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Title: Paul Goodman: Finding an Audience for Anarchism in 20th Century America

Introduction

Paul Goodman was the principal anarchist political intellectual in America in the mid twentieth-century era. He became an influential social critic in the 1960s after he published *Growing Up Absurd*, which looked at the problems of youth in the ‘organized system’ of modern American society. With the publication of this book he was well placed to address the anti-institutional social movements which emerged at this time. His books criticised the failings of the centrally organised technological society and advocated the recreation of modern society on a humanly intelligible scale. He positioned himself as an iconoclast of contemporary American politics and culture using his anarchist ideology of active individualism, community participation and radical decentralisation. However, insufficient attention has been paid to Goodman’s role in transmitting the themes and concerns of anarchism to the early New Left in America. This diminishes both our understanding of the twentieth-century anarchist tradition and of Goodman as an actor within that tradition. Via misrepresentations of Goodman’s ideological agenda the significance of anarchism in his work has been overlooked and its role in twentieth century political thought is obscured. Commentators that do address the anarchism in Goodman’s work question the sincerity of his anarchist commitment. This is because they fail to recognise his distinctive ideological developments of the tradition. They fail to recognise his distinctive anarchist combination of individualistic and socially oriented values, and his radical synthesis of idealism and pragmatism, and thus misrepresent his emphases as a diluted reformism or a critical form of liberalism.¹ This paper will illustrate Goodman’s unambiguous place in the anarchist tradition, his development of that tradition, and his application of its insights to early New Left movements.

Goodman utilised the anarchist tradition in order to formulate his distinctive critique of contemporary America according to the principles of decentralisation, participatory democracy, autonomy, and community. He also formulated a biological grounding of anarchism in concepts drawn from the field of psychology, which underpinned Goodman’s critiques of the managed and proscribed nature of centralised and heavily administered societies. Goodman expressed this conception in his work in the utopian, city planning tradition and in his work in the psychological-therapeutic field. The following examination of Goodman's work shows that a clear and precise awareness of the anarchist underpinning of his concerns and ideas develops both our understanding of its

¹ See for example Kingsley Widmer, *Paul Goodman* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), pp.8, 17, 50, 51, 63, and Kevin Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action. The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), p.131

contribution to twentieth-century debate and an awareness of the steady presence of anarchist ideas in the twentieth century. It also helps to forge greater insights into the development of anarchist ideas in later twentieth century contexts. In what follows this will be demonstrated initially via challenges to the literature on Goodman on two counts; by emphasising both his utilisation of the anarchist tradition and his contribution to that tradition. Both of these features of Goodman's writing are discernable, for example, in his contribution to later twentieth century radical pedagogical thought. Then, in what follows, Goodman's development from the New York intellectual scene of the 1940s to the role of campus movement intellectual of the 1960s will be traced. Next, this paper will offer a detailed examination of his input into anarchist thinking about human agency, which drew on psychological schools of thought. This will feed into a study of how this set of insights, and their synthesis of pragmatic and idealistic emphases, fits into the traditional anarchist emphasis on decentralisation.

Paul Goodman and Anarchism in the Twentieth Century

Relative to other major figures in the twentieth-century tradition of anarchism, the work of Goodman has received a significant amount of analysis and interpretation. Much of this commentary, however, perpetuates a number of misrepresentations of his place in the anarchist tradition. Re-examining these representations of Goodman supports both a better understanding of the anarchist tradition and a more developed understanding of the relationship of anarchism to the thought and movements of the twentieth century. There is also a marked failure in the literature to address the current of anarchist influence in the libertarianism of some of the social movements of the 1960s. The influence of anarchism is often alluded to in commentaries on 1960s radicalism but rarely addressed. As Nigel Young notes, 'all the most active groups in the counter-culture – were continually labelled 'anarchist'.'² The sources of anarchist influence and its relationship to contemporary movements and ideas are, however, generally overlooked. Kingsley Widmer has devoted a volume to discussing Goodman's biography and work, beginning with the claim that he is 'not historically a major figure', but going on to assign Goodman 'considerable intellectual value as well as historical significance'.³ This inconsistency concerning the influence of Goodman and his ideas is typical of the overall shape of the literature on the subject and is symptomatic of its ambiguity concerning the significance of anarchism in the twentieth century.

