The Metaphysics of Anarchism

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This essay considers the consequences for anarchist theory of the intrinsic relationship between cosmology and politics. Typically, the anarchist will recognize this relationship only in its negative form since he believes, if only instinctively, that the received versions of cosmological theory in our tradition are little more than disguised ideologies, having their origins in precisely those authoritarian impulses which give rise to traditional forms of government and the state. In sympathy with the anarchist sensibility, I am largely in agreement with this view and will provide evidence in its support in the following pages. It is important to recognize, however, that the anarchist is seldom aware of the serious consequences of this attitude toward philosophic speculation. For by eschewing speculative cosmology in order to avoid its ideological impurities he denies himself direct access to the sole ready source of those concepts and categories essential to any responsible act or theoretical reflection. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that anything is gained in this manner, for almost certainly these distorting categories will be unwittingly imported into the anarchist's reflections, obscured by only the thinnest veneer of nonauthoritarian rhetoric.

The irony of this situation is direct and intense. The more theoretically respectable anarchists become, the more they find themselves coopted by "archist" sensibilities. The solution cannot, of course, be the abandonment of general theory in favor of the strident pamphleteering of the stereotypical anarchist. A theoretically articulated anarchist vision is essential, for both constructive and apologetic reasons. Thus it is necessary that we discover a novel, ideologically untainted, categorial ground permitting the anarchist to clothe his most significant insights in articulated concepts of "freedom", "authority", "autonomy", 'community", etc. In these pages I defend the claim that such a categorial ground is to be found only in classical Taoism. An important corollary of my argument is that Taoist philosophy provides the sole nonideological resource for metaphysical speculation. Thus the thesis of this essay: *Political Taoism is the only true form of anarchism; speculative Taoism is the one pure form of metaphysics.*

I. TWO CULTURAL PROBLEMATICS

Any given cultural sensibility is a function of specific problems that have goaded and lured individuals to envision the context of their public life in a particular way. A fundamental element of our Anglo-European cultural problematic is expressed in the attempt to account for the existence of order-cosmological and social-in the face of what we discern to be the obvious disruptive aspects of existence. Thus we have resorted to cosmogonies that articulate the movement from Nonbeing to Being as a transition from Chaos to Cosmos. Whether expressed through the *creatio ex nihilo* of *Genesis*, the victory of Reason over Necessity illustrated in Plato's *Timaeus*, or the union of Heaven and Earth which heals the "yawning gap", or Chaos, as in Hesiod's *Theogyny*, one function of our cosmogonic myths has been to provide some assurance that the World is an ordered whole. Philosophic rationalizations of these myths provide systematic explanations of the way of things grounded in principles as transcendent determining sources of order.

Obviously it is not essential that there be the explicit recognition of cosmogonical activity in a philosopher's speculations. Aristotle provided no cosmogony, and in fact denied the necessity for any single creative act, yet he provided perhaps the *locus classicus* for our understanding of principles as determining sources of order. A principle, according to Aristotle, is that from which a thing can be known; that from which a thing first comes' to be, or that at whose will that which

is moved is moved or that which changes changes. Principles both establish and account for the order of the world. As principles of being they are the sources of origination per se. As principles of knowledge they are origins of thought. Beginnings or principles in the sod and political sphere are due to *archai* or *principes* those who command. in any of its senses a first principle. functions as a determining source of order. And standing behind the notion of principles as *archai* there is the intuition of the challenge to order and harmony which our cosmogonic myths celebrate as chaos.[1]

The Taoist sensibility seems bizarre from our cultural perspective principally because it begins from a radically different problematic. Rather than seeking to account for the existence of order in a world continually threatened by negative chaos, the Taoist wishes to make sense of the disorder and the failure of spontaneity in a world intuited as a harmony of self-created events. The Taoist doesn't ask what for most of us is a self-evidently fundamental question, "How are we to account for the harmony of the world without recourse to a transcendent ground of order? " He puzzles over precisely the opposite problem of explaining the intermittent failures of harmony when spontaneity and naturalness are so obviously the most prominent features of the world.

