral awakening, a recovery of the self through self-culture or self-improvement. Fifth, Thoreau claims that certain existing social practices and institutions, particularly the territorial state, impede awakening. Finally, he contends that awakening or recovery of the self will entail noncooperation with and elimination of the evil or unjust practices of

the territorial state; this means that self-recovery, when generalized, will, as social movement, entail revolution of a certain sort.

I can restate more concisely this simple prophetic message as I understand Thoreau to present it. God is immanent. Human persons possess a divine power within. We have lost sight of this power. It can and must be recovered. To recover this power would require us to reject many of the practices in which we are currently participants. In particular, we would have to resist contributing to the violence and injustice propagated by the territorial state, or officials of the state. And we most certainly cannot be represented by nor be representatives of the territorial state. Therefore, a recovery of the self or the divine power within the self would mean a revolution. Importantly, Thoreau does not propose that persons committed to justice seize control of the territorial state. Rather, they are charged with becoming the kinds of persons that call into being and make possible the emergence of new institutions. This last point is crucial. Anarchism, as I suggested above, does not, as it is sometimes believed, entail a wholesale rejection of organizations or institutions. To that end, anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin, George Woodcock, and Murray Bookchin have proposed different forms of government to replace the modern territorial state, including its representational democratic emanation. By the end of Chapter 1 we will see that Thoreau advocates for a government that is probably best described as anarchism as government by consent.

In Chapter 2, "Love in Action: Dorothy Day's Christian Anarchism," Thoreau's political philosophy is contrasted with the Christian-motivated anarchism of Dorothy Day, a convert to Roman Catholicism who cofounded the *Catholic Worker* and the Catholic Worker movement. Just as with my analysis of Thoreau, my analysis of Dorothy Day is very much a story about how a person's conception of God can inform a conception of the self and thus shape a person's political ethics. That is to say, similar to the chapters on Thoreau, it is a story about how our political notions are often wrapped up in our notions about God and the self.

Dorothy Day flirted with anarchism as early as 1914, yet she did not fully embrace it until later: "I wavered between my allegiance to socialism, syndicalism (the I.W.W.'s) and anarchism. When I read Tolstoi, I was an anarchist . . . [This] appealed to me. But not the American anarchism that I had come in touch with."¹⁵ Years of equivocation would end with Day's conversion to Catholicism. After converting, and settling in on a love-centered ethics, she came to find Tolstoy's claim undeniable: Christian love is incompatible with coercion, violence, and centralized political decision-making processes.

Day's religious ethics provides perhaps the clearest twentieth-century statement of Christian anarchism in the American context, which is striking in that Roman Catholicism has been one of the main objects of anarchist criticism during the past century. Part of the lasting significance of Day's

activist career is that she demonstrated the way in which traditional Catholic piety could be channeled in radical political directions. After converting to Catholicism in the late 1920s, Day would self-consciously submit to ecclesiastical authority, however, she appealed to Catholic dogma, namely, the distinction between “truths of the faith” and the idea of the “autonomy of the temporal order” in order to establish her license to assert her view that anarchism is an (if not “the”) appropriate form of social organization for a Catholic Christian.¹⁶

Chapter 2 is comprised of two major parts. In the first part, I will primarily explicate Day’s religious commitments as they relate to her conception of God, the person, community, and love, mostly by indicating the particularly religious—and unifying—function that Day attributes to love. More specifically, in the first section of Chapter 2, I consider Day’s religious odyssey, focusing on important aspects of her move toward joining the Roman Catholic Church. In the second section, I give attention to Day’s articulation of her religious ethics in the light of her interpretation of Catholicism.

After considering Day’s conversion to Roman Catholicism, I analyze the details of Day’s political philosophy, including her criticisms of the modern sociopolitical order and her positive sociopolitical prescription. Further, I highlight aspects of her thought and activism that connect her directly to the nonviolent activist tradition, putting on display the way in which Day combines crucial aspects of Thoreau’s and Tolstoy’s normative visions. In particular, Day embraces a type of realized eschatology that Tolstoy emphases in *The Kingdom of God Is Within*. And similar to both Tolstoy and Thoreau, Day embraces voluntary poverty and suggests the liberatory character of asceticism. For Day, asceticism—the self-regulation of desire in the light of authentic needs—when politically charged carries all of the way to the level of the state. Asceticism forces the moral agent to subsist conscientiously, thus liberating the agent to imagine alternative modes of being, including social and political practices at the institutional level. In this way, Day’s political vision is rooted in the kind of imaginative ethos that is often dismissed as unrealistic or utopian. It is through concrete action that the activist undermines the purchase of this charge, and so for Day, imagining an alternative social reality and the viability of the vision hinges on what we might term “revelatory praxis.” Such praxis sets out to *reveal* what is in fact necessary.