Misrepresentations of Goodman's anarchism reflect a wider misunderstanding of the anarchist tradition, this is evident in Widmer's questioning of Goodman's anarchist commitment. He claims that the stance was somehow incongruous with the man, his 'petty bourgeois origins', the 'New York *lumpen*-intellectual milieu', his role as 'Artist and Man of Letters', and his lack of attention to 'equality and justice'.⁴ Widmer, like many commentators on anarchism, is looking for a violent proletarian revolutionary figure in the Marxist image, or an other-worldly idealist. This overlooks the nature of the anarchist tradition in the twentieth century, which

² Nigel Young, *An Infantile Disorder? The Crisis and Decline of the New Left* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1977), pp.133-135

³ Widmer, *Paul Goodman*, p. 8, 17

⁴ Widmer, *Paul Goodman*, p.37

included a focus on power and autonomy rather than class and economics and a non-violent, piecemeal conception of social change. The piecemeal, reformist nature of Goodman's proposals is misunderstood by Widmer as 'diluted anarchism'.⁵ Widmer assumes reformism is antithetical to anarchism, but the small-scale style of social change was essential to the decentralist, face to face, self-oriented aspirations of Goodman's anarchism. Commentators like Widmer, lacking an awareness of the twentieth-century developments of anarchism, can not reconcile the idealism and the practical aspirations of ideas like Goodman's. George Woodcock, however, has demonstrated a more subtle awareness of the dynamics of the anarchist tradition when he notes, in relation to Goodman's educational ideas in particular, that his anarchism sought to 'liberate natural social urges' rather than engage in a 'suicidal course of political revolution'.⁶

Widmer claims that Goodman's position was iconoclastic rather than ideological and he thereby neglects his role as important figure in the utilisation and development of anarchism.⁷ He states that in the context of the mid-century New York intellectual ambience, Goodman's ideological stance was mere 'intellectual role playing', a posturing reaction to Marxist and conventional ideologies rather than a distinct ideological commitment, 'less literature and ideas than the suggestive role'.⁸ At the root of Widmer's confusion is the failure to recognise the reformist, piecemeal, and conservative elements in Goodman's approach to social change as elements of an anarchist ideology. In this sense Widmer is also reflecting the mainstream treatments of anarchism which have represented it as essentially destructive and dismissive of convention and tradition. David Wieck demonstrates a more sophisticated comprehension of Goodman's place in the twentieth-century current of anarchism by recognising that his advocacy of a functional and common sense initiative in response to local and immediate contexts is entirely consistent with the anarchist spirit, especially that of Kropotkin. Wieck goes on to note that even Goodman's most modest proposals: 'threatened entrenched interests and challenged the operating principles of the "organized society"'.⁹ In re-examining Goodman's work we find Woodcock's and Wieck's interpretations more consistent with Goodman's ideas and intentions than that of Widmer. Statements like the following illustrate that for Goodman 'piecemeal' was the authentic tactic of modern anarchism: 'In Anarchist theory, "revolution" means the moment when the structure of authority is loosed, so that free functioning can occur. The aim is to open areas of freedom and defend them. In complicated modern societies it is probably safest to work at this piecemeal, avoiding chaos which tends to produce dictatorship.'¹⁰

As an insincere anarchist, according to Widmer's misunderstanding both of twentieth-century anarchism and Goodman's radicalism, Goodman's commitment

⁵ Widmer, *Paul Goodman*, p.51

⁶ George Woodcock 'On Paul Goodman: The Anarchist as Conservator' (2002), pp.55-73 in Dimitrios Roussopoulos (ed.) *The Anarchist Papers* (Montréal and London: Black Rose Books, 2002), p.65

⁷ Widmer, *Paul Goodman*, p. 9

⁸ Widmer, *Paul Goodman*, p.24, 25

⁹ David Wieck, 'Review of *Drawing the Line: The Political Essays of Paul Goodman*, Taylor Stoehr (ed.), New York: Free Life Editions, 1977' (1978), *TELOS* (vol. II, no. 35), p.200