Of course, the belief in a single ordered world responsive to rationally discoverable laws of nature is not the only cultural problematic pertinent to the understanding of Anglo-European cultural development-though, at least since Plato and Aristotle it has clearly been the dominant one. Indeed, an alternate problematic entertained among our philosophic elites was one which bears some vague resemblance to that which grounds the Taoist vision. This problematic involved, that is to say, the belief in a many-ordered universe.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates roundly criticize certain of the *physiologoi* because "they do not think anything is really.bound and held together by goodness or moral obligation".[2] Again, in the *Philebus* Socrates insists that one must oppose anyone who "asserts that the world is... devoid of order."[3] Plato's Cosmos was created by a Craftsman who inured that "there is and ever will be one only begotten and created heaven."[4] An infamous passage in Book X of the *Laws* provides severe penalties for impiety, which principally involves the denial that the cosmos is ordered according to "what is best". The purpose of these penalties (five years imprisonment for a first offense, death and burial outside the gates of the city for a subsequent impiety) was to attempt to render *practically unthinkable* the opinions of certain of the *physiologoi*: first, that whatever order the world possesses is wholly natural and immanent, and, second, that an infinite plurality of worlds (*kosmui*) exist, either serially in time or contemporaneously in infinite space.[5] Clearly, the importance Plato placed upon combatting such "impieties" suggests that the belief in a single-ordered world he championed was not the only problematic from which philosophic speculation proceeded in the ancient Greek world.

In the discussion which follows I will designate the vision of a plurality of worlds, against which Plat0 argued so forcefully, as First Problematic Thinking, and the belief in a single-ordered Cosmos as Second Problematic Thinking. The purpose of contrasting these two cultural problem-

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[1] See *Metaphysics*, Book V, Chapter 1 for a discussion of the various meanings of *arche*.

[2] *Phaedo*, 99c in *Plato: Collected Dialogues*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Fbss, 1978), p. 80.

[3] *Philebus*, 29a in *Ibid.*, p. 1106.

[4] *Timaeus*, 31b in *Ibid.*, p. 1163.

[5] Sae Gregory Vlastos, *Plato's Universe* (Seattle: Tha University of Washington Press; 1975), pp. 23–25.

atics is to provide a basis for understanding the metaphysical ground of anarchistic thinking and the relation of the Taoist sensibility to anarchism in its most fundamental sense.

The most coherent form of first problematic thinking was expressed rather late in Greek philosophy in the systems of Leucippus and Democritus who sought a metaphysically articulated vision of the existence of "innumerable worlds". Given the chance emergence of worlds from out of the vortex, there is no philosophic ratio& for maintaining the uniqueness of the world in space or in time. The totality is to be identified with the ultimate unfathomableness of "empty space" which includes a complex variety of cosmological structures evidenced by a plurality of worlds. This places the atomist in accord with certain radical representatives of the Sophistic tradition. For these, likewise, there are many truths associated with many "worlds". The fact that, for the Sophists, these worlds are constructs of human agency and intellect, rather than chance produces of "causal interaction", matters little. The visions of both the atomists and sophistic relativists deny the existence of a single-ordered Cosmos.

The essential traits of first problematic thinking are to be derived from the notion that ''there are many worlds" in some truly important sense. The first consequence of such a claim is to render problematic the notion of 'World' itself. In the most direct ontological or metaphysical sense, there is no World, only worlds — no *Kosmos*, only *kosmoi* It may easily be shown that the materialist and mechanistic metaphors that develop within the context of ancient Greek materialisms, grounded as they are in the denial of intrinsic relations among the atomic individuals and a *fortiori* among the constructs of such individuals, lead plausibly to the assertion of a plurality of worlds. The conception of "World" or "Cosmos", in any truly meaningful sense, requires the existence of a common patterning which can be recognized as pervading the totality of that which is. If this structure is accidental or co-incidental, as the atomists asserted, no intrinsic connections define the character of the totality and it is perfectly feasible to accept the existence of a plurality of complexes with co-incidental and accidental regularities among which no meaningful interactions obtain. This extrinsic connectedness of alternative worlds "existing" within the same spatial void or serially throughout indefinite stretches of time, would in no real sense constitute a meaningful totality answering to the notion of a single-ordered Cosmos.

