

From Benign Anarchy to Divine Anarchy: A Critical Review of “Spiritual Anarchism”

Anthony Fiscella

Independent Scholar, Sweden

Rather than assuming that such a thing as “spiritual anarchism” exists (a union of two highly contested terms), this chapter critically examines whom the label has applied to, whom it could refer to, and how we might conceive its story. Beginning with a critique of subtle but significant legacies of colonialism inherent within contemporary terms such as “religion” and “politics” as well as “anarchism” and “spirituality,” this chapter moves from an overview of literature on “spiritual anarchism” (Sri Aurobindo, Peter Lamborn Wilson, etc.) to discussion of forgotten stories (Krishnamurti, Womanism, MOVE, etc.) and concludes with an eye toward future studies of “spiritual anarchist” praxis (Auroville, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.).

I. Introduction

Despite more than a century of usage and an apparent increase¹ in people who espouse some sort of blend between presumably “spiritual” and “anarchist” perspectives, the term “spiritual anarchism”

¹ In my search for discussions (rather than mere mentions) of “spiritual anarchism,” I found more examples in the last ten years than in the last 100 years combined (see Charts 1–3). However, through a casual online Ngram search of phrase frequency in English literature, I noticed that the early 1930s seemed to have ten times as much frequency of the phrase as today (perhaps due in part to the founding of the Catholic Worker movement or Sri Aurobindo’s publications).

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remains relatively obscure and understudied. Scholarship remains limited in at least three senses. First, while various writers have employed the term “spiritual anarchism” (often as if it had a self-evident meaning), no one seems to have ever attempted to chart the terrain—much less examine the term, its usage, or its possible usefulness. Second, those who mention “spiritual anarchism” typically emphasize texts, individual writers, and ideas rather than activism, practitioners, and collective praxis. Third, many groups and figures who might seem directly related to the topic of “spiritual anarchism” do not appear to have received much (or any) attention. In particular, we find a general tendency to downplay or overlook the roles of two cultures that have often overlapped with and provided inspiration for “spiritual anarchists”: stateless shamanic² societies and black liberation struggles. In this review, I aim to both provide a broad (albeit non-exhaustive) survey of usages of “spiritual anarchism” as well as critically imagine alternatives that point our gaze in directions where—thus far—the term has not.

In his monumental work, *Demanding the Impossible* (1992), Peter Marshall traced anarchism back thousands of years to Daoism and Buddhism.³ Along the way, he provided the first generic (as opposed to polemical) definition of “spiritual anarchism” (that I know of):

Spiritual anarchists see humans as primarily spiritual beings capable of managing themselves without the curb of external government. Most of them reject man-made laws in favour of a prior obligation to natural law or the law of God; some go even further to insist

² “Shaman,” originally a Siberian reference, remains a contested term (see, for example, Mayer 2008). I apply it here loosely rather than technically and simply point toward the type of decentralized and personal relationships of healers, visionaries, entertainers, and mediators that help regulate the stories that organize social life in stateless societies. Indigenous cultures vary greatly from Lakota to Sami, from Tonga to Hi’aiti’ihi (often called Pirahã). Not all of them share a role that neatly corresponds to that of a shaman (however one defines it) and no single term could adequately describe all such cultures.

³ Many discussions of “spiritual anarchism” mention Zen, Daoism, and/or quote Lao Tzu. For arguments of Daoism as non-anarchist, see Feldt (2010); For research on Daoism and anarchism see Rapp (2012). For anarchism and Zen Buddhism, see Galván-Álvarez (2017).

that in a state of grace no law, whether human or divine, is applicable. They generally assume that human impulses are fundamentally good and beneficent. Spiritual anarchism is not linked to any particular creed or sect, but its adherents all reject organized religion and the hierarchical church.⁴

Without dwelling on potential problems in the formulation (e.g., using an undefined “*spiritual beings*” to define “*spiritual anarchists*,” ambiguity of “state of grace,” etc.), tautology (e.g., “capable of managing themselves without the curb of external government”—isn’t that plain anarchism?), or assumptions (e.g., “They generally assume...” yet “they” refers to whom?), we can see two key elements inherent in Marshall’s definition that may help us understand why people ever use the term at all. First, if “spiritual” implies here a “prior obligation to natural law or the law of God” then it may add a “positive” element to counter anarchism’s “negative” opposition-based implication (“an-arch” = *against* rule). In this sense, obligations—like devotion—may feel empowering because they fill social functions and provide a clear focus for action, routine, ritual, etc. Second, in rejecting “organized religion and the hierarchical church,” it seemingly fills the same function as the term “spirituality” (as in “spiritual but not religious”) yet, in combination with “anarchism” also provides a nuance to traditional anarchist anti-clerical critiques (implying that “spiritual” approaches need not fall into the same traps as “religious” approaches). Connecting these two elements, we see the possibility of *voluntary* obligation as well as broad ambiguity: as “creedless” this definition could include atheists and, via “natural law,” could include deep ecologists.⁵

⁴ Marshall 2008: 6. Marshall did not specify whom he included or excluded while explaining “spiritual anarchism” as if it had one untested definition.

⁵ When Naomi Gross sought to identify the Swiss Brethren with “Spiritual Anarchism,” she cited the part of Marshall’s definition that bolstered her argument. The entire quote follows: “Spiritual Anarchists see humans as primarily spiritual beings capable of managing themselves without ... external government.... [They] reject man-made law in favour of ... the law of God” (2013: 18).

In *American Gurus* (2014), Arthur Versluis, without mentioning Marshall, offered a more narrow but similarly “self-evident” definition:

The term ‘spiritual anarchism’ ...is a much more extreme form of what we saw more than a century earlier in Transcendentalism, itself an individualistic sport from Protestantism. Here, religious individualism is taken perhaps as far as one could take it. ...Spiritual anarchism, as we will see in other instances as well, is fundamentally different from political anarchism...Typically, spiritual anarchism emphasizes the moment, and a limited space and time within which liberty can be realized. In *Zenarchy*, Thornley extols the virtues of ‘simply knowing that freedom is everywhere for those who dance through life, rather than crawl, walk, or run.’ For ‘what Zen has most to offer Anarchism is freedom here and now.’⁶

Here we see an emphasis on “freedom” and “liberty” without any reference to obligations. In contrast to Marshall, however, Versluis made it quite clear whom he thought of as the prototype for “spiritual anarchism”: Peter Lamborn Wilson aka Hakim Bey whom Versluis felt “brings together, more than any other figure, the many and varied aspects of spiritual anarchism, embodying them as no one else does.”⁷

Clearly, the proposed definitions of “spiritual anarchism” by Marshall and Versluis clashed yet I could find very little related debate. A few have rejected the term and/or that which it purportedly represented. The controversial book on the European development and global spread of anarcho-syndicalism, *Black Flame* (2009), dismissed “spiritual anarchism” (e.g., Tolstoy) outright because it “[is] not part of the anarchist tradition ...and arises from a misunderstanding of anarchism. ...There is only one anarchist tradition, and it is rooted in the work of Bakunin and the Alliance.”⁸ Christian anarchist scholar André de Raaij (2009) vehemently rejected the term “spiritual anarchism” to describe people like Gustav Landauer or Jacques Ellul because it “reflects current fashions and quests” possibly making “these anarchists

⁶ Versluis 2014: 123, 128.

⁷ Ibid: 146.

⁸ Schmidt and van der Walt 2009: 71.

being sold to the millions ...because it tastes of the idiocies of consumer society.”⁹

A few have argued about clashes between varieties of “spiritual anarchism.” In the early 1900s, Sri Aurobindo embraced the term but rejected what he saw as the “extreme” versions of “spiritual anarchism” in Tolstoy and Gandhi.¹⁰ National anarchist activist Jay Cypher (2014) not only embraced the term “spiritual anarchism” but described two subcategories “Spiritually Based Anarchism” (in which people create a community based on “shared spirituality and sustained by common bonds and experiences”) and “Anarchism as Spiritual Practice” (in which members of a “tribe” do not necessarily share the same “spiritual beliefs” and where “creating an intentional community is a spiritual act in and of itself”). Commenting on this online video presentation, commenter “J. Harris” rejected the entire presentation on grounds that anything associated with “National Anarchism” did not qualify as “spiritual anarchism” because it descended from Julius Evola and “spiritual racism/fascism” and “*real* spiritual anarchism” rejects “hierarchy and tradition.”¹¹

These squabbles may seem petty but, in regard to any term that gradually comes into use, they matter. They show the parameters of a term’s embryotic development. As Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Matthew Adams (2018) wrote in the previous volume: “How one defines key terms does, after all, determine what one analyses (and what not), and generally reveals one’s assumptions and preferences (implicit or explicit) about

⁹ Raaij 2009.

¹⁰ Varma 1990: 300.

¹¹ Emphasis added. See comments to Cypher (2014). National anarchists combine nationalism and anarchism and typically meet strong opposition from antifascists as did Cypher’s National Anarchist Tribal Alliance-New York (NATA-NY). Despite Cypher’s denial of racism, the broader National Anarchist Movement (NAM) apparently expelled NATA after a dispute about, among other things, whom one should stigmatize: Jews or Muslims. See Troy Southgate, “Important Message,” *National Anarchist Movement* homepage, 26 September 2016, <http://www.national-anarchist.net/2016/09/important-message.html>; For an anti-racist analysis of national anarchists, see Sunshine (2008).

what is being discussed.”¹² As scholars do not agree on how to define key terms such as “spirituality,” “religion,” “anarchism,” “state,” “justice,” or “violence,” the conjoining of “spiritual” and “anarchism” into “spiritual anarchism” both amplifies its ambiguity and the difficulty in uncovering implicit assumptions.¹³

With such a wide range of potential meaning, I shall restrict this discussion exclusively to “spiritual anarchism” as a term and, thereafter, critiques and ideas related to that. I shall ignore extensive material on “religious anarchism,”¹⁴ “mystical anarchism,”¹⁵ and even work that essentially discusses much of the same material that “spiritual anarchism” has referred to (i.e. work on the following topics and overlaps with many of the themes, concerns, and figures that one finds associated with “spiritual anarchism”: stateless societies,¹⁶ syncretistic struggle,¹⁷ Swedenborgian syndicalists,¹⁸

¹² Christoyannopoulos and Adams 2018: 1.

¹³ I place quote marks around words such as “spiritual,” “religion,” and “spiritual anarchism” to remind readers that these terms remain ideological, contested, and tentative categories.

¹⁴ In contrast to Marshall’s definition of “spiritual anarchism,” “religious anarchism” tends to refer to those who identify with an age-old organized (typically Abrahamic) tradition and/or who adhere to a particular creed such as Christian anarchists (Christoyannopoulos 2011; Foster 1997), Muslim anarchists (Crone 2000; Karamustafa 2006; Jean-Veneuse 2009; Kazmi 2014), Jewish anarchists (Shapira 2013; Magid 2017), or anarchist discussion of “religion” (Kennedy 2005; CrimethInc. 2013).

¹⁵ This includes a variety of “mystical anarchisms,” including millenarians of the Middle Ages (Cohn 1970), certain Russian Symbolists (Rosenthal 1977), a later Russian group in the 1920s also calling themselves “mystical anarchists” (Nalimov 2001), or various recent works that have propagated the term such as Critchley (2009) and Ladha (2015). For a “social anarchist” critique of “Mystical and Irrationalist Anarchism,” see Bookchin (1995).

¹⁶ See Barclay (1982) and MacDonald (2012).

¹⁷ See McNicholl (2018).

¹⁸ A seemingly improbable category, Ivan Aguéli (1869–1917) advocated Sufism, Swedenborgianism, and syndicalism and Helen Keller (1880–1968), a member of the International Workers of the World (IWW), also identified with Swedenborg’s “spiritual” teachings (Gauffin 1941; Keller 1998). For the record, Catholic priest Thomas Haggerty (also Haggerty) wrote the original preamble for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and theorized about its union structure (See “‘Father’ Thomas J Haggerty.” IWW homepage. 26 October 2011. <https://www.iww.org/>

prophetic resistance,¹⁹ decolonizing,²⁰ psychology and anarchism,²¹ liberation psychology,²² anarchy and the sacred,²³ anarcho-perennialism,²⁴ biographies of people sometimes labeled “spiritual anarchist,”²⁵ anarchist theology,²⁶ anarchist conflict-resolution,²⁷ pagan anarchism,²⁸ anarchistic “New Religious Movements,”²⁹ anarchism and Satanism,³⁰ anarchist abolitionists,³¹ sub-scenes of punk such as taqwacore³² or straight edge,³³ drop-out and psychedelic culture,³⁴ utopian/anarchist/mystical communes,³⁵ anarchist/mystical social order,³⁶ or any number of antinomian groups such as Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth (TOPY),³⁷ Movement of the Free

history/biography/FatherHaggerty and “Father Thomas J. Haggerty’s Wheel.” *IWW* homepage. <https://www.iww.org/about/official/wheel>).