¹⁰ Paul Goodman, 'The Black Flag of Anarchism' (1968), *New York Times Magazine* (July 14th), reprinted in Stoehr (ed.), *Drawing the Line*, p. 208

waned significantly in his later work. This was evidenced, Widmer claims, by Goodman's emphasis on reform and the downscaling of social institutions. Goodman's emphasis on decentralist policy via reformist measures has been misunderstood by Widmer as 'wobbly anarchism'.¹¹ Goodman 'moderates his anarchism' claimed Widmer 'to something of a disenchanted liberalism'.¹² In a variation of this view, Kevin Mattson argues that Goodman was fighting a rearguard action against the post-war betrayal of the liberal agenda in America. Mattson argues that Goodman injected a richer and more culturally grounded liberal vision into the ideological malaise created by technocratic domestic policy and aggressive anticommunist foreign policy. Whilst more sympathetic to the political project of Goodman, this argument reinforces Widmer's erroneous notion that Goodman's professed anarchism was not a sincere ideological commitment to the tradition. It is true that Goodman did develop a pessimism regarding the New Left and unreflective youth movements by 1969 and found himself defending liberalism, which he had previously equated with fascism. It is also true that Goodman's work with the group Americans for Democratic Action, an important liberal organisation, contributed to the attempt to define what they termed a 'qualitative liberalism'.¹³ However, Goodman's adoption of the label 'anarchist' was not, as Widmer's argument implies, mere posturing. He understood his ideas as developing from and advancing the anarchist tradition in the twentieth-century American context. He rejected modern liberalism for its complicity with centralisation and state building and its tendency towards technocratic policy and social engineering. He rejected alternative radical ideologies like Marxism for the same reason. Anarchist political ideas were for Goodman the only ideological framework which could satisfactorily underpin his formulations of freedom and social change. As he argued: 'Of the political thought of the past century, only anarchism or, better, anarcho-pacifism – the philosophy of institutions without the State and centrally organized violence – has consistently foreseen the big shapes and gross dangers of present advanced societies, their police, bureaucracy, excessive centralization of decision-making, social-engineering, and inevitable militarization.'¹⁴

A specific focus of Goodman's indictment of the institutional framework of modern society was the school. The relationship between anarchism and libertarian educational theory and practice is consistent enough to identify a distinct tradition in the history of ideas. This tradition included the work of William Godwin, Leo Tolstoy, and Peter Kropotkin. It also included the Francisco Ferrer inspired experiments of the Modern School Movement, particularly the New York circle of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman in the early twentieth century, and to the experiments of the freeschooling and deschooling movements of the later twentieth century.¹⁵ Working within this tradition, Goodman argued that the effect of modern education was to institutionalise youth

¹¹ Widmer, *Paul Goodman*, p.63

¹² Widmer, *Paul Goodman*, p.50

¹³ Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action*, p. 131

¹⁴ Paul Goodman, *New Reformation. Notes of Neolithic Conservative* (New York: Vintage Books, New York, 1971, first published 1969), p.143

¹⁵ For a study of the Modern School Movement in America, see Paul Avrich's study, *The Modern school Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton, Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1980)

and alienate it from society, rather than contribute towards a useful, and thus fulfilling, life. He argued that ‘Like jails and insane asylums, schools isolate society from its problems, whether in preventing crime, or in curing mental disease, or in bringing up the young.’¹⁶ He also stated that ‘formal schooling is now used as universal social engineering.’¹⁷ Goodman argued that ‘The form that progressive education takes in each era is prophetic of the next social revolution.’¹⁸ He identified progressive education as a ‘reaction against social-engineering’, ‘against obedience, authoritarian rules, organizational role playing instead of being, the destruction wrought by competition and grade-getting.’¹⁹

One of the most revealing statements of Goodman’s anarchism, the following passage from his 1966 essay ‘Reflections on the Anarchist Principle’ highlighted key features of his position including the principles of decentralisation, participatory democracy, autonomy, community, and the biological grounding of anarchism in concepts drawn from the field of psychology:

Anarchism is grounded in a rather definite proposition: that valuable behavior occurs only by the free and direct response of individuals or voluntary groups to the conditions presented by the historical environment. It claims that in most human affairs, whether political, economic, military, religious, moral, pedagogic, or cultural, more harm than good results from coercion, top-down direction, central authority, bureaucracy, jails, conscription, states pre-ordained, standardization, excessive planning, etc. Anarchists want to increase intrinsic functioning and diminish extrinsic power. This is a socio-psychological hypothesis with obvious political implications.²⁰