The contrast between First and Second Problematic Thinking is specifiable as the contrast between anarchist and archist forms of thought. The anarchist sensibility is disposed to the denial of principles (*archai*) as external determining sources of order. Archists, on the contrary, find the affiliation of principles which ground the existence and meaning of things — from single things to the World as a single-ordered complex — as the *sine qua non* of responsible reflection. In Anglo-European philosophy, there have been very few serious attempts to develop the anarchist sensibility in its fundamental form. For the most part, even atomistic and Sophistic theorists have either ignored the basis for this enterprise inherent in their own sensibility, or they have been ignored whenever they have tried to forward such speculation.

Of course, neither the materialistic nor Sophistic versions of First Problematic Thinking are wholly adequate bases for the development of anarchist theories. The Romantic or Sophistic conception of First Problematic Thinking accepts the imaginative capacities of the *human* agent, disciplined by volitional activity, as the basis for descriptions of the nature of things. An indefinite number of efficient agencies of a single type (viz., human beings) determine the complexities of the World by selecting from their imaginative resources. Further, in this vision order is finally reducible to the "orders" of our commanders; principles are immanent within efficacious "princes"; rules are the expressions of "rulers". The materialists hold that things themselves, material units,

scattered through the void by the winds of contingency coagulate into various mutually uncoordinated orders the explanation for which is not to be discovered except by recourse to the bare facticity of the infinity of existents themselves. All explanations of human agency are, of course, grounded in the language of contingency and determination derived from the atomic realm.

For a variety of reasons, the metaphysically undergirded theories of anarchism are unacceptable at the social level. Clearly the atomist version of metaphysical anarchism is not viable in the realm of human social praxis since it is the atoms which are the *archai* and human agents are determined by the contingencies of their atomic composition. Sophistic versions of anarchism are likewise noviable. The metaphysical assumption of such perspectives is that there is no objective, absolute order, but that orders are creations of the human agent. "Man is the measure of all things". This Protagorean Principle does not assume a harmony emergent from the willful actions of individual *archai*, but recognizes that one or some from among the measurers of things will be rulers whose standards establish and maintain the rules of order for a social complex.

If the radical versions of metaphysical anarchim do not ground viable social and political anarchims, it would seem *a fortori* that Second Problematic Thinking would not be able to do so. To argue that there are cosmological principles, but that the organization of society need not resort to governing agencies as mediators of these principles in their socially relevant form, is a hard position to maintain. If an individual is capable of directing his own actions so as to bring about social harmony, we must presume he can do so because he possesses a knowledge or insight into the nature of right action. But what is the source of such knowledge? If, with Kropotkin, for example, we assume scientific reason to be the source of principles of social harmony.[6] the question arises as to how these principles become operative in a society. The application of such principles requires persuasive agencies which aim at a harmonious implementation of values justified by scientific reason. And this in turn assumes the existence of a consensus as to the nature and content of scientific rationality. If a consensus is required, how is it to be realized and maintained without coercion?

The paradox of Anglo-European philosophy as regards the contrast of archist and anarchist thinking is that the visions which argue for anarchism "in principle" quite obviously cannot sustain it at the level of social *praxis*. On the other hand, the single-ordered theories drawn from the Second Problematic require the notion of consensus. The persuasive agencies which promote such a consensus, as humanely motivated as they may be, cannot but become coercive agencies if there is significant resistance to the principles which ground consensus.

Anarchisms in the Anglo-European tradition have either illustrated the rabid and chaotic individualisms which muse the Carlyles among us to term anarchy "the hatefullest of things,'' or else they are utopian and idealistic visions which in their promotion of principled order have served to reinforce the presuppositions of classical social and political theory. Thus, it should not be surprising that we have no viable tradition of anarchism, in a theoretically respectable form, as a part of our cultural heritage.

The argument of the remainder of this essay will be that in the Taoist sensibility one may find not only an example of what I have termed First Problematic Thinking, but one which actually serves as a ground for anarchism in its most general metaphysical sense, and, *a fortiori*, for an-

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[6] "Anarchism is a worldconcept based upon a mechanical explanation of all phenomena ... (It is) an attempt to apply to the study of human institutions the generalizations gained by means of the natural4.enWic inductive method." This is taken from '!Modern Science and Anarchism" in ed. Roger N. Baldwin, *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets* (New York: Dover Press, 1970), pp. 150,191.

archistic social theory as well. An important, if slightly ancillary, consequence of my argument will be the implicit conclusion that anarchists in the Anglo-European tradition would do well to research the bases of anarchist theory in First Problematic assumptions, ramifying their insights in accordance with inspiration drawn from philosophical Taoism.

