

Re-visiting Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*: Anarcho-Taoism and World Resource Management.

By Samar Habib

I called it “an ambiguous utopia”. I think it’s a perfectly natural step to go from Taoism to anarchism. That’s what I found myself doing [in *The Dispossessed*]. They are definitely related, they appeal to the same type of person, the same bent of mind.¹

Ursula K. Le Guin is one of the most influential science fiction and fantasy writers of the twentieth century and is easily the most prolific female author we have seen in relation to these, often male-dominated, genres. Born in 1929 in Berkeley, California, Le Guin has led a somewhat parochial lifestyle and has rarely ventured away from the “West Coast” since her return from Paris to live in Portland, Oregon, in 1958.² Her works received numerous awards and honours and they continue to be the subject of critical and analytical scrutiny across the academy. The series of novels that take place within her “Hainish Universe”³ yield complexity and insight beyond the scope of most science fiction writers. *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*, which won both the Hugo and Nebula Awards in 1975, was Le Guin’s last Hainish universe novel to be published, but in the chronology of that world it is the first story to occur along the timeline. However, it is not this intricacy and combination of geographically plausible worlds and timelines that have made *The Dispossessed* a classic, but rather the unassailable philosophical contribution to Utopian discourse that it has made and continues to make.

Le Guin had managed to imagine and put in motion an alternative economy and styles of living which could work and whose inhabitants were all equally stripped of an infrastructure that would enable the power-hungry to exercise that power, once obtained, on others. But this utopian world did not prevent the existence of, or annihilate, such individuals. Take the character Sabul for instance, in his attempts to suppress fresh intellectual ideas that disprove his own,⁴ or that incidental character, Desar the mathematician, who compulsively hoards and accumulates material for himself, despite the free availability of amenities and paraphernalia (133-134). Such individuals continue

to exist but they are disabled from inflicting themselves absolutely on others. There is a utopia even in this simple idea of de-centralizing power, of turning governments into administrations of “things” not people. Recently, an anthology of thoroughly researched critical essays on *The Dispossessed* was published, but there was an omission of a rigorous treatment of what Le Guin saw at the time as a relationship between anarchist theory and Taoism.⁵ Although articles on both anarchism and Taoism in relation to the novel exist,⁶ there has not been a serious attempt to consider the interrelations of these modes of thought and how they are represented in the novel. In this article my intention is to explore Le Guin’s imperfect Utopia and to expose the intertextual influences of Taoism and anarchist theory on Le Guin’s profound novel and vision in the hope of filling the hiatus which currently exists in this area.

The Background to the Story

The story of *The Dispossessed* begins with its hero, Shevek, boarding a shuttle from a planet called Anarres to another satellite planet called Urras. The ancestors of the inhabitants of Anarres came from Urras, some sixteen hundred years prior to the timeline of the text, after a revolutionist by the name of Odo led an insurrection against the government system of her nation. The anarchic theory of “Odonianism” gathers support and momentum after its founder’s death, so that a small group of internationalist, Urrasti inhabitants, identifying themselves now as Odonians, are given the means to colonize Urras’s arid, desert-like moon. With this opportunity the Odonians set out to create a society which observes the paradigm of anarchic political theory.

This theory of Odonianism, is not to be mistaken, as Ursula Le Guin tells us, with “the bomb-in-the-pocket stuff, which is terrorism...[or] the social-Darwinist “libertarianism” of the far right; but anarchism, as prefigured in early Taoist thought, and expounded by... Kropotkin, Goldman and Goodman.”⁷ Odonianism then, is extrapolated from the political theory of anarchism that was developed in the late nineteenth century by European thinkers such as Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman and Michael Bakunin. Furthermore, Odonianism is, as Le Guin indicates in several interviews, a combination of Taoist thought and anarchist theory.