¹⁹ See McKanan (2011).

²⁰ See Forbes (2008).

²¹ See Fox (2011), Heckert (2013), and Lees and Cleminson (2015).

²² See Martín-Baró (1994) and Moane (2003).

²³ See Watson (1998) and Kursions (2005).

²⁴ Closely associated in modern times with Ivan Aguéli, René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Julius Evola and others, perennialist philosophy centers on belief in common eternal and esoteric truths underlying all world traditions. For anarcho-perennialism see Cudenec (2013).

²⁵ For *Angelic Troublemakers*, a biographical study of Henry David Thoreau, Dorothy Day, and Bayard Rustin, see Wiley (2014). For a biography of J. Krishnamurti, see Jayakar (1986); for early Sufi Rābi‘a al-Adawiyya al-Qaysiyya of Basra (c. 713–801), see Upton (1988).

²⁶ See Mazura (2017) and Knowles (2002).

²⁷ See Auerbach (1983).

²⁸ See Starhawk (1998) and Thompson (2016).

²⁹ E.g., the Earth People in Trinidad (Littlewood 2006).

³⁰ For Satanism and anarchism, see Faxneld (2012).

³¹ See Perry (1995).

³² See Fiscella (2012) and McDowell (2017).

³³ See Stewart (2017).

³⁴ See Goffman and Joy (2004).

³⁵ In particular, one prominent anarcho-vegetarian commune in the Swiss Alps named Monte Verità hosted visitors such as Rudolf Steiner and J. Krishnamurti (Green 1986) and Tenko Nishida founded the long-standing service-oriented anarcho-commune Ittoen (also Itto-en) in 1904 (Nishida 1983); For a broad study of anarchist and mystical communes, see Veysey (1973).

³⁶ See Amster (2003) for overview on social control in anarchist communities, including the Rainbow Family of Living Light and indigenous societies.

³⁷ See Keenan (2003).

Spirit,³⁸ or the Bāuls).³⁹ Finally, in order to avoid attributing the term to people who do not use it, I also excluded discussions that combine anarchism with Daoism, Zen, and “spirituality” but do not use the terms “spiritual anarchism/spiritual anarchist”⁴⁰

While this may sound like an extremely narrow terrain remaining, we might better picture that which “spiritual anarchism” has referred to by contrasting individualist and communal-collectivist variants. Taking one small step beyond the most individualist variants of “spiritual anarchism” which tend to emphasize autonomy, personal issues (drug use, sexuality, asceticism, etc.), magick,⁴¹ and/or mind expansion, we might find someone like punk vocalist GG Allin (1956–1993) who said (shortly before dying of a heroin overdose): “I believe that everybody’s the ruler of their own temple. If you don’t believe that you’re Jesus Christ or God or Satan, you’re selling yourself short. You can’t put any person before number one. Number one is you.”⁴² As per Versluis (“religious individualism [taken] as far as one could take it”), this resonates both with the slogan, “Nothing is true—Everything is permitted” popularized William Burroughs as well as Peter Lamborn Wilson/Bey’s conception of anarcho-monarchism and the “Imam-of-one’s-own-being.”⁴³ Burroughs notably shot and killed his wife, Joan Vollmer, presumably by accident, and Wilson/Bey used his idea of “self-rule” to both imply a “personal ethics which reaches unimaginably higher than any moral code” and advoca-

³⁸ See Vaneigem (1998).

³⁹ See Bhattacharya (1999).

⁴⁰ See Clark (1984), Moore (1988), and Murray (1992). Morris characterized Lao Tzu not as a mystic but as an anarchist writing, “he was indeed the first writer to express the libertarian socialist ideal” (1996: 51).

⁴¹ Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) coined the spelling “magick” which characterized an interpretation based on Nietzschean type of *will* in contrast to “superstitious” connotations. Chaos magicians and TOPY later adopted this spelling.

⁴² Gangloff 1993: 17. Not far from this, one might find the philosophical nihilism of “spiritual terrorist,” U. G. Krishnamurti (see, for example, “U. G. Krishnamurti” <https://people.well.com/user/jct/>).

⁴³ Wilson 1993a: 65, 74; Following on the heels of Nietzsche’s declaration “God is dead,” Crowley wrote, “Each one of us is the One God” (Crowley 1975: 4). For a Crowley-Discordian-Bey “genealogy,” see Greer (2013).

te adult sexual activity with pre-pubertal children.⁴⁴ As Michael Muhammad Knight put it, Wilson crafted “a child molester’s liberation theology” and published it “for an audience of potential offenders.” Helms (2004) surmised that Wilson/Bey’s most famous work *Temporary Autonomous Zones* aka TAZ (1985) essentially provided a cover for Wilson/Bey’s “paedophile apologies.”⁴⁵ TAZ also helped inspire various movements including Burning Man.⁴⁶ Therein lies one end of the individualist interpretation of “spiritual anarchism.”

At the other end of the spectrum we see a collectivist approach that tends to emphasize responsibility, connections, community, mediating, healing, solidarity, service, and a sense of oneness with all existence. One step beyond the edge of what people have labeled “spiritual anarchism,” we may find something like “natural anarchism” as advocated by patrice jones (2009): “It’s a false kind of freedom that depends on the separation of the individual from the community and its enveloping ecosystem. ...Liberation does not mean freedom from all constraint. Liberation means freedom from unjust or unnatural restraints. ...Thus the ultimate aim of natural anarchism is the restoration of the relationships severed by the state.”⁴⁷ Without mentioning “spirituality,” jones implied natural, justifiable restraints and echoed Marshall’s association of “spiritual anarchists” with “obligation to natural law” by declaring: “liberation is connection” looking to animals and nature for inspiration.⁴⁸ On the inner edge of what people have labeled “spiritual anarchist,” we find a pagan anarchist, author, and activist such as Starhawk whose vision sounds quite similar to that of jones:

⁴⁴ Wilson 1993a: 70.

⁴⁵ Helms (2004: 3). Versluis discussed Wilson/Bey’s “proclivity” for “love of boys” but added that it “is worth recognizing that cultural norms do differ” on this matter (2014: 144).

⁴⁶ Harvey 2013.

⁴⁷ jones 2009: 245–246; Or, as Forbes put it, if a person loses their hand, they still live but if they lose the sun, the plants, or the air, they die: “What is my real body? We are not autonomous, self-sufficient beings as European mythology teaches ...We are rooted just like the trees” (2001: 291).

⁴⁸ jones 2009: 245.

The mysteries are what is wild in us, what cannot be quantified or contained. But the mysteries are also what is most common to us all: blood, breath, heartbeat, the sprouting of seed, the waxing and waning of the moon, the turning of the earth around the sun, birth, growth, death, and renewal. To Witches, the cosmos is the living body of the Goddess, in whose being we all partake, who encompasses us and is immanent within us. ...But power-from-within is also akin to something deeper. It arises from our sense of connection, our bonding with other human beings, and with the environment. ...To connect, to build bonds of caring and community, to create structures of support that can nurture us and renew our strength, are powerful acts of resistance.⁴⁹

Starhawk co-founded the pagan Reclaiming Collective as well as women-led anti-militarism network Code Pink, and has led workshops in nonviolent resistance and Earth Activist permaculture courses.⁵⁰ As we see, both individualist and community-oriented wings of “spiritual anarchism” tend to identify “self” with the “Divine” yet they seem to mean different things by that assertion (or at least translate them into very different implications and applications). Thus, while people have used the term “spiritual anarchism” to refer to everything in between Allin/Wilson/Bey and Jones/Starhawk (as well as beyond that linear spectrum), no one has thus far studied it.

This chapter aims to address and discuss gaps in relevant scholarship as well as provide resources and ideas for new conversations. I do not, however, provide a comprehensive or rigorous study here. Instead, I offer these stories and findings as “conversation starters.” To these ends, I purposefully choose breadth over focus veering more toward encyclopedic than theoretical. Deviating from conventional structure, I provide cursory overviews (the resources) interwoven throughout this chapter with cri-

⁴⁹ Starhawk 1988: 6, 7 10, 84.

⁵⁰ Not without her own challenges, Starhawk faced critique from MaxZine Weinstein (2003) who complained about adulation of the “anarcho-goddess” Starhawk at pagan events and her complicity in that. While believing in “greater forces,” Weinstein felt that “spirituality” easily turns into “religion” and “seduces radical anarchists and creates an environment of repackaged religion under the guise of some supposedly liberating spirituality” (2003: 32).

tical reviews (ideas) in dialogue with—not just about—those who advocate some form of “spiritual anarchism.” I organize the chapter in the following sequence: introduction to the topic (Section 1: Introduction); discussion of conceptual framework and language (Section 2: Concepts and Language); overview of relevant terminology and development (Section 3: Terms and Background); general overview of the literature (Section 4: Material); closer look at selected material with consideration of racial whiteness (Section 5: Critical View: A Race for Anarchy?); presentation of overlooked figures (Section 6: Spirited Away: Forgotten Legacies), and finally a turn toward stories of practice/organization rather than ideas and writing (Section 7: Beyond Words: A Critical View of “Spiritual Anarchist” Praxis). We currently have no field of—or broad conversations—about “spiritual anarchism” but, if we did, what might they look like?

II. Concepts and language

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) insisted that asymmetric power relations ultimately corrupted both sides of a relationship.⁵¹ The very fact that I *can* write (in English no less) and publish texts marks my own asymmetrical position of power—while resisting power—in a world where a billion people cannot read and a tiny fraction participate in “expert”-based academia. I value diversity and inclusion yet while varieties of English continue to expand, hundreds of indigenous languages continue to die out or face extinction. In English, we have to work extra hard to see fundamental relationships and interdependence that come more naturally in Native tongues because we have words such as “religion,” “philosophy,” “politics,” “science,” and so on that divide the world, divide, knowledge, and divide people—unequally—from one another and the environment upon which we all depend. To help conceptualize underlying complexities, connections, and paradoxes I add a significant caveat to all apparent binaries here: rather than either/or, read both/and (while leaving space for neither/nor); rather than opposition, read complementarity; rather than

⁵¹ See Wollstonecraft (1792).

a neat “study” that “proves” a “thesis,” read sets of subjective observations and perspectives aimed to challenge assumptions, increase inclusion, and add to existing conversations about radical personal and social transformation. This caveat of admitted “messiness,” informed my (imperfect) choice to integrate some Native voices from (in the following order Oglala Lakota, Yankton band/ Standing Rock, Hopi, Yaqui, Klamanth, and Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) throughout this chapter rather than attempt to select a single one in the section on “Forgotten Legacies.”⁵² Native voices collectively share worldviews that fundamentally challenge the conceptual and practical underpinnings and ideologies of English and academic discourse which unconsciously affect all who partake. As Maia Ramnath wrote in *Decolonizing Anarchism*: “The fact is that every dimension of modernity as we know it was built on colonial history.”⁵³ Reconfiguring one term would entail reconfiguring the broader constellation of ideas in which it found itself embedded. As Timothy Fitzgerald (2007) has argued, the categories of “religion” and “religions”, not only form a basis for “the ideology of religious studies,” they also play a foundational role in constituting modernity and colonial consciousness: “We are not studying what exists in the world, but by reproducing religion and religions we are tacitly reproducing the whole rhetorical configuration.”⁵⁴ In this regard, “anti-religion” anarchists and religious studies scholars alike confirm colonial ideology by using these terms as if they apply universally. Cedric Robinson (1940–2016) went so far as to argue that European anarchists did not actually envision a new society but merely engaged in “rearranging the ideas of that bourgeois society.”⁵⁵ H. L. T. Quan wrote that, “despite its claim of heresy, anarchism in the West remains faithful and obedient to the ontologies and life-worlds that gave birth to it.”⁵⁶ Similarly, Russell Means (1939–2012), of the American Indian Movement (AIM), accused capitalist industry,

⁵² To a lesser extent I interspersed mentions of Unitarian Universalists with whom I affiliate.

⁵³ Ramnath 2011: 29.

⁵⁴ Fitzgerald 2007: 26.

⁵⁵ Robinson 1980: 215.

