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Daoism and anarchism reconsidered

Introduction

Philosophical Daoism is a term used to refer to the ideas of some people who arose at the end of China's Zhou dynasty (1027–256 BCE), a period when China disintegrated into a long period of civil war and chaos that finally ended only in 221 BCE with the end of feudalism and the founding of the centralized, bureaucratic Qin empire (221–206 BCE). In the latter part of the Zhou period (722–481 BCE), specifically in the Spring and Autumn, and Warring States Periods (403–221 BCE), philosophers and teachers arose who tried to gain the ear of the feudal warlords to adopt their particular systems in order to reunify China. Most such thinkers offered specific advice on how to attain order, such as the idea of rule by moral virtue of the Confucians or the idea of rule by power and force of the so-called Legalist school. Those thinkers later labeled the Daoists often traced their ideas back to Lao Zi (“Old Master”), a semi-mythical figure who may have lived, if he lived at all, in the sixth century BCE and who is traditionally treated as the author or compiler of the *Daodejing* (Wade-Giles: *Tao Te Ching*, or the “Classic of the Way and Its Power,” referred to hereafter in this book as *DDJ*). This text dates in its received form at least from the third century BCE (in Chapter 3 we will examine a recently unearthed version of the text that dates back to as much as a century earlier). Modern scholars argue that the *DDJ* may have been compiled over a long period of time from the sayings of village elders, and perhaps first coalesced as a text during the Warring States period partially in response to other schools of thought.

The other great classical Daoist philosopher was Zhuang Zi (Master Zhuang), a historical individual with the given name of Zhuang Zhou who

lived in the fourth century BCE and who wrote at least the seven core or “inner” chapters of the book known as the *Zhuangzi*, the other, “outer” chapters being added at later periods by unknown authors. Thus the core chapters of *Zhuangzi* are nearly as old as the received *DDJ* and should not be denigrated as any less important a “. . . foundational text of socio-political relevance” for Daoism, as Alex Feldt contends, so that the *DDJ* should not have to “clearly enjoy primacy in developing a classical Daoist political theory.”¹ Whatever their differences, both texts were unique in their advice for rulers to rule by inaction or doing nothing (*wuwei*) and in their opposition to law, morality, punishment, warfare, and nearly all other techniques and forms of rule. As such, many scholars have long referred to Daoism’s “anarchistic” tendencies and aspects.²

Given these many references to its anarchist tendencies, it may seem strange to question whether or not philosophical Daoism is really a doctrine of full-fledged anarchism similar to Western anarchism. In fact, however, as noted in general in the prelude there have been various objections raised to equating Daoist philosophy with anarchism, mostly focusing on the classical Daoists of the late Zhou dynasty. We will examine these objections more in detail in the first part of this chapter. In the second part of the chapter we will examine key thinkers of the Daoist revival in the Wei-Jin period (ca. 220–420 CE) and note their similarities to specific Western anarchists on key points central to the doctrine of anarchism.

Doubts about Classical Daoism as Anarchism

Doubts about the fully anarchist nature of Daoism have mostly centered on the Daoism of the late Zhou texts, the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*, associated with the mythical or real figures of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi respectively. Although only some of these doubts apply to the Wei-Jin Daoists, as we will see, those who question the fully anarchist nature of the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* nevertheless usually see Wei-Jin Daoist anarchism as an extension or even corruption of classical Daoism rather than a loyal exegesis of it. These doubts about classical Daoism as an anarchist doctrine then must be dealt with before examining the more obvious anarchism of the Wei-Jin thinkers. Below the questions about Warring States Daoist anarchism are broken down into five categories. Here it should be noted that many of these doubts may have to do with the distinctions among different types of anarchists that we noted in the prelude. Those sympathetic to socialism and skeptical about philosophical and individualist anarchists as genuine anarchists and those sympathetic to the nineteenth-century collectivist anarchist movement (not to say that Daoist anarchism can easily be pigeonholed as philosophical and

individualist, as we will see below in the section on Warring States Daoism as individualist or socialist), are perhaps the most skeptical about Daoism as true anarchism.

The *DDJ* and *Zhuangzi* as advocating laissez-faire or limited government and not full-fledged anarchism

The main limit many scholars find in Daoist anarchism of the Warring States Period is that the *DDJ* and for some even the *Zhuangzi*, if to a lesser extent, seemed to be giving advice to sage-rulers on how to govern, even if their advice was to rule by *wuwei* (often translated as nonaction or doing nothing). As Hsiao Kung-chuan put it about the *DDJ*,

. . . non-action in government need not destroy and cast aside the ruler-servitor institution, and return to the total lack of restraints that exists among birds and beasts . . . in theoretical terms, what Lao Tzu attacked was not government in and of itself, but any kind of governing which did not conform to “Taoistic” standards.³

Likewise, Frederic Bender and Roger Ames in a 1983 roundtable discussion of Daoism and politics, while finding great lessons for anarchism in “political Daoism,” conclude that the (received) *DDJ* is not a full-fledged anarchist text, since, as Ames notes it seems to accept the state as a natural institution,⁴ and as Bender argues, “retains, albeit in improved form, ruler, rule, and the means of rule (the state).”⁵ This is the main basis upon which Feldt argues that classical Daoism represented at best a “diluted” form of anarchism⁶ and at most a justification for the most efficacious type of limited rule within an autocratic and bureaucratic state, a type of rule akin to the “minimal, ‘night watchman’ state of Nozikean liberalism,”⁷ a contention that, besides the obvious self-contradiction between autocratic and limited rule, we will dispute on page 28 of this chapter below.

On a less literal level other scholars find similar limits to anarchism in the received *DDJ* and even in the *Zhuangzi*, the author(s) of which many scholars otherwise recognize as much more explicitly anti-statist than the *DDJ*. Arthur Waley, for example, while finding great similarities between the classical Daoism of the *DDJ* and *Zhuangzi* and Western anarchism, nevertheless concludes that there were important differences, since “one of the main tenets of modern anarchism is that no appeal must be made to the authority of ‘metaphysical entities’” and that “. . . [*dao*] is undoubtedly a ‘metaphysical entity’.”⁸ Similarly, Benjamin Schwartz claims that the language of the *DDJ* suggests “. . . not a spontaneously emerging ‘anarchist’ state of affairs but a state of affairs brought about by a sage-ruler.”⁹ Likewise, A. C. Graham claims that however similar Western

anarchism is to the thought of later “Daoist primitivists” who probably were the real authors of some of the “outer” or later added chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, by contrast the more limited anti-government doctrine in the (received) *DDJ* and perhaps the “inner” or original chapters of the *Zhuangzi* if not amounting to “hierarchic anarchism” at least “amounts to a paternalistic anarchism” in its hope that the ruler will follow the practice of the “ancient Emperors, [who] it may be presumed, had no task but to keep the people ignorant of the arts and luxuries which were eventually to corrupt them”¹⁰ For Graham, as for Hsiao, the classical Daoists “[found] it difficult to imagine a society without any ruler or sages at all The concept of the pure community explicitly described as without ruler and subject belongs rather to the revival of philosophical Taoism in the 3rd century A. D.”¹¹

This point of view that finds limits to Daoist anarchism and instead deems it a doctrine of laissez-faire or limited government,¹² would perhaps have as its best evidence the use of ideas in the *DDJ* and *Zhuangzi* ideas by officials in the court of the emperor Wu Di in the first century of the former Han dynasty (202 BCE–8 CE). At that time, after the official Legalist ideology of the hated Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE) was discredited (the Qin being the first, if the shortest, centralized imperial dynasty in Chinese history due to its rule by naked force with little legitimizing ideological veneer) and before official Confucianism took full form as a replacement ideology justifying the Han empire as rule by the morally virtuous for the benefit of all, some court scholars briefly adapted Daoist ideas to legitimize the Han’s supposedly more “light” rule compared to that of the Qin. This laissez-faire version of Daoism can especially be found in parts of the *Huainanzi*, a text of the early Han.

Likewise, during the revival of philosophical Daoism at the end of the later Han dynasty (25–220 CE) and the beginning of the long Period of Disunity (ca. 220–581 CE) before the centralized empire was finally revived in the sixth century CE, Daoism was first used as a formula to justify the rule of the upstart military dictator and posthumous founder of the failed Wei dynasty Cao Cao against the Confucian ideology of his opponents—the great families or large landlords from the end of the Han—as represented especially by the Sima clan who founded the Jin dynasty after Cao’s death, another failed attempt at revival of empire (thus this first part of the Period of Disunity is usually referred to as the Wei-Jin period by China historians). Again, it seems to have been no problem for the Wei ideologists of the first generation of neo-Daoists to use the thought of the *DDJ* and *Zhuangzi* to justify a supposedly limited government, or at least one free from the Confucian conventions of “benevolent” rule by the morally superior.¹³

Against this idea of the limits to anarchism in classical Daoism, many scholars have posited an opposite case of a more full-fledged anarchism. In general, their argument would be that the received *DDJ* while referring

to ideal rulers takes virtually the entire content of rule away from them in its condemnation of law, morality, education, taxes, and punishment. In effect the received text takes away all meaning of rulership by removing all elements of coercion from “rulers.”¹⁴ As first and best pointed out by Joseph Needham (if within what many, including this observer, view as an unnecessarily unilinear and old-fashioned form of Marxist analysis), the *DDJ* was trying to change “feudal” rulers back into leaders of primitive communal tribes, that is, into tribal elders or wise men with no monopoly on the legitimate use of coercion, to employ again Weber’s minimalist definition of the state. As such, the authors of the classical Daoist texts could be identified as “men of the South,” that is, of the areas at the far southern end of the Yellow River valley sedentary agricultural society who may have been in touch or dimly aware of surviving pre-sedentary practices and ideas.¹⁵ Without accepting Needham’s thesis, Burton Watson, the great translator of the *Zhuangzi*, does accept that the author of its inner chapters was a man of the South,¹⁶ who was thus not just anti-imperial but may have been in touch with pre-Zhou and thus prefeudal customs and ideas.