From Taoism to Anarchism and Back

It is believed that Taoism was born in the first century B.C. (this is uncertain), out of the writings and teachings of Lao Tzu and his disciple Chuang Tzu. Taoist thought creates a consciousness of the world that encompasses every distinct thing and being into an unsegmented whole. Lao Tzu writes: “There is something that contains everything. Before heaven and earth it is. Oh, it is still, unbodied, all on its own, unchanging.... Not knowing its real name, we only call it the Way.”⁸ This unsegmented whole, in another translation and interpretation of the *Tao-Te-Ching*, is said to be “the all-changing changeless” which is also “being in itself”.⁹ Therefore, in Lao Tzu’s ontological projection, reality is oddly static but in this stasis and precisely because of it, inexhaustible change and new life is possible. The stasis is called ‘ho’, roughly meaning ‘structure’ (in Shevek’s temporal physics this is the ‘cycle of time’, in Odo’s social theory it is called ‘the ends’) and the inexhaustible spirit of change is called k’ai, which means ‘expansion’ (Shevek calls this ‘linear time’, Odo calls it ‘the means’).¹⁰

Deleuze and Guattari’s “1933: Micropolitics and Segmentarity”¹¹ offers a demonstration of this conception of the human world as oscillation between the expansive and the static. The main stipulation for Deleuze and Guattari in their essay, is that laws and states (or communities with customary law) are facts of human existence, changeless, part of the structure that Taoism refers to as Ho. Deleuze and Guattari focus on the tensions that exist between states and individuals (or customary law and the individuals in non-centralized societies) as object-specific examples of the Taoist perception of the ‘changeless’. In the field of theoretical political science (which is what Deleuze’s philosophy is in this context) aspects of Taoism can be *used* to theorize the human world. However Lao Tzu does not specify what is part of the structure and what is part of k’ai, but man-made laws are not seen as part of the cognition that attempts to comprehend the *Way*.

For this, there is a simple reason in Taoism. To create a law one needs the knowledge of the difference between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, of course this is relative to the creators of the

law. Within the “all-changing-changeless” there are “two things, one origin, but different in name, whose identity is mystery. Mystery of all mysteries!” (Lao Tzu, 3). The *difference* between, for example, the north pole and the south pole is metaphysically impossible, however people are surer of the difference between good and bad. From the all-changing-changeless polarities emerge that humans *think* they are capable of distinguishing between. This distinction, in Taoist thought is an illusion, which “enlightened” ones overcome. On the basis of the uncertainty of all knowledge a Taoist cannot conceive of a law, since a law assumes one certainty or another. Taoism therefore is more accurately related to a political theory which admits indeterminacy, lawlessness and constant change, rather than to a political theory that finds states, laws and rigid authority as unchangeable facts of human being.

However, if Guattari and Deleuze are correct, the Taoist is squandering her life for she wants to be rid of customary and state laws by targeting human cognition of reality. In Deleuze and Guattari’s theory, the fact of the state and law (or customary law through Shamans and medicine men and the religious community in non-centralized *governments*) remains unchanging, whilst in the meantime, collected (united) individuals, act on a shared desire and work on making changes within the rigid reality of the State. Thus, individuals and the communities they constitute, are part of k’ai – the expanding content of the “all-changing changeless.” According to the theory, desire is what brings about change, but individual desire (the desire of one) is not a strong enough “flow” to make changes in the state, so, individuals desiring the same thing fuse into a “line of flight” that either ends in failure (for example: the anarchic cultural movement in the U.S) or makes the desired change (another example: the re-introduction of capital punishment in some states in the U.S) and then disappears.

Unlike the Taoist however, who has no law in his mind, Deleuze and Guattari assert that ‘laws’ are inevitable to human consciousness. Anarchism, by its nature wants to create a world that falsifies Gilles and Deleuze’s theory.

Individualist anarchism sees that a balance between the individual cell and the social organism must be created and it claims that this is possible, and together with collectivist anarchism, reiterates the Taoist concept of wholeness and oneness. Emma Goldman claims that anarchism is the “philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of governments rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful as well as unnecessary.”¹² Not having studied Taoism, Goldman writes that “Anarchism is the only philosophy which brings to man the consciousness of himself; which maintains that God, and the State, and society are non-existent [meaning synthetic illusions], since they can be fulfilled only through man’s subordination. Anarchism is therefore the teacher of the unity of life; not merely in nature, but in man” (Goldman, 58).