⁵⁶ Quan 2013: 125.

as well as “the so-called theories of Marxism and anarchism,” of “despiritualizing the universe.”⁵⁷

Most Native languages did not see a need to conceive of a “religion” or “spirituality” in order to describe their lives. Interestingly, the Chinese word “Dao” translates the “Way” and we hear this term among Native Americans. As told by Vine Deloria, Jr. (1933–2005):

Someone was telling me last night that when the Navajo went to the Parliament of World Religions in Cape Town last year, one of their elders said, “We don’t have a religion, but we do have a ‘way.’” That’s why you didn’t have religious conflict between tribes. You might have fought over everything else—women, horses, or buffalo—but not over religion. Each person, each group, had to do what their tradition told them to do.⁵⁸

While obeying “tradition” may sound overly restrictive, one gets an idea of such “restrictions” from the Hopi as told by Kendrick Fritz: “the Spider Grandmother did give two rules. To all men, not just Hopis. If you look at them, they cover everything. She said, ‘Don’t go around hurting each other,’ and she said, ‘Try to understand things.’...You learn to respect everything because you *are* everything”⁵⁹ Rather than focusing on belief, emphasis has resided on pragmatism. Lee Irwin wrote, Native American spirituality “is not so much about things or actions or quantifiable beliefs, but about the consequences of human decisions, the quality of life, the way things work, how life is valued and enhanced.”⁶⁰ With such justifiable restraints (recalling Jones), Native people did not need “freedom of religion” because they generally did not suppress beliefs.⁶¹ As Rebecca Tsosie wrote:

...most traditional Native societies did not separate their systems of thought into separate domains of “religion,” “philosophy,” and “science,” although their epistemologies contain all of those functions. To the contrary, many Native societies operate within a

⁵⁷ Means 1991: 72–73; Also see Barsh (1988).

⁵⁸ Smith 2007: 12.

⁵⁹ Heat-Moon 1999: 187.

⁶⁰ Irwin 1996: 310–311.

⁶¹ Also see Lindquist (2014: 87).

holistic understanding of the rules and responsibilities that govern the relations between people and all components of the natural world, whether human or non-human.⁶²

By imagining disciplinary categories (which Native people never had) and building institutions of research on those categories (imposed upon Natives through colonial occupation) European “Enlightenment” traditions embedded unconscious ideological commitment into the very fiber of supposedly “neutral” academic language and terminology. Ironically, technical sciences have advanced to the degree that English fails to describe the “reality” that quantum physics reveals. Physicist David Bohm (1980), a friend of J. Krishnamurti’s, sought to modify English (a form he called “rheomode”) in order to make it more similar to verb-based Native American languages that he saw as better suited to describe quantum mechanics (forces that *move* rather than “are”).⁶³

These perspectives may help explain some of this chapter’s idiosyncrasies: (1) As with “religion,” I do not assume here that words such as “freedom” or “history” can have non-ideological senses,⁶⁴ (2) I try to speak here of *stories* and translate “religious belief” or “ideology” as *life-organizing stories* and “religion” or “politics” as *life-organizing practices*, and (3) Except when quoting others, I have avoided use of the verb “to be” (which “allows us to play God using the omniscient ‘Deity mode’ of speech,” oversimplifies messy questions of “identity,” and ascribes transient reality a static character).⁶⁵ With this conceptual foundation and

⁶² Tsosie 2012: 1138.

⁶³ On a related note, see *Blackfoot Physics* by Peat (2002).

⁶⁴ The English word “history” refers to a common language term for “past events,” personal life story, as a Eurocentric academic discipline, and as a linear-oriented system of bureaucratic records and documentation using the mythical birth year of Jesus as the center of chronology. For critical views of “history,” see Christian (2005) and Fuglestad (2005). The English word “Freedom,” refers to a dominant social value with mythic implications (people kill and die for it) yet remains ambiguous, contradictory (always tied to an “unfreedom”), and unnecessary (traditional stateless societies had neither enslavement nor prisons yet no word for “freedom”). For a decolonizing of “freedom,” see Fiscella (2015: 130–276).

⁶⁵ Kellogg and Bourland 1991: 42; Bourland refers to English without forms of “to be” as E-Prime.

appreciation for some limitations and impact of English language bias, we proceed now to terminology.

III. Terms and background

This section shall address some fundamental terms related to “spiritual anarchism” beginning with its constituent components and ease toward an overview of early and current uses of the term.

“Anarchism” has elicited a variety of interpretations. This includes reluctant anarchists who oppose government for pragmatic reasons but do not necessarily oppose *all* government as a matter of principle⁶⁶ and also includes reluctant statist who may regard the state as wrong in principle but do not necessarily oppose government expansion in practical terms.⁶⁷ Finally, it has also included people who simply organize with other people non-hierarchically.⁶⁸

The term “spiritual” has a similarly wide range. Jeremy Carrette and Richard King (2005) traced it from the Latin *spiritus* (breath of life) to the individualization of the term which ostensibly began with Ignatius Loyola (founder of the Jesuits) in the 1500s and, in particular, Madame Guyon in the 1600s. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, writers, speakers, and activists such as Swami

⁶⁶ See, for example, Patricia Crone’s (2000) discussion of “reluctant anarchists” such as the Najdiyya and certain Mutazilite ascetics within early Islam. Though they preferred to have a righteous caliphate, circumstances led them to advocate anarchism.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Kate Soper’s interview with Noam Chomsky who has both advocated anarchism and supported expansion of the federal state or Kropotkin and other anarchists’s “reluctant statism” when they supported war against Germany in 1916 and received critique from Errico Malatesta who lambasted them as “pro-government anarchists” (Soper 1998; Malatesta 1977: 248).

⁶⁸ Similarly, Barclay distinguished between anarchy (“the condition in which a society is stateless,” i.e., traditional indigenous societies) and anarchism (“the socio-political theory developed largely in nineteenth-century Europe which reject all forms of domination”) (2002: 105). Broad understandings of anarchism include Mohammed Bamyeh’s view of anarchy as the “de facto practice of everyday life” and David Graeber’s suggestion of “endless examples of viable anarchism... from a klezmer band to the international postal service” (Bamyeh 2010: 61; Graeber 2004: 40).

Vivekananda, D. T. Suzuki, and Helena Blavatsky (co-founder of the Theosophical Society in 1875) popularized Anglophone interest in Eastern mysticism and the practice of “spiritualism” (communication with the dead) similarly spread during this period.

Descendants of enslaved Africans (like Natives) had European conceptions of “spiritual” diversity forced upon them:

Thrust into the bowels of New World terrorism, her inferior status caused her at times to abort her old life-affirming notions of self and spirituality, and to adopt debilitating ones. She was now subjugated to the European’s wants, desires, and ways of life. His puritan mindset, proslavery rhetoric, anti-African ideology, biblical text, and colonial laws served to deaden her precolonial sense of selfhood and seal her subjugation.⁶⁹

With Muslims, Christians, and Animists forced to live together through enslavement, “spirituality” for African Americans morphed into an interfaith practice “that collectively sustained and empowered them in times of crisis. ...It reconnected them to God, the spirit world, land, nature, and each other.”⁷⁰

During the 1800s, “spiritual” developed a noun form as African Americans “learned the Christian language of their oppressor(s), reinterpreted and subverted that language, and creatively communicated that subversion in song.”⁷¹ This could entail blending archetypes from previous traditions with new ones. By “envisioning God and Christ as tricksters and usurpers,” African Americans made “a way out of no way” and “used their religious and spiritual convictions to subvert White, racist, and patriarchal hegemony; ...agitate for social justice; and maintain a sense of community.”⁷² For many people, “spirituality” relates to anything from choir to cooking, from gardening to resistance.

By the 1970s, the term “spiritual” could appear without any association of a “spirit world” such as in the second Humanist Manifesto of 1973 which stated: “The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine ‘spiri-

⁶⁹ Harrison 2009: 54.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 208–209.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*: 200.

⁷² Mattis and Jagers 2001: 523.

tual' experience and aspiration."⁷³ The term "spirituality" today often connotes what "spiritual anarchism" implied 100 years ago except, of course, framed in positive terms: "The goal is not to defer to higher authority, but to have the courage to become one's own authority."⁷⁴ This appears relevant because, in the United States alone, an increasing number of people (already 17 million by 2012) identify as "spiritual but not religious" (a term popularized by AA and Twelve-Step programs).⁷⁵

The first instances that I could find of any variant of "spiritual anarchism" appeared in newspaper articles in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These mentions of "spiritual anarchism" implied or denoted things as varied as atheism,⁷⁶ pacifism,⁷⁷ Theosophy,⁷⁸ absence of moral direction,⁷⁹ lawless libertinism,⁸⁰ rejection of biblical authority,⁸¹ and the dismal state of London cultural life in the 1920s.⁸² It often bore a negative connotation as in *Mysticism* (1911) where Evelyn Underhill insisted that the "view which regards the mystic as a spiritual anarchist receives little support from history; which shows us, again and again, the great mystics

⁷³ Gina Allen et al. *Humanist Manifesto II*, 1973. <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto2/>

⁷⁴ Heelas and Woodhead 2005: 4.

⁷⁵ Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, "Nones' on the Rise," 9 October 2012. <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/> Accessed 27 October 2014.

⁷⁶ A letter to the editor reads: "atheism is anarchism, in the spiritual realm" in the *Blue-Grass Blade*, Springer 1908: 15.

⁷⁷ Krishnamurti 1944: 1.

⁷⁸ A "Dr. Coues" stated that members of the Theosophical Society "are to the spiritual world ... what the Chicago anarchists are to the political world... They are the spiritual anarchists ... If they were numerous enough they would create disorder and confusion, and play sad pranks in society" (*Evening Star* 1889: 11).

⁷⁹ According to the *British Medical Bulletin*, "Without this loving despotism of the parents, the child turns towards spiritual anarchism, becoming a law unto himself, and missing the two primary 'goods' of human life—control of self and consideration of others" (1947: 249).

⁸⁰ Weltin 1956: 382.

⁸¹ A "Reverend Omer" stated: "In the divine government, if every citizen were allowed to erect his own standard of duty, we would soon run into a state of spiritual anarchy" (*St. Louis Republic* 1902: 10).

⁸² Banks 1930: 38.

as faithful sons of the great religions.”⁸³ The first instance that I have found of a public advocate for some form of “spiritual anarchism” appeared in the semi-autobiographical novel *El Árbol de la Ciencia* (1911) by Pío Baroja (1872–1956) where the main character “was inclined to a spiritual anarchism, based on kindness and piety, with no practical solution.”⁸⁴ The earliest instance I found of “spiritual anarchist” to describe someone positively appeared in 1914 where Voltairine de Cleyre (1866–1912) posthumously used the term to describe Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882).⁸⁵

Around the same period, Sri Aurobindo Ghose (also Ghosh, 1872–1950) created perhaps the first explicit and specific articulation of “spiritual anarchism” as an ideology.⁸⁶ Aurobindo wrote “the perfectly spiritualised society will be one in which, as is dreamed by the spiritual anarchist, all men will be deeply free, and it will be so because the preliminary condition will have been satisfied.”⁸⁷ Using “Nature” as a guideline, Aurobindo felt that humanity ascended through “spiritual” stages corresponding to individualism/democracy, then socialism, and finally anarchism.⁸⁸ He saw both revolutionary and state force as necessary until the final stage when reason would rule. Probably with Tolstoy and Gandhi in mind, he critiqued “impossible self-abnegation” and “asceticism” which impoverished life and ignored the “many real and valuable gains” of “civilization.”⁸⁹ Yet, as Vishwanath Varma (1976) observed, Aurobindo did not emphasize “spiritual anarchism” but rather saw it as a byproduct of a “spiritualized society.”⁹⁰

⁸³ Underhill 2002: 95–96.

⁸⁴ 1911: 55 (translation my own); Baroja had described himself as “a liberal radical, an individualist and an anarchist” and an enemy of first “Church” and then “State” in that order (Baroja 1920: 219).

⁸⁵ She wrote, “None who are familiar with the thought of Emerson can fail to recognize that it is spiritual Anarchism” (de Cleyre 1972: 145).

⁸⁶ Aurobindo published his ideas related to this as early as 1915–1918 in a series of articles later printed as books in *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1919) and *The Human Cycle* (1949).

⁸⁷ Aurobindo 1997: 259.

⁸⁸ Ibid: 193.

⁸⁹ Ibid: 219.

⁹⁰ Varma 1976: 300–304.

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) figures as an early promoter of some form of “spiritual anarchism” through his use of similar terms as early as the 1920s. Like Aurobindo, he saw concentrated power as a necessary stage before ultimately attaining “divine Anarchy” and this bothered him.⁹¹ Yet, the anarchic goal, however distant, remained important and intimate: “Anarchy of the Spirit alone is the true Freedom.”⁹² Yet in contrast to those who saw inner change as a precursor to social change, Du Bois saw the reverse and maintained that “individual equality and the free soul is impossible” without first establishing an essentially socialist society that guarantees “equality of opportunity.”⁹³ In David Haekwon Kim’s (2004) summary of Du Bois’s position: “there can be no spiritual freedom or anarchy without political freedom or anarchy.”⁹⁴ Despite seeming to differ from Aurobindo in his emphasis on external change as a prerequisite for internal change, their views seem similar. Du Bois, however, did not develop the theme, nor did he have—as Aurobindo did—a woman like Mirra Alfassa (founder of Auroville) who would put those ideas into practice.