Even the best evidence for the laissez-faire interpretation of classical Daoism, the *Huainanzi* (a text of the early Han dynasty in which Daoism was combined with other philosophies in an eclectic fashion in an attempt to find a legitimating formula for Han rule), has been brought into question by Roger Ames. In a vein of analysis very similar to that in this chapter, Ames views the text as only justifying government on a literal level, but with a deliberate subtextual purpose of undermining political authority since “. . . as an anarchistic political theory, the [Daoist] concept of [*wuwei*] cannot be supported by any elaborate apparatus for practical implementation.”¹⁷ In effect, Ames sees large portions of the *Huainanzi* (which he translates as “The Art of Rulership”) as a continuing attempt to use Daoist ideas, if in a more practical and concrete way, to undermine Confucian and Legalist justifications of authority, and indeed all coercive rule:

If we understand the primary objection of the anarchist to be coercive authority—that is, one person or group obliging another to act in a certain way—and the primary objective of the anarchist to be the eradication of this kind of authority from all areas of political life, then inasmuch as *The Art of Rulership* advocates full use of the spontaneous contribution of each participant in an organization committed to the nonmediated action of personal initiative, there is much here that points to a [Daoist] anarchism.¹⁸

For Ames, the “political Daoism” of the *DDJ*, *Zhuangzi* and the *Huainanzi* has four necessary conditions for a “comprehensive anarchism,” namely a theory emphasizing a natural “free” condition of human nature, a rejection of all coercive authority, a notion of some kind of “noncoercive,

nonauthoritarian society” that could replace coercive authority, and “some practical method” of moving from “authoritarian reality” to the “non-authoritarian ideal.”¹⁹ Even if one questions whether this “willingness to work within the framework of existing institutions to approximate the [anti-authoritarian] ideal”²⁰ in the *Huainanzi* could too easily lead to accommodation and acquiescence to authority rather than a challenge to it, this weakness does not have to apply to the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* nor to other, later Daoists. Even granting the inconsistency of the *Huainanzi* on the issue of political power, Ames’ view of political Daoism as a thoroughgoing, anti-statist critique even in the classical era thus goes a long way toward refuting the theory of early Daoism as only a doctrine of laissez-faire rule and not of anarchism.

“Anarchism” of the *DDJ* and *Zhuangzi* as corrupt idea of later Daoists

Related to the above point, many scholars, led again by A. C. Graham, see the later, more explicit Daoist anarchism from the time of the authorship of the outer chapters of the *Zhuangzi* to the Wei-Jin neo-Daoists as an extrapolation and even distortion of the political ideas expressed in the *DDJ* and the inner chapters of the *Zhuangzi*. For Graham, the explicitly anarchist sections of the *Zhuangzi* (Chapters 8–10, and parts of Chapter 11) reflect the writings of the “primitivists,” who wrote with a very different, if still “idiosyncratic” style than the author of the inner chapters²¹ (see Appendix 1 for the most brilliant anarchist chapter of the *Zhuangzi*). Likewise, Burton Watson finds the same chapters to be written in a tone with a much more “shrill, almost pathological fury that is unlike anything found in the ‘inner chapters’,”²² although, interestingly enough, he finds these chapters much more closely parallel to the *DDJ* than the inner *Zhuangzi* chapters.²³ As an important corollary, such scholars would see Wei-Jin Daoist anarchism as a further extension or even corruption of the less harsh and explicit anti-statism in the *DDJ* and the inner chapters of the *Zhuangzi*.

A. C. Graham, however, sees the “primitivist” additions to the *Zhuangzi* not as much later corruptions but as based on an earlier tradition that goes back to the hermit Yang Zhu, a legendary figure who predated even the classical Daoist texts. This primitivist tradition was also based on the “Shen Nung” (“Divine Farmer”) tradition of a stateless agricultural community that also goes back at least to the Warring States period and fourth century BCE, if not earlier.²⁴ Graham also notes the tradition of Xiu Xing, another of the great “madmen of the South” who disputed the Confucian thinker Mencius around 315 BCE based on the Shen Nung ideal.²⁵ Thus, even for Graham, who believes that the “primitivist” chapters were authored between 209–202 BCE, that is, during the interregnum between the fall of the Qin

and rise of the former Han dynasty,²⁶ there is nevertheless a long tradition of Daoist or proto-Daoist anti-statism that goes far back into the Warring States Period.

Liu Xiaogan disputes Graham's dating, finding instead that the "anarchist" chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, which for him include the "Yangist" chapters as well (i.e. those influenced by the tradition of the hermit Yang Zhu, including Chapters 28, 29, and 31), date to the late Warring States period, that is, not as far removed from the historical Zhuang Zhou. Although Liu thinks these chapters did go far beyond the political vision of the *Zhuangzi* in their radicalism, he nevertheless concludes that the authors of the "anarchist" chapters were still followers of Zhuang Zi.²⁷ If true, this would help make the case even more that the anarchist tradition of Wei-Jin Daoism has long and deep historical roots that go back nearly to the time of the historical Zhuang Zhou, if not before.

On a philosophical level, of course, many authors have found an anarchist spirit in both the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*. The case for an anarchist vision in the classical Daoist texts, to be explicated further in this chapter and throughout this first part of the book, would focus first on the thoroughgoing critique of all aspects of government and the positive view of the stateless society expressed in the *DDJ*.²⁸ Second, an anarchist view of classical Daoism would focus on the cybernetic vision of life in the paragraph of the great second (inner) chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, where the original author himself suggests that since there is no one body part that rules the others, there is thus a natural or spontaneous order in the universe that exists without human intervention.²⁹ As the author of this inner chapter put it,

The hundred joints, the nine openings, the six organs, all come together and exist here [as my body]. But which part should I feel closest to? I should delight in all parts, you say? But there must be one I ought to favor more. If not, are they all of them mere servants? But if they are all servants, then how can they keep order among themselves? Or do they take turns being lord and servant? It would seem as though there must be some True Lord among them. But whether I succeed in discovering his identity or not, neither adds to nor detracts from his truth.³⁰

This is essentially the same point that Peter Kropotkin made using the language of nineteenth-century science in his famous pamphlet, "Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal," where he claimed that the discoveries of modern astronomy and other natural sciences have led to a new realization that there is no purposive center or natural hierarchy in nature. As Kropotkin put it about the universe, "thus the center, the origin of force, formerly transferred from the earth to the sun, now turns out to be scattered and disseminated. It is everywhere and nowhere."³¹

It is not just for the view of the absence of purposive order but for the positive vision of a world free from all “restraints or controls” that Hsiao Kung-chuan changed his earlier skeptical view and concluded that the “thought of” the *Zhuangzi*, even in the inner chapters, amounted to “the most radical of all anarchisms.”³²

Warring States Daoism as “Reactionary” and not “Revolutionary”

Nevertheless, even if one grants the philosophical anarchism of the *DDJ* and/or the *Zhuangzi*, many observers find that philosophical Daoism, from the Warring States to the Wei-Jin periods, is still limited by its lack of outright support for revolution, that is, for lack of any attempts to overthrow the existing state by force. For example, Liu Xiaogan, who finds that the “*wujun*” (again, literally, “without a prince” or, in other words, anarchist) chapters of the *Zhuangzi* went beyond the inner chapters to attack the (political) reality of the day rather than merely try to transcend or escape it,³³ nevertheless claims that the “theories of the Wu-Jun school never directly became a herald for any revolution.”³⁴ As Frederick Mote puts it, even if one accepts the *Zhuangzi* as a thoroughgoing anarchist text and not just as advocating laissez-faire, the doctrine in this text was only the “anarchy of the non-conforming individual” and thus if the author(s) of this text were anarchists they “certainly did not believe in organization or social movements.” Therefore in the end, the anarchism of the *Zhuangzi* “could not become a political threat, except that it gave a point of view to less disinterested critics of the state.”³⁵

Again, some observers relate this critique of the nonrevolutionary nature of Daoism to the emphasis put on appeals to the ruler in the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*. Both texts appeal not to the masses to revolt, but only to rulers to govern through the *dao* rather than through coercive means.³⁶ Above all, such critics would argue, the *DDJ* and especially the *Zhuangzi* call for transformation of the individual and not for genuine social revolution, and thus remain limited and ineffectual. Peter Zarrow, a student of twentieth-century Chinese anarchism who takes seriously the “anarchist provisions” supplied to Chinese political culture by Daoism³⁷ nevertheless similarly finds Daoism lacking in this regard:

... traditional anarchistic tendencies, in China as in the West, were not associated with a full-fledged theory of social reconstruction. An alternative vision is not the same as a sense of how real people can create and respond to a new social structure. This traditional anarchism, then, lacked revolutionary self-awareness. Philosophical Daoists issued no calls for organizing the people or fostering resistance to the rulers

they so condemned, for such calls themselves would be unnatural and interfering.³⁸

Against this idea of inherent political limits to Daoist anarchism, other scholars stress that perhaps Daoism is superior and on a higher level more revolutionary than the “social and political” Western anarchists. First, on a philosophical level Frederic Bender thinks Daoism has much to teach Western anarchism about applying a consistent metaphysical grounding for its claim of an essential “egolessness” of human nature (e.g. what Alan Ritter would call Western anarchism’s search for “communal individuality”³⁹), a lack of grounding that has helped to weaken anarchism as “a practical movement for social transformation.”⁴⁰ In addition, Daoism can better explain, and thus attract followers for an anarchist movement, the psychological and not just material needs that are unmet by any type of state.⁴¹

Most importantly, classic Daoism, similar to the ideas of Tolstoy and other Western pacifist anarchists, is much more consistent in its opposition to coercion⁴² and less susceptible to the contradictions of the Western anarchists, from Bakunin on, willing to embrace violent methods. This willingness to use violence or, as in Kropotkin, the failure to clearly denounce it was a large factor in leading to the demise of anarchism in the West, forever poisoning the name of anarchism in many people’s minds.⁴³ We will examine this argument at more length later in this chapter. Here we should note that just because Daoist anarchism rejects violence should not mean that it lacks revolutionary qualities.