II. TAOISM AS ANARCHISM

The yawning chasm that separates scholars from the dynamic subject matters they seek to investigate is nowhere wider than at the point at which the intellectual assessment of Taoism is attempted. As a philosopher of culture with an active, but altogether unspecialized, interest in the cultural ramifications of the Taoist sensibility, I cannot, of course, claim to be an expert on the phenomenon of Taoism. I do, however, share the scholar's guilt since I have performed my share of intellectualizing activities aimed at rendering exoteric something of the esoteric vision of the Way.[7] My justification for continuing to speak of that which cannot be spoken of is based upon my belief that mere silence is but the auditory equivalent of that night wherein all cows are black. Meaningful silence is the articulated quietude that is surrounded by words, propositions and arguments which in their utterance function, paradoxically, both as barriers preventing further penetration, and as sign-posts indicating what lies beyond.

The phenomenon of Taoism is in many ways & an ill-defined tradition that a claim that the Taoist is this or that cannot be ma& without some qualifications. In arguing that Taoism is an anarchist theory I shall not focus upon any of its historical instantiations, nor for that matter will I stress, exclusively, the doctrines of a single representative of the Taoist tradition.[8] Rather, I shall state five criteria which I deem characteristic of any pure anarchistic theory and in the the manner in which certain fundamental Taoist notions may be understood in terms of these criteria. The mutual coherence of these notions so interpreted will argue for a viable anarchistic vision. The degree to which my understandings of these terms conform to any particular esoteric or exoteric rendering of the Taoist sensibility will doubtless be a matter of some debate.

One of the penalties for speaking of the Way that cannot be spoken of is the embarrassing appearance of inconsistency that inevitably creeps into one's explanations. It is, alas, true that in the sequel I will be providing a list of "principles" for a vision which I claim to be intrinsically unprincipled. The effect of these "principles", however, will be to deny the relevance of transcendent determining sources of order. Thus, the inconsistency is only apparent.

1. The Totality is without a "Beginning".

Taoism as anarchism does not possess traditional cosmogonies which characterize the initial state of existence in terms of a transition from nonexistence to existence or from ontological to

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[7] See my "Process and Anarchy — A Taoist Vision of Creativity" in *Philosophy East and West*, July, 1978, and "Praxiw, Karman and Creativity", *Ibid.*, January, 1980. I have discussed the Taoist sensibility at some length in my *The Uncertain Phoenix — Adventures Toward a Post-Cultural Sensibility* forthcoming from Fordham University Press. My interpretation of Taoist philosophy underlies the arguments of my *Eros and Irony-A Prelude to Philosophic Anarchism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1982). Many of the arguments of this essay are drawn directly from this latter work.

[8] Anyone familiar with the Taoist texts, however, will be able to tell that my sympathies generally lie with the kind of intexpretation of Taoism offered by Kuo Hsiang in his *Commentary on the Chuang Tzu*.

cosmological determinateness.[9] The "cosmogonical" explanation, 'Being and nonbeing produce each other",[10] qualifies the understanding of "All things in the world come from being and being comes from nonbeing."[11] The creative act in Taoism is immanent in every creature. Tao is That Which is and is-not. As That Which is, Tao is nameable — i.e., is cosmologically determinate in the beings of an actual world. As That Which is-not, Tao is Nameless — is., is indeterminate with respect to the being of an actual world. But both nameless and nameable Tao are abstractions from Tao as That Which both is and is-not — i.e., from Tao as pure process or becoming. Since there is no single creative act, creativity is defined in any given instance as a thing becoming itself by moving from non-being to being, from indeterminancy to determinancy. This transition is from *yin* the creative source to *yang* the creative action, and is a balanced and polar process throughout. "Everything in the World creates itself without the direction of any creator. Since things create themselves they are unconditioned. This is the norm of the universe."[12] This is also the norm of any radical form of anarchism.