Goodman’s utilisation of the anarchist tradition drew on its anti-institutional bias, its focus on organic notions of community formation, and the emphasis on notions of autonomous individuality, personal judgment, and individual choice. This drew together the federative principles of Proudhon, Godwin’s distrust of political institutions, and Kropotkin’s commitment to natural associations and voluntary groupings. Not only did Goodman work within an anarchist framework of values and concepts, but he contributed to the anarchist tradition via his development of an ontology of selfhood which not only asserted the significance of the unique human sensational and cognitive processes for freedom but also located the experience of selfhood in the relationships between the individual and the human and material environment. The importance of direct human primary experience of the immediate physical and human environment for Goodman’s anarchism tied his ideas to a significant feature of modern formulations of anarchism. This was the cluster of emphases on change in the present, the importance of the immediacy and pragmatism of goals, and the significance of directness in human interaction. Accordingly, anarchism was for Goodman a philosophy of appropriate, freedom engendering responses to actual situations, a principle he referred to as ‘neo-

¹⁶ Goodman, ‘The Present Moment in Education’, in Stoehr (ed) *Drawing the Line*, p.68

¹⁷ Goodman, ‘The Present moment in Education’, in Stoehr (ed) *Drawing the Line*, p.71

¹⁸ Goodman, ‘The Present moment in Education’, in Stoehr (ed) *Drawing the Line*, p.74

¹⁹ Goodman, ‘The Present moment in Education’, in Stoehr (ed) *Drawing the Line*, p.74

²⁰ Paul Goodman, ‘Reflections on the Anarchist Principle’ (1966), *Anarchy* (62), reprinted in Stoehr (ed.), *Drawing the Line*, p. 176

functionalism' which expressed 'an humane appropriateness thru and thru: an easy body for the breath of the creator spirit to bring alive.' He described this approach to the relationship between means and ends as 'This esthetics which asks both for the efficiency of the means toward the end and of the human appropriateness of the end, for the means also consumes one's time of life, and the end of life is to live well also during that time. And end is *prima facie* suspicious if its means too do not give satisfaction.' Goodman was hereby expressing one of the most significant conceptual features of twentieth-century Anglo-American anarchism, a present-focused and context-centred approach to social change. As he stated: 'why not start here now with this man making, using, and experiencing this object?'²¹

War and Anarchism in the 1940s: The Engaged Intellectual

Goodman as a figure was both consistently anarchist and publicly prominent, commentaries tend to recognise one or the other feature but rarely both together. Tracing the development of Goodman's political agenda and public role leads to reassessments of these interpretations, and means we can form a more complete picture of the character and role of anarchism in the twentieth century. Goodman emerged from within the New York intellectual scene of the 1930s and 40s, particularly those writers connected with *Partisan Review*. Their sense of independence was expressed in terms of an avant-garde elitism, the essential component of their communal identity in political and cultural senses, combining the vanguardist elements of Marxism and modernism. Goodman was drawn to the artistic avant-gardism of this group and their sense that artistic experimentation and challenge had a positive effect on the social awareness of its audience. It was from the avant-garde milieu that Goodman drew his identity as a literary critic of contemporary social forms and the impoverished processed culture of the American mainstream. However, Goodman came to see himself as working on the side of his audience. He aimed to strengthen popular awareness of independence and community by highlighting shared cultural resources and thereby counter the atomising and homogenising experience of mass entertainment and commercialisation. By the 1960s Goodman had become a campus cult figure and a movement intellectual. Writing at the time, Roszak stated that: 'Whenever he speaks one feels for sure there is a contingent of the young somewhere nearby already inscribing his words on a banner.'²² In *Growing Up Absurd*, first published in 1960, Goodman conclusively demonstrated his move from avant-garde artist to connected critic. For an audience concerned with poverty and injustice, racism and urban blight, imperialism and militarism, Goodman pointed to the organised system as the cause and the young were highly receptive. The vital point about Goodman and his desire to address his reflections to a public audience was that he used and developed the anarchist tradition as his ideological framework.