However, for these positive theories of human potential there are counter theories. The Darwinian Socialists do not agree with either Taoism or anarchism. They say that the world is the way it is and *they*, their mode of thought, has nothing to do with it. Charles Darwin, a scientist and not a political theorist, saw that a struggle for existence existed between species and among members of the same species, since they all share the biological urge to reproduce and were in fact competing for the space and resources of the earth. Darwin did not see that species could control these hostile urges against each other (unless this was in favour of everyone’s survival), for the force of Natural Selection is greater than themselves.¹³ Darwinian Socialists, as Le Guin refers to them, believe that the State is a biological necessity, as Guattari and Deleuze intimate (though they might not be Darwinian Socialists themselves). Atro, the eighty year-old Urrasti physicist, who is a passionate militant, communicates to Shevek the political appropriation of the Darwinian theory of existence and evolution.

I don’t want those damned aliens getting at you through your notions about brotherhood and mutualism and all that. They’ll spout you whole rivers of ‘common humanity’ and ‘leagues of all the Worlds’ and so on, and I’d hate to see you swallowing it. The law of existence is struggle – competition – elimination of the weak – a ruthless war for survival. And I want to see the best survive. The kind of humanity I know. 68

Anarchists disagree, and consider “mutual aid”¹⁴ to be a more important factor in human affairs than the “struggle for existence.” Therefore anarchists target the positions of power created by institutions and centralized governments, laying direct blame on an office which can only be mismanaged, not on the infallible urge to mismanage.

In *The Dispossessed*, Shevek’s other Urrasti colleagues at the University of Ieu Eun, Pae and Chifoilisk, represent those who comprehend human potential according to the deterministic stasis of Darwin’s biological theory and Deleuze and Guattari’s political theory. They also represent both capitalist and communist modes of government, respectively (they are literally government representatives). In contrast, Shevek represents the anarchist individuals who have transcended the “wall” that Chifoilisk and Pae insist on accepting.

I think you are afraid of me Pae...Because I am, by my existence, disproof of the necessity of the State. But what is there to fear, Saio Pae, you know I am personally quite harmless. 73

[To Chifoilisk]

The state of Thu is more centralized than the state of A-Io. One power structure controls all, the government, administration, police, army, education, laws, trades, manufactures... You fear we [Odonians] might bring back the revolution, the old one, the real one, the revolution for justice which you began and then stopped half-way. Here in A-Io they fear me less because they have forgotten the revolution. They don’t believe in it anymore, they think if people can possess enough things they will be content to live in prison. But I will not believe that. I want the walls down. I want solidarity, human solidarity. 120

Shevek’s mode of cognizing the objective world beyond his individual perception, suggests a *proof* of the mental ability to transcend the seeming necessity/predeterminacy of bureaucratic control and violent competition. The way of the Tao, to be found in a mind that contemplates the cosmos, and the way of anarchism, to be found in a mind that contemplates the social organism, together seem to raise an objection to the biological determinism figured in the “Darwinian life cycle” and the political determinism figured by Deleuze and Guattari. Something that is not described by these political theories emerges: the quest to eliminate their correspondence to perceived reality. On this point of escaping the Darwinian life-cycle, Fredric Jameson has noted that:

The absence, from the Anarres of TD, of large animals such as the donkey [...] which startles Shevek, is the negative obverse of a far more positive omission namely that of the Darwinian life-cycle itself, with its predators and victims alike: it is the sign that human beings have surmounted historical determinism ... and have been left alone with themselves to invent their own destinies.”¹⁵

Later in the essay Jameson observes that violence in the Utopia of Anarres is not meant to be eliminated, for there is nothing “more shocking in TD than the scene in which Shevek is beaten into unconsciousness by a man who is irritated by the similarity between their names.... Utopia is, in other words, not a place in which humanity is freed from violence but rather one in which it is released from the multiple determinisms (economic, political, social) of history itself” (226-7).