Perhaps a reexamination of the concept of *wuwei* can help us to resolve this question. Given the numerous “people power” movements that began in the late 1980s and have spread most recently to North Africa and the Middle East, one must no longer identify violent action as the most revolutionary kind of movement. Indeed, the attempts of some online Chinese bloggers to spark a “Jasmine Revolution” in China, according to one author, may reveal the possibilities of *wuwei*. As Will Clem argued in the Hong Kong newspaper *The South China Morning Post*, those Chinese citizens who showed up in the crowded shopping districts of Beijing and Shanghai to “take a stroll” in response to the bloggers’ call played a very clever cat and mouse game:

There was a certain aesthetic to the action, like a farcical ballet. No sooner had uniformed and plain-clothes officers broken up one possible gathering than the crowds simply re-formed somewhere else.

It was almost the embodiment of the ancient Taoist philosophical concept of *wuwei*, best translated as “active non-action.”⁴⁴

Thus it is not only state rulers who can operate by *wuwei* but perhaps those who would oppose oppressive rule. As in the events in the middle east perhaps show, the greater the efforts of states to repress their citizens,

perhaps the greater reactions of their subjects, which can be prevented from becoming violent movements that in the end would recreate state violence only by taking on a radical but pacifist Daoist attitude toward revolution.

Warring States Daoism as individualist and not socialist

As we have just seen above, many observers who find an essential nonrevolutionary nature in Daoism often see Daoist anarchism as a doctrine of transformation of the individual self rather than as a call for collective action. For such observers, even if the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* did advance beyond the reported pure hedonism of the proto-Daoist Yang Zhu and even if on some level classical Daoism could be labeled as an anarchist doctrine it nevertheless remained at the level of individualist anarchism and contained no elements similar to modern socialism. Such critics in effect agree with scholars such as Feldt about the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* but take the opposite position from him in seeing only collectivist anarchism as true anarchism. Thus, even if the Wei-Jin Daoists were firmly within the tradition of the received *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* in their explicit anarchism, they nevertheless were far from the collectivist anarchism of Proudhon, Bakunin, and especially Kropotkin. As Hsiao Kung-chuan puts it,

... [the authors of the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*] thought that the individual should abandon knowledge and make few his desires, seek self-contained contentment and not seek individual advancement, sharing accord with ruler and superiors about the way [of simplifying life] through diminishing. Hence the political method of letting alone did not demand "popular knowledge" and did not demand social equality . . . in consequence the individual becomes the only value, and freedom is not a means for guaranteeing the growth of knowledge and human capacities, but becomes in itself the ultimate goal.⁴⁵

Against this view, one could posit again Needham's idea of the early Daoists as harking back to the real or supposed primitive communism of pre-Zhou society.⁴⁶ Thus, far from justifying a "ministerial bureaucracy" of an autocratic and centralized state, as Feldt somewhat anachronistically argues⁴⁷ (since the imperial state had not formed yet), the classical Daoists may in fact have been opposing such tendencies as may have been growing but were far from universal during the Warring States period.

Even if one is not inclined to fully accept Needham's rather literal view of "Daoist communism," others would still stress the vision in the received *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* of an organic community that links individual and

collective. Though Daoist anarchists perhaps based their hopes for change on individual awareness and transformation, this would *not* lead to a society of egoists as in the ideals of Max Stirner or Murray Rothbard, but instead, as Bender argues, to the transformation of the “egoistic self into a realized, nonegoistic self which, if successful, will be the necessary and sufficient condition for corresponding transformations of [the] subject’s selves and thereby the restoration of harmonious social order.”⁴⁸ In other words, the classical Daoists may have surpassed Western anarchists in their vision of a society of “individual-communal beings,” the vision again that Ritter sees as the essential project of Western anarchism.⁴⁹

Daoism as a negative or passive, backward-looking Nihilist doctrine and not a positive, scientific vision for the future

Even if one grants that at some level the classic Daoist vision was communal in nature, other critics would suggest that this was always an anti-technological ideal that posited a lost utopia far in the past. Furthermore, this was inherently a negative vision of loss that offered little or no hope for grafting the benefits of economic and technological progress onto an anarcho-communist future society. As Hsiao Kung-chuan put it in an early, influential article on anarchism in Chinese political thought (but a position from which he changed greatly in his magnum opus on Chinese political thought as we saw above), “Western anarchism is . . . a doctrine of hope, whereas Chinese anarchism seems to be a doctrine of despair.”⁵⁰ Finally, the vision of freedom, if there was one in Daoism, was only of a negative freedom that could easily turn into a passive nihilist acceptance of authority, as in the early Han Daoists and the first and third generation of neo-Daoists of the Wei-Jin periods (as we will see in chapter 4).

A much more deadly version of this argument was played out in Mao’s China where two strong supporters of Mao’s Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution argued that the authors of the classical Daoist texts represented the interests of the “patriarchal slave owning class” who were gradually losing out to the rise of the feudal, land-owning class. The author of the *DDJ*, these Maoists argued, took the stand of the slave masters by advocating “abolishing struggle and adopting a cyclical theory” that denied progressive development and wanted to “restore the idyllic system of the Zhou.”⁵¹ Under this view, the author of the *Zhuangzi* represented the “pessimistic and hopeless remnants of slave-masters” in the later Warring States period, when the principal contradiction (using Mao’s formula for determining progressive and reactionary forces) was between the “aristocratic landlords” (who were primarily old slave masters transformed) and the

newly emerging “feudal landlords” (who represented new and progressive social privilege).⁵² Those who would dare to oppose this official Maoist line on Daoism would suffer greatly for 20 years. Liu Xiaogan, for example, argued in 1957 that the theories of the “Wu Jun” school “were theories with which the laboring people criticized reality, not the theories of a reactionary faction wanting to turn things back.” For Liu, “it is utterly unreasonable to say that the [anarchist] chapters [of the *Zhuangzi*] represented the ideas and feelings of the declining class of slave owners.”⁵³

Situated as we are safely apart in time and space from these far from purely academic quarrels, where any people opposing the Maoist line on Daoism could be (and were) arrested or killed, it should be clear that these Maoist authors tried to fit Chinese history into the Stalinist unilinear straitjacket where every precapitalist society had to undergo the same transformation from primitive communes to slavery to feudalism.⁵⁴ As Hsu Cho-yun states, and as most Chinese and Western historians recognize, “there is no evidence that the economy of ancient China was based on slavery like the economy of ancient Greece.”⁵⁵ Still, even within their orthodox Marxist faith that every idea has a particular economic class standpoint at its base, the Maoists failed to account for the opposition to Confucian beliefs in the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* and to the fact that the classical Daoists looked to mythical *pre-Zhou* rulers for their ideal. Furthermore, when they recognized that because of indigenous climatic and agricultural conditions and needs in China much of the “patriarchal communal” system survived in the late Zhou period,⁵⁶ the Maoist critics missed the chance to argue that the Daoists may have represented the interests of remnants of primitive communism, much as Joseph Needham argued, as we have seen. While still making the Daoists “reactionary” in the Marxist sense, this line of argument would go a long way toward taking the Wu Jun school’s ideas seriously as a “radical attack on monarchical power.”⁵⁷ Without being hampered by any version of Marxist dogma, in any analysis of the radical side of Daoism one should still try to determine whether the Daoists were really reactionary and anti-progressive.

First, on the question of looking to the past, some scholars would argue that the nature of classical Chinese makes it ambiguous, at least in Chapter 80 of the received *DDJ*, whether the Daoist ideal is located in the past, present, or future.⁵⁸ Even if the ideal did exist in the past, this was a tradition of most schools of thought in the late Zhou with the exception of the Legalists;⁵⁹ but certainly the Daoists believed that the ideal society could be attained again, at the present moment or whenever the *dao* was followed again. Furthermore, extrapolating from philosophical discussions of Daoism as related to the lack of a “beginning” or “creation myth” in Chinese thought, we could say that the Daoist stateless ideal is definitely not limited to the past but can be created of itself and by itself unconditionally. This “unconditioned norm,” as David Hall says, is “also the norm of any radical form of anarchism.”⁶⁰

Additionally, this norm is far from being only a negative version of freedom that stresses removal of restraints, though this aspect is important, nor is it true that Daoist anarchism must be based only on the concept of *wuwei*, as Feldt suggests. It is true that many Daoist metaphors are expressed in terms of *wu* or negative forms, as David Hall has pointed out.⁶¹ These forms include not only *wuwei* (variously translated as “doing nothing,” “inaction,” or, as Hall says, “non-assertive action”) but also *wuzhi* (“without knowledge” or, as Hall says “without unprincipled knowing”; or as Needham suggests, without the objective and harmful technological knowing of the coming centralized state), and *wuyu* (“no desire” or, as Hall says, “objectless desire”). We could add, of course, *wujun* (“without a prince” or ruler) of the neo-Daoists. But as both Hall and Chang Chung-yuan⁶² suggest, these terms relate to an unleashing of creativity when one is freed from restraints.