2. The Totality is a "Many".

The denial of a single creative act as the source or ground of the Totality of things or states of affairs involves the affirmation of the many-worlds view; associated with First Problematic Thinking. Since creativity is not a single instance of the construal of order from Chaos, Chaos (*hun-tun*) for the Taoist is harmony antecedent to any conventional order. *Tao* as nameable is expressed in the being of this (or some) actual world. As nameless, *Tao* is nonbeing. There is, of course, an ambiguity in the notion of nonbeing which is relevant to our understanding of the relations of nameless and nameable *Tao*. "Not-being", or the *nihil*, is to be distinguished from nonbeing in the sense of "becoming" or "process". In the Taoist Universe everything is in process of self-creativity and this process involves an admixture of being and not-being. Or to state this somewhat more clearly, both being and not-being (the *nihil*) are abstractions from the concrete process of becoming which is the nature of each self-creative act. To complicate matters, if every creature is a selfcreative act of becoming, then the totality of things is a plurality of "worlds" construed from the perspective of each act of becoming. *Tao* as That Which both is and is-not is Chaos as *hun-tun* — the sum of all orders.

How are we to account for this totality? If everything creates itself without the direction of a creator, then the internal standard of the self-creative act must be such as to bring into existence a harmonious world. But since there is no single perspective in accordance with which the order of things may be defined for all creatures, there can be nothing like "pre-established harmony"

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[9] See Wolfgang Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness.* trans. Michael Saw (New York: Seabury Pres, 1976), pp. 6–7,351,428 and N. J. Giardot, 'The Problem of Creation Mythology in the Study of 5inese Religion", *History of Religions*, 15, No. 4 (May, 1976), pp. 289–318. Girardot is concerned to show that Cosmogonies did, in fact, exist in ancient China. The examples he offers, however, are such as to justify Bauer's statement, "(In China) legends about the origin of the world ... did not emerge until a surprisingly late period and were immediately relegated to the sphere of 'popular belief' " (p. 428, see above).

My point, of course, is a philosophical one — *viz*, there is a discernible strain of Taoist interpretation, discoverable in, for example, Chuang-Tzu and Kuo Hsiang, which cannot be construed in terms of radical forms of Cosmogonical explanation.

[10] *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Wing-tsit Chan in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), Chapter 2, p. 140.

[11] *Ibid.*, Chapter 40, p. 160.

[12] Kuo Hsiang, *Commentary on the Chuang Tzu* in *Ibid.*, pp. 330–431.

established by a single principle or Being. The harmony of "the world" is accomplished by a natural or spontaneous (*tzu-jan*) coming into being in accordance with one's *te*. Taoist relativity is, thus, ontological. The *te* (intrinsic excellence) of each thing provides it the perspective in accordance with which it creates itself. In creating itself it creates a nameable world which houses it. "If a man lies down in a damp place he contracts lumbago. But what of an eel? "[13] There is an eel-world and a man-world. Doubtless these are much more compatible than are the man-world and the myriad seemingly incompossible worlds which overlap in no important respect the-world of human beings. The Totality is a chaos of worlds of varying degrees of conceptually understandable compatibility. And this chaos, this *hun-tun*, is ordered and harmonious only so long as the interrelationships among its various citizens are based upon mutuality and deference.

3. Ontological Parity

The denial of a single instance of creativity, the affirmation of the manyness of things, and the claim that the *Tao* is the sum of all orders, together entail the necessity of ontological parity. Any hierarchy of cosmological structures is a function of construing the world from the perspective of a privileged being. The parity of things, however, is not an equality associated with sameness, as for the atomist, but is the parity born of the uniqueness of each separate item in the totality. Such uniqueness is guaranteed by the "piping of heaven, blowing on the ten thousand things in a different way, so that each can be itself."[14]

This vision of ontological parity suggests that not only are political orders artifices in the most fundamental sense, but "the" Cosmos as a single-ordered world is itself conventional. This is, of course, well illustrated by the famous story of Lord Hun-tun who was destroyed when his imperious colleagues provided him with the seven orifices associated with seeing, hearing, tasting, and breathing.[15] The humanly sensed and naturalized world is artifice.