Shevek calls for the elimination of “unnecessary suffering” which Jameson rightly labels as facets of the multiple economic, political and social determinisms of history itself. The implication is that human-made laws create unnecessary suffering, while the laws of existence themselves create unavoidable suffering. Human consciousness is asked to make a distinction between an act of willful harm, which is preventable, and an event of natural disaster. Shevek explains to his Anaressti friends that:

Suffering is a misunderstanding ... no society can change the nature of existence. We can't prevent suffering. This pain and that pain, yes, but not Pain. A society can only relieve social suffering – unnecessary suffering ... If instead of fearing it and running from it, one could, get through it, go beyond it. 56-7

The Taoist sage, unlike Shevek, is never roused to passionate action; he does not inflict change, but cooperates with natural change, offering no resistance. The collectivist anarchist, to be found in the early writings of Kropotkin and Bakunin, demands that change occur through a physical revolution – through what they see as moral violence and what is referred to in the taxonomy of the state as “terrorism” (for the obvious reason that “it” is being terrorized with the idea of “its” extinction/destruction).¹⁶ The sage on the other hand does only what is needed and is psychologically incapable of violence since “he” sees things as they are and consequently sees beyond them and changes nothing. Odo's ‘circle of life’ and rejection of the notion of *deserving* make an alliance

with Taoist consciousness which, on this point, conflicts with both collectivist anarchists and those they are “collecting” against:

No man earns punishment, no man earns reward. Free your mind of the idea of deserving, the idea of earning, and you will begin to be able to think. 296

No “man” will punish another, no “man” be offered reward. When the mind is free of the idea of value, the idea of punishment and reward (a Taoist maxim) individuals will begin to be able to see clearly – the ultimately incomprehensible fact of things and beings. Clarity is also bewilderment, but to the Taoist it is a full engagement in being. The collectivist anarchist has a partial (or partisan) engagement in being, as does the Statist. The Taoist-anarchist or the individualist anarchist (the Odonian) however is different. Far from being indifferent to the political world, as is the mental state of the Taoist, and far from being ready to inflict change by force, as in the mental state of the collectivist anarchist, the individualist anarchist finds a middle point between the two.

The individualist anarchist is a Taoist for she resists the urge to violence and, in fact, transcends the need by accepting the fact of the others. At the same time, unlike the Taoist sage, she continues to desire a better world full of psychically similar people to live with. The psychic similarity that the individualist anarchist, or Shevek, is searching for is to be found in the philosophy that Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching* reflects. Liu Xiaogan explains that *wei-wei* (i.e. nonaction¹⁷) is ‘to eradicate or reduce certain, not all, human action’¹⁸ and he argues that the concept of *tzu-jan* (a specific kind of action) should not be confused with ‘naturalism’ (for this has Western implications¹⁹) which is contrary to Lao Tzu’s theory, but rather to conceive *wei-wei* (nonaction) through *tzu-jan*, which is to be taken for “naturalness, spontaneous, or spontaneity” of action (Xiaogan, 212).

Compare this to the actions taken by politicians and corporate executives, which are often motivated by a desire to harness more power, or even to the behavior of a bank teller or any person working according to the protocol of the institution employing her – in the cognition that recognizes *Tao* there cannot exist such a thing as protocol, it would only be a game. Should this ‘naturalness’ of behaviour (and psychology) be activated only ‘necessary suffering’ will remain (since violence is contrary to *tzu-jan*) and that is easier

to deal with than unnecessary suffering. No one would want to seek revenge against a storm that destroys one's home, but if the force of destruction is an army, this would be (and indeed is) different. That is because we know that soldiers each have a reproachable conscience, but do not suspect for a minute that a storm does.

The individualist anarchist who has rejected even the "moral" use of violence, as Shevek does, cannot accept the coercion or oppression of another human being, even if that human being "himself" is coercive and oppressive. This reiterates Lao Tzu's conception of power. Once one reaches Taoist enlightenment, Lao Tzu explains, it becomes clear that the *use* of power is not part of the Way:

True leaders are hardly known to their followers. Next after them are the leaders/the people know and admire;/after them, those they fear;/after them, those they despise. (Lao Tzu, 24)

At this point in the *Tao Te Ching*, Le Guin comments that this mode of action/behaviour is "a matter of "doing without doing": uncompetitive, unworried, trustful accomplishment, power that is not force."(Le Guin, *Tao-Te-Ching*, 24). This form of self-conduct cannot admit authoritarian rule since it is free from force or coercion and it is characteristic of Shevek's behaviour throughout the text.

