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Main Thesis of this Book

This book examines the key moments in Chinese history when different people used a basic anarchist theory to criticize the inevitable tendency of all states to rule for themselves, from radical Daoists¹ in pre-imperial and imperial China to members of the twentieth-century Chinese anarchist movement influenced by the West, to what we will label “neo-anarchist” dissidents in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Despite China’s long history of authoritarian rule and state autonomy from society, as well as a long line of political thinkers who in one way or another justify centralized state power, China also has a long history of anti-statist thought. This book does not attempt the impossible task of examining all Chinese dissident thought but only those people in ancient and modern times who utilized an underlying anarchist theory of the state.

Since this book is primarily aimed at helping non-China specialists to see anarchism as not just a Euro-American concept, and in order to avoid the potential problem of this author appealing from authority as a sinologist, this book will cite Chinese sources in translation wherever possible and even provide original translations in the appendices of key texts that have never before been fully translated into English. Nevertheless, this work will pay attention to scholarly debates among ancient and modern China specialists and will not hesitate to join these debates whenever it proves necessary to the book’s main thesis.

The thesis is that what most distinguishes anarchism from other political ideologies is the idea that the state rules for itself whenever it can, not for individuals, interest groups, socioeconomic classes, or society as a whole. Furthermore, for anarchists, the very nature of the state, its hegemony on the legitimate use of coercion, to slightly modify Max Weber’s definition, not to mention its monopoly on the ability to define threats to itself as threats to society, only reinforces its inherent advantages in being able to gain autonomy from its subjects.² The basic anarchist thesis, this book argues, is not limited in time or by region. Anarchist thought can and has occurred many times and in many places in history and not just among those thinkers and activists in Europe from the early to mid-nineteenth century who consciously took on the anarchist label and who started a

movement that then spread throughout the world, including to China, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the adherents of that movement were for the most part explicitly socialist or communist in orientation and favored revolutionary methods to implement their ideals, such ideas and commitments, however important and necessary they may have been, do not in themselves distinguish anarchists from other socialist revolutionaries. Instead, this book argues, it is their critique of states, whether capitalist or socialist, as, in the end, ruling for themselves that gave the anarchist movement its greatest power and coherence.

In China anarchist thought arose among what has been traditionally labeled the Daoist school of philosophy (though we will examine later in this chapter those who question the existence of such a coherent school) which, as we will see in Part 1 of this book, began during the pre-imperial era nearly 2,500 years ago and revived in the third century CE. Modern anarchist thought arose most consciously among Chinese thinkers and activists in the early twentieth century, first among Chinese students studying in Tokyo and Paris but after the 1911 revolution among many trade union activists and intellectuals in China itself. Though in the interlude chapter we will briefly examine the thought of some members of that self-conscious Chinese anarchist movement, we will look at that movement primarily for the rare times when it consciously harked back to radical Daoist political theory and also for the key moment when it most consciously used the basic anarchist theory of the state ruling for itself, namely, during the anarchists' debates with early Chinese Marxist–Leninist thinkers. In Part 2 of this book we will examine the question of the influence of anarchism on the thought of Mao Zedong as well as denunciations of anarchism in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and then examine what we will label neo-anarchist critiques of Marxism–Leninism in the PRC from the Mao to Deng and contemporary eras in order to see that the deadly contest over the question of state autonomy is still very much alive in modern and contemporary China.

Definition and Typology of Anarchism

Before proceeding with the case for the anarchism of premodern and contemporary Chinese thinkers, we first need to distinguish between the various types of anarchism and to develop a working model of the term as well as to suggest the main points of the argument in later chapters.