Within anarchist contexts, “spiritual anarchism” and “anarchist spirituality” seem to have necessarily implied a rejection of the state. Yet whatever type of “spiritual anarchist,” they all seem to reject the authority of church and state in determining beliefs or behavior. Beyond that, they often espouse some sort of sanctification of “self” (defined individually or collectively), a general reverence for nature, conceptions of existential oneness, external social change as intertwined with internal personal change, and an emphasis on immediate experience and/or behavior and a critique of language limitations. In other words, contemporary use of “spiritual anarchism” does, however ambiguously, seem to refer to a certain terrain of ideas and practices wherein people typically view change as both “internal” and “external” and/or identify the self with the divine. If, then, “spiritual anarchism” serves as a useful term in some sense we can examine how some

⁹¹ Du Bois [1928] 1995: 283.

⁹² Du Bois cited in Kim (2004: 69).

⁹³ Kim 2004: 67–69.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*: 68. For a development of Du Bois’ thought, especially in regard to his limitations on gender, see Griffin (2000).

have used it, how they have not used it, and imagine how we *could* use it.

IV. Material

This section shall provide a broad overview of various instances in which the term has appeared in order to capture a bird's eye view of how people have treated the term. The first list includes all people whom I found designated "spiritual anarchist" by someone other than themselves. The second list includes every piece I could find that specifically addressed the topic of "spiritual anarchism" in one way or another. After presenting material in this section, we have a better grasp of what people have already said in order to make preliminary assessments about patterns (if any) and also to discuss what patterns did not appear.

Concerning people whom observers have described as "spiritual anarchist," I found the following:⁹⁵ Lao Tzu,⁹⁶ Leo Tolstoy,⁹⁷ Henry David Thoreau,⁹⁸ William Godwin,⁹⁹ William Blake,¹⁰⁰ William Lloyd Garrison,¹⁰¹ Robert Anton Wilson (RAW),¹⁰² Peter Lamborn Wilson (PLW),¹⁰³ William Burroughs,¹⁰⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson,¹⁰⁵ Walt Whitman,¹⁰⁶ Toshihiko Izutsu,¹⁰⁷ Max Stirner,¹⁰⁸

⁹⁵ List compiled primarily through Internet and database searches.

⁹⁶ Fox 2001: 19–20.

⁹⁷ Cannon 2014.

⁹⁸ Canby 1929: 789.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Wilson 2002. Marshall wrote that Blake (1757–1827) saw humans as interdependent with nature and "went on to reject all moral rules and man-made laws" (Marshall 1944: 22). Marshall described him as "visionary anarchist" yet clearly sees Blake as both "spiritual" and "anarchist" (confirmed via correspondence with author 16 February 2019).

¹⁰¹ Boitani 1979: 218.

¹⁰² Versluis 2014: 136.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*: 140.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*: 104.

¹⁰⁵ Žižka-Marušiaková 2012.

¹⁰⁶ Mitchell 2015; Sarracino 1974: 15.

¹⁰⁷ Ueno 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Henderson 1918: 4.

Friedrich Nietzsche,¹⁰⁹ Henrik Ibsen,¹¹⁰ Alan Clements,¹¹¹ Remy de Gourmont,¹¹² Pío Baroja,¹¹³ Abiezer Coppe,¹¹⁴ Jacob Frank,¹¹⁵ Henry Corbin,¹¹⁶ Henry Miller,¹¹⁷ Henry Wright,¹¹⁸ Henry “Harry” Hay,¹¹⁹ Ivan Illich,¹²⁰ Robert Ingersoll,¹²¹ Gustav Landauer,¹²² Charlie Chaplin,¹²³ Martin Buber,¹²⁴ Mattias Gardell,¹²⁵ Gary Snyder,¹²⁶ John Scotus Eriugena,¹²⁷ Oliver Cromwell,¹²⁸ Shakespeare,¹²⁹ Aleksandr “A. A.” Meier,¹³⁰ Nikolai Berdyaev,¹³¹ Rudolf Steiner,¹³² Jiddu Krishnamurti,¹³³ Keshub Chandra Sen,¹³⁴

¹⁰⁹ Goodway 2011: 157; Iliopoulos 2014: 12.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Pignataro 2003: 20.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Gleaves 1971.

¹¹⁴ Levy 1995: 141.

¹¹⁵ Peter Lamborn Wilson described the neo-Sabbatean Jacob Frank in Poland as “spiritual anarchist” in Akers et al (2012).

¹¹⁶ Ben Chasny cited in Riley (2017).

¹¹⁷ Sarracino 1974.

¹¹⁸ Whyte 2012: 83.

¹¹⁹ Hay co-founded Radical Faeries. Wilson 2002.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Voorsanger 1913: 249.

¹²² Newman 2010: 11. Landauer’s name often appears in these contexts. For more on his life and work, see Hoppen (2017), Landauer (2010), and Maurer (1971).

¹²³ Zein 2016: 6–7.

¹²⁴ Magid 2017: 58.

¹²⁵ Höjer 2007.

¹²⁶ Mazura 2017: 34; Ueno (2016: 153) claimed that Snyder had used the term “spiritual anarchism” in his essay “Buddhist Anarchism” (1961). I cannot however find evidence of that in any version that I have seen. For more on Snyder’s approach to anarchism and spirituality, see Taylor (2005).

¹²⁷ Eagleton 2010: 25.

¹²⁸ Harrison 1908: 149.

¹²⁹ Beadle 2015: 47.

¹³⁰ Iliopoulos 2014: 73.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Barnes 2005: 17; Also see Preparata (2006).

¹³³ Gopal 1995: 96.

¹³⁴ Rambachan 1994: 27.

Swami Nirmalananda,¹³⁵ Sri Aurobindo,¹³⁶ Osho,¹³⁷ Mohandas Gandhi,¹³⁸ and, three of the few women associated with the term, Starhawk (Miriam Simos),¹³⁹ author Anaïs Nin,¹⁴⁰ and the British suffragette Dora Marsden.¹⁴¹ On a few occasions, authors have described “Hindus”¹⁴² or “shamans”¹⁴³ in general as “spiritual anarchists.” Others have attributed the label to movements such as early Christians,¹⁴⁴ Anabaptists in general,¹⁴⁵ Tantra,¹⁴⁶ Swiss Brethren in particular,¹⁴⁷ New Age circles,¹⁴⁸ certain Russian Symbolists,¹⁴⁹ American Discordians,¹⁵⁰ and Dadaism.¹⁵¹

The following charts organize all of the essays, articles, books, lectures,¹⁵² and blogs that I could find that have explicitly discussed “spiritual anarchism” or “anarcho-spirituality.” In order to retain a semblance of focus, I have restricted this list to those

¹³⁵ Martin 1999.

¹³⁶ Chakraborty 1997.

¹³⁷ Marshall 2010: 530, 746 citing Stewart Edwards, “Spiritual Anarchism,” *Bulletin of Anarchist Research* 21 July 1990: 26. (I have not yet acquired the original source that Marshall cited).

¹³⁸ Badrinath 2016: 42; Also, see Stallings-Ward comparing Gandhi and Durruti (2011).

¹³⁹ Amster 2012: 4.

¹⁴⁰ Fitch 1993: 200.

¹⁴¹ Clarke 1996: 50.

¹⁴² “The Hindu has been a spiritual anarchist, his faith being intensely personal and individualistic” (Mohammada 2007: 79); Also, see Khalfaoui 2009: 85. Sri Aurobindo referred to India’s Golden Age as one of “spiritual anarchism” (Ghosh 2011: 45).

¹⁴³ Lindquist 2004: 87.

¹⁴⁴ Jenson and Wilhite 2010: 81.

¹⁴⁵ Walker 2013: 57.

¹⁴⁶ Dowman 1985: 3.

¹⁴⁷ Gross 2013.

¹⁴⁸ Cuda 2017: 82–83; Citing Bamyeh’s definition of anarchism, Cuda wrote: “New spirituality groups can be categorized as forms of anarchism” that “are organized outside of traditional religion, ‘voluntarily through various institutions, groups and informal networks, which form a theater of non-state oriented methods of collaboration [and] mutual aid’” (2017: 93).

¹⁴⁹ Hellman 2018: 20. Also see Rosenthal (1977).

¹⁵⁰ Greer 2013: 183.

¹⁵¹ Fernée 2014: 28.

¹⁵² I have included recorded public lectures but not online videos/podcasts sans audience. I made one exception with Herve from Los Angeles who identified as homeless.

that included a variant of “spiritual anarchism” (alt. “anarchist spirituality,” “anarcho-spirituality,” etc.) in the heading of their presentation or at least use the phrase repeatedly in their talk or text. The more that a presenter performed research, spoke descriptively, tried to present more than one perspective, and provided the listener/reader with sources (footnotes, bibliography, etc.), the more likely I would categorize their work as *formal* (Chart 1). The less they did, the more likely I would categorize it as *polemical* (Chart 3). As a spectrum, I placed those with a blended approach in the middle (Chart 2).

In the first list (above the three charts) of 46 individuals labeled “spiritual anarchist,” we see skewed ethnic representation through an abundance of white male writers (including four Henrys and six Williams/William’s sons aka Wilsons), eight Asian names appeared (six of those from India), and no indigenous peoples, Central or

Chart 1. Formal presentations of “spiritual anarchism.”

Author/ Speaker	Year	Title	Format/ Length	Central references or concerns
1.1 Vishwanath Prasad Varma	1960	Spiritual Anarchism: Tolstoy, Gandhi and Aurobindo	Book chapter subheading/ 5 pages	Aurobindo’s pro-technology and anti-ascetic “spiritual anarchism” versus the “spiritual anarchism” of Tolstoy and Gandhi
1.2 Edwin Gleaves	1971	Hemingway and Baroja: Studies in Spiritual Anarchism.	Article/ 13 pages	Pío Baroja, non-activist anarchism
1.3 Carmen Sarracino	1974	Henry Miller, Spiritual Anarchist.	Ph.D. dissertation/ 119 pages	Henry Miller, Zen, Thoreau

(Contd.)

Chart 1. *(Continued)*

Author/ Speaker	Year	Title	Format/ Length	Central references or concerns
1.4 Peter Marshall	1992	Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism	Book/818 pages ¹⁵³	Daoism, Zen, Blake, Osho, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave
1.5 Jana Žižka- Marušíaková	2012	Spiritual Anarchy in Emerson	Masters thesis/ 68 pages	Emerson, Daoism, Zen, Stoics, Transcen- dentalists
1.6 Arthur Versluis	2014	Dogmas, Catmas, and Spiritual Anarchism	Book chap- ter/8 pages	Discordians, Burroughs, RAW, Thornley, Benares, Snyder, Beatniks, magic, marijuana, Zen
1.7 Arthur Versluis	2014	Spiritual Anarchy: Tantra and Islamic Heterodoxy	Book chap- ter/8 pages	PLW/Bey, tantra, TAZ
1.8 Alexei Anisin	2019	Spiritual anarchism	Subheading in article/ 3 pages	Nonviolence, Ahimsa, Tolstoy, Berdyaeu, Dorothy Day, Chris Crass, Gandhi, anarchist spiritual transformation

¹⁵³ Less than a page of his deals explicitly with the term “spiritual anarchism” yet Marshall views many of the topics covered throughout the book (Daoism, Zen, Blake, Osho, etc.) as falling under into the category.

Chart 2. Semi-Formal/Polemical presentations of “spiritual anarchism.”

Author/Speaker	Year	Title	Format/Length	Central references or concerns
2.1 Peter Lamborn Wilson	1993b	Caliban’s Masque: Spiritual Anarchy and the Wild Man in Colonial America.	Book chapter/ 22 pages	On colonial America when “European vagabonds transmuted themselves into Noble Savages,” Thomas Morton of Merry Mount, Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams, Quakers, Ranters, Freemasonry
2.2 Chakraborty, S. K.	1997	From Intellectual Anarchism to Spiritual Anarchism	Journal editorial/ 2 pages	Aurobindo
2.3 Peter Lamborn Wilson	2002	Spiritual Anarchism.	Public lecture/ 1 h, 56 min. (includes 35 min. Q&A)	Blake, pre-civilization societies, Illich, antimomian Christians, Moorish Science Temple, narrating the past, tech-critique, etc.

(Contd).