Along with Tolstoy and Thoreau, Day contends war, presidents, and the territorial (welfare-police) state are false necessities. Convinced that centralization is unnecessary and undesirable, Day embraced strong anarchism and insisted that morally responsible persons must refrain from supporting the territorial state and must enact alternative social practices that demonstrate that the territorial state is unnecessary. This enactment of an alternative is a precondition to the realization of a postterritorial state social order.

It will be clear by the end of my analysis that Day's political vision was a religious vision: she asserted that social transformation is something that has to do simultaneously with God and other persons and she claimed that cultivating and sustaining the qualities of character necessary for a perpetual revolution requires the vehicle of the Roman Catholic Church with its liturgy and sacraments. Taken together, the sections that comprise Chapter 2 show that, on Day's view, God is encountered through acts of love, love precludes violence, and only in community and in interpersonal relationships can persons realize their higher selves. As such, Day identifies decentralized associations and cooperatives—houses of hospitality and farm communes—as the appropriate institutional arrangements by which to usher in the new sociopolitical order, the beloved community.

In Chapter 3, "The Dilemma of the Black Radical: Bayard Rustin's Ambivalent Anarchism," I turn to the social and political philosophy of African American Quaker public intellectual and social activist Bayard Rustin. Rustin is not ordinarily described as an anarchist and he did not embrace the anarchist label. While at first glance, Rustin might not seem to fit the anarchist mold, I wish to show that his substantive commitments can be interpreted so that it is clear that they have anarchist implications. In this way Rustin might be regarded as an implicit anarchist, and I am confident that even skeptical readers will find that closely analyzing Rustin's substantive commitments reveals that Rustin presents an ambiguous case. This ambiguity is in fact what makes reflecting on Rustin instructive, with the ambiguity providing an occasion to clarify what constitutes anarchism as an ethic and political philosophy. And at the same time, the anarchist lens itself puts into focus critical aspects of Rustin's political philosophy. With Rustin in the frame and the character of anarchism clarified, through my analysis of Rustin, I hope to make clearer how pervasive the anarchist spirit has been among radicals on the American scene. At the very least, it shall become clearer how compatible anarchism can be with certain practical commitments and how incompatible it is with others.

Rustin participated in nearly every major progressive social movement in post-World War I America, which poses significant challenges for a student of his life and work. Rustin's biographers such as Jervis Anderson, John D'Emilio, and Daniel Levine all more or less respond to this issue by dividing Rustin's life based on the organization that he was working for or the issues that he was devoted to at a given point in time. The first stage was his communist phase, where he worked as a Young Communist League organizer. The second period was his work with Fellowship for Reconciliation (FOR) and then War Resisters League (WRL), where he melded radical pacifism with civil rights activism. Then during the 1960s he renounced his absolute pacifism, left WRL, and resigned as an editor of the leftist journal *Liberation*. At that stage he became intricately involved in the operations of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization

that Rustin helped create, along with Ella Baker, Stanley Levinson, Fred Shuttlesworth, Martin King. When Rustin's SCLC involvement waned, after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, he then set up shop at the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, funded in part by the American Federation of Labor. Finally, from the beginning of the 1970s, he became the chair of the board at Freedom House, concentrating on cultivating grassroots social movements in authoritarian societies around the globe.

I treat Rustin's life in two overlapping phases beginning with the phase during which he combined a Quaker-inspired radical pacifist position with an idea of perpetual political disobedience in the face of social injustice. Building on my consideration of pacifism in Chapter 2, in Chapter 3, I will show how Rustin's Quaker-inspired radical pacifism implies a version of anarchism. In particular, I argue that radical pacifism, if consistently expressed, has strong anarchism as its consequence. Since many African American Christians embraced radical pacifism during the mid-twentieth century, my consideration of Rustin's career as a radical pacifist suggests where we might turn in order to find African American anarchists or African Americans with political commitments that are consistent with strong anarchism. Yet, there is a rub here too; for, meditating on Rustin's experience will highlight the tests confronting African Americans who would embrace such an ethic.