Indeed, one cannot claim an essential negativity of classic Daoism without ignoring the whole artistic tradition spawned in large part by the literary influence of the *Zhuangzi* on the Southern schools of Chinese art, poetry, and calligraphy that were based on the concept of *ziran*, which this author would contend is nearly as important if not more so than *wuwei* to an understanding of Daoist anarchism. The term *ziran* (literally “of itself so,” often translated as “natural” or “spontaneous”) taken from the classical Daoist texts, was central to the revived anarchist vision of the second generation of neo-Daoists and should dispel any notion of a lack of a positive vision of freedom in ancient China. Based on an understanding of *ziran*, one can see that the Daoists did indeed contain a positive vision of the limitless possibilities of human nature unbridled and did contain a positive embrace of the world, as David Hall suggests.

As we will see in Chapter 4 this is not to argue that all Daoists avoided the problem of slipping from anarchism into nihilism, but only that the nihilist side of Daoism comes out when shifting away from *dao* to *wu* (nothing, nothingness) as the key term, or to *wuming* (the nameless), as did some generations of Wei-Jin Daoists.⁶³ In other words, only when the Daoists shifted away from saying “everything exists as an interdependent whole of which we are a part” (as emphasized by those focusing on *dao* and *ziran* together) to saying that “nothing exists” or that “power came out of nowhere” did they shift from anarchism to nihilism. Based on this view of the centrality of *ziran* to a consistent vision of Daoist anarchism, one could also follow Needham and Hall and see the Daoist stress on *hundun* (“[positive] chaos,” “primeval unity,” or “social homogeneity”) as a positive vision of individuals living and working together in [stateless] society.⁶⁴

As for the question of science and technological progress, here again we can turn to Needham, who sees the Daoists as representatives of a “anti-feudal” forces and who criticized the use of technology to build up new forms of oppressive rule while at the same time maintaining within their

thought a “proto-scientific” element of opposition to all authority and a desire to observe the universe without preconditions, as we saw above in the satirical version of a cybernetic view of the human body in the second, inner chapter of the *Zhuangzi*.⁶⁵ Generally speaking, Daoist anarchists did not oppose all knowledge, but only knowledge used to divide and conquer the world. Indeed, those claiming a Daoist philosophical base were at the heart of Chinese scientific discoveries.

To sum up, then, this chapter starts from the position that the later Wei-Jin Daoist anarchists were firmly within the vision of the received *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*, that is, a positive vision of the freedom and human creativity that could be unleashed once the terrible authority of the state was removed. This vision could be achieved by a program of combining individual transformation with the need to realize our essential communal nature. Far from being a corrupt, less artistic vision, the explicitly anarchist side of Daoism in the hands of talented writers and poets such as Ruan Ji and Tao Qian (see sections on these poets in this chapter below) could demonstrate the powers of *ziran* in action. Finally, as will be argued later in this chapter, the efforts of Daoist anarchists did amount to a consistent, very long-lasting movement that by the standards and lessons of the late twentieth century we can now see can be much more progressive and effective than old-fashioned “revolutionary violence.” Extrapolating from Bender’s argument,⁶⁶ we could suggest as others do concerning Tolstoy’s pacifist anarchism that Daoist anarchism may solve the dilemma of Western anarchists who tried to use violent coercion to bring down the state and end all coercion, but who in the process only succeeded in poisoning the name of anarchism and in leading to some degree of popular revulsion against revolutionaries. Using the language of postmodernism (though in Chapter 4 we will examine a potential lesson also for postmodern anarchism from some Chinese thinkers who used neo-Daoist language to shift away from anarchism to nihilism), we could posit the Daoist anarchist method as an attempt to deconstruct and undermine the specific structures of ideological hegemony, structures that are far more important to ruling elites than raw coercion as a method to maintain state power, and to build in their place a new language of resistance that will not itself easily degenerate into a new system of authority (as critics have often explicitly or implicitly charged against devotees of Derrida and deconstructionism).

Synopsis of the thought of Wei-Jin Daoist anarchists

This author argues that Wei-Jin Daoist anarchism, which most scholars recognize as very close in spirit at least to philosophical anarchism in the

West, is not a distortion but a fuller explication of the anarchism at least implicit in the received *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*. In order to make this case before proceeding to outline the ideas of the key figures of later Daoist anarchism, we should outline the historical background to their thought.

The revival of philosophical Daoism (*daojia* as opposed to *daojiao*, or religious Daoism as we saw in the introduction—a distinction that postdated the classical Daoist philosophers but that predated the Wei-Jin), began at the end of the later Han dynasty (25–220 CE). The warlord Cao Cao (150–220 CE), a general of the Han who had helped put down the Yellow Turban and Five Pecks of Rice rebellions, later went on to found his own state, which contended with two other states to reunify China. In this effort, he grouped around himself various scholars of different persuasions who developed philosophies designed to give him legitimacy as a ruler, perhaps including eventual justification for assuming the title of emperor itself if he could have succeeded in conquering the rival kingdoms. Included in this group of scholars were men who used Daoist and Legalist concepts to justify his rule. After the death of Cao Cao, the regent in the succeeding *Zhengshi* reign period filled all of the important posts of the government with a group of these neo-Daoists. For 10 years, from 240 to 249 CE, this neo-Daoism became part of the official orthodoxy for the central Wei kingdom against the other states controlled by the great aristocratic family interests dominant in the centrifugal forces that had weakened and finally brought down the Han dynasty and which continued to oppose recentralization of imperial state power.⁶⁷

Under this first version of neo-Daoism, the emphasis was changed from *dao* to a new focus on *wu* (“nothingness” or “non-being”). According to this philosophy, all things come not from an underlying unity in the world, but from nothing. Activities should be carried out according to *ziran* (again, “naturalness” or “spontaneity”). Thus Cao Cao’s rise from nowhere to the top of the social hierarchy could be justified by this combined Daoist–Legalist philosophy as opposed to the prevailing *mingjiao* (“teaching of names”) school of Confucianism. Richard Mather describes the political nature of the Wei faction’s philosophy as follows,

In the [Zhengshi] era the debris of Confucian ritualism had to be cleared away and room made for new values of ‘Naturalness’ [*ziran*] and ‘Non-actuality’ [*wu*] to buttress the new order of government . . . [Originally] the new men like [Cao Cao] had risen to power by virtue of their ability alone, and the Confucian shibboleths of the old aristocracy concerning ‘goodness and morality’ [*ren-i*], ‘loyalty and filial submission’ [*zhongxiao*] were meaningless to them if a man could not conduct a campaign successfully or manage an administrative post efficiently. [Cao]’s slogan, ‘Only the talented will be promoted to office’ . . . agreed with his policy of disregarding whether or not a man “carried a sullied or disgraceful reputation, acted with ridiculous behavior, or was neither ‘good’ nor ‘filial’” [quoting

the *Wei shu* (Book of Wei), O29lb]. And the men he gathered about him quickly furnished this pragmatic policy with an ideological base.⁶⁸

At the same time, however, these neo-Daoists did not totally reject Confucianism. For example, they saw Confucius as the greatest sage since, unlike Lao Zi, he supposedly practiced the (Daoist) way of nonaction without ever talking about it.⁶⁹

Eventually the centralizing Wei faction was thrown out of power by the Sima clan who, after a brief period of using the Wei emperors as puppets, seized power in their own right under the name of the Jin dynasty. For a short time, the Jin reunited all of China into one empire organized along the interests of the great families. The surviving neo-Daoists then readapted their philosophy, now emphasizing *ziran* to refer to a way of behavior opposed to official life and customs. This new use of the term also helped to justify refusing to serve in the new government as a higher form of behavior rather than as an act of disloyalty. A group of these neo-Daoists known as the “Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove” became famous for their nonconformist behavior, which besides refusal to join the government included *qingtan* (literally “pure conversation”) a style of behavior consisting of witty remarks and put-downs, nudism, and wine drinking.⁷⁰ All of their actions were supposedly based on precepts in the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*, and indeed, in this time those classical Daoist texts were recollected and studied anew.⁷¹

The Jin dynasty fell almost immediately after it was founded because of infighting among the royal princes as well as due to the incursions of the northern “barbarians.” Moving its capital eastward, the Jin became little more than another kingdom among several regional and “barbarian”-controlled states. This era of the Period of Disunity, known as the Six Dynasties, became increasingly chaotic, as even family estates themselves soon became unstable.

In such a situation of chaos, from the fall of the Wei to the disintegration of the Jin, the anarchistic side of Daoism began to reemerge. Even in making the case for the extreme anarchism of the second generation of neo-Daoists, it is important to note that this Daoism originated as a justification for the centralization of power and only became anarchistic as the centralizing faction was defeated and its descendants forced to fight for survival against the rule of the great families. Nevertheless, the greatest of the Western anarchists, including Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy, also came from privileged backgrounds, as Marxists never fail to point out, including from aristocratic classes that were being swept aside in the push toward industrialization and centralization of state power in the West. Thus the Daoist anarchists cannot be denigrated on these grounds as any less sincerely anarchist than their Western counterparts. Below we examine the background and key elements of anarchism of four writers of this

second generation of neo-Daoists, making specific comparisons to Western anarchists along the way.

Ruan Ji (210–263 CE)

One of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, Ruan Ji, was the first person in the post-Han era to reemphasize the anarchistic side of Daoism. His father, Ruan Yu, was intimately involved with the military government of Cao Cao. Indeed, the Ruan family's wealth and power does not seem to precede Ruan Dun, the grandfather of Ruan Ji, who was a local magistrate in the district where Cao Cao first raised his troops.⁷² In spite of these strong Wei connections, Ruan Ji survived the executions of the Wei intellectuals at the end of the Zhengshi period by carefully walking the line between Confucianism and Daoism in his poetry, and by his nonconformist, "harmless" behavior in which he could avoid serving in the Jin government without being accused of disloyalty. He died a supposedly natural death in 263, yet that was the same year in which the last of the Seven Sages were executed by the Sima faction.