Anarchist theory offers its own suggestions on the etiology and mechanics of authoritarian rule. Peter Kropotkin brings to light the phenomenon of "mutual aid among animals". Interestingly he suggests that not only 'man' has come up against the wall of Darwinist competition, while many species have already transcended it: "If an ant which has its crop full has been selfish enough to refuse feeding a comrade, it will be treated as an enemy..."²⁰ Thus, the tendency toward authoritarianism can be traced back to the human's desire to minimize her own struggle for survival. By creating and enforcing a system where he is a beneficiary, he is tipping the balance (the natural distribution of struggle) in his favor, so that others, weaker than him, bare not only their burden but a substantial portion of his. There is no better elucidation of this concept than through the anarchic scrutiny of the creation of property. And it is no secret of course that

anarchism's worst enemy is the concept of ownership,²¹ which is why in the Anaressti vocabulary there is no filthier swear word than 'profiteer'.

To better understand the logic behind anarchism's rejection of propriety and this rejection's relation to Taoist philosophy I propose the following mental excursion: Let us choose the bank balance of one of the richest people in the world (not the richest, say US\$666m), now let us purchase with that amount of money all the cans of beans in the world, then let us topple the cans on top of each other in the shape of a pyramid. Now let us call forward the possessor (and her dependents, if any) of all this food and ask her to stand at the base of this pyramid. What would the ratio of her body weight to the weight of beans be? And if she ate from it for the next one hundred years (without purchasing any more beans, mind you) how much would still be left over, as waste? The net weight of beans in each can is 400g, the height of each can is 11cm, the diameter 7cm, and the price of each can is 50 U.S. cents. This woman eats an astonishing 8 cans of beans a day, she weighs 75 kilos and is 168 centimeters tall. I shall leave it to the mathematician to sort out the volume of the pyramid and all those answerable things. What becomes apparent for anarchists is that since human beings are all connected to each other as living parts of a social organism (or the Taoist "unsegmented whole" I spoke of earlier), it becomes indefensible and solipsistic to argue along the lines of an individualistic, consumerist and capitalist (or possibly feudal) economic system. Le Guin illustrates that Urras is a mismanaged world, which speaks of ostentatious and superfluous riches on the one hand and, on the other:

A famine in Bachifoil Province in the Nation of Thu,' the commentator's voice had said. 'Bodies of children dead of starvation and disease are burned on the beaches. On the beaches of Tius, seven hundred kilometres away in the nation of A-Io...women [high class prostitutes] lie on the sand all day until dinner is served to them by people of the unpropertied class. 42

At the heart of this inequality is the respect for and defense of one's *right* to procure and accumulated beyond one's needs, and neither collectivist anarchism nor Taoist philosophy are able to accept the ideological basis of such an economic system. Emma Goldman explains that "organized authority, or the State, is necessary *only* to maintain or

protect property and monopoly” (Goldman, 64). Shevek understands this, refuting that the “human will to dominance” and greed is intrinsically unavoidable, and indicates that any explanation of the reality of the political world other than logically dissoluble greed is either itself deluded and ignorant or intentionally deluding and ostensible.

“[Oiie]: It did not matter who governed, or thought they governed, the Benbilis: the politics of reality concerned the power struggle between A-Io and Thu”

“The politics of reality,” Shevek repeated...”That is a curious phrase for a physicist to use.”

“Not at all. The politician and the physicist both deal with things as they are, with real forces, the basic laws of the world.”

“You put your petty miserable “laws” to protect wealth, your “forces” of guns and bombs, in the same sentence with the law of entropy and the force of gravity? I had thought better of your mind, Demaere!” 172

Oiie represents in this context, what Emma Goldman calls “the ordinary man” or the “average reader”. For Emma Goldman and Paul Goodman, Kropotkin and Bakunin, anarchism is a necessary step in cultural evolution. They are aware (as is Le Guin) that social and political structures are increasingly taxing individual breath and personal freedom. However, aside from the states themselves, the greatest obstacle to anarcho – Taoism is also the inability of the mass-individual²² to comprehend the teleology of the political world and how the condition of the material world *is* and *can be* managed.