From the start Goodman's attachment to anarchism and pacifism placed him on the fringes of the *Partisan Review* group. In 1942, when the Allies seemed to be losing the war and *Partisan Review* was turning towards support for their efforts,

²¹ Paul Goodman, 'Notes on Neo-Functionalism' (1944), *politics* (December), reprinted in Stoehr (ed.) *Drawing the Line*, p.49

²² Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture. Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 184

Goodman adamantly persisted with his refusal to consider the war as a legitimate struggle between fascism and democracy. At this point *Partisan Review* was still publishing a fairly wide range of political opinion, including a controversy over pacifism and war which included statements by Alex Comfort and George Orwell.²³ But from 1943 when the editorial line became firmly pro-war, and since he would not rescind his pacifism, Goodman was ostracised from New York literary circles of influence. This placed him in contact with the smaller, more marginal bohemian New York scene, including radical sub-communities, small cooperatives, anarchist publications, avant-garde theatres, and bohemian clusters. Goodman also began to write for the anarchist magazine *Why?*, published by the new generation of young radicals meeting in the Spanish Anarchists' Hall on Lower Broadway. Even more than conscription and pacifism, they were interested in mutual aid, communal living, and decentralization.

Goodman became more involved in the journal *politics*, Dwight Macdonald's breakaway attempt at a new political magazine, and his influence on the developing political stance of *politics* was marked.²⁴ Influenced by Goodman's anarchism, the journal heralded pacifism and non-violence as important political alternatives. The activities and perspectives of wartime conscientious objection provided *politics* with a model for a new form of leftism, which included an attack on mass society and the advocacy of an individualist form of socialism. With these attempts at ideological innovation, argues Mattson, *politics* became a 'seedbed for later New Left thinking'.²⁵ Proposals for decentralised, spontaneous activism prefigured the activism of the following decades with its suspicion of technology and bureaucracy and radical humanist emphasis on personal empowerment. Via these inputs into new political cultures, Goodman and his anarchism were at the centre of developments, emerging from dissatisfaction with the traditional left in America, towards political and cultural formulations associated with the new social movements of the 1960s. As Mattson notes, regarding the significance of Macdonald's journal, *politics* was one of the chief ways in which audiences were introduced to the key thinkers in the development of New Left thinking, especially C. Wright Mills and Goodman.²⁶ Building on his contributions to *politics*, Goodman's *May Pamphlet* was a collection of his essays written in the 1940s advocating draft resistance and resistance to the war in general. They were his first explicitly political body of work and outlined the naturalist conceptual framework that identified the whole of his career of social criticism. They were the work that most explicitly demonstrated the conviction of his turn towards an anarchist social philosophy and identified the significance of the war, including rejection of the draft, conscientious objection and the critique of war aims, for precipitating this anarchist commitment. The opening essay 'Drawing the Line' identified nature rather than rebellion as the grounds and defence of draft resistance. Modern society, Goodman argued, was organised for the benefit of the industrial machine, and man was alienated from his natural powers. This was the cause of war,

²³ See D.S. Savage, George Woodcock, Alex Comfort, George Orwell, 'Pacifism and the War. A Controversy' (1942), *Partisan Review* (September-October), pp.414-21

²⁴ Gregory D. Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp.18-19, 177-78

²⁵ Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action*, p.29

²⁶ Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action*, p. 30

coercion and disaffection. The solution to the ills of dysfunctional society was a return to natural behaviour, including mutual aid, individual fulfilment through meaningful work, and direct decision-making. Because Goodman presupposed an unchanging human nature, and saw the 'natural force' in an individual as 'no different in kind from what it will be in a free society', the expression of the natural in the behaviour of individuals and groups had revolutionary implications.²⁷ Like the draft resister, each man had to draw a line beyond which he would not go along with society's demands, or be party to its acts.

Goodman's *Communitas*, written with his architect brother, was a book concerning urban planning and utopian social thought. It was another key work of his 1940s writing which, alongside the *May Pamphlet*, lay the foundations of his whole system of critique. In it the solution for an impoverished human nature was to be found in new arrangements for self and community creation, in a civic culture on a human scale that could be a mentor to freedom. Rejecting both state and capitalist industrial city projects, he argued that city creation was analogous to self-creation. He argued that 'The background of the physical plant and the foreground of human activity are profoundly and intimately dependent on one another.'²⁸ The work made explicit his admiration of the Greek ideal of citizenship and the fusion of the identities of public and private. An Athenian citizen was at ease and capable of relaxed personal interaction in the public places of the city. There was no sharp distinction between private affairs and public affairs.²⁹ This social style was directly correlated with the system of direct democracy, a political system not distinguished from the life of the city in general and in which each man participated directly as in matters of his own affairs. Goodman's anarchism was related to an ancient Greek sense of the public and its relationship to democracy. This ideal was fused with Kropotkin's advocacy of an organic public style of life centred on communal squares and popular rituals. A key message of this work concerned the nature and political ends of the relationship between the individual and his environment. For Goodman, the origin of politics was the self engaging in his environment. Freedom rested upon the free act and the wilful appropriation of social and material contexts.