Chart 2. (Continued)

Author/Speaker	Year	Title	Format/Length	Central references or concerns
2.4 <i>Fifth Estate</i> (Sunfrog aka Andrew Smith), Max Cafard [aka John Clark], Snyder, Weinstein, etc.)	2003	Theme title: the spirit of Anarchy. Article titles: "Spiritual Anarchism: Topics for Research," "Anarcho-spirituality and its Discontents," "Da(o) Da(o) Spirituality," and others.	Journal theme/ Ca. 32 pages	Buddhist Anarchism, Dada, Daoism, Zen, Starhawk, Blake, PLW lists a variety of antinomian groups
2.5 Erik Davis	2010	Nomad Codes: Adventures in Modern Esoterica.	Book	PLW/Hakim Bey, psychedelics, Burning Man
2.6 Naomi Gross	2013	A Historical Comparison of Anabaptism to Anarchism: To What Extent Do the Swiss Brethren Embody the Ideals of Spiritual Anarchism?	Article/ 7 pages	The Swiss Brethren (early Anabaptist movement)
2.7 Jay Cypher (aka Jamie O'Hara)	2014	Anarchy as Spiritual Practice	Workshop presentation/ 1 h. 18 min.	PLW, national anarchism, ritual, self-sufficiency, Native American traditions, Jung, Eliade, mystical traditions, Moorish Science, Five Percenters, Rastafaris, Mayan Zapatismo, etc.

2.8 Derrick Broze, John Vibes, and Davi Barker ¹⁵⁴	2015	The Conscious Resistance: Reflections on Anarchy & Spirituality	Online book/ 117 pages	Anarchism in Daoism, shamanism, psychedelics, African/Asian/American indigenous traditions, Buddhism, and Islam, etc.
2.9 Patrick Cannon	2016	Martin Buber & Leo Tolstoy: Two Examples of Spiritual Anarchism.	Journal article/ 3 pages	Buber, Tolstoy, Landauer, Bakunin, Emma Goldman
2.10 Toshiya Ueno	2016	Deleuze and Guattari and Buddhism: Toward Spiritual Anarchism through Reading Toshihiko Izutsu	Book chapter/ 26 pages	Izutsu, Deleuze, Guattari, Zen, (unspecified types of) shamanism
2.11 Waldo Noesta	2019	Introduction to Spiritual Anarchism	Blog article/ ca. 12 pages	Catholic anarchist Ammon Hennacy, Alan Watts, Angela Davis, Quakerism, Utah Phillips

¹⁵⁴ In 2018, Broze, who identifies as anarcho-capitalist or “an-cap,” gave a presentation at the annual an-cap “Anarchapulco” gathering, a hugely understudied phenomena that has attracted the likes of ex-Republican congressman Ron Paul, rapper Eric July, punk vocalist Mark Passio, Green Party politician Cynthia McKinney, theorist of elites-as-alien-lizards, David Icke, and, oddly enough, anti-capitalist rapper Immortal Technique who performed there in 2019. Derrick Broze, “Why Are All The Anarchists so F*cked up?” Anarchapulco 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mefQ8i-3cw> Posted 2 July 2018 by The Conscious Resistance.

Chart 3. Polemical presentations of “spiritual anarchism.”

Author/Speaker	Year	Title	Format/Length	Central references or concerns
3-1 Martinito, Mr.	2008	What is Spiritual Anarchism?	Blog post/ Ca. 2 pages	Advocating “spiritual” individualism
3-2 Saint Faust	2008	The Magician as Spiritual Anarchist.	Online document/ 8 pages	Magick, Gnostics, Hakim Bey, TAZ, Crowley, freedom, sex
3-3 Wylden Freeborne	2011	Towards an Anarchist Spirituality	Blog article/ Ca. 4 pages.	Joseph Campbell, Alan Watts, pre-Christian spirituality, unspecified shamanism, civilization critique
3-4 Nickleberry	2011	ASCM and Anarchist Spirituality	Blog article/ Ca. 1 page	Australian Student Christian Movement, Catholic anarchists
3-5 Morten Tolboll	2014	The Matrix Conspiracy Part 1.	Online document/ 3-13 pages	“Philosophical globetrotting,” idleness, Zen, Taoism, anti-Self Help industry, pseudo-skepticism, Krishnamurti
3-6 Herve	2015	Spiritual Anarchism	Video/ 2 min. 30 sec.	Quakers, proposal of Twelve-step program for recovery from “religion,” “Religious authorities of all stripes are a coercive authority over individuals’ spiritual rights.”
3-7 Travis Encix	2017	Why I am a Spiritual Anarchist?	Blog article/ Ca. 1 page	“Spiritual nomadism,” Buddhism, Daoism

3-8 A. Wretch	n.d. ca. 2017	The Chronicles of Anarchy	Online document/ 1,145 pages	Gnosticism, psychedelics, Zodiac, shamanism, magick, Crowley, anti-capitalism, Daoism, oneness, anarchism, tantra, “balance between social justice and PC Fascism”
3-9 <i>Otherworlds Review</i>	2018	Review #7: Spiritual Anarchism	Blog article/ Ca. 8 pages	Remembering, Anna Campbell (1991-2018) ¹⁵⁵ and Kirsten Brydum(1983-2008), ¹⁵⁶ activism, CrimethInc. Daoism, “acknowledging the divinity in others and oneself.”
3-10 Erica Crooks	2019	Spiritual Anarchism: Living in an Anarchist Society/ 5D Earth	Blog post/ c. 3 pages ¹⁵⁷	Law of Attraction, Transgender, heyoka, ¹⁵⁸ combining New Age and anarchism, 5D Earth, anti-bullying
3-11 Anna Ronan	2019	Anarchism as a Spiritual Practice	Booklet/10 pages	Dao, <i>The Tao of Pooh</i> , Libertarian Socialism

¹⁵⁵ Campbell, a member of IWW, died while fighting alongside the Kurdish YPG against ISIS and Turkish forces.

¹⁵⁶ Brydum, anarchist organizer, authored an unpublished text entitled “Spiritual Anarchism” which Otherworlds discussed.

¹⁵⁷ I selected one article but Crooks has at least three more blogs with “spiritual anarchism” in the title, all essentially covering the same themes listed. See <http://officialericcrooks.blogspot.com/2019/07/spiritual-anarchism-living-in-anarchist.html>

¹⁵⁸ Lakota trickster figure. Crooks identified as a “heyoka empaths” and claimed distant Native ancestry but could not remember which tribe.

South Americans, Middle Easterners, Africans, or anyone from the African diaspora.¹⁵⁹ We see a skewed gender representation with three of the 46 as white women (no women of color). Similarly, in regard to movements, several movements labeled “spiritual anarchist” seemed white-dominant (Dadaism, Anabaptism, and Symbolism), two originated in India, and only in one instance, shamanism, did the term apply to an indigenous tradition.

Although most of the names have acquired renown through their writing rather than activism, in my subjective and open-to-question view, one might see at least half of the forty-six as engaging in activism or organizing work of some kind, yet only fifteen of thirty-five white males seem inclined in this direction, all six of the Indian males, and two of the three white females engaged in extensive activism.¹⁶⁰ Also, note that many of the people labeled “spiritual anarchists” did not reject the state on principle (Nin, Cromwell, Aurobindo, Ingersoll, etc.) indicating that the term has sometimes implied broad definitions of “anarchism.”

In the second list (Charts 1–3), of 30 presentations, we find no ethnographic or qualitative studies of “spiritual anarchist” practice. Yet two (1.8 and 2.6) seemed to clearly focus on group practice more than individual writers and their ideas: Gross (2.6) looked at Swiss Brethren practices while Anisin’s study on nonviolent activism concluded: “No spiritually committed anarchists have been observed to engage in violent dissent or ... advocating violent actions.”¹⁶¹ In my highly subjective assessment,

¹⁵⁹ To clarify, I see race as a social construction (superstition) that powerfully influences social life and I drew these assessments based on popular racial norms to expose the racial dynamics that tend to grant greater attention to people seen as “white men.”

¹⁶⁰ While tentative and subjective, I categorized the following as engaged in notable activism or organizational work, founding organizations, campaign work, civil disobedience, etc: Garrison, RAW, PLW, Coppe, Frank, Wright, Hay, Illich, Ingersoll, Landauer, Chaplin, Buber, Gardell, Cromwell, Steiner, Sen, Nirmalananda, Aurobindo, Osho, Krishnamurti, Gandhi, Starhawk, and Marsden.

¹⁶¹ Anisin 2019: 391; Ambiguities, however, remain. Discussions of Aurobindo (1.1 and 2.2) may focus on ideas but Aurobindo’s aim toward practice ultimately manifested in the creation of Auroville. Weinstein’s (2.4) one-page piece focused personal experiences of group practice, PLW/Bey (2.1, 2.3, and 2.4) and, building on his work, Cypher (2.7),

eight of them seemed to lean in a communal/collectivist direction and/or emphasize some form of activism, social practice, and/or organization,¹⁶² twelve seemed to lean toward individualism and/or emphasized writers, ideas, theory, and/or cognitive transformation,¹⁶³ and thirteen seemed to fit neither category comfortably.¹⁶⁴

Here, too, we can see an overrepresentation of whites as authors/presenters, three from Asia (two from India), and none from any Native or African background or perspective. We also see a form of segregation in that mostly Indian writers addressed Aurobindo and the other group of largely (or wholly) white writers generally ignored him and his work.¹⁶⁵ No presentation in Chart 1 gave any attention to either Krishnamurti, Native Americans, or African/African diaspora-based groups as “spiritual anarchists.” In the next charts, two quoted Krishnamurti (3.5 and 3.8).¹⁶⁶ Shamanism and Native Americans also garner some (not extensive) attention in Charts 2 and 3, in least eight instances¹⁶⁷ and we found a slight increase of attention to Africans/African diaspora with discussion of Moorish Science Temple (2.3 and 2.7)¹⁶⁸ and

discussed a wide variety of group practices in cursory sketches making them more difficult to categorize here in regard to practice.

¹⁶² See 1.8, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 3.9, and 3.11.

¹⁶³ See 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 3.1, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8.

¹⁶⁴ See 1.1, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.11, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.11.

¹⁶⁵ Marshall gave Aurobindo a paragraph (1992: 529). Versluis mentioned Aurobindo twice in his book but not in relation to “spiritual anarchism” and likewise for Tolboll. I have seen only one anarchist studies scholar, Brian Morris, give any notable attention to Aurobindo (1996: 108–111).

¹⁶⁶ Inspired by Krishnamurti’s assertion that “Truth is a pathless land” and his conception of “aleness,” Tolboll devoted an entire section of his book to Krishnamurti (2014: 19–26); Wretch quoted Krishnamurti as stating “it is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society” (n.d.: 71).

¹⁶⁷ 2.1, 2.10, 2.3, 2.7, 2.8, 3.3, 3.8, and 3.10.

¹⁶⁸ The Moorish Science Temple (MST) appears repeatedly in Wilson/Bey’s work. In the early 1900s Noble Drew Ali (1886–1929) re-named/re-claimed African Americans as “Moors” and re-interpreted Jesus to mean “justice.” He founded the Moorish Science Temple which spread its teachings through a new scripture: *The Circle Seven Koran* (no relation to the Quran) in the years immediately prior to the founding of the Nation of Islam by W. D. Fard. In 1986 Wilson revived a defunct white beatnik “branch” of Moorish Science named the Moorish Orthodox Church

brief mentions of “Bwiti people of Africa” and their use of the plant Iboga plant (2.8).¹⁶⁹

Only Cypher (2.7) discussed Fiver Percenters¹⁷⁰ and Rastafaris, noting that the former broke down “ISLAM” as “I Self Lord And Master,” and “ALLAH” as “Arm Leg Leg Arm Head” (references to the self as God).¹⁷¹ In regard to Rastas, Cypher acknowledged them as a decentralized group fighting an oppressive state (Babylon) with degrees of self-sufficiency and they engage in “reclaiming and redefining language based on their spiritual views.”¹⁷²

Finally, Waldo Noesta (2.11) quoted black liberation scholar Angela Davis’s revision of the Serenity Prayer: “I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I’m changing the things I cannot accept.”¹⁷³

As with the first list, most—but not all—of the presentations advocated a rejection of the state as well as church authority.

(see Knight 2012: 20–23; 87–92). The MST shared commonalities with the Ahmadiyya, Rosicrucians, Theosophical currents, Freemasons such as the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine (Black Shriners), and, in name at least, the Moorish Zionist Temple founded in 1899. For more on MST, see Curtis (2009), Nance (2002). For black Freemasonry (a major influence on the MST and later the Nation of Islam) see Sesay (2013).

¹⁶⁹ Broze and Vibes (2015: 48) referred (in passing) to the Bwiti tradition in Gabon in regard to the psychotropic Iboga plant. So did Wretch who also mentioned the Somali xeer system of conflict resolution (n.d.: 425, 85).

¹⁷⁰ Also known as the Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE).