On Urras, our fictional anarchic theorist, Odo, writes that “excess is excrement” (P88). Similarly, Shevek, adjusting to the lavish excesses of A-Io’s capitalist economy, “had reflected, quite early in his stay on Urras, that the Urrasti lived among mountains of excrement, but never mentioned shit.” (128-9). In addition, “he could not force himself to understand how banks function, because all the operations of capitalism were as meaningless to him as the rites of a primitive religion... barbaric... elaborate... unnecessary... acres of luxuries, acres of excrement.” (113-4). It does not appear that the majority of consumers in a capitalist economy are aware of the connection between excess and inequality. By contrast, simplicity, purpose and pragmatism are key concepts in an anarchist economy. Bedap, Shevek’s life-long friend, is a Functions analyst, who, joking with Shevek, points out that the color of Shevek’s blanket (orange) was the

product of unnecessary labour. The blanket need not look pretty to meet its practical purpose/function (*TD*, 139-40). Le Guin may have extrapolated this from Paul Goodman's essay entitled "Notes on Neo-Functionalism". Goodman writes:

Functionalism is design of the means simply for the end...the neo-functionalists goes further...Is the use, he asks, as simple or ingenious or clear as the efficient means that have produced it? ...he keeps his eye more immediately on the object itself and asks, is it worthwhile?²³

In the same essay Goodman gives a "theory of packages" (Goodman, 51), which demonstrates the utilitarian hierarchy (what Goodman calls "Functionalism") that an anarchist economy advances. Le Guin no doubt interprets Goodman's ideas as we see in the following:

He had been fascinated...by the Urrasti habit of wrapping everything up in clean, fancy paper or plastic cardboard or foil. Laundry, books, vegetables, clothes, medicines, everything came inside layers and layers of wrappings. Even packets of paper were wrapped in several layers of paper... 168

The theory of resource management that anarchism suggests works on the evident but unprovable premise that all members of the social organism are connected, even if they perceive themselves to be (arbitrarily) divided. Therefore if O's bank balance is US\$666 million, this is directly connected to the astonishing number of starving individuals in the world. In addition, the police and the state protect this economic inequality within a solipsist taxonomy on what is real. The "ordinary man" has not yet understood these "facts" (or so the anarchist propagandist thinks), nor is he willing to discard the quest for "luxury." Shevek's remark to Keng becomes especially meaningful in this context: "We cannot come to you. We can only wait for you to come to us" (289). This remark signals the anarcho-Taoist's patience and carefulness not to contradict her own principles of individualism, not to *enforce* her belief but to patiently await the moment it is finally realized by the others (especially the owner of that bank balance) exactly what possible world they are in fact being offered. The individualist anarchist cannot go back to Keng and her collective of capitalists; he must wait until the collective catches up with him. Then and only then, Le Guin seems to suggest, can a successful anarchy establish itself,

naturally, and as part of the evolution of the mass-individual human mind, which comprehends the relationship between excess and inefficiency, propriety and poverty.

Like all power-seekers, Pae was amazingly shortsighted. There was a trivial, abortive quality to his mind; it lacked depth, effect, imagination. It was in fact a primitive instrument. 231

George Orwell once wrote that all hope lies with the proletariat and, in the course of a fictional narrative, he clarified, devastatingly, that there is no hope in them.²⁴ Whether the mass-individual mind is part of Ho – the static reality of the Mind (as Deleuze and Guattari suggest), or whether it is along the expansive passage of K'ai remains to be seen in the next millenium or two. Somehow the anarchic claim that this barrier exists predominately in the human mind seems reasonable but is yet unprovable. However, the personality and thought patterns of pacifist (taoist) anarchists suggest that the possibility of this utopia exists already in their behaviour and mode of thought. That Shevek, Lao Tzu, Goodman, Goldman, Le Guin and others are *in themselves*, in the manner of their thinking, proof of the feasibility of the idealism of anarchist world and self management.

¹ Interview with Ursula Le Guin, cited in Philip E. Smith's "Unbuilding Walls" in Ursula K Le Guin, eds. Joseph Orlander and Martin Greenberg. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1979. 79.

² "Ursula K Le Guin: Biographical Sketch" Ursula K. Le Guin's Official Website <http://www.ursulaklequin.com/Hyperbite2000.html>, last accessed April 4, 2007.