Though Ruan Ji himself never openly challenged the authority of the Jin, late in his life, in one great poetic essay, the *Daren Xiansheng Zhuan* ("Biography of Master Great Man"), Ruan Ji raised the first banner of Daoist anarchism since the Warring States period. In the first third of this work (reprinted in Appendix 2), a fictional, nameless person supposed to have lived since Creation replies to a letter from a typical Confucian gentleman that attacked the Great Man for his unconventional ways. In his reply the Great man gives, in the words of Hsiao Kung-chuan, a "merciless attack upon conventionality, and, at the same time, an enthusiastic encomium of anarchist freedom."⁷³ The Great Man begins his reply by describing the original utopian community of the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* when all lived in harmony, innocence, and physical equality (see the next chapter), concluding that,

... for then there was no ruler, and all beings were peaceful; no officials, and all affairs were well ordered.⁷⁴

The Great Man then continues to say that, by unspecified means, artificiality was introduced into this community, including class differences between rich and poor, strong and weak. Then government came about and resulted in the greatest misfortunes. Different factions fought among themselves for power and caused great chaos. According to Jung Chao-tsu, it was from his vantage point in the struggles between the factions of Wei and Jin that Ruan Ji came to conclude that the origin of social chaos was in the power

struggles between competing empires, and thus explains why in the end he came to oppose all government and advocate anarchy.⁷⁵

Following the *Zhuangzi*, Ruan Ji in this essay describes the nature of sages as essentially the same as that of thieves, and the nature of government as oppression:

When rulers are set up, tyranny arises; when officials are established, thieves are born. You idly ordain rites and laws only to bind the lowly common people.⁷⁶

By pursuing wealth and power, these rulers hold up a bad example to the people; thus crime and rebellion ensue only after government is established and drain away all of the public wealth. Confucian ideas ensuring order through benevolence and ritual, and Legalist ideas of standardized law “are indeed nothing more than the methods of harmful robbers, of trouble-makers, of death and destruction. . . .”⁷⁷

Though there is more ambiguity in this poem concerning the origin of government than in the ideas of Bao Jingyan (as well will see in the next section), Ruan nevertheless does bring out of the *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi* a clearer picture of how an unnatural and harmful government could originate out of the *dao*, just as Western anarchists have to explain how government could have originated out of a species with a supposedly naturally communitarian and peaceful human nature. For Ruan, based firmly on passages in the received *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*, it is clearer that government is not just philosophically indefensible but actually harmful and counterproductive. Furthermore, government is not a natural occurrence, but an artificial creation of those trying to justify their wealth and power. Ruan equates rulers and sages in power with thieves, although the Great Man does seem to believe that the sages are merely mistaken, not insincere, in setting government up in the first place. In addition, the Great Man sees crime not just as a response to oppression, as do the Western anarchists from Proudhon to Kropotkin, but as corruption of the people by wealth and power. Thus, even with his more blatant anarchist tendencies, Ruan Ji remains within the limits of the *DDJ* in seeing both rulers and subjects alike as well-meaning if corruptible or, as Benjamin Schwartz puts it, “latently vulnerable” to this “propensity to fall.”⁷⁸ Finally, though justifying rebellion as inevitable once government is established, Ruan Ji still paints a picture of this as an unfortunate occurrence—in other words, he is not openly advocating violent revolution as would, say, Bakunin. Nevertheless, within the thesis of this book, Ruan’s poem clearly contains an anarchist theory of the state.

It should be noted that the Daoist anarchist critique occurs only in the first third of Ruan’s poem; in the latter two-thirds of the essay, the Great Man soars through the universe to attain harmony with the *dao*. Nevertheless, one should not mistake the fictitious and fantastic nature of this essay as an

indication of anything less than a serious work. As Donald Holzman says, “far from marking this as a work of satirical exaggeration, a playful slap at the bigoted Confucian of his day, the extremeness of his condemnation shows how heart-felt it was, how absolutely serious he is.”⁷⁹

Soon after the death of Ruan Ji, the neo-Daoist or *qingtan* movement began to decline from “liberty to libertinage” as it was taken up by the idle sons of the aristocracy.⁸⁰ At the same time, serious neo-Daoist philosophers began again to justify government service as being in line with *ziran* once they saw the inevitable and irreversible triumph of the Sima reaction.⁸¹

Bao Jingyan (ca. 300 CE)

Before the neo-Daoist movement totally degenerated, however, the last and probably greatest direct statement of Daoist anarchism was made. It survives only as a short treatise in one chapter of the alchemical text of Ge Hong (253–333 CE), who reproduced it with a lengthy refutation of his own⁸² (see Bao’s full tract in Appendix 3). This anarchist was clearly influenced by Ruan Ji and, according to Ge Hong, “enjoyed the works of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi and studied the discipline of dialectics and sophistry.”⁸³ The anarchist’s name is Bao Jingyan, who had the same surname as one Bao Jing, the father-in-law of Ge Hong, thus probably placing Bao Jingyan in the same family and aristocratic class.⁸⁴

While firmly basing his critique of the State on the ideas in the received *DDJ* and the *Zhuangzi*, Bao Jingyan unambiguously shifts the emphasis regarding the origin of the State from that of misguided altruists trying to order the world, to that of, according to Lin Mousheng, “an institution created and maintained by the dominant classes in society and imposed upon the weak and ignorant.”⁸⁵ Bao starts out by explicitly condemning the Confucian theory of the origin of the State as a mere pretext for rule of the strong over the weak, arguing that “. . . servitude and mastery result from the struggle between the cunning and innocent, and Blue Heaven has nothing whatsoever to do with it.”⁸⁶

Bao goes on to use the argument in Chapter 9 of the *Zhuangzi* to refute the idea of the naturalness of having ruler and ruled, concluding that, in reality, government works by force in order to enrich those in office:

. . . And so the people are compelled to labor so that those in office may be nourished; and while their superiors enjoy fat salaries, they are reduced to the direst poverty.⁸⁷

Next Bao denigrates by implication those Daoist alchemists who sought immortality, as well as the Confucians who claimed to believe in resigning from office under an immoral government. He denounces the Confucian virtues

as a response to rebellion and discord rather than as natural occurrences, concluding that “loyalty and righteousness only appear when rebellion breaks out in the empire, filial obedience and parental love are only displayed when there is discord among kindred.”⁸⁸ Again, the last sentence is firmly based on the received Chapter 18 version of the *DDJ* and on the *Zhuangzi*.

The next section of Bao’s treatise repeats the description of the Golden Age found in Chapter 80 of the received *DDJ* and in the *Zhuangzi*, when small, independent, and self-sufficient agricultural communities supposedly lived in harmony both with each other and with animals. In this ideal state, Bao claims, there was no accumulation of private property or wealth, nor were there any plagues, pestilence, rebellions, nor, of course, any government.⁸⁹ In an unspecified way, knowledge and cunning entered this world, and immediately it lost the Way and fell into decadence. A hierarchy was established, along with regulations for promotion and demotion and profit and loss, class distinctions, and technological development. With the search for and acquisition of wealth, people began to strive for reputation; next thievery developed, after which came armed aggression and war.

Bao then denounces evil tyrants, not just as immoral rulers but as capable of doing evil only because of the existence of the principle of rule and the distinction between lord and subject. In such a situation, people are inevitably corrupted both by the oppression of rulers and by covetousness for the wealth and power that rulers possess. Finally the people are led to rebel and are then unstoppable by government to the point that “. . . to try to stop them by means of rules and regulations, or control them by means of penalties and punishments, is like trying to dam a river in full flood with a handful of earth, or keeping the torrents of water back with one finger.”⁹⁰ Here Bao goes a step beyond Ruan Ji to explicitly suggest the social causes of crime, a point that marks him greatly similar to Western anarchists. His final metaphor is strikingly similar to the idea of Michael Bakunin that,

. . . all the revolutionaries, the oppressed, the sufferers, victims of the existing social organization, whose hearts are naturally filled with hatred and a desire for vengeance, should bear in mind that the kings, the oppressors, exploiters of all kinds, are as guilty as the criminals who have emerged from the masses . . . it will not be surprising if the rebellious people kill a great many of them at first. This will be a misfortune, as unavoidable as the ravages caused by a sudden tempest, and as quickly over. . . .⁹¹

Both Bao and Bakunin find that crime is caused by government, especially by one emphasizing harsh laws and punishments whether they be late absolutist monarchies of Bakunin’s day or the Legalist side of the Chinese imperial state, which in its last stages is more easily exposed as a government imposed by force with no pretensions of morality. Bao, following the *DDJ* and Ruan Ji, sees this Legalist government as the final phase of rule after Confucianism

had earlier stirred up the people's desires. Both Bakunin and Bao Jingyan, then, refuse to condemn rebels and also seem to be trying to scare members of the ruling elite with the possibility of violent revenge to be exacted by the masses. Nevertheless, neither tyrants nor criminals should be looked upon as incurably evil or deserving of punishment for both Bao and Bakunin; it is their corruption by the State that accounts for their evil ways.

In sum, Bao Jingyan explicitly detailed all of the anarchistic tendencies in the political critique of Daoism and made more explicit two important elements: first, the nature and origin of government as the oppression of the strong and rich over the weak and poor, rather than as well-intentioned attempts of sages to order the world; and second, the explanation of crime and popular revolt as the inevitable reaction of the people to the tyranny of government. Influenced heavily by the "anarchist" chapters of the *Zhuangzi* and perhaps by Ruan Ji in these opinions, he denied completely that the attempts of sages were simply mistaken—clearly he denounced sages as trying to protect stolen property by imposing an unnatural ideal of morality.