¹⁷¹ Promoting an egalitarian and antiauthoritarian interpretation of Islam via Nation of Islam (NOI) teachings, Five Percenters similarly reject the idea of a “mystery God” in the sky. They re-named Harlem “Mecca” and Brooklyn “Medina,” they avoid pork, and yet, unlike the NOI, they adamantly reject the label of “Muslims”—in favor of “Gods” (Knight 2007). Five Percenters have developed a complex interpretational system called the Supreme Alphabet and Supreme Mathematics, which they use to build on tradition with new interpretations, essentially co-creating doctrine in participatory democratic gatherings reminiscent of the Viraśaivas of twelfth century India where men and women would share poetry together in meeting halls and co-create group doctrine (Schouten 1991: 4).

¹⁷² Cypher 2014. Indeed, the Rasta term “I-and-I” means both “we” and “God.” As Edmonds noted, for Rastas the “locus of authority is in each individual” (2003: 71).

¹⁷³ Noesta 2019.

If exclusively white and Asian people have used the term “spiritual anarchist,” that may help explain why we have never heard the term “anarchist spiritual” to refer to African American spirituals. Frederick Douglass said he would “bow to no priests either of faith or of unfaith,”¹⁷⁴ yet I have yet to see anyone declare him a “spiritual anarchist.” This, in light of a range from Shakespeare to Anaïs Nin and from Cromwell to Ingersoll, begs the question as to who does *not* qualify. Dynamics of whiteness and structural racism seem to play a role in perception of the term but they do not fully explain “spiritual anarchism’s” apparent boundaries: I could not find anyone having ever described two well-known white men, Noam Chomsky and William James, as “spiritual anarchist.” With the former a prominent anarchist who has advocated “spiritual transformation”¹⁷⁵ and the latter a forerunner of contemporary “spirituality” who advocated anarchism,¹⁷⁶ one might think they would qualify. While exploring such questions lies beyond the scope of this chapter, we can take at least take a closer look at how some racial dynamics seem to have related to “spiritual anarchism.”

V. Critical view: a race for anarchy?

Tensions between people of color and white anarchists have long persisted in various forms.¹⁷⁷ “Spiritual anarchists” have proven no exception. Adopting ideas from Indigenous peoples, African Americans, or “heretical” Islam—even “respectfully”—does not come without complications. Looking back we can see a long-term pattern of stolen words and distorted tales. Innocent Onyewuenyi argued that, “what we call Greek or Western Philosophy is copied from indigenous African philosophy of the ‘Mystery System.’ All

¹⁷⁴ Aptheker 2001: 77.

¹⁷⁵ Chomsky supported Rosa Luxemburg’s call for “spiritual transformation” (Chomsky 2013: 46).

¹⁷⁶ William James wrote in 1900: “I am becoming more and more an individualist and anarchist and believer in small systems of things exclusively” (Coon 1996: 81).

¹⁷⁷ E.g., Lagalisse (2011) and Hahn (2014: 124).

the values of the mystery system were adopted by the Greeks and Ionians who came to Egypt to study.”¹⁷⁸

As white Freemasons took inspiration from Islamic and Middle Eastern cultures, the Founding Fathers drew from Native Americans as they imagined and conceived new forms of governance. Two primary examples shall illustrate some tensions in contexts of “spiritual anarchism”: the literary blackface and orientalism of Wilson/Bey and Burroughs. Let’s start by looking at two quotes:

[D]ue to self-detrimental mental programs that have been installed in you by your parents, family, society, school, religion, consensus reality, etc. you have been limited and disabled.

— Hakim Bey, *Secret of Secrets*, 2011.

What mysticism really tries to surmount is false consciousness, illusion, Consensus Reality, & all the failures of self that accompany these ills.

— Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.* 1985/2003.

The two quotes seem to reference a single author and both mention “consensus reality” yet appearances deceive. How? Quite simply: two different people currently write under the name “Hakim Bey.” The first Hakim Bey, author of *Secret of Secrets*,¹⁷⁹ appears African American, self-identifies as a Moor, and has membership in the Moorish Science Temple. The second Hakim Bey (PLW) appears European American, self-identifies as an anarchist, and, after working for the government of the Shah of Iran, returned to his native New York and revived the Moorish Orthodox Church (a somewhat Discordian-like white beatnik network of Noble Drew Ali enthusiasts). As Knight stated, “people often speak of the ‘black Hakim Bey’ and the ‘white Hakim Bey’ as though they’re oppositional twins in some cosmic dualism.”¹⁸⁰ By writing *T.A.Z.* under that pseudonym, Wilson gave readers the image of a black man precisely because the name evokes the Moorish Science Temple (where members typically adopt the last name “Bey” or

¹⁷⁸ Cited in King 1999: 29.

¹⁷⁹ Written under the name Moorpheus H. B. (2011).

¹⁸⁰ Knight 2012: 70.

“El”). By borrowing the color and assumed authenticity of blacks, this male white gained street credibility and performed a symbolic coup by firing the imagination of readers who might otherwise have found an identical text by “Peter Lamborn Wilson” less inspirational. Furthermore, the words, “Hakim” (“wise”) and “Bey” (“prince”), have very different implications in relation to race in the United States. When a black man takes a name of prestige, he acts to re-capture a sense of dignity, humanity, and prestige that whites had stolen from him and his ancestors. Whites (especially from the upper middle-class) who call themselves “wise princes” build upon a racial foundation of prestige and skin privilege created through theft, exploitation, and colonialism.

In another example, William Burroughs and Brion Gysin popularized the phrase “Nothing is true—everything is permitted” (hereafter NITEIP) which has appeared in mainstream cultural contexts such as the TV series *True Blood* and the computer game *Assassin’s Creed*. It seems to offer universal license for any activity. Burroughs attributed the phrase to the last words of the famous head of the Assassins, Hasan-i Sabbah, and, through his fictional writing, Burroughs built up his own mythology around Sabbah. In Wilson’s words: “‘Nothing is true; everything is permitted.’ This was the teaching of Hasan-i Sabbah, the first Grand Master of Alamut, called the Old Man of the Mountain.”¹⁸¹

Miles (2000), Geiger (2005), and later Knight (2012) falsely described NITEIP as the result of a “cut-up experiment” by Burroughs.¹⁸² Supposedly Gysin and Burroughs had rearranged or simply taken the words from a chapter heading in Betty Bouthoul’s (1936) book on the Assassins and haphazardly connected it to Hasan-i Sabbah’s dying words. The story fails on several counts. First, Bouthoul used the exact phrase “Nothing is true; everything is permitted” (“*Rien n’est vrai, tout est permis*”) both as chapter title *and* in the text claiming that Hasan-i Sabbah spoke it as his dying words.¹⁸³ Burroughs and Gysin simply took the phrase and story directly from Bouthoul without any creati-

¹⁸¹ Wilson 1988: 56.

¹⁸² “Cut-up” = the cutting up text and rearranging the words. See Geiger (2005: 145–148) and Knight (2012: 18).

¹⁸³ Bouthoul 1936: 196.

ve input. Nietzsche had also used the phrase (“*Nichts ist wahr, Alles ist erlaubt*”) decades earlier yet both he and Bouthoul seem to have taken the phrase from an 1818 book in Bouthoul’s bibliography by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall who used variations of the phrase to describe the philosophy of the Assassins but he neither attributed the phrase directly to Hasan-i Sabbah, did not use quote marks, nor cite any source for the phrase.¹⁸⁴ It seems that von Hammer-Purgstall interpreted the Ismailis; Nietzsche popularized this interpretation; Bouthoul embellished it and placed the phrase in Hasan-i Sabbah’s dying mouth; Gysin and Burroughs popularized the phrase in the U.S. (and mystified their own behavior with smoky clouds of Eastern exoticism). This mystique served not only to justify raw individualism but also disguise their own relationships to colonialism and racism.¹⁸⁵ The disguise worked so well that biographer Miles could list “all of the hideous personages” of Burroughs, including “Hassan-i-Sabbah” and “an old Southern nigger-killin’ sheriff” without mentioning any racial implications.¹⁸⁶

By taking the reader through the gradual steps of this narrative construction I hope it clarifies how passive acceptance of “white people’s words” combined with orientalist manipulations both objectifies and distorts colonized cultures and—in Wollstonecraft’s terms—corrupts both sides of the asymmetrical relationship. From Quakers’ problematic and paternalistic relationship with Native Americans¹⁸⁷ to complex ways in which Freemasons both created interfaith community centers based to some degree on mutual aid and also primarily served white people (including Unitarians and Universalists such as Thomas Starr King, Thaddeus Mason Harris, and Hosea Ballou as well as anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin and occultist Aleister Crowley),

¹⁸⁴ Thanks to Jeff B. Taylor at Vanderbilt University who conducted this research and supplied details through correspondence: “Origins,” <https://my.vanderbilt.edu/jefftaylor/publications/origins/>

¹⁸⁵ For more on Orientalism and how white Occidentals have a long tradition of shaping and distorting images of the East, see Said (1979) and King (1999).

¹⁸⁶ Miles 2000: 184–185.

¹⁸⁷ Milner 1982.

race has affected social justice struggles.¹⁸⁸ While the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) organizes according to a congregational polity akin to Bakunin's federalism and act as pioneers of social justice, they too have struggled with racism in their membership and institutions.¹⁸⁹ Even an anarchist such as John Collier helped entrench colonialism when he helped shape the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the U.S. government.¹⁹⁰ More recently, the anarchic and largely white Rainbow Family of Light, also called Rainbow Nation, came into conflict when they planned to gather 8,000–20,000 people in Black Hills, South Dakota in 2015 and a Lakota group, United Urban Warriors Society, viewing the land as sacred, ardently opposed the plan. Two Lakota activists complained that “the Rainbow Family has no leaders, and no one is really accountable.”¹⁹¹ Michael Muhammad Knight came into conflict with Five Percenters when he accused Lord Jamar of homophobia. Knight ended his identification as a Five Percenter and framed his departure as a result of sexism and homophobia among Five Percenters (both of which he knew of when he joined). He accompanied his farewell essay with a pink and lavender version of the Five Percenter's logo, the Universal Flag, to which a QueenAishah Intelligence responded “looks like you an agent[.] your determined idea was never to learn because if it was you would do just that and stay in your lane[.] not turn around and slander the Nation take the flag and disrespect the people that made it.”¹⁹² Tensions appear even in close relationships. Across

¹⁸⁸ For prominent Unitarians and Universalists as Freemasons, see Sala (2000). For Bakunin as Freemason, see Lagalisse (2018: 297). Crowley additionally admitted working as an agent for the British state (Spence 2000: 361).

¹⁸⁹ For Bakunin's outline for anarchist federation, see Dolgoff (2002). For racism and the UUA, see Morrison-Reed (2011). For UUs and anarchism, see Dewey (2004). For an anarchist UU approach to challenging racism, see Crass (2001).

¹⁹⁰ Hauptman 1983.

¹⁹¹ Briquet 2015. Ultimately, both sides seemed divided on the question and less than 1,500 “Rainbow warriors” showed up with minimal confrontations.

¹⁹² See Knight 2013 plus comments.

chasms such as racial divides, we can at least begin with acknowledging the violence of silence.

VI. Spirited away: forgotten legacies

With much focus on individual white writers, focus on people of color and activist groups has fallen by the wayside. While impossible to address all such cases, this section briefly covers J. Krishnamurti, Earth First!, Womanism, MOVE, and indigenous peoples.

