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**THE ANARCHIST COUNTERCURRENT**

John A. Rapp: *Daoism and Anarchism: Critiques of State Autonomy in Ancient and Modern China*. (London: Continuum, 2012. Pp. xi, 292.)

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This ambitious study was carried out over more than a decade, with devoted effort and persistence in gathering all possible relevant materials. The book is second in a series, *Contemporary Anarchist Studies*, launched in 2012 by Continuum Publishers. Its broad range will stimulate the discussion that any author hopes for. One of my first reactions was to see it also as an excellent source book, offering translations of writings by a number of historic Daoist anarchists who are not widely known.

The book is well organized, presenting anarchist ideas in China from Laozi up to the present. Professor Rapp discusses Daoist anarchism, the term he uses to link the traditional with the modern forms of these ideas, in an opening section of about a hundred pages. The *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* expressed Daoism as it emerged in the late Zhou context. Later Daoist anarchists were active during the Six Dynasties and post-Tang periods. A brief "interlude" on the modern anarchist movement of the first three decades of the twentieth century surveys earlier work on this most active and specifically anarchist period. The study concludes with another section of about a hundred pages entitled "Maoism and Anarchism." The appended translations noted above form a valuable contribution.

John Rapp's career has focused on authority in China, and on opposition to that authority. The temporal sweep of this study grows out of the body of his work. For example, with Anita Andrew, his wife, Rapp coauthored *Autocracy and China's Rebel Founding Emperors: Comparing Chairman Mao and Ming Taizu* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000). His interest in modern Chinese anarchism goes back many years. His PhD dissertation concerned post-1949 debates in China on the Asiatic mode of production. All this experience enters into this study on Daoism and anarchism.

Rapp states in several places his awareness that people of certain views might not agree with his claims as to what ideas and individuals are anarchists. This reviewer is not in full agreement on some issues, not out of a purist sense as to what constitutes anarchist principles but from more broadly logical considerations. Whatever objections anyone might put forward, the grand scale of this work and Rapp's sense of the large issues involved, in addition to his control of a great range of materials, should be more than sufficient to overcome the concerns of all but the most devoted purist.

The first section of the book offers two fine chapters, one on the "Guodian strips," the other on the *Wunengzi*. The Guodian manuscript, an early book in the form of bamboo strips, takes its name from the place in Hubei where it was discovered in 1993. Rapp provides an excellent analysis of this alternative

text of the *Daodejing*, focusing on its apparent lack of opposition to the state. The *Wunengzi* comes from the post-Tang dynasty period and represents one or a few individuals who espoused Daoist anarchist ideas in one of the numerous periods of disorder in China's history. The *Wunengzi* tends toward nihilism in its later chapters, a pattern in some followers over the centuries and also in the modern anarchist movement. The appended translation (thirty pages) of the *Wunengzi* is a bonus for readers.

Rapp discusses the Chinese anarchist movement of the early twentieth century in an "interlude." That movement, broad in appeal and in its effects from about 1905 to 1925, has had ongoing influence in the century since then. Indeed, the influence of anarchism during those years may be seen as an underlying reason why this study is relevant. Rapp's selective treatment of this period is appropriate, as those decades have been most closely studied (including by this reviewer). Rapp's survey of that period is excellent, providing background for the years since 1949, a major concern in this book.

By 1949, anarchism was supposed to have been done for—except the Maoists kept bringing it up! It is worth noting that a reevaluation of Party history was carried out following the Cultural Revolution, with a major focus on the anarchist influence on the revolutionary mentality. That project resulted in publication of anarchist materials during the early 1980s, volumes most useful to all who have worked on anarchism in the years since then. "Anarchism" is a convenient pejorative term in all organized polities. It was overused during the first decades of the People's Republic, but surely those references reflected a general memory of anarchism's vibrant influences—the very influences the post-Cultural Revolution Communist Party sought to understand as a cause of that tragic decade in the nation's development.

Rapp's discussions of post-Mao "neoanarchism" also are insightful. He uses "neoanarchism" to identify forms of indirect criticism that resonate with the anarchist viewpoint. He divides these critiques into "extra-party" and "inner-party." Most of the extra-party criticisms arose from Red Guard groups during the Cultural Revolution. Within the Party, variant positions included Marxist humanism, which drew inspiration and arguments from the Communist parties of Eastern Europe. A second group focused their critique on views of the Asiatic mode of production. Besides his own earlier work on this theme, Rapp draws on studies done during the heat of intense ideological battles in China during the Cultural Revolution years. Activists on both sides claimed ideological authority, and many did indeed display amazing ability to manipulate Marxist orthodoxy and variations on it. But as Rapp notes, a number of these participants also ultimately acknowledged that there had been much hair-splitting and argument simply for the sake of argument.

To move from the problems of that difficult period to a more universal perspective, Rapp's study opens the reader's mind to Daoism as one of China's gifts to world thought. We often forget that these and other schools of

Chinese thought also comprise a great literary creation. Arising in China's formative period of cultural development, Daoist anarchism might under different circumstances have become the dominant influence in the Chinese polity. This possibility was lost forever with the establishment of the Qin empire in late third century BCE. We accept as axiomatic that Daoism provided relief from the stress of duties for Confucian-Legalist officeholders over the centuries. Why did some Daoist anarchists backslide or turn nihilist, then and in modern times? Their beautiful ideals about the possibilities of human life got flooded out in the sea of statist pressures. Confucius's humanism also succumbed to the Legalist origins of the Chinese state—a curse that still plagues efforts to develop a creative statist culture in China, if that is even possible.

In his concluding comments, Rapp notes the irony that in China now there have been revivals of both Mao and Confucius. He suggests that in this situation there might be a new opportunity for Daoist anarchism to emerge once more and have meaningful influence. This study is most impressive in conception, in the scholarly work it exhibits, and in the intellectual stimulus it offers. John Rapp has made a great contribution to our understanding of this fascinating, vital feature of Chinese history and culture.

Continuum Publishers invites manuscripts for this worthy series; this too is recognition of anarchism's ongoing relevance.

—Edward S. Krebs  
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## PLATONIC RESONANCES

Seth Benardete: *The Archaeology of the Soul: Platonic Readings of Ancient Poetry and Philosophy*. Edited by Ronna Burger and Michael Davis. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine, 2012. Pp. xiii, 383.)

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This is a posthumous collection of essays and reviews by the philosopher-classicist Seth Benardete. Unlike the previous collection edited by Burger and Davis (*The Argument of the Action* [University of Chicago Press, 2000]), *The Archaeology of the Soul* could not have Benardete's stamp of approval, but the range and depth of (occasionally oracular) interpretation are unmistakably his. The volume, in a sense, completes Benardete's body of work and confirms him as one of the most philosophically penetrating thinkers of recent generations. Its highlights include his recovery of the self-reflective wisdom of Heraclitus and Parmenides (arguably exceeding the insights of the avid proponent of the pre-Socratics, Heidegger); his intensive interpretations of ancient tragedy on the city and the gods (perhaps surpassing the interpretations by Hegel and Heidegger [cf. 238n6]); his unfolding of the meaning of