According to Goodman, the crisis of modern society was rooted in the disengagement of the individual from everyday life. Since individual existence was bound to that of the group, genuine community consisted of individuals interacting openly with other. This rendered all human intercourse political, and the self as a concept was tied to the notion of the public and defined by the existence of others. The democratic design and planning of the city would represent how and what people chose for themselves. Such participatory and engaged experience facilitated the development of the individual. In this way the design of the physical environment was our self in the making, and Goodman included in this notion of self-development our ability to mature autonomously as well as cooperatively. In *Communitas* and in the whole of his body of work, Goodman asserted the direct relationship between man making his environment and man making himself free. In line with this view, Goodman thought that the

²⁷ Goodman, 'Reflections on Drawing the Line', p. 3

²⁸ Paul and Percival Goodman, *Communitas. Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (New York: Vintage books, a division of Random House, 1960, First Published 1947), p. 3

²⁹ See Goodman, *Communitas*, especially p.50

desirable human character would develop in an authentically democratic and civilising city. He belonged in a tradition of thinking about the American city which depicted it as inherently insurrectionary, a conduit of the experimental character of the American personality, and generating opportunities for participation, fraternity, creativity, and equality.³⁰ King rightly highlights Goodman's place in this American city tradition, claiming that Goodman's ideas drew on the 'functionalist-pragmatic' tradition of American social analysis beginning with Thoreau and carried on in the twentieth century by Dewey and Veblen.³¹ Goodman argued that 'There is no substitute for the spontaneous social conflux whose atoms unite, precisely as citizens of the city.'³² As Goodman developed it, the concept of community implied that man's social relationships, his perspective on the world and his values were represented in his self-construction of his own habitat. In various ways this idea was a central theme of Goodman's philosophy. The relationship between the developed self and his environment was an area of thought developed even further in Goodman's psychological thought and the work he contributed to the Gestalt Therapy school of psychiatry in the 1950s. The development of his thinking in this area brought him to the concepts and themes from which he formulated his 1960s critiques of the atomisation and disengagement of life in modern societies, which were to bring him to the audience for his anarchist philosophy that he sought.

Gestalt Therapy

The relationship that Goodman asserted between selfhood and the environment, in his *Communitas* and most comprehensively in *Gestalt Therapy*, was a vital component of his contribution to the anarchist tradition. This theory of self tied together the inner life of the individual and the integrated social life of vibrant societies into a single notion of selfhood. For Goodman the human self existed at the point of contact between the organism and its environment, analogous to the relationships between breathing and air, eating and food, and seeing and light. There was no animal function without an object, and no feeling or emotion that did not address an environment. This point of contact between the organism and the environments in which its functions operated, including socio-cultural, animal, and physical contexts, he called the 'organism/environment field'.³³ There was thus a direct unity between the energy of the organism and the possibilities of the environment, which led to awareness of the further unities of body and mind, self and external world, subjective and objective, and personal and social. For Goodman, this meant that the individual was the agent of their adjustment with their environment, and individuals had to shape reality and engage with social change as a factor in their mental health. This fed Goodman's voluntarism, his emphasis upon political and social initiative, and the centrality of the here-and-now in his work. This set of focuses on the here-and-now in modern anarchism is closely related to the anarchist emphases on congruity between means and ends

³⁰ Lewis Fried, *Makers of the City* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), p. 7

³¹ Richard King, *The Party of Eros. Radical Social Thought and the Realm of Freedom* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p.89