4. The Denial of Principles as Transcendent Determining Sources of Order

In our tradition principles are conceived as *archai*, sources of order. Whether the most general principle or principles be associated with *Nous*, or some material element such as water or *aer*, or with Love and Strife, or with God as Mind or Will, as long as the source of the principle and its normative instantiation transcends the element being assessed in accordance with it, there is an *arche* which measures and *rules* the item. For the Taoist as anarchist there is no principle transcending any item which determines it. The *Tao* is immanent and expressed through the *te* of things. "Everything has its own nature and each nature has its own ultimate … Then by whom are things produced? They produce themselves, that is all."[16]

Thus "anarchy" ought. to be taken literally as the denial of *archai*. The Taoist hope for the "absence of princes" suggests that where there are no principles there can be no legitimate princes; where there are no rules there can be no legitimate rulers; where order is spontaneous, no one

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[13] I do not recall whose translation this is. The line in question is found in Chapter Two of *The Chuang Tzu*. See Burton Watson's translation, in *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 45: "If a man sleeps in a damp place, his back aches and he en& up half-paralyaed, but is this true of a loach?"

[14] *Ibid.*, Chapter Two, p. 37.

[15] *Ibid.*, Chapter Seven, p. 97.

[16] Kuo Hsiang, *Op. cit.*, p. 328.

need follow orders. The denial of principles is an implication of the failure to assert a cosmogonic act as the ground of cosmological order.

5. Creativity as Self-Creative Action

The contrast between Taoist and archist sensibilities is fundamentally a contrast between two intuitions of the character of things. The one is based upon *creativity*, the other upon *power*. The one construes the notion of power in terms of the more fundamental notion of creativity, the other does the reverse. While the intuition of power explains how things become determinate by virtue of the actions of something transcendent. creativity explains determinate being always by appeal to the notion of self-determination. Power is a dualistic concept — it requires something over against which one can exercise influence. Creativity is always reflexive and polar — i.e., there is only self-creativity. Power relations are characterized by otherness, dependency and extrinsic relationship; creativity realities through mutuality, deference, and intrinsic relationships. Power is expressed through acts of construal — be they rational, volitional, or passional activities; creativity is expressed through acts of deference grounded in the spontaneous recognition of the possibilities for promoting mutual harmony. Creativity requires something like ontological parity if it is to function as a criterion of description and explanation; power requires a hierarchy of ruler and ruled, conditioner and conditioned, creator and created, being aria non-being.

The presumptions that creativity is a kind of power and that power qives the character of the inter-relations of things lead to the understanding of social relations in terms of agency and passivity. There are *doers* and those *done to*. Human interactions then are actions of construing and being construed. Human beings as efficient causes, or the effects of such causes, as potentially rulers or ruled, are "ruled out" by the wu-forms of social interaction. *Wu-chih* (unprincipled knowing), *wu-wei* (non-assertive action), and *wu-yu* (objectless desire) form a Taoist "no-soul" which permits a non-instrumental understanding of nature and society. *Wu-chih* is knowledge of the re of.things and does not permit the *imposition* of principles or forms of organization as the basis for understanding. True understanding presupposes deference to the intrinsic excellence of the "object" of investigation. *Wu-wei* is action in accordance with the natures of things. Again, such action cannot lead to the imposition of a form of behavior, but is based upon cooperation with that behavior emergent from the self-creative activity of others. *Wu-yu*, as objectless desire, permits enjoyment without attachment — ie., that kind of feeling in and through another which does not depend upon the objectification of the other and need not lead,'therefore, to the desire to manipulate, dominate, or control. Such detached emotion is the ground of deference and mutuality which, when combined with *wu-chih* and *wu-wei*, maximizes the possibility of harmonious relationships.

III. Utopia and Utility

It is at the level of the *wu*-forms of social interaction that Taoism expresses its character as social anarchism. The individual who grasps the *te* of another grasps the world focussed by that other and intuits the context within which interactions with that other are possible. It is important to recognize that the workability of Taoist anarchism is not dependent upon grand-scale phenomena such as revolution or radical social reform. It is a strategem which can be exercised by ordinary individuals in their social relationships with a sufficient degree of success

to suggest that the vision of the world underlying it is, indeed, sound. The question as to whether this anarchist vision will become the way of things at the level of social existence is quite another matter.