Anarchism as a term of course comes from the Greek *an-archos*, meaning “without a ruler,” and should refer to any doctrine that contends that any type of rule is unnecessary, harmful, and/or even counterproductive or evil. As such, this author would contend that anarchism is a generic label

for all doctrines opposed to rule and should not be limited to the Western anarchist movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Wei-Jin Daoist term *wujun* literally means “without a prince” (see Chapter 1), the Chinese characters for which appear on the cover of this book, and is nearly identical in meaning to the Greek *an-archos* and thus clearly fits within this broad definition of anarchism. In short, anarchism can and has appeared in many periods and places throughout history and thus this author would disagree with those who would limit the concept to a modern context. Indeed, the first part of this book argues that the Daoist anarchists’ focus on the state ruling for itself, while they noted at the same time that other political ideologies only disguise this fact, may have much to teach Western anarchists about internal consistency and may aid in a revival of anarchist themes in the contemporary world.

Within this all-inclusive generic definition there are of course many different types and strands of anarchism, all of which can be divided among three intersecting poles. First, following the historian of Western anarchism George Woodcock, anarchism may be divided into the “idea” and the “movement,”³ that is between philosophical anarchism on the one hand and on the other the concept of anarchism as a “developed, articulate, and clearly identifiable trend . . .,” which Woodcock argues appeared only in “the modern [Western] era of conscious social and political revolutions.”⁴ In this distinction, all “social or political” anarchists would also be philosophical anarchists, though of course analysts never fail to point out contradictions of particular anarchists on this score as, for example, between Bakunin’s expressed anti-statism and the perhaps inherent authoritarianism of his professed revolutionary methods. On the other hand, we could also say that not all philosophical anarchists could be labeled political or social anarchists, that is, to the extent that such philosophical anarchists declined to join much less lead movements aimed at overthrowing particular states even if they expressed doubts about the basis for all political authority. It is this distinction, this author believes, that is at the root of many doubts over the supposed anarchist nature of Daoism and probable criticism of the label of “neo-anarchist” for contemporary Chinese critics of Leninism. This distinction may have started to make less sense in the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century era of “people power” than in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when many activists and intellectuals saw violence as the only way to affect true revolution. Certainly, just because Daoists may not have led overtly political movements to overthrow existing states does not mean that Daoism amounts to a “diluted” form of anarchism as Alex Feldt and others contend;⁵ instead, as will be argued throughout Part 1 of this book, to the extent that they refused to join movements that themselves might found oppressive states, Daoists may be more consistent anarchists. This point leads us to the second, intersecting distinction among anarchists.

Many students of anarchism draw a distinction on the one hand between those anarchists willing to use and even embrace violent methods, the archetype again being Bakunin, and on the other those such as Tolstoy who insist on a unity of means and ends, and thus who would stress methods of noncooperation and passive resistance (what Tolstoy, following the Christian gospel(s), called “non-resistance”) to all coercive authority.⁶ Some pacifist anarchists went beyond pure philosophical anarchism to the extent that they founded movements of their own that later analysts label as social or political. In this case, Daoists of the Warring States and Wei-Jin periods should definitely be labeled pacifists, but whether or not they led conscious social or political movements we will examine later in this chapter and in the following chapter.

In the third main distinction, many scholars commonly differentiate between “individualist” anarchists including Stirner and the modern anarcho-capitalists such as Murray Rothbard who reject all political authority but accept and assume the prior existence of private property (whether or not they are willing to use violence and/or hire private armies), and “collectivist” anarchists including everyone from socialist to communist anarchists who deny the existence or right of private property prior to the state. The collectivist view is summed up in the famous phrase of Proudhon that “property is theft.”⁷ This distinction, problematic enough when applied to Western thinkers such as William Godwin and even Proudhon (who accepted the need for private “possessions” such as tools, if not landed property) becomes even more difficult when dealing with the ancient and medieval Daoists, as we will see in the next chapter. Nevertheless, one can distinguish, as we will see, between the more individualist or “selfish” strands of thought as in the “Yang Zhu” chapter of the *Liezi* (a book probably written ca. 300 CE during the Daoist revival,⁸ though this chapter may have been based on the surviving ideas of the legendary proto-Daoist hermit of the earlier, classical Daoist period) and the possibly more communitarian strands of other Wei-Jin anarchists who claimed to base their thought more directly on the received versions of the classic texts known as the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. There is certainly no justification for Feldt’s assumption that all anarchists must have a view of society as made up of a collection of atomized individuals and that the only job of anarchists is to protect the autonomy of the individual from the force of the state.⁹ Instead, this author would argue, the main similarity in all anarchists is the rejection of the conflation of state and society, even if various kinds of anarchists have different views of the nature of society.