Discussions of “spiritual anarchism” in general have largely ignored J. Krishnamurti’s tremendous, long-term, and widespread influence. Aside from his literature, videos, and recordings, Krishnamurti’s legacy continues on in the schools that he founded. Furthermore, many anarchists and activists over the years have taken his message to heart. In 2005, the journal *Green Anarchy* published an anonymously written text on Krishnamurti’s philosophy (alongside references to Daoism, William Blake, and Dadaism). For the author, one of Krishnamurti’s most important contributions entailed his emphasis on challenging authorities in our “internal environment,” the presuppositions that unconsciously direct us. After all, “if ‘spirituality’ is synonymous with self-awareness, then those that don’t seek it are all mad as hatters. ... all robots, and sleepwalkers.” The author concluded with quotes from Krishnamurti such as:

Friends, why don’t you worship a cloud? Why don’t you pray to the man who is labouring in the fields, or take delight in shadows cast on tranquil waters? While you are worshipping in an enclosed shrine, Life dances in the street and escapes you. If you do not test your strength by throwing away your crutches, how can you know your integrity, your vitality? ...and enjoy that which creates all things.¹⁹³

The author did not mention (and perhaps did not know) that other anarchists have discussed Krishnamurti’s work. Krishnamurti influenced a wide range of people from writers such as Aldous Huxley, Henry Miller, Marshall Rosenberg, Alan Watts, and Timothy Fitzgerald to activists such as the Black Panthers, martial arts le-

¹⁹³ Krishnamurti quoted by *Green Anarchy* (2005: 13).

gend Bruce Lee, Osho, and the founders of the anarchist commune Beeville in New Zealand.¹⁹⁴ At one point in time, an anonymous editor surreptitiously cut and pasted his words into an apocryphal text supposedly documenting a debate between W. D. Fard (founder of the Nation of Islam) and Albert Einstein in 1933.¹⁹⁵

As early as 1931 the feminist Maria Lacerda de Moura wrote in *Estúdios* that Krishnamurti had influenced her.¹⁹⁶ In 1935, Krishnamurti critiqued war, nationalism, and “religion” through seven lectures in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro and Brazilian anarchist press covered his talks positively.¹⁹⁷ According to Mendiola, in 1936, a Spanish vegetarian named Celestino García avoided “politics” and studied Krishnamurti. He and a friend attempted to evade participation in the Spanish Civil War yet ultimately consented to serve in the Bakunin battalion without bearing arms.¹⁹⁸ In 1960 the newspaper of the syndicalist AIT/CNT in exile, *Solidaridad Obrera* published an article by J. Tato Lorenzo, co-founder of the Hermandad Universal Anarquista, where he discussed Krishnamurti’s teaching on ending exploitation and balancing reason and emotion through experimentation: “Find your own path and rise forth. ...Belief is the wealth of the ignorant.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Black Panther David Hilliard stated, “we lived by some of the Eastern philosophies of Krishnamurti. Vegetarianism was a big thing in our BPP. Our school was vegetarian [and] children were on a vegetarian diet.” “The Satya Interview with David Hilliard,” 2004. <http://satyamag.com/apro4/hilliard.html>). Bruce Lee created a new martial arts style, Jeet Kune Do, based on Krishnamurti’s teaching (O’Regan 2005). Osho’s commune Rajneeshpuram named a lake after Krishnamurti (Carter 1990: 10). For his influence on Rosenberg, see Rosenberg (2003: 28). Inspired in part by Krishnamurti, members of the Beeville commune (1933–1973) in New Zealand lived a vegetarian and pacifist lifestyle, engaged in direct action (such as the refusal to pay “war taxes”), regularly served time in jail for refusing military service, and once even broke a fellow member out of prison (Sargisson and Sargent 2004: 33–35).

¹⁹⁵ Aside from Krishnamurti (1970: 129), the text also lifted liberally from Sikh and Christian Scientist sources. For a more detailed discussion, see Fiscella (2015: 361–363).

¹⁹⁶ Queluz 2018.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Mendiola 2015: 12. (Thanks Santiago Gorostiza!)

¹⁹⁹ Lorenzo 1960: 1. Translation from Spanish my own. Supposedly anarchists associated with the individualist anarchist journal *Iniciales* also

In his 1973 work on communes, Laurence Veysey wrote: “Emma Goldman thought it was worth devoting half a page of *Mother Earth* to a scornful account of Krishnamurti’s first arrival in America as the announced Theosophical avatar.”²⁰⁰ However, Goldman’s text appeared in 1913. Krishnamurti (barely 18 at the time) did not arrive in the U.S. until 1922. Nor did the article mention Krishnamurti’s name or seem to know anything about him. It stated: “It is fortunate that this time the Savior of the world is to be a real Yankee. Were he—God forbid—a foreigner, he would in all probability fall into the hands of the Immigration Bureau and be deported, so that the millions of Americans would be robbed of salvation and be doomed to eternal hell-fire.”²⁰¹ Later, *Road to Freedom*, a follow-up journal to *Mother Earth*, quoted Krishnamurti positively in 1930.²⁰² In 1952 Henry Miller described Krishnamurti thusly:

His career, unique in the history of spiritual leaders, reminds one of the famous Gilgamesh epic. Hailed in his youth as the coming Savior, Krishnamurti renounced the rôle that was prepared for him, spurned all disciples, rejected all mentors and preceptors. He initiated no new faith or dogma, questioned everything, cultivated doubt (especially in moments of exaltation), and, by dint of heroic struggle and perseverance, freed himself of illusion and enchantment, or pride, vanity, and every subtle form of domination over others. ... “You seek truth,” he says again, “as it if were the opposite of what you are.”

“*Man is his own liberator!*” Is this not the ultimate teaching? ... He has often been referred to as “the World Teacher.” If any man living merits the title, he does. But to me the important thing about Krishnamurti is that he imposes himself upon us not as a teacher, nor even as a Master, but as a *man*.²⁰³

studied Krishnamurti’s work yet I do not have documentation to verify this.

²⁰⁰ Veysey 1973: 45–46. Based on Veysey, Lagalisse repeated this information (2018: 307).

²⁰¹ *Mother Earth* 1913: 196. Thank you to Candace Falk at the Goldman Papers for digging up this source!

²⁰² Veysey 1973: 49.

²⁰³ *Ibid*: 153, 159.

Miller's depiction neatly captured a contradiction behind the allure and drama of Krishnamurti's seemingly egalitarian message: it depended upon the elite status that he rejected. In demolishing that glamorous pedestal he settled for a more modest one but he never lived an adult life without a pedestal.

For others who have spoken a similar message, attention has not come so easily. Especially when they have translated those ideas into action. We find, for example, very similar starting points of Oneness with nature in womanism, Earth First!, and The MOVE Organization who turned these basic premises into a pragmatic call to defend animals and Mother Earth from assault by humans. Alice Walker, inspired by Zen (among other things), wrote:

Womanism is a social change perspective rooted in Black women's and other women of color's everyday experiences and everyday methods of problem solving in everyday spaces extended to the problem of ending all forms of oppression for all people, restoring the balance between people and the environment/nature, and reconciling human life with the spiritual dimension.²⁰⁴

A womanist: "Loves the Spirit ...Loves struggle. ...Loves herself. *Regardless.*"²⁰⁵ Walker, who has expressed support for MOVE, wrote: "Certainly I don't believe there is a God beyond nature. The world is God."²⁰⁶ Not only does womanism embrace diverse DIY "spiritualities," it involves an inclusive and broad-based "struggle against oppression based on race, gender, and class."²⁰⁷

Although given a name recently, one can trace the intersectional essence of womanism much farther back. For example, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825–1911), an orphan who grew up to write and speak as one of the country's foremost authors and abolitionists. Historian LaRese Hubbard described Harper as "one of the most important figures in African American intellectual history" and a "womanist *sani-baat*, a Wolof word and Senegalese

²⁰⁴ Phillips 2006: xx. At least one scholar, Jessica Sadr, has noticed that "natural anarchism and ecowomanism share conceptual and practical similarities for addressing ecological degradation and remedying uneven relationships between humans and non-human life" (2013: 18).

²⁰⁵ Walker 1983: xii.

²⁰⁶ Ibid: 265.

²⁰⁷ Vanessa Sheared cited in Razak (2013: 221).

concept of ‘voice throwing’ [meaning] a disruptive and self-affirming insertion of women’s voice in spaces and discourses which would exclude or silence them.”²⁰⁸ Harper called for “[e]arnest, self-sacrificing souls” who would make their mark and not allow “blood stained government” to buy their loyalty.²⁰⁹ When living in Philadelphia, she attended both the white First Unitarian Church and the black African Methodist Episcopal Church where she taught Sunday school class. In response to racism in the suffragette movement, she teamed up with Harriet Tubman²¹⁰ and others to found the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1896 (reaching 100,000 members by 1924).²¹¹ With the slogan “Lifting as we Climb,” the NACW “built schools, ran orphanages, founded homes for the aged, set up kindergarten programs, and formed agencies in New York and Philadelphia to help female migrants from the South find jobs and affordable housing.”²¹²

According to Nash, Dave Foreman, white co-founder of the generally anarchist eco-activist group Earth First!, “liked to say that ‘I’m operating as part of the wilderness defending myself,’ and that monkeywrenching was ‘self-defense on the part of the Earth.’”²¹³ Another environmental activist described “spirituality” as knowing “what the trees are saying. ...It has [convinced me we are not] separate from each other, and from the rocks, and everything else.”²¹⁴ With these perspectives various Earth First! and animal liberation activists have committed acts of sabotage to prevent companies from “developing” land and killing or incarcerating animals. Bron Taylor described tactics of Earth First! and animal liberation activists as including tree spiking, sinking whaling ships, hunt sabotage, and arson attacks against trucks, research laboratories, ski lodges, or meat factories. Often however

²⁰⁸ Hubbard 2012: 68, 74.

²⁰⁹ Schulster 2010: 1138.

²¹⁰ For more on Tubman, whom Monica J. Evans called “that most prominent of outlaw women,” see May (2014); Evans cited in Jones (2009: 239).

²¹¹ Now called the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC).

²¹² Rubiner 1996.

²¹³ Nash 1989: 196.

²¹⁴ Taylor 2010: 97.

“self-defense on the part of the Earth” has entailed less confrontational methods. In December 1997, a vegan activist named Julia “Butterfly” Hill climbed a giant redwood (dubbed “Luna” by Earth First! activists) in order to save the tree from logging. She spent two years living atop the tree, enduring winter storms and frostbite, yet “drawing strength from the tree” and only coming down “after negotiating an agreement with the logging company that left Luna standing as well as a two-hundred foot buffer of surrounding trees.”²¹⁵ She said she could feel the tree crying when the company had cut down trees in the vicinity. Graham Innes buried himself in a road up to his neck in order to hinder a company from cutting down trees. He described how, during this period, he felt an “awareness of a hitherto unknown connection—Earth bonding [when the Earth’s] pulse became mine, and the vessel, my body, became the vehicle for her expression.”²¹⁶ In 2012 the *Earth First! Journal* published three pages by and about The MOVE Organization.²¹⁷ Here we could read, for example, Phil Africa writing from prison:

I just wanted to show some appreciation for the work yall do. It does us all good to see people out there with the courage to stand up for what’s Right against this rotten system. ...People need to realize that when they take a stand for what’s Right it is for Themselves they are fighting for. People must realize that there is Nothing more important than LIFE/NATURE. ...To quote JOHN AFRICA: “THE EARTH IS FOOD, WITHOUT EARTH THE SEED IS DEAD, WITHOUTH THE SEED THE EARTH IS DEAD, WITHOUT FOOD ALL LIFE IS DEAD FOR IT AIN’T THE CABBAGE THAT IS THE FOOD, IT IS THE LIFE IN THE CABBAGE THAT KEEP YOU ALIVE. EARTH IS LIFE, THE CABBAGE IS EARTH, WHEN YOU EAT THE CABBAGE YOU ARE EATIN’ THE SOIL JUST A[S] SURELY AS YOU ARE DRINKIN’ YOUR BREATH WITH EVERY SWALLOW OF WATER WHEN THIRSTY” ...end quote
LONG LIVE JOHN AFRICA!²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Taylor 2010: 94.

²¹⁶ Ibid: 95.

²¹⁷ For a comparison of MOVE’s significance in legal studies and their relative exclusion from religious studies, see Fiscella (2016).

²¹⁸ Africa 2012: 12. Particular spellings and emphasis in original.

John Africa founded the MOVE Organization in Philadelphia in the early 1970s. Based on the principle of the absolute unity of life, members lived communally and strove to end all violence (including pollution, racism, prisons, and war). Rejecting trash collection, they put their food scraps on their yard and attracted large numbers of roaches and rats. Defending these “vermin” against pesticide probably made MOVE the first activist group to defend the rights of insects.²¹⁹ After a period of weekly study sessions of the teaching of John Africa, MOVE began protesting zoos, pet stores, and the local Board of Education. Confrontations with police left a MOVE infant dead in 1976, a police officer dead in 1978, nine MOVE members serving 30–100 year sentences, and a 1985 bombing of their home by police which killed eleven people (including five children) and left 250 people homeless.²²⁰ Survivor of the bombing Ramona Africa has long served as spokesperson for MOVE’s continuing activities. Now, MOVE members have raised a generation of urban home-schooled sober youth who express deep concern for animals and nature.

How differently would we think of MOVE and John Africa, a black man, if people would come to believe (correctly or falsely) that his parents who arrived in Philadelphia from Georgia in the early 1800s had Cherokee background? Would these principles of oneness with life, rejection of technology, and harmony with nature somehow seem more ...natural?

Not only do the values of Krishnamurti, Earth First!, womanism, and MOVE resonate with one another, they resonate too with indigenous peoples who seem to, by and large, match or surpass criteria to which the terms “spiritual” and “anarchist” often seem to apply. Native societies resolved conflicts and crime

²¹⁹ Jain ascetics, of course, have avoided killing insects for hundreds of years yet have not, as far as I know, actively defended insects’ *rights*. MOVE and Jains struck a prophetic chord: scientists now assess that corporate pollution, pesticides, and habitat devastation threaten a third of insect species and the entire eco-system of Earth along with them. See technical meta-study at Sánchez-Bayo and Wyckhuys (2019) and popular science overview in *The Guardian* by Carrington (2019).