In Bao Jingyan we see an explicit rejection, not only of the naked, Legalist style of harsh rule but also of the Confucian Mandate of Heaven theory of the origin of government. In this rejection Bao also closely parallels Western anarchists, especially Proudhon, who see the nature and origin of government as the protection of the seizure of private property by theft. As Western anarchists rejected other contemporary theories of government, such as Social Contract and Divine Right, so Bao rejected all justifications for rule in his day. Again, following Ruan Ji, Bao also clearly went beyond pure philosophical anarchism by viewing government as harmful and criminal, not merely as unjustifiable.

Nevertheless, while resolving this contradiction, Bao still fails to explain how wealth itself was introduced into the ideal community, or how "knowledge and cunning came into use."⁹² But of course one could argue that Western anarchists, given their positive view of human nature, also failed to give this explanation. Perhaps one could augment both anarchisms by taking the idea from modern anthropology that it was an increase in the social surplus created by accidental discoveries and improvements in agriculture that gave rise to a fight for control over this surplus, with government as the final justification and protection of the wealth of the winners.

Even without such an argument, and while clearly not endorsing violent revolution, as opposed to Bakunin and his followers among Western anarchists, Bao Jingyan still has no sympathy with rulers and clearly presents an anarchist ideal in the place of state rule. In his ideal society, as in that of most Western anarchists, no crime occurs and no law and punishments are even dreamed of. Since the social environment of excess wealth and the coercion and oppression of government are the main causes of crime, at the same time, in the anarchist ideal of both Bao and Bakunin, crime will largely disappear. Punishment by the government is useless and hypocritical and

only exacerbates the problem, according to both Bao and Western anarchists such as Bakunin, since it is the principle of rule that allows rulers to do harm and leads to the people's violent reaction. Belief in the environmental factor as the cause of crime as well as the rejection of law and punishment are thus key ingredients in both Daoist and Western anarchism.

Liezi and the Yang Zhu chapter

As stated earlier, the anarchistic trend in Daoism began to die out when, as Balazs says, the qingtan movement fell into the hands of the

gilded youth—"the brothers and sons of the idle" [*guiyu zidi*], in the stock phrase of the Chinese historians—and became fashionable, whereupon the attempt made by the politicians of the first generation and by the artists of the Bamboo Grove to break free from social conventions degenerated into moral breakdown.⁹³

It is either the beginning of the first qingtan generation (249–265 CE) or the end of the second (265–317 CE) that Aloysius Chang thinks is most likely to have produced the fatalistic work *Liezi* and its hedonistic chapter "Yang Zhu."⁹⁴ According to A. C. Graham, the *Liezi*, except for the Yang Zhu chapter, may have been written by a single author as late as 300 CE.⁹⁵ In any event, the philosophy of Yang Zhu as expressed in this chapter could be summed up very simply:

If the men of old could benefit the entire world by pulling out one hair, they would not do it. If they were offered the entire world for life, they would not take it. When no man hurts one hair and no man benefits, the world will be at peace.⁹⁶

According to the author of this chapter, if everyone minded their own business the idea of rule itself would disappear:

Take my way of private life; if it could be extended to the whole world, the principle governing the ruler-subject relationship would naturally die out.⁹⁷

Chang finds that while the Yang Zhu chapter contains passages from the original philosophy of the historical Yang Zhu of the late Zhou era, passages which contain his anarchistic statements, most of the rest of the chapter, as well as the *Liezi* as a whole, is not fundamentally opposed to the idea of government as long as it does not interfere or try to regulate people's enjoyment of life.⁹⁸ A. C. Graham, on the other hand, concludes that the *Liezi* gives many examples of the ideal Daoist anarchy:

The [*Liezi*] itself reflects this [anarchistic] tendency [of Ruan Ji and Bao Jingyan], although very cautiously. The hedonist [Yang Zhu] chapter explicitly recommends a society in which each pursues his own pleasure without interfering with others, and “the Way of ruler and subject is brought to an end.” The [other] chapters retain the old assumption that the power emanating from a true sage maintains the harmony of society without the need of government, but imply that he is not an Emperor; such sages have only existed either before or outside the Chinese empire.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the *Liezi* as a whole advocates a fatalistic acceptance of life, while the Yang Zhu chapter deemphasizes the element of restraint present in the original Yang Zhu’s philosophy and substituted for it the belief in an unrestrained enjoyment of the full sensual pleasures of life. Therefore, we could put forward the hypothesis that the *Liezi* and its Yang Zhu chapter represent a transition stage in the decline of the *qingtan* movement and its shift from pacifist anarchism into passive nihilism.

As many students of Chinese philosophy in this century have noted,¹⁰⁰ the extreme individualism of the Yang Zhu chapter bears a striking similarity to the work *The Ego and Its Own* by the early nineteenth-century German philosopher known as Max Stirner. Though ideas of the Yang Zhu chapter also helped play into the passive nihilism of the third generation of *qingtan* Daoists, and the ideas of Stirner were later influential perhaps on the development of Nietzsche’s nihilism and perhaps even of later fascism,¹⁰¹ in the beginning both the Yang Zhu chapter and *The Ego and its Own* were sincere statements of rebellion by men who wished to place the individual above the demands of the central authority. Despite this great similarity, others find that Yang Zhu may represent a less radical form of individualism as the author of that chapter “concedes the existence of other egos” and condemns the use of force against others, which Stirner would justify as “might makes right.”¹⁰² Still, both the Yang Zhu author and Max Stirner show a basic and striking similarity in their placing of the individual above the state. In both cases this was a much more radical individualism than that represented by other figures in their respective movements, but nevertheless foreshadowed other anarchists’ denunciations of the State and its limitations to the full potential of humans in both ancient China and the West.

Although the *qingtan* movement did degenerate and eventually die out, the Daoist anarchist tradition lived on in art and literature and in the lives of scholars and government officials after hours and in retirement. Especially in times of disorder, or when the government sponsored or promoted the study of an official Daoism, the anarchistic side of Daoism would resurface, for example, in the Buddhist-inspired anarchism of Wu Nengzi during the breakdown of the Tang dynasty in the tenth century (see Chapter 4) or by

Liu Shipai during the Western-inspired anarchist movement in China in the early twentieth century (as we will see in Chapter 5).¹⁰³

Tao Qian's "Peach Blossom Spring"

The best example of the anarchist tradition of Daoism surviving through art is the poem "Peach Blossom Spring" by Tao Qian (326–397 CE) (see Appendix 4). Tao Qian was a scholar-official of the surviving remnant of the Jin dynasty, who retired from government service during the later years of his life in a Confucian protest against the "immoral" regime. Refusing all offers of government posts, he retired to his estate to till his own soil and write poetry.¹⁰⁴ Possibly inspired by a contemporary account of a lost, independent community of people,¹⁰⁵ and obviously influenced by classical Daoist texts, especially the *Zhuangzi*, he wrote twin prose and poetic accounts describing a fisherman who sailed down a stream through a cave to discover a hidden land to which people had fled long ago to escape the harsh Qin dynasty and where they founded a society without government. This poem epitomizes the Daoist ideal of anarchy and as such demands a detailed commentary of its political philosophy.¹⁰⁶

As with most Chinese poetry, this poem can be read on several levels. It might just be the poetic expansion of the contemporary report of such a place, but on the other hand the fisherman's physical discovery might be a metaphor for a psychological discovery of an internal, forgotten tendency. The fisherman found the spring only after he "had lost track of how far he had gone," which could be taken to mean temporarily forgetting conscious attempts to alter the world. By not striving or desiring to affect artificial changes, he was able to "return to the root" in the phrase from the *DDJ*, in other words, perhaps, to discover this anarchical state of being as an innate part of his nature. When he followed this impulse and returned to this state of "original simplicity" (*pu*—a very important Daoist term), his path "suddenly opened out and he could see clearly." Therefore the amazing community he found might on one level be the *dao* itself. In other words, while the *dao* may not be an empirically verifiable entity, it is nevertheless a real state of being that is far from simply metaphysical. An artistic, suggestive description, which in a way constitutes all of Daoism, is not inherently more metaphysical than a supposedly objective explanation.

On this level the *dao* is really a metaphor for freedom, a word that scholars used to stress as not existing in ancient Chinese and *had* to be expressed metaphorically in order not to be confused with the idea of libertinage or license (as Balazs argues,¹⁰⁷ though A. C. Graham disparages the idea that in traditional China there was no way to get across the idea of liberty¹⁰⁸). As with modern Western anarchism, in Daoist anarchism the idea of freedom means more than the absence of restrictions. In both anarchisms, freedom

is inseparable from equality and community. This is expressed in Daoism by the term *pu* ("original simplicity," which Needham thinks refers to the "solidarity, homogeneity, and simplicity of primitive collectivism"¹⁰⁹), a term which this author would contend, is yet another metaphor for freedom in the positive, active sense. In other words, the legacy of Daoist anarchism for Tao Qian was far from purely individualistic, but contained strong communal elements.