³² Goodman, *Communitas*, p.50

³³ Paul Goodman, in Paul Goodman, Frederick S. Perls, Ralph F. Hefferline, *Gestalt Therapy. Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (London: Souvenir Press, London, 1971, first published 1951), pp.227-235, especially p.229

and prefigurative forms of social change. For Goodman, the important focus in this respect was the emphasis on primary experience. Man could act in an effective autonomous way only in the finite and concrete framework of his primary experience, in which he could actually exert his powers of creation, initiative and control. Beyond this the world became an abstraction, the individual would have to rely on middlemen, specialists, and bureaucrats for managing and representing him in a world to which he had no access. In all areas of life the sense of causality was lost through the indirect nature of experience, the real environment was hidden, real needs were manipulated and subverted, necessary tasks were replaced with meaningless ones, even authority was impersonal. Thus, initiative was lost, stupor set in and life was unnatural and 'absurd'. The aim should be to decentralise society and install face-to-face community so as to establish a more direct intercourse between man and his environment.

The key feature of the psychological tradition which interested Goodman and prompted his contribution to the anarchist emphasis on agency, and its environmental context, was the biological focus he perceived in Freud's thought which provided him with a justification for the self's resistance to adaptation to prevailing social and cultural structures. As part of the support for his conceptual framework based on nature Goodman defended the instinctual in human behaviour. From the perspective of Wilhelm Reich's speculations on the connection between sexual and political repression, Goodman attacked neo-Freudians like Erich Fromm for abandoning Freud's emphasis on the centrality of sex, and thus the biological instincts generally, and thereby sanctioning a psychology of social engineering. The novelty of Goodman's basic thesis in this respect was the assertion that a coercive society depended upon the repression of human instincts. From this perspective Goodman challenged behaviourists, psychoanalytic revisionists and social psychologists. As Goodman saw it, the implication of Freud's theories was that humans come into the world bearing an innate set of dispositions, such as the instincts for love and aggression. Thus, human nature itself put absolute constraints on the nature of community. Goodman used his interpretation of Freud against those psychoanalysts and others who maintained that human nature was indefinitely malleable and could be redesigned to fit the social order. In his article 'The Political Meaning of some Recent Revisions of Freud', which appeared in the July 1945 issue of *politics*, Goodman argued that thinkers like Karen Horney and Erich Fromm diminished the role of instinctual drives to argue that character directly reflected the social pattern. Goodman argued that 'What is alarming is not their deviation from the orthodox Freudian sociology and implied politics, in which a good deal is faulty, but the fact that most of these deviations lead step by step to a psychology of non-revolutionary social adjustment that is precisely the political ideal (by no means the political action) of the New Deal, the Beveridge Plan, Stalinism, etc.'³⁴ Goodman's view irritated many left-wingers as well as orthodox psychoanalysts. C. Wright Mills and Patricia J. Salter wrote an attack on it for the October 1945 issue of *politics*. They wrote, illustrating the traditional radical commitment to a nonessential view of man, that:

³⁴ Paul Goodman, 'The Political Meaning of Some Recent Revisions of Freud', p.43

For a long time conservatives have stressed the biological immutability of man's nature, whereas progressives have emphasized the social plasticity of his character structure. Conservatives have tried to buttress every status quo by appealing to the biological instincts of man. Now Paul Goodman seeks to overturn a particular status quo by appealing to the apparently same instinctual nature. He presents us with a metaphysics of biology in which he would do no less than anchor a revolution.³⁵

Goodman wanted to argue, in defence of an inviolable conception of freedom, that humanity retained an essence outside the control of history, propaganda, advertising and social structures. As he stated: 'the freedom and spontaneity of men are natural, but the institutions have been made.'³⁶ Goodman argued in this vein that: 'Freedom consists not, as Fromm says, in the agreement to participate as an equal member in a vast social system... but in the continuing revolution of new demands and ideas as they emerge from the depths, called forth by and transforming the reality, including the institutions. A free society is one that is peacefully permeable by this revolution.'³⁷ The criticisms of Mills and Salter were based on the opposing view that 'Rationality and freedom are values which must be socially achieved.' They attacked Goodman's 'Rousseauian conception' that 'freedom is "naturally" given to individual men.'³⁸ They argued that: 'The locus of freedom, and of the historical dynamic, is not the gonads but the political and economic order.'³⁹

In his attack on the various schools of post-Freudian psychoanalysis for their conformist political implications, Goodman focused in particular