In the latter half of Chapter 3, I explore Rustin's dramatic turn away from radical pacifism. Rustin's mid-1960s pivot finds him arguing explicitly for the necessity of a strong centralized state as a means to eradicate poverty and eliminate racial oppression, separating him from Dorothy Day in ways that are important to understand. Although both Day and Rustin embraced a Christian theological ethic that entailed a commitment to pacifism, their differing views about the role of the territorial state led them in remarkably different directions. With Rustin it becomes evident how difficult it is for one committed to racial justice and economic justice (eradication of poverty) to maintain a radical pacifist or strong anarchist position and prescribe decentralization. For, racial and economic justice in the American context has nearly always been pursued by means of the national government and an absolute rejection of political violence would seem to rule out relying on state action. Rustin appreciated this. But even as he renounced his radical pacifism, he maintained a commitment to perpetual political disobedience.

Rustin's commitments, after he relinquishes his radical pacifism, raise a thicket of profoundly important political philosophical questions and point to the paradox of black radicalism. In the later phase of his career, Rustin adopts views that would appear to rule out his being referred to as an anarchist. However, in Chapter 3, I attempt to refine my conception of anarchism and reflect on whether a rigorous commitment to political disobedience can be regarded as *entailing* a commitment to weak anarchism. My analysis reveals that a commitment to a strong centralized state does not

necessarily mean that one has to posit that individuals have *moral* duties to obey political commands or the law in virtue of its being the law.

The reflection in Chapter 3 specifically sets the stage for exploring the affinities between anarchists and the political philosophies of persons belonging to the black radical tradition. As Michael Dawson and others have pointed out, black radicals typically endorse two important theses. First, they argue for a state-centered view of social change. Second, they contend that extrajudicial agitation is necessary for the realization of social justice and the liberation of the oppressed. My contention is that a significant number of black radicals place a premium on the second of these theses, which brings them close to weak anarchism. Indeed, one of the virtues of weak anarchism as a classificatory term is that it provides an auspicious way to capture the praxis of a large number of radical social activists and raises an important question about the attitude toward authority—particularly political authority—that it is appropriate or pragmatically advisable for social justice actors to embrace in the contemporary sphere.

I should note that, more than in Chapters 1 and 2, my treatment of Rustin will be especially interpretive. I rely on artificial constructs, to some extent, to make the distinctions between phases, but by no means are the lines arbitrarily drawn. Rather the analytic units that are employed simplify the subject matter—the objects of study—providing for maximal clarity or clarification. Rustin enunciates a political philosophy with subtly different implications at various points during his activist career and, as I analyze Rustin's social and political philosophy, I am particularly concerned with the *implications* of the views that I attribute to Rustin during the respective stages that I take up. Further, I am interested in the positions that Rustin held in the respective periods more so than in his consistency over the course of his life, and so I will discuss inconsistency and shifts comparatively insofar as it bears upon a perceived principled contradiction or pragmatic assessment of the impracticality of a given principled stance.

My aim is to understand the implications of his explicitly held ethical commitments and to see how certain substantive ethical commitments relate to anarchist philosophy and praxis. To put this differently, I attempt to show how in practice and at the theoretical level certain principles—radical pacifism or a strict commitment to substantive social justice—can become the content of or basis for an anarchist ethic. Proceeding in the manner proposed will put us in a position to assess and understand how anarchist ideas, ideals, and attitudes relate to Gandhian theories of social change and the sociopolitical commitments of members of the black radical tradition, opening the door for a reconsideration of how we conceptualize anarchist practice, past and present social movements, and imagine possible radical coalitions in the present-future.

So in the main chapters I will make explicit the moral dimension of anarchism and will consider the way in which certain religious-ethical

commitments connect with or constitute grounds for an anarchist philosophy or anarchist ethic. Thoreau, Day, and Rustin, on the basis of their respective concerns for racial and social justice, each emphasize moral autonomy, noncomplicity, and responsibility in a way that entails the rejection of the claims to authority characteristic of modern territorial states. These three moral exemplars, I hope to demonstrate, belong to or have at least greatly influenced the nonviolent anarchist tradition, a tradition that presents a formidable theory of immediate action or revolutionary practice. In the “Conclusion,” I will consider the implications, for ethicists, historians of social movements, and activists, of making explicit the moral and religious sources of anarchism or, to put it in different terms, the anarchist dimension of certain moral and religious commitments. By referring to Thoreau, Day, and Rustin as anarchists, it should be evident how radical their respective ethical commitments were; but at the same time, by showing how each of the three, at various moments in their activist careers, can be properly understood as anarchists, I mean to show anarchism in a fresh light. In what follows, at once I aspire to render the familiar strange and make the strange familiar, with an eye toward haunting, inspiring, awakening, and prodding—perhaps.