The village that the fisherman found was totally peaceful; all were "carefree and happy." There were no institutions and rites to teach the people goodness and morality, yet there was no evident selfishness. All invited him into their homes and shared their harvest with him. As in the ideal in the *Zhuangzi*, all relished simple food and clothing and were content to farm and live at home. When Tao Qian says the chickens and dogs could be heard from farm to farm, he is further suggesting the passages from Chapter 80 of the received *DDJ* and Chapter 10 of the *Zhuangzi* where the members of the ideal community also live so close to each other that the fowls of neighboring villages could be heard, "but the people would grow old and die without ever having been there."¹¹⁰ It is important that the poem notes that the inhabitants of the spring fled there in order to escape the Qin dynasty, both to show that this state of harmony is only to be achieved in the absence of government, and to show that the official views of the history and civilization of humanity, far from improving our moral nature, must also be abandoned along with government in order to attain the ideal state. In other words, merely by stating that the people fled the Qin dynasty and had no desire to return even after hearing of the glorious succeeding dynasties, Tao Qian alluded to the Daoist belief that the Confucian attempt to inculcate morality and order only comes about after morality and order have been lost. Far from the Confucian ideal of people in their primitive state desperately needing good government, it is clear in this poem that it is the State which causes the suffering of the people.

However, the fisherman was not a true Daoist sage and in time remembered himself and desired to return to society. Later, deliberately retracing his steps, this time failing to forget conscious effort, he was unable to find the community again. True to its own dependence on domination and its desire to attach its institutions upon the people, the government also tried to find the community upon hearing of it from the fisherman. Along with the Confucian gentleman Liu Ziji, however, the government was unsuccessful in its search. Clearly, the idea of government as well as the basic idea of Confucianism is the antithesis of the ideal Daoist community. More importantly, Tao Qian is expressing a nearly identical idea to that of Kropotkin, that government depends on people's voluntary cooperation—mutual aid in Kropotkin's language—in order to have a society to rule over, but government is at the same time parasitic on this cooperation and in basic contradiction against it. In other words underlying Tao Qian's poem is a clear anarchist theory of the state.

In time men stopped seeking the spring, just as in time men forgot their original state and were corrupted by laws and morals and knowledge, until, as in Chapter 10 of the *Zhuangzi* “nothing was left in its original state. It must be hacked and sawed until the whole world was in utter chaos and confusion. All this came from tampering with the heart of man.”¹¹¹

The tale suggests the survival of the *dao* even in the corrupt times of Tao Qian. Indeed, the fisherman could be a metaphor for the former Confucian bureaucrat Tao Qian himself, who in one moment of inspired despair drew upon the reservoir of the Daoist anarchist tradition. That the statist and anti-statist traditions could survive side-by-side in one man is perhaps not easily understandable to Western observers, but it is the chief means by which the anarchistic side of Daoism survived in Chinese minds up to the twentieth century.

In any event, in “Peach Blossom Spring” we can see that the Daoist anarchist ideal is far from that of individualism. The Daoist ideal community, it could be argued, conforms closely to Kropotkin’s idealization of mutual aid, that is, his view that primitive anarchist communism was an important factor in the past evolution of humanity, as well as in his ideal communist society of the future. As cooperative tendencies survive from “savage tribes” to “barbarian villages” to medieval towns and even to the present in Kropotkin’s analysis,¹¹² so too perhaps did elements of this primitive communism survive the development of Zhou feudalism and even the onslaught of the centralized, bureaucratic state in China. In the ideal of both Kropotkin and Tao Qian, humans are easily able to survive without government by utilizing mutual cooperation and communal living and work.

Tao Qian can also stand, perhaps, for another great similarity of the Daoist anarchists and one strand of Western anarchism. This strand, of course, is pacifism. Leo Tolstoy, the greatest Western exponent of the pacifist anarchist ideal, perhaps comes closest to the Daoist vision as reenunciated by Tao Qian. For Tolstoy, God was synonymous with nature, and humanity was a part of God, as for the Daoist anarchists humans are all a part of the *dao* from which all things arise. If we only fulfill “the infinite law from Whom he has come” for Tolstoy,¹¹³ or if we only “return to the root” and act in accordance with *dao*, then the ideal anarchy would be achieved by itself, and the State, with all of its instruments, would eventually disappear. Of course, both pacifisms seem to reject material progress, at least as an end in itself, and both hold up a life of simplicity as the ideal. Both recognize the absurdity and impossibility of governing by force and violence, and both reject the use of violence to do away with government. Both see the moral enlightenment of each individual, enlightened that is, to see the natural connection between all individuals as the only means to achieve the ideal society. Most importantly, rather than placing humans above and isolated from the natural and spiritual, against what they see as the orthodoxies of their day, both Tolstoy and the Daoist anarchists such as Tao Qian in this poem, construct a nonauthoritarian ideal which

defines human freedom and the pure anarchist society as attainable only by recognizing the link with the natural and spiritual. For both Tolstoy and Tao Qian, this link had never really been severed, but only forgotten and perhaps disguised by the State. God and the *dao* are synonymous with freedom in these systems of thought; the state of living totally by the power of love or the *de* of the *dao* is thus synonymous with the state of anarchy. Therefore this author would strongly disagree with Frederic Bender who believes that Tolstoy was less than a fully consistent anarchist because his thought “relies ultimately upon the authority of God.”¹¹⁴ Instead, Tolstoy’s vision was clearly one in which each individual came to see the link to the rest of humanity and to the universe by him or herself, by accepting God as Love into one’s heart, not by a process of “rational knowing” or certainly not by accepting an official, imposed idea of God from any Church institution. In this hope that we can by our own efforts find the link between the individual and collective mind, the Daoists and Tolstoy were remarkably similar and more consistent than other anarchists, this author would argue.

Tao Qian is also strikingly similar to Western anarchists such as Godwin and Tolstoy who fostered the idea of anarchism through their art. Although Daoist anarchism died out as a movement long ago, perhaps, its influence carried on in the artistic tradition that the *ziran* ideal inspired. Ruan Ji and Tao Qian, two of China’s greatest poets, carried on the Daoist anarchist ideal in two great poems of fantasy that inspired whole genres as well as individual poets throughout Chinese history. In both China and the West, then, perhaps the anarchist traditions survive in an inactive, yet purer form. For the artistic metaphor of an undifferentiated freedom and equality, stripped of all artificial blueprints of how to attain that condition in the future, perhaps suggests more powerfully than calls to violent revolution the universal idea that can never be destroyed or extinguished, the idea of the unimaginable heights that could be achieved by humanity unrestrained—the idea of freedom in the active sense that is the pure ideal of anarchy.

Conclusion

By examining the thought and art of key Wei-Jin Daoists, we have seen how Daoist anarchism can be considered a long-term, clearly identifiable movement in Chinese history. Daoist anarchism does go beyond pure philosophical anarchism and can be considered a movement for real political change, albeit a pacifist one. Daoist anarchism is also not limited to individualist anarchism, except perhaps in the ideas of the “Yang Zhu” chapter of the *Liezi*, but in fact does contain a clear communitarian ideal.

It is true that Wei-Jin Daoist anarchists, for all their opposition to authority, so far as we know, never led peasant rebellions against the state (though the life and career of Bao Jingyan remains a mystery). Critics of

the case for Wei-Jin Daoist anarchism might maintain that since at least some of the Wei-Jin Daoists were representatives of families and groups whose ancestors had supported Cao Cao's attempts to reinstitute an empire built on central bureaucratic lines as opposed to the Sima family rule of the great landowners, perhaps they were not sincere anarchists but only, in effect, sore losers. Even if they were sincere, the neo-Daoist anarchists could easily have been identified in the minds of the peasants with the process of centralization of state power, with all of the connotations of taxation, military conscription, and public works corvées that centralization implies. Nevertheless, since in the end the peasant rebellions in Chinese imperial history were themselves quite hierarchically organized, coercive movements that failed to break down the imperial system of autocracy, perhaps the Daoist anarchists were aiming at opposing the state by attempting to subvert its myth of legitimacy and by undermining the confidence of the scholar-gentry elite in the morality and/or efficacy of rule. Thus, even if there were limits to Daoist anarchism because of the class background of its main adherents in the Wei-Jin period, on the other hand, Daoist anarchism never suffered the terrible contradictions of Western anarchists such as Bakunin. Many scholars still view such Western anarchists today as the precursors of the Leninist vanguard, and as people who helped to justify violent acts that seemed to have poisoned the name of anarchism.¹¹⁵

Furthermore, as some students of revolution have long suggested, the rare instances in history of genuine social revolution only occur after the ruling elite itself split or became demoralized. This attempt to sabotage the confidence of the ruling elite is the main project of Daoist anarchists, one could argue, from the Warring States through to the Wei-Jin Daoists and beyond, an intellectual pacifist guerrilla project that is often repressed but is also easily revived in succeeding centuries. In this sense, then, the similarities outlined above between Daoist and Western anarchists relate to a common project that is ultimately more important, and more consistent with the anarchist ideal of ending coercive rule. That project is to sow a seed of doubt and undermine the faith in the authority of elites and through them the masses. By helping to break the hegemony of dominant statist ideologies promoted by the intellectual agents of the State, if only for brief moments, Daoist and Western anarchists may achieve their greatest significance.

Notes

- 1 Feldt, "Governing Through the Dao: A Non-Anarchist Interpretation of the *Laozi*," *Dao* 9 (2010): 324, 325, n. 3.
- 2 We will cite below many English language sources that give an anarchist interpretation of Daoism. For German-speaking readers, perhaps the best summary is in Gotelind Müller, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus*: 110–18. Feldt's different interpretation of *wuwei* is the main basis for his

non-anarchistic view of the *DDJ*. See Feldt, 323–37. Even though this author argues in this chapter and throughout this work that *wuwei* can and does allow for non-violent passive resistance, nevertheless the concept of *wuwei* is only one important clue about the *DDJ* and, *contra* Feldt, is far from the only basis for an anarchistic interpretation. Furthermore, Feldt's non-anarchistic interpretation of the *DDJ* rests on what this author will argue are three very dubious assertions, including, besides his claim that the *DDJ* must be given primacy over the *Zhuangzi*, second, his belief that all anarchism must be based on a defense of “the traditional Western, atomistic individualism” against state interference (326, 330), and third, that the *DDJ* does not depart from “ancient Chinese political texts [that] unvaryingly assume an autocratic framework” (328), and thus that the “political structure presented in [the *DDJ*] would necessarily be autocratic with a centralized government ruled by the Daoist sage and administered by numerous ministers” (335). We will question both of these latter assumptions later in this chapter.