As will be argued in Chapter 1, the Daoism of certain figures of the Wei-Jin period was indeed thoroughly anarchist, at a minimum on a philosophical level and at a maximum as an intended program to delegitimize the centralized bureaucratic rule of the late Han and the less effective but no less brutal rule of the Wei and Jin dynasties. While never advocating or propagating violent opposition to authority, so far as we know, the Wei-Jin Daoists did

oppose all authority in general and did attempt to oppose the ideological hegemony of Confucianism, a form of which had become the official ideology of the imperial Han dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE) and almost all successive imperial dynasties, if combined in practice with heavy doses of the Chinese Machiavellian doctrine of Legalism. Thus this book will argue that Wei-Jin anarchism *was* a doctrine of resistance to the state, albeit almost certainly pacifist and remaining at the intellectual level if no less important as a means to undermine authority. Furthermore, this work will argue that the full-fledged anarchism of the Wei-Jin thinkers was firmly based on classical Daoist texts, which the later Wei-Jin Daoists only highlighted and did not distort. In sum, Part 1 of this book contends that the Wei-Jin figures were only the most open advocates of Daoist anarchism, a movement that lasted at least from the early Han or late Warring State periods, if not before, and extended well into the Tang dynasty (617–907 CE). Daoist anarchism, we will conclude, was a movement that perhaps can still be drawn upon in any contemporary or future challenges to Chinese political authority.

Although there are many different types of anarchists, what they all share in common and what distinguishes them from other dissident thinkers and radical activists is their basic tenet that the state rules for itself whenever and wherever it can. Even those who use the basic anarchist theory of the state, both those who consciously label themselves as anarchists and those who do not, can depart from anarchism in other aspects of their thought as we will see throughout the book; thus different types of anarchists can themselves be criticized for acquiescing in one kind of state power or another. The focus of this book is on the key periods in Chinese history when the basic anarchist theory of the state was expressed most clearly within a Chinese context.

Major Objections to Main Thesis of this Book

While the basic thesis of the book may seem obvious to many readers, in fact this author has found it to be very controversial and has encountered two seemingly quite different types of objections. On the one hand, some scholars and practitioners of Daoism would argue that no clear school of Daoist thought exists and that to focus on those relatively few thinkers who brought out the anarchist themes in the classical Daoist texts risks distorting the essence of Daoism by radicalizing it. On the other hand, scholars of and/or sympathizers with anarchism worry that universalizing anarchism may ironically *de*-radicalize it, emptying it of meaning. As we will argue in this chapter, both types of objections are based on shared similar unwillingness or inability of such observers to face up fully to the truly radical aspect of the anarchist theory of the state.