It is certainly un-taoistic to be concerned about the pragmatic relevance of the vision of the Way. Indeed, the belief that a vision is to be justified solely by its applicability to the sphere of concrete *praxis* is absolutely alien to the Taoist sense of the function of human understanding. Theoretic reflection, as the studied attempt to envision the Cosmos in a humanly relevant manner, seems to point in two directions: outward, horizontally, to the sphere of human *praxis* from which, in fact, it largely derives; and, vertically, to the realm of detached contemplation, to the ontological sphere which grounds, and serves as context for, the cosmological speculations of systematic thought.

The most general characterization of the world as Cosmos requires a resort to consistency and adequacy in the development of systems of concepts which chart the world in terms of the mutual determinations of the items comprising it. This theoretical activity has, we presume, pertinent applications to the sphere of praxis. But, in addition to the practical function of theory, there is a *theorial* function as well. Here concepts become metaphors whose mute appeal is to an ontological sphere transcending propositional characterization.

If we recall that for both Plat0 and Aristotle the ideal of human existence is contemplation (*theoria*), and that .vision not doctrine is the true aim of philosophic endeavor, we should be able to understand something of the Taoist approach to understanding. For, clearly, thinking as a rational enterprise open to systematic articulation, and contemplation (*theoria*) as the dialectical or self-referential consequence of thinking per se, are qualitatively distinct. Theory is unavoidably practical since it is motivated and shaped in accordance with the demand for application. Theory is per se utilitarian. *Theoria* is distinctly non-instrumental and, thus, utopian. The intrinsic connections between theory and practice, whether construed in terms of the preeminence of theoretical activity aimed at practical application, or in terms of practical actions which give rise to theoretical articulations, have constituted one grand short-circuiting of *theoria* which involves the intuition that the realm of individual *praxis* is primarily a sphere of self-creative activities the fundamental coherence of which is expressed in terms of mutually adjusted responses to harmonious Chaos (*hun-tun*) as the sum of all natural orders. The utopian function of the Taoist sensibility is realized to the extent that our thinking, acting, and feeling are qualified by the intuition of self-creative harmony.

The utopian function of theory is not to be totally separated.from its utilitarian function. Philosophic wisdom, which permits the refined adjustment of utopia and utility, is the presupposition of all adequate thought. The failure to recognize the ambidexterity of theory is, at the most fundamental level, the failure of philosophy itself. The kind of failed philosophy which ignores the *theorial* dimension of thought and insists upon not speaking of what cannot be said seems eminently reasonable until we recognize that we continually include what cannot be said in every act of speaking. The enclosing act of conceptual definition is a disclosing act as well; and the disclosure is of what lies beyond, as well as what lies within, the concept.

Taoist anarchism is certainly utopian, though not perniciously so. Since it is grounded in vision rather than doctrine, Taoism lacks the totalitarian impetus of doctrinaire utopias. Moreover, the *theorial* vision of Taoism does not assume an anthropocentric perspective. The Taoist vision is

polycentric,[17] each item of the totality is recognized as focusing a world from the perspective of its individual *te*. The question, "Does Taoism work? ", must, of course, be answered 'No" if we insist upon a monocentric perspective. For in that case we can only mean by "works" something like the following: the promotion of the short term ends of a small fraction of a single species on the surface of one planet in a tiny system in but one of countless galaxies . defining the current, largely conventional, understanding of cosmological context. The answer is decidedly different, however, if we enlarge our perspective and contemplate the variety of things which lay rightful claim to self-creative dwelling within the unconceptualized Totality.

The utility of utopian speculation and actions which promote "impossible ideals" lies in expanding the range of creative possibilities open to us. There are, undoubtedly, limits to the successful application of the *wu*-forms of social interaction. We will not, however, have the slightest conception of those limits as long as we continue to blow our own horn instead of listening to the piping of heaven "which blows on the ten thousand things, in order that each can be what it truly is."

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[17] Chuang Tzu, *Op., cit.*, p. 37.

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