- 3 Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, 1: 298–9.
- 4 Roger Ames, “Is Political Taoism Anarchism?” 35.
- 5 Frederic Bender, “Taoism and Western Anarchism,” 12.
- 6 Feldt, 326, 336.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 334, 336.
- 8 Arthur Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, 74.
- 9 Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 213.
- 10 Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*, 310.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 311.
- 12 Again, a view most clearly expressed in Feldt, 336, though he claims that the type of state allowed in the *DDJ* under his expanded concept of *wuwei* could “far exceed the scope of the legitimate functions of Nozick’s state,” leading him to what this author views as the highly self-contradictory assertion that the supposed laissez-faire state of classical Daoism could support a highly centralized, autocratic form of rule (as will be noted later in this chapter).
- 13 Etienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy: Variations on a Theme*, 234–5; Richard Mather, “The Controversy over Conformity and Naturalness during the Six Dynasties,” 161–4.
- 14 John P. Clark, “On Taoism and Politics,” 84–5.
- 15 Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, II: 100–32.
- 16 Burton Watson (trans.). *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 1–2.
- 17 Ames, *The Art of Rulership: A Study in Ancient Chinese Political Thought*, 46. For a full translation of the *Huainanzi*, see Liu An, King of Huainan, *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*. For other partial translations, see deBary and Bloom, 268–73, and Mark Csikszentmihalyi (ed. and trans.), *Readings in Han Chinese Thought*, 63–4, 72–5.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 148.
- 19 Ames, “Is Political Taoism Anarchism?” 113; *The Art of Rulership*, 30–1 and *passim*).
- 20 Ames, *The Art of Rulership*, 44.
- 21 Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 306–11; *idem.*, *Chuang Tzu: Textual Notes to a Partial Translation*, 202–13.

- 22 Watson, 14–15.
- 23 Ibid., 14.
- 24 Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 64–74.
- 25 Ibid., 70–2.
- 26 Ibid., 306.
- 27 Liu Xiaogan, *Classifying the Zhuangzi Chapters*, *passim*. Also see Livia Kohn, “Review of Liu Xiaogan, *Classifying the Zhuangzi Chapters*,” 420–4.
- 28 As argued in Clark, *passim*, and by this author originally in Rapp, “Taoism and Anarchy: An Analysis of the Political Critique in Philosophical Taoism and Its Comparison with the Western Philosophy of Anarchism, 18–23.
- 29 See Ames, “Is Political Taoism Anarchism?,” 36–7.
- 30 Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 38.
- 31 Kropotkin, “Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal,” in Kropotkin, *Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets*, Roger Baldwin (ed.), 117. This author was reminded of Kropotkin’s cybernetic argument by Arif Dirlik, who noted the evident adaptation of this argument by the twentieth-century Chinese anarchist Wang Siweng as part of his criticism of the Marxist emphasis on centralized organization. See Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, 246, citing Wang Siweng, “Hewei er xinyang wuzhengfu gongchan zhuyi” (What Are Anarcho-Communist Beliefs), 5–19.
- 32 Hsiao, 318, a change from his earlier view of Daoism as a philosophy of despair, as we will see below.
- 33 Liu Xiaogan, “The Wu Jun School,” Chapter Three of *Zhuang Zi houxue san paizhi yanbian* (The Evolution of Three Schools of Latter-Day Zhuang Zi Philosophy), translated in *Chinese Studies in Philosophy* 23:2: 50.
- 34 Ibid., 85.
- 35 Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, 76.
- 36 For example, see Bender, 12–15.
- 37 Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, 6–12.
- 38 Ibid., 11.
- 39 Alan Ritter, *Anarchism: A Theoretical Analysis*, Chapter Two, “The Goal of Anarchism: Communal Individuality,” 25–39.
- 40 Bender, 15–20.
- 41 Ibid., 20–1.
- 42 Ibid., 24–5.
- 43 As argued, for example in Woodcock, 16–17.
- 44 Will Clem, “The Flowering of an Unconventional Revolution,” *South China Morning Post*, March 3, 2011.
- 45 Hsiao, 317–18.
- 46 Needham, II; also see Clark, 82.
- 47 Feldt, 334.
- 48 Bender, 9.
- 49 Ritter, *passim*.
- 50 Hsiao, “Anarchism in Chinese Political Thought,” 260.
- 51 Guan Feng and Lin Lüshi, “Characteristics of Social Change and Philosophical Thought during The Ch’un-Ch’iu Period,” 90–104.
- 52 Ibid., 168–70.
- 53 Liu, “The Wu Jun School,” 6.

- 54 In chapter nine below we examine modern Chinese thinkers who disputed this unilinear Marxist view.
- 55 Hsu Cho-yun, *Ancient China in Transition*, 13.
- 56 Guan and Lin, 49–50.
- 57 Liu, “The Wu Jun School,” 4–5 and *passim*.
- 58 Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power: A Study of the Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought*, 242, n. 1. We will examine this part of the DDJ in the next chapter for its utopian vision.
- 59 The author would like to thank one reviewer of an early version of this chapter for reminding me of this point.
- 60 David Hall, “The Metaphysics of Anarchism,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 10 (1983), 56–57.
- 61 Ibid., 59–60.
- 62 Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism*, *passim*.
- 63 Balazs, 247; Mather, “The Controversy over Conformity and Naturalness,” 169–70.
- 64 Hall, 58; Needham, II: 107–15.
- 65 Needham, II: 86–99; 121–7; 131–2.
- 66 Bender, 24–5.
- 67 For one movingly written and still useful description of this period, see Balazs, Chapters 13–14, 187–254.
- 68 Mather, 161, 163.
- 69 Fung Yulan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, 218.
- 70 See Richard Mather (trans. with introduction). *Shih-shuo Hsin-yu: A New Account of Tales of the World*, for an English translation of the most famous collection of *qingtan*.
- 71 See Holmes Welch, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way*, revised edition, 123–6.
- 72 Donald Holzman, *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Times of Juan Chi (AD 210–263)*, 2–5.
- 73 Hsiao, “Anarchism in Chinese Political Thought,” 253.
- 74 Holzman, 195; also see Balazs, 238 and Bauer, 135–7.
- 75 Jung Chao-tsu, *Wei-Jinde ziran zhuyi* (The Wei-Chin Doctrine of Naturalness), 42–3.
- 76 Holzman, 195.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Schwartz, 210.
- 79 Holzman, 189.
- 80 Balazs, 247.
- 81 Mather, 1969–70, 169–70.
- 82 See the translation of Bao’s tract in Balazs, 243–6, reprinted in Appendix 3 below and in Robert Graham, *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)*, 1–3; also see Bauer, 138–40; Liu, “The Wu Jun School,” 80–8, and Lin Mousheng, *Men and Ideas: An Informal History of Chinese Political Thought*, 150–8.
- 83 Ge Hong, *Baopuzi nei wai pian* (Master Embracing Simplicity, Inner and Outer Chapters), *wai pian* 48, “Jie Bao” (The Refutation of Bao), translated in Lin, 152–3.

- 84 Needham, V: 76; also see Bauer, 138, 438, n. 16; Ofuchi Ninji, "Ho seiden ko" (On the Identity of Bao Jing), *Tohogaku* (Eastern Studies) 18 (June 1959): 18; and Robert Ford Campney, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents*, 16.
- 85 Lin, 152–3.
- 86 Bao, translated in Balazs, 243.
- 87 Ibid., 244.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 Ibid., 245.
- 90 Ibid., 246.
- 91 Bakunin, quoted in Sam Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 150.
- 92 Balazs, 245.
- 93 Ibid., 246–7.
- 94 Aloysius Chang, "A Comparative Study of Yang Chu and the Chapter on Yang Chu," *Chinese Culture* 14 (1972): 77–8.
- 95 A. C. Graham, *The Book of Lieh Tzu*, 3.
- 96 "Yang Zhu," translated in Lin Mousheng, 81.
- 97 Ibid., 81.
- 98 Chang, 77–8.
- 99 Graham, *The Book of Lieh Tzu*, 8.
- 100 See for example Lin Mousheng, 152–3.
- 101 As argued for example by John Carroll, *Max Stirner: The Ego and His Own*, Introduction, 15–16.
- 102 Lin, 86–7.
- 103 Zarrow, 10.
- 104 James R. Hightower (trans.), *The Poetry of T'ao Ch'ien*, 1–3.
- 105 Ibid., 256.
- 106 This author's following commentary on this poem is based on the translation in Watson, *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century*, 142–3, reprinted in Appendix 4 below. For other translations, see Cyril Birch (ed.), *Anthology of Chinese Literature Volume 1: From Early Times to the 14th Century*; Hightower, 254–5; and Tan Shilin (trans. and ed.), *The Complete Works of Tao Yuanming*, 96–9.
- 107 Balazs, 247.
- 108 Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 202.
- 109 Needham, II: 114.
- 110 *Zhuangzi*, translated by Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, 39, 69.
- 111 Ibid., 72.
- 112 Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, *passim*.
- 113 Tolstoy, quoted in Marshall S. Shatz (ed.), *The Essential Works of Anarchism*, 249–50.
- 114 Bender, 19.
- 115 For Bakunin as a precursor of Lenin, see the publisher's preface in G. P. Maximoff (ed.), *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism*, 15 and the critical discussion of this view in Dolgoff, xxiii, 9–12, 181–2.