Objections from scholars and proponents of Daoism

The first main objection to this book will come from scholars and proponents of Daoism who would deny that Daoism has any clear coherence as a distinct school of thought. First, some such people, especially those studying Daoism as a religious practice, would argue that the traditional Chinese separation of Daoism into *daojia* (Daoist school, that is, philosophical Daoism) and *daojiao* (Daoist teaching, for example, alchemical and religious traditions) is itself only a later concept of the historian Sima Qian (165–110 BCE) of the former Han dynasty who imposed a coherence upon many disparate types of much earlier thinkers and practitioners, a coherence that did not in fact exist or that those individuals were unaware of. Even among the classic philosophers of the Eastern Zhou era (ca. 770–221 BCE), scholars of Daoism would argue, there was often no clear distinction between Daoist and Confucian schools, which again was only a later idea applied to the thought of this era. Many modern scholars argue that both so-called Daoist and Confucian thinkers called for limited governance and for rule by sages virtuous in one way or another, and the idea of opposing schools of Daoists and Confucians (the name even for the latter school given by Westerners with the Chinese term the *ru* only meaning the school of the scholars) is an exaggeration of later historians. Furthermore, what are often regarded as the classic Daoist texts, the *Daodejing*, traditionally ascribed to the probably nonexistent personage Lao Zi (old master) and the *Zhuangzi* were not clearly single author texts, and even the author of the seven inner chapters of the latter text, the historical individual Zhuang Zhou, was perhaps unaware of any coherent text known as the *Daodejing* that may have been compiled into a single text contemporaneously or slightly after Zhuang Zhou lived. Many scholars of Daoism argue that there are in fact differences between the two texts and it was not until the last years of the later Han (25–220 CE) and the Wei-Jin era (265–420 CE) that scholars who created the “Lao-Zhuang” tradition related the two texts. Many scholars of Daoism would claim further that the “Lao-Zhuang” side of Daoism is itself at best only one tendency within a tradition that developed for over 2,000 years after the classical period and which included many other traditions and aspects including spiritual and physical practices that were far from anarchist. Overall, some scholars of Daoism worry that “radicalizing” Daoism by comparing it to Western anarchism risks losing the overall picture of the real place in Chinese tradition of the holistic concept of life contained within the disparate strands of what is labeled Daoism.¹⁰

We will deal more fully below with this basic objection to the main thesis of this book. Before turning to the other main objection from scholars and proponents of anarchism it should just be noted here that the position of this book is that to ignore the clearly expressed anarchist point of view in key

Daoist texts or to minimize or excise from the Daoist tradition those thinkers who express an anarchist point of view itself distorts a key part of Daoist thought. Perhaps a useful heuristic if not identical analogy would be to the idea of a Christian anarchism. Although it is true that the anarchist interpretation of Jesus is very much a minority tradition compared to the over 2,000 years of other interpretations, from purely spiritual to avowedly statist from the apostle Paul to Augustine and beyond, scholars of and sympathizers with Christian anarchism nevertheless claim a firm basis for their interpretation in the words and practices of Jesus and his early followers.¹¹ Likewise those later Daoist thinkers and students of Daoism, including this author, who make an anarchist interpretation of classical Daoist texts even if they are not in the mainstream of Daoist scholarship would claim clear links to some of the oldest texts in the Daoist tradition, as we will see throughout Part 1 of this book.

Objections from scholars and proponents of anarchism

Seemingly opposite to the objections of Daoist scholars, those who study and/or sympathize with anarchism fear that “traditionalizing anarchism” risks *de*-radicalizing it and that assuming the universality of anarchism runs the risk of making the concept meaningless. For example, if one limits anarchism to its critique of the state, then, some might charge, one would have to include as anarchist even American libertarians and Tea Party activists who claim to hate government, which on the face of it again would seem to empty the term anarchism of all meaning as a truly radical critique given such people’s support for and by corporate and other elite interests.¹² To such students of anarchism and to anarchist sympathizers, anarchism as a concept must involve socialism, revolution, and critiques of all kinds of oppression, including that caused by, among other types of power, family, religion, property, and culture. Many students of anarchism and Communism in China would argue more specifically that ignoring important differences between ancient Daoist writings and modern Chinese anarchism risks denigrating the modern anarchist movement in China.