³ The Hainish Universe is contained within Rocannon's World. [1966]. London: Universal Tandem, 1978. Planet of Exile. [1966]. N.Y: Acebooks, 1973. City of Illusions. [1967]. London: Granada, 1971. The Left Hand of Darkness. [1969]. Frogmore [Eng.]: Granada, 1973. The Word for World is Forest. New York: Berkley, 1972 and The Dispossessed. [1974]. Frogmore: Granada, 1976.

⁴ For example see Ursula K. Le Guin. [1974] The Dispossessed. Frogmore: Granada Publishing, 1976. 93, 101-3. Subsequent page numbers refer to this edition.

⁵ I am referring to Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman, eds., The New Utopain Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed. New York, Oxford & Toronto: Lexington Books, 2005.

⁶ The above anthology contains impressive scholarship on anarchism in The Dispossessed in the section entitled "Anarchist Politics" 111-166 which espouses three articles on the subject by Dan Sabia, Mark Tunick and Winter Elliott. Articles published in earlier decades on anarchism and The Dispossessed include: Tower Sargent, Lyman. "A New Anarchism: Social and Political Ideas in Some Recent Feminist Eutopias." Women and Utopia. Eds. Marleen Barr and Nicholas D. Smith. New York: UP of America, 1983. 3-33; Smith, Philip E. "Unbuilding Walls: Human Nature and the Nature of Evolutionary Political Theory in The Dispossessed." Ursula K. Le Guin. Eds. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg. New York: Taplinger, 1979. 77-96; Brennan, John P. and Michael C. Downs. "Anarchism and Utopian Tradition in The Dispossessed." Ursula K. Le Guin. Eds. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg. New York: Taplinger, 1979. 116-52; and Urbanowicz, Victor. "Personal and Political in The Dispossessed." SFS, 5 (1978): 110-7. J.R. Wytenbroek's "Taoism in the Fantasies of Ursula K. Le Guin." In The Shape of the Fantastic:... Ed. Olena H. Saciuk. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990. 173-80, is concerned with tracing the influence of Taoism on Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea novels, however the author's definition of Taoism holds for a reading of The Dispossessed and has resounding similarities with anarchist

political theory. Wytenbroek writes: “Taoism proposes a pacifistic lifestyle of nonaggression, and is against war and possessiveness, and the desire for wealth, possessions, glory, and power. It leads its adherent to seek oneness with being, to become aware of the unity, harmony, order and balance of all being, man included, and insists that such wholeness of being can be achieved through the practice of wu-wei [Unaction]” 17.

⁷ Interview with Ursula Le Guin cited by Elizabeth Cummins. Understanding Ursula K. Le Guin. Columbia: South Carolina UP, 1993. 106.

⁸ Lao Tzu. Tao Te Ching: A Book about the Way and the Power of the Way. Ed. Note. Comp. Ursula Le Guin. Boston: Shambhala, 1997. 34. Subsequent page numbers refer to this edition.

⁹ Chung-Yuan. Creativity and Taoism. New York. The Julian Press. 1963. 9 & 126-7

¹⁰ For more information on the k’ai-ho effect see above reference “introduction” 9

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. “1933: Micropolitics and Segmentarity” A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Minneapolis. University of Minnesota Press, 1987. 208-231.

¹² Emma Goldman “Anarchism.” Anarchism and Other Essays. London: Kennikat Press, 1910. 56.

^{xi} See Charles Darwin. “Struggle for existence” in Origin of Species. London: John Murray, 1906. 75.

¹⁴ Peter Kropotkin “Mutual Aid Among Animals” Mutual Aid. London. William Heinemann, 1910. 1-10.

¹⁵ Jameson, Fredric. “World Reduction in Le Guin: The Emergence of Utopian Narrative.” SFS. 3 (1975): 221-230. 224.

¹⁶ Michael Bakunin suggests that the state should be destroyed so that it is replaced by the “international”. He writes: “Convinced...that the individual and social evil resides much less in individuals than in the organization of material things and in social conditions, we will be humane in our actions...and we will ruthlessly destroy what is in our way without endangering the revolution.” Bakunin on Anarchism: Selected Writings. Trans. Sam Dolgoff. Montreal. Black Rose Books. 1972. 149.