²²⁰ Boyette and Boyette 1989; Two MOVE members, Merle Africa and Phil Africa, have died in prison. The rest of the “MOVE 9” served 40–42 years in prison before exiting on parole 2018–2020.

without formal law or incarceration,²²¹ provided integrated and inclusive forms of psychotherapy,²²² and they typically organized without state, police, homelessness, standing armies, great wealth disparities, and largely in sustainable relationship with sacred environment.²²³ Furthermore, many Native peoples have had more than two genders and/or allowed transition between them.²²⁴ As seen recently in Standing Rock and other places, many Native Americans/First Nations people continue to challenge corporate and settler state power.²²⁵

Clearly, more than ample material has existed in excluded contexts for people to have potentially characterized them as “spiritual anarchist.”

VII. Beyond words: a critical view of “spiritual anarchist” praxis

This section imagines what studies of “spiritual anarchism” might look like if they examined actual groups and practices. I selected two institutions, Auroville and Twelve-Step programs/Alcoholics Anonymous because (a) I had a degree of familiarity with them as well as access to research on them, (b) they both constitute early pioneers in “spiritual anarchist” contexts; and (c) they both captured my personal interest as groups that created new life-organizing stories and practices designed to heal relationships to self and society. Although I only provide a sketch rather than an actual study, this may hopefully inspire closer examination of these groups and many others.

Mirra Alfassa (1878–1973), a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, founded perhaps the largest “spiritual anarchist” commune in the world: Auroville, a “cluster of ecovillages” in southern India with more than 1,500 residents stewarding 3,000 acres of land.²²⁶ Alfassa founded Auroville on February 28, 1968 in southern

²²¹ E.g., Okulski (2017).

²²² E.g., Lindquist (2014).

²²³ E.g., Barclay (1982).

²²⁴ E.g., Gilden (2006).

²²⁵ E.g., Gilio-Whitaker (2019).

²²⁶ Mueller 1990: 111.

India. Asked by an interviewer about the type of organization that she hoped to see in Auroville, the Mother answered: “a divine anarchy.”²²⁷ Today, members run Auroville as a network of eco-villages consisting of more than 2,000 residents. Their website states that “there are no leaders as such; each person is responsible for the collective becoming of Auroville” and also “The bulk of Auroville’s administration is carried out by autonomous and non-hierarchic working groups.”²²⁸

Yet, Auroville, as studied by Joukhi (2006) and Namakkal (2012), also exemplifies a group of well-intentioned colonists. The members of Auroville initially viewed their Tamil neighbors with great respect. Yet Aurovilians’ respect for the locals also assumed that the Tamil would understand the magnificent project of Auroville as superior to their own existing lifestyle and Tamil traditions. Due to cultural differences and economic disparities, the initial vision of absorbing the local populace into Auroville gave way to a sense of resignation. Instead of joining Aurovilians as equals, the local Tamil worked as servants and provided cheap labor for the Aurovilians who, by and large, did not come from the local region (many came from Europe, the U.S. or northern India) and they did not speak Tamil.

The creation of Auroville, a Western utopia, in India, a site of Western colonial expansion, reproduced colonial institutions, specifically those of race, class, and nation, thus maintaining continuity between the colonial and the postcolonial periods that the architects and visionaries behind Auroville had explicitly hoped to avoid.²²⁹

In Jukka Jouhki’s words: “It seemed as if the Aurovillian ideal of ‘unity in diversity’ meant unity in *Western* diversity.”²³⁰ This “anti-colonial colonialism” (as Namakkal termed it) stemmed from the structural institutions of the global economy and the classes and peoples that it privileged even if the members of Auroville aimed to abolish that system. As far as I can tell, Aurovilians still struggle

²²⁷ Anonymous 1977: 28.

²²⁸ See www.auroville.org

²²⁹ Namakkal 2012: 62.

²³⁰ Jouhki 2006: 186.

with the issue even while they have made progress. In addition to outreach programs, they have begun teaching Tamil to children in Auroville schools.²³¹ Despite setbacks and difficulties, they have persevered. From their humble beginnings, for example, in a largely barren terrain, they planted approximately 2 million trees in their first 30 years alone.²³²

Today with “inhabitants from about 40 different nations” Auroville consists of “nearly 100 communities of varying sizes” and “has nearly two dozen schools, a number of research institutes, cultural centers, a seed bank, forests and sanctuaries, appropriate technology and renewable energy centers, and many commercial units.”²³³ Among the features that have contributed to Auroville’s success, one resident stated ten “essential ingredients” including “commitment to being willing servitors of the divine (in a philosophical rather than religious sense),” a “sense of humor that usually manifests in bizarre forms of self-criticism,” and “a refusal to believe in impossibilities.”²³⁴

Bill Wilson aka Bill W. (1895–1971) and Robert Smith aka Dr. Bob (1879–1950) founded Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in Akron, Ohio in 1935 and in 1939 published the “Twelve Step program” which millions of people have used to address various types of addictions.²³⁵ AA/Twelve Step programs have meetings organized across the world but reject all forms of coercive organization. They lack both membership lists and leaders (rejections made explicit

²³¹ For more on Auroville, see Minor (1999), van den Akker and Lipp (2004), and Vengopal and Kumari (2010).

²³² Mueller 1990: 111.

²³³ *Ibid.*: 112.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*: 113. Watson (1998: 172–174) also noted Native use of humor in overcoming dualism.

²³⁵ The twelve steps include: admit powerlessness in relation to addiction; believe a “higher power” could help; decide to turn one’s life and will over to that higher power; perform moral self-inventory; openly admit wrongdoing; feel ready for “God/higher power” to remove the defects; make such a request; make a list of people wronged and feel prepared to make amends; make amends; continue self-inventory and admit when wrong; use prayer and meditation to ask for direction and strength to follow through; having completed the previous steps, spread the message. See Kurtz (1979) and AAWS (1957).

in Tradition Nine that guides AA groups).²³⁶ Participants identify themselves only by their first name (hence, the “anonymous” aspect of AA). Bill W. described AA as a “benign anarchy.”²³⁷ At its core, it functions as a form of decentralized mutual aid for people in need. Mark Andersen, co-founder of the straight edge punk activist collective Positive Force, described Twelve Step programs such as AA as “a powerful model ...with their use of personal inventories, amends-making, and service.” Andersen continued:

In our hierarchical, profit-driven health care system, where doctors can almost assume the role of God, such groups represent a radical alternative. Rotating leaders, no fees involved, the “sick” helping one another, with only the loosest of structures—what more profound refutation of our present system could there be? Even the word “God” is left for each person to define for themselves, or to even reject outright, should another word like ‘greater power’ seem preferable. In their way, these meetings, autonomous except in matters affecting other Twelve Step groups, seem strikingly like anarchy in action. They begin with an admission of powerlessness over some aspect of life, but only in order to harness a deeper, broader power. The aim of the process is a small but very real liberation, one that can help clear the way for larger transformation.²³⁸

²³⁶ Tradition Nine of the Twelve Traditions states: “A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.’ ...Neither its General Service Conference, its Foundation Board, nor the humblest group committee can issue a single directive to an A.A. member and make it stick, let alone mete out any punishment. ...It is clear now that we ought never to name boards to govern us, but it is equally clear that we shall always need to authorize workers to serve us. ...If nobody does the group’s chores, if the area’s telephone rings unanswered, if we do not reply to our mail, then A.A. as we know it would stop. ...Tradition Nine ... discloses a society without organization, animated only by the spirit of service—a true fellowship.” Thanks to Elena Metcalf for pointing this out to me years ago. For AA and spirituality see Kelly and Greene (2014) and Westermeyer (2014).

²³⁷ AAWS 1957: 225; Butler (2010) even wrote a book bearing this title. Butler credited AA’s decentralized and non-partisan approach with its massive success in establishing itself throughout Ireland.

²³⁸ Andersen 2004: 124.

In another sense, its pragmatic inclinations and lack of critique of the state and state violence as such, has (unsurprisingly perhaps) led to collaborations with the state. Hence, although ostensibly a purely voluntary enterprise, the state can force prisoners into attending an AA program.²³⁹ Nonetheless, Twelve Step programs have led to discernable changes in many people's lives. Al Smith (1919–2014), a Native American who had grown up without contact with the Klamath tradition of his parents eventually succumbed to alcoholism but recovered through AA. Therein he began to rekindle his ancestral ties and a relationship with, in his words, “a God that I didn't even understand.”²⁴⁰ When employers fired his work colleague for using peyote, he stood up for him and attended a Native American Church ceremony involving peyote. His legal defense of peyote use went all the way to the Supreme Court. Though the case lost, it led to a popular uproar that culminated in a 1993 congressional act to rectify it, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

Whereas the “benign anarchy” of Twelve-Step programs/AA does not threaten the status quo per se, it can create important spaces for mutual aid, DIY education, self-organization, and healing within nation-state contexts. Whereas the “divine anarchy” of Auroville does not necessarily threaten the status quo either, the acquisition of land, creation of egalitarian organization via (semi-)permanent communal living can enable mini-versions of new egalitarian societies. Figure 1 illustrates that each of them have their corollaries in other contexts and may potentially combine in an infinite number of constellations.

In Twelve-Step's “benign anarchy,” we find an egalitarian approach that empowers its members to cooperate horizontally toward healing themselves and personal relationships. In Auroville's “divine anarchy,” the group tends toward both healing and building a new society alongside personal development. Both revealed promise for social transformation as well as, recalling Wollstonecraft's observation about asymmetric power relations, complicity with existing power structures. Both examples seem to

²³⁹ Peele, Bufe and Brodsky (2000).

²⁴⁰ Epps 2001: 19.

	Structural type of “spiritual anarchism”	Possible manifestations
Individual association	Benign anarchy	Twelve-step programs; anarchist affinity groups; co-counseling communities; study circles
Community organization	Divine anarchy	Egalitarian eco-villages; leaderless communes; tribal organization
Other areas (global, national, nomadic)	Combination	Bakunin’s federative system; Unitarian Universalist Association; Eco-village network; global trade unions; international DIY networks

Figure 1. Benign Anarchy and Divine Anarchy.

suggest that whether a “benign anarchy” or a “divine anarchy,” all attempts to heal, repair, build, and sustain egalitarian communities today do so in relation to the complexities of power disparities, inequalities, and violence of governments, class, and race.

VIII. Conclusions?

In this chapter, I have addressed a notable gap in research by scanning uses of “spiritual anarchism” and, in particular, noted Marshall’s broad definition of “spiritual anarchism” that left space for (unspecified) collective-oriented groups and obligations to “natural law” or “God’s Law” in contrast with a definition by Versluis which associated the term very specifically with the individualistic “freedom”-focused white Beatnik writers and Peter Lamborn Wilson/Hakim Bey. Second, I discussed racial dynamics concerning the latter group. Third, I addressed voices largely excluded from “spiritual anarchist” discourse (including Krishnamurti, Earth First!, womanism, MOVE, and indigenous peoples) to provide potential counter-prototypes. Finally, with the examples of Auroville and Twelve-Step programs/AA, I offered a sketch of a praxis-based study of “spiritual anarchism.”

Initially, “spiritual anarchism” caught my attention because it seemed to often point in directions that interested me (i.e., social and eco-justice work, radically revising dominant language and life-organizing stories, challenging patterns of violence inwardly and outwardly, building community, etc.). I don’t know that we need a single term for all of that. But, if some people use “spiritual anarchism” to refer to those (and many other) things, it may warrant studying what people do with it and if the term continues to provide a function for thinkers, activists, and organizers as a means of harmonizing personal and social struggles then it may also warrant decolonizing.²⁴¹

In a discussion about the need to include Indigenous perspectives in interspecies thinking, Kim TallBear (2011) mentioned her skepticism toward the idea of beginnings. She argued that, along with the word “origin,” we “should dump that word ‘genesis’ from our scientific vocabulary” because such terms obscure the actual dynamics of “different pieces” forming to “make a new kind of whole.” Life, as we know it, offers no “discrete beginning,” so unless “we are talking about the Big Bang, we probably should not use these terms.”²⁴²

One could perhaps say something similar about the idea of endings. This several thousand-word journey ends where it began: with an awareness of the limitations of words. Which terms should we use when we speak and when we study? This chapter ends with a respect for the unknown and a willingness to listen. What happens if we look closer at the ways people relate to terms like “spirituality” and “anarchism” and what do these relations say about larger societal challenges? What impact does the exclusion of women and people of color from discourse have on the emphasis of individualism and “freedom” versus connection to community and “justice”? This chapter ends with an attempt to shift focus from life-organizing stories toward life-organizing practices in that terrain

²⁴¹ Or, if people choose a new term altogether, why not choose a verb (like *daoing*?—but less awkward—in reference to the Dao) or, in a nod to Russell Means’ opposition to colonial despiritualizing of the universe, *respiritualizing*?

²⁴² TallBear 2011.

where questions morph into experiments. Perhaps, in scratching the surface, this chapter may spark conversations.

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