Preliminary Answer to Both Types of Objections

Both objections ignore the clear times in Chinese history when, whatever one labels them, Chinese thinkers did express a clear anarchist theory of the state, that is, when they did not just call for limited government but criticized states as ruling for themselves and not for the benefit of the people, and when they rejected the possibility of any type of reformed or benevolent

government. So the Daoist anarchists, as we will see in the four chapters of Part 1, did not just call for a limited government to rule in a benevolent way but attacked the whole idea of humane rule, both in the chaotic Eastern Zhou and later Wei-Jin periods of competing states. That is, whether or not they called themselves Daoist or whether or not one labels them anarchist, these Chinese thinkers rejected the whole idea of government. While this book by no means argues that all Daoists are anarchists, we will see that there was in China a long tradition of people who did base themselves on ideas in the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*, texts that, whatever their other different emphases, did try in key chapters that were written as far back as the Warring States period of the Eastern Zhou, if not by the original authors, to undermine the whole idea of rule, as we will see in the next chapter. These Daoist anarchists, as we will call them, also attacked the application of Legalist ideas of rule by power and force and Confucian ideas of benevolent rule as different types of ideological disguises to justify the wealth and power of a few. Furthermore, the Daoist anarchists did indeed include critiques of other kinds of power besides that of the state, including especially patriarchal authority and manipulation of language, but with the basic anarchist point that it is the link to and backing by the state that makes social, family, and linguistic authority oppressive.¹³ As noted above, to the degree that scholars of Daoism, including Chinese scholars from the Han to the PRC eras and Western scholars from the eighteenth century to the present, ignore this basic critique it is they in fact who serve to tame and deradicalize Daoism. In short, it is they who distort Daoism to the extent that they ignore or minimize this important anarchist part of the Daoist tradition.

Against some scholars of Daoism who might agree that the radical anarchist tradition exists but was a revision of later thinkers, in the first chapter we will trace this radical anarchist streak back to the classic texts of the Warring States era, the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. Indeed, in Chapter 3 we will trace this radical tendency even further back to even the oldest surviving version of the former text, the so-called Guodian manuscripts, refuting those scholars who think that earliest known version of the text does not contain anti-Confucian language and is more accommodating to state power. As we will see, beyond its critique of the state this Daoist anarchism did have communal aspects and was similar in many other ways to the thought of different Western anarchists, if without a commitment to violent revolution. Despite their similarity with Western anarchists on many other grounds, we will nevertheless see throughout Part 1 of this book that the radical Daoist argument was most powerful when it kept to the main anarchist theory of the state and weakest and most contradictory when Daoist thinkers were willing to acquiesce in state power, as we will see was especially the case with some people who revived Daoism in the late Han and Wei-Jin eras and after, including especially Wu Nengzi of the Tang dynasty whose thought we will analyze in Chapter 4.

Against the criticism from scholars and proponents of anarchism that focusing on anarchism's theory of the state risks losing sight of its larger vision, we will see in Chapter 2 that the Daoist anarchists did not just have a negative view of the state but also a positive vision of the possibility of life without government, though still containing a dystopian vision of the state run amok under other political ideologies. Scholars of anarchism and anarchist sympathizers would likely on the same ground also strongly disagree with the last two chapters in Part 2 of this book that view as neo-anarchist those dissident thinkers within and outside the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the PRC who criticized the Leninist state, since such thinkers took pains to deny they favored anarchist solutions even if some of them also denied that official Maoist thought had a genuine anti-statist side. Nevertheless, we will see that those thinkers did indeed criticize the Leninist state as ruling for itself and were often well aware that anarchists were the first to make such a charge. Their separation of the anarchist critique from proposed anarchist solutions is why we will label such thinkers "neo-anarchist."

Although this book will not hesitate to criticize and show the limits of modern Chinese thinkers as well as ancient ones when they depart from the basic anarchist critique, including especially Mao Zedong himself as we will see in Chapter 6, one important secondary theme of this book is that we must not forget about the terrible limits faced by genuine anti-statist Chinese thinkers from ancient to modern times when states started to centralize and militarize their power, as at the end of Zhou dynasty and the beginning of the imperial era in the third century BCE and in the Nationalist and Communist eras of modern China. In all such periods of consolidating authoritarian states, intellectuals trying to oppose state autonomy had to express themselves carefully and to claim to be arguing within tradition in order to protect themselves, get their works published, and even survive physically. Though often having to disguise or camouflage their thought, this does not mean Chinese anarchist thinkers were in any way less radical, as long as they kept to the basic anarchist critique of the state.