¹⁷ In Ursula Le Guin’s City of Illusions this is referred to as ‘Unaction’. In a critical passage Le Guin refers to Lao Tzu’s “Tao Te Ching” and to Lao Tzu himself when she writes: “...that quiet voice speaking from amidst forgotten wars and disasters [...] Mankind had outlived disaster; and he had outrun mankind...that old canon of Unaction...” . City of Illusions. London. Granada. 1967. 36.

¹⁸ Liu Xiaogan. “Naturalness (tzu-jan), the Core Value in Taoism: Its Ancient Meaning and its Significance Today”. Lao Tzu and the Tao-te-ching. Eds. Livia Khon and Michael LaFargue. Albany: N.Y. UP. 1998. 218.

¹⁹ For a brief summary and example of ‘naturalism’ in the Western tradition see Paul Goodman’s “Advance-guard writing in America: 1900-1950” in Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals. New York. Vintage Books. 1964. 196-9.

²⁰ Peter Kropotkin. Mutual Aid. (1902). London: William Heinemann, 1910. 13.

²¹ Odo’s slogan “to make a thief make an owner” (120) implies not only that a thief without property cannot exist, but that the self-made owner (the first owner) is a thief, since, beyond utility, there is no rational or natural basis for ownership in the physical world. This is no doubt in reference to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s famous edict: “The true founder of civil society was the first man who fenced in a piece of land, thought of saying “this is mine,” and came across people simple enough to believe him.” see Jean Jacques Rousseau’s Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (1775). Trans. Franklin Philip. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 55.

²² The term “mass-individual” appears in Deleuze and Guattari’s essay. It refers to the popular opinion in a democratic state. A state which fully fuses with mass-individual desire becomes a war-machine state (Nazi or fascist) since all the power of the state is directed to appease the mass-individual desire which is, by its nature according to Deleuze and Guattari, centred around the rejection of the Other.

²³ Paul Goodman. “Notes on Neo-Functionalism.” Drawing the Line: Political Essays of.... Ed. Taylor Stoehr. N.Y: E.P. Dutton. 1977. 49.

²⁴ I refer to Orwell’s Nineteen-Eighty-Four in which the anti-hero Winston recognizes that a successful revolution must needs be a people’s revolution: a mass revolution. As Winston conjectures: “If there was hope, it *must* lie in the proles, because only there, in those swarming disregarded masses, 85 per cent of the population of Oceania, could the force to destroy the Party ever be generated.” Later Winston clarifies that “until they become conscious they can never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious.” See George Orwell, Nineteen-Eighty-Four. [1949]. New York & Toronto: Hudson Books, 1990. 72 & 74. The trope of the sleeping “mass-individual” is an old one and it seems to have recurred in literature of various historical and cultural periods, including Henry David Thoreau’s “sleepers” in his

autobiographical work, Walden Pond, which is easily a critique of early entrepreneurial capitalism as a means to freedom. See “Economics” in Walden Pond. New York: Dover Publications, 1995. 1-52. Thomas Pynchon’s version of the proles, Thoreau’s sleepers and Deleuze and Guattari’s mass-individual, are the *Thanatoids* in his novel *Vineland*. The Thanatoids are literally “the living dead,” and they are addicted to television. Curiously in Vineland, the Thanatoids awake just before the novel ends. See Thomas Pynchon. Vineland. Boston: Little Brown, c. 1990. The earliest reference to this trope that I can think of is to be found in another work of “utopian” philosophy, that of Plato’s Republic, where we find the analogy of the cave dwellers. Socrates likens our “education and the lack of it” to a condition he describes as that similar to people living in a cave, where the shadows on the wall, in the poorly lit cave, become, in the dwellers’ perception, ultimate reality. While, in the meantime, those who are exposed to the reality outside the cave, in the full light of the sun, are mocked upon their return to the cave for being “blind” and for their seemingly ludicrous idea that what is perceived inside the cave is only the shadow of truth. See Plato’s “Book VII: The Cave.” in The Republic R.E. Allen, trans. 227-261 This fascinating trope, however, should be the subject of an entirely different study altogether. A study from which a detailed research paper would easily emerge and I hope to write it one day.