

Challenges for Environmental and Political Philosophy in the Anthropocene

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Title:

Daoist Biopolitics, Anarchy, and Participatory Eco-Democracy

Bio:

Eric S. Nelson is Professor of Philosophy at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He works on Chinese, German, and Jewish philosophy. He is the author of *Daoism and Environmental Philosophy* (Routledge, 2020), *Levinas, Adorno, and the Ethics of the Material Other* (SUNY Press, 2020), and *Chinese and Buddhist Philosophy in Early Twentieth-Century German Thought* (Bloomsbury, 2017). He has published over seventy-five articles and book chapters and is the editor of *Interpreting Dilthey: Critical Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Abstract:

One prominent tendency in early Daoist discourses from the Warring States period (Zhuangzi) to the Wei-Jin period (Liezi, Bao Jingyan) has been identified by modern interpreters as libertarian or anarchistic due to its emphasis on non-coercive or responsive action (*_wuwei_ 無為*) in relation to the generative self-ordering (*_ziran_ 自然*) of things and peoples. Such interpretations are anachronistic insofar as these discourses do not presuppose either the possessive capitalist individual of laissez-faire libertarianism or the oppressed collective subject of anarchism. Further, these sources do not concern a fixed subject of or identity in agency, whether individual or social, but rather “action” as forms of participation in the transformations of things and the shared nourishing of life (*_yangsheng_ 養生*). In this paper, I will further develop reflections from *Daoism and Environmental Philosophy* (2020) on early Daoist biopolitics and the implications for contemporary ecopolitics by examining the extent to which Daoist models of participation indicate ways to reimagine anarchy, elemental democracy, and ecological praxis in response to the climate and environmental crises of the Anthropocene.