This book argues that to insist on including as radical anarchists only those people who expressly advocate achieving socialism through violent revolution is not only to take a completely Euro-centric approach (since the faith in the universality and inevitability of both socialism and revolution began in Europe in the nineteenth century) that in effect serves as the flip side of Western cultural imperialism, but also serves to miss the radical heart of anarchism. Far too often, as we will see in Chapter 6 for example, those China scholars who want to defend the socialist nature of the Chinese revolution and more particularly the ideas of Mao Zedong as radical and liberatory in intent have to downplay the atrocities of Mao and his successors alike that are clearly linked to their presiding over a state ruling in its own interests, whatever be those leaders' stated intentions. Likewise, far too often such socialist sympathizers among China scholars in order to defend the socialist

nature of the Chinese revolution are led to downplay or even ignore the thought of the “neo-anarchist” critics of the Chinese Leninist regime that we will examine in Chapters 8 and 9.

Arguing that anarchism does not have to include the call for socialist revolution by no means is to say that Western-style collectivist anarchists, including in China itself as we will see in the interlude Chapter 5, failed to be true anarchists; instead this book argues that collectivist anarchists were most true to the basic anarchist idea when they criticized nonanarchist collectivist fellow revolutionaries for ignoring the dangers of accepting socialist state autonomy and least true to anarchism when for one reason or another they themselves acquiesced to state power, as we will see was the case with Liu Shipei and other members of the twentieth-century Chinese anarchist movement. In that chapter we will both refer back to Part 1 to see why Liu was such an exception among twentieth-century Chinese anarchists in looking to the Daoist tradition as well as forward to Part 2 to see the genesis of the Marxist critique of anarchism in the PRC after 1949 in the anarchist–Marxist debates of the 1920s, where the modern Chinese anarchist critique of Leninist state autonomy also began.

In the end, for a true anarchist everything else, no matter how necessary or genuine, should be secondary to the political critique at the heart of anarchism, namely, the idea that all states ultimately try to rule for themselves, the idea that most distinguishes anarchists from other schools of thought. This basic anarchist premise is also the hardest idea for dissident thinkers to express since it is the biggest taboo that state leaders try to enforce and thus the first type of thought they start to repress when they (rightly) realize it strikes directly at their interests. Thus anarchists often have to partially disguise or camouflage their basic premise within the language of other schools of thought, even then only in rare times of openings in official ideology. This is why Daoist thinkers often had to sound similar to Confucians in eras when the state’s reach was expanding, and so too why modern Chinese thinkers took advantage of the Maoist openings during the Cultural Revolution and the reform opening in the 1980s before the post-Tiananmen clampdown to use the varying language of official Marxist–Leninist ideology to criticize the Leninist state as ruling for itself and not the proletariat. Though the neo-anarchists in the PRC had to use seemingly Marxist language in order to get published and to survive, similar to the ancient Daoists if without citing them, these modern Chinese thinkers as we will see in the second part of this book clearly used the anarchist theory of the state (though unlike the Daoists, divorced from any clearcut anarchist solutions) to break the biggest taboo in Marxist–Leninism. The modern Chinese neo-anarchists certainly claimed to be anti-capitalist and made clear their support for idea of socialist revolution, but their main argument was how the socialist goal of equality would be compromised and contradicted by an unchecked socialist state ruling for itself. Even if not calling for a fully stateless society, nevertheless,

like the ancient Daoists these modern Chinese neo-anarchists still had a positive vision of a cooperative society that would flower best when not limited by the state's interests. If their positive vision was not expressed as overtly as an anarchist vision as that of the radical Daoists, again this was perhaps because the neo-anarchists had to use Marxist language to mount their critique given the very real threat of prison or execution and because they knew very well that they would be denounced as anarchists by official state ideologists. Such Leninist state apologists would always be quick to use the old Marxist anti-anarchist memes first employed against Chinese anarchists in the 1920s that we will examine in Chapter 5, revived by Mao to put down genuine anti-statist radicals in the Cultural Revolution, as we will see in Chapter 6, and used against dissident thinkers in the PRC from the 1950s to the early twenty-first century, as we will see in Chapter 7. In the end, this book will find that these anti-anarchist memes only served to prove the main anarchist critique of Marxism: by acquiescing to centralized state power, Marxist and other socialists become servants of the state and help to quash hope for genuine liberation.

An Anarchist Critique of the Critics

Within this thesis of their critique of the state as the key minimal characteristic of all anarchists, this book argues that even self-labeled anarchists can depart from anarchist theory of state and acquiesce to state power, as was the case for some Daoists—as we will see throughout Part 1 of this book—for members of self-styled Chinese anarchist movement of early twentieth century—as we will see in Chapter 5—and for Mao and some official Maoists who claimed to be using anti-bureaucratic class ideas that others argue were influenced by anarchism—as we will see in Chapter 6. In the end, employing the basic anarchist premise, one could argue that such people at times limited the real anarchist content of their critiques in order to justify, promote, or augment their own power within the state.

So too one could argue that self-styled libertarian Tea Party activists in America and elsewhere may sometimes sound like they are using the anarchist theory of state but in reality only want their opponents to unilaterally disarm (e.g. ending regulation of oligopolistic corporations) while keeping the parts of state apparatus that they find beneficial (e.g. those related to the “military–industrial complex” or policing people’s sexual behavior). Some intellectuals within that tradition claim to find a *laissez-faire* management approach or even an anarcho-capitalist vision in the *Daodejing*, which would seem to give further ammunition to socialist critics of Daoism as anarchism, but both types of thinkers have to ignore many other inconvenient aspects of radical Daoism including the idea of communal village life and living in harmony with nature.¹⁴

More consistent and explicit anarcho-capitalists such as Murray Rothbard (in that he at least rhetorically favors privatizing the police and military) are perhaps more useful in showing the limits of anarchism in some collectivist anarchist critiques to the extent that the latter would allow social coercion and “social consensus” as defined by small groups to lead to new oppressive authority.¹⁵ This possibility of the germ of future political oppression can be seen most famously in Bakunin’s conspiratorial cells to direct the violent revolution, contradicting his own most brilliant version of the anarchist theory of state in his view that the Marxist “workers’ state” would all too quickly become the state of ex-workers and how it would never “wither away” as Marx predicted. At the same time, however, collectivist anarchists help to deny the anarchism in practice among such “libertarian” thinkers by showing the real link of Tea Party “anti-government” ideology to the power of wealthy individuals and corporate interests and especially to the military-industrial complex, which distorts the “free market” to the benefit of state-supported industries. Both sides of the individualist-collectivist divide can depart from the anarchist critique by asserting something else as primary above the anarchist theory of the state, whether “free” markets or socialist revolution, and both are most useful when criticizing each other for shortcomings in this regard. It is the Daoist anarchists, this book argues, who are most true to this genuinely radical critique.

Despite their seemingly opposite criticism—for either overly radicalizing Daoism or deradicalizing anarchism—in the end both types of objections to this book’s main thesis are very similar. Scholars and proponents of Daoism would argue that just looking at the political critique of Daoism is to miss the larger picture and how much more Daoists say, including about living in touch with the whole and not dividing things into separate or opposed categories. Scholars of and sympathizers with anarchism say that anarchism involves much more than a critique of the state but also includes critiques of oppression in the economy, family structure, sexual relations, and the environment, among other areas, and contains a positive vision for a cooperative, communal future. This book certainly does not deny the power of Daoists and other kinds of anarchists to say much more about life beyond politics, but it will highlight and focus on the minimal yet crucial aspect of all anarchists: their critique of the state ruling for itself and their warnings of the danger of radical thinkers who depart from this main point as themselves distorting the main message of anarchism. While paying attention to both types of critics of Daoist anarchism, we should not ignore their own possible interests in avoiding or minimizing the radical heart of the anarchist critique, as intellectuals in all countries throughout history have divided interests between promoting intellectual autonomy and yet retaining their elite status within existing or future states or systems of authority. So, above all, this book tries to stay on point and will challenge even Daoist and other anarchists when they depart from the basic anarchist

critique of the state, while of course welcoming challenges from all types of people wherever they think this book too strays from the basic anarchist premise.

Notes

- 1 As romanized in the modern *hanyu pinyin* system used throughout in this work except for the names of some Chinese scholars and the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek; “Taoist” is perhaps the more familiar version from the older Wade-Giles system, a romanization system that is used by some authors of works translated in the appendix.
- 2 See Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action*, Chapter 9, “Escalation: International Relations,” 142–71, for a neo-anarchist critique of the state’s ability to manipulate its monopoly on the identification of foreign threats in order to maintain its internal authority.
- 3 George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, Prologue, 11–31, Epilogue, 404–23.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 39.
- 5 Feldt, “Governing Through the Dao: A Non-Anarchistic Interpretation of the *Laozi*,” 326, 336.
- 6 Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You: Christianity Not as a Mystic Religion but as a New Theory of Life*, 213ff. The most recent analysis of Tolstoy’s thought as the culmination of Christian anarchism can be found in Alexandre J. M. E. Christoyannopoulos, *Tolstoy’s Political Thought* and throughout his *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel*.
- 7 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What Is Property*, 13.
- 8 A. C. Graham, *The Book of Lieh Tzu*, 1.
- 9 As argued in Feldt, 326, for example.
- 10 This paragraph includes ideas now commonly held by a number of students of Daoism. For a convenient summary of such ideas, if perhaps within the most strident attempt to “radically reconstruct” Daoism in a way that would privilege the believers and practitioners and belittle classic texts such as the *Zhuangzi* as being at the heart of Daoism, see Russell Kirkland, *Taoism: The Enduring Tradition*, *passim*. Kirkland argues that the classical texts such as the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, at best “played a marginal role in the lives and thoughts of most later Daoists” (68) and in general accuses Chinese and Western scholars of “lying” about the true nature of Daoism. This author would conclude that Kirkland’s version of a post-colonial critique of Western and Chinese scholarship on Daoism can itself serve to promote the flip side of cultural imperialism, privileging those who turned to Daoism for spiritual or physical guidance in effect to colonize Daoism for the academic field of religious studies. Modern students of Daoism as a philosophy, such as Chad Hansen, may similarly find as key to Daoism the aspects that privilege their field, though perhaps more ready to preserve room for disparate types of Daoist thinking as well as practice. See Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*.

- 11 For the most recent and comprehensive review of the Christian anarchist tradition, see Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism*.
- 12 As one reviewer of the original proposal for this book charged.
- 13 See Hansen, 225–30, who though mostly looking at Daoism as pure philosophy and not political philosophy, nevertheless finds the goal of at least some of the early Daoist thinkers to be “radical anarchy” (229).
- 14 See Clark (pseudonym Max Cafard), “The Dao of Capitalism or ‘Going with the (Cash-) Flow’,” in Cafard, *The Surre(Gion)alist Manifesto*, 25–39.
- 15 The important, if very controversial idea to anarchist sympathizers, of the insidious dangers of social coercion under any future anarchist society becoming worse than state coercion to the extent they are denied was an important theme of Ursula Le Guin’s novel *The Dispossessed*, as well as R. Booth Fowler’s scholarly essay “The Anarchist Tradition of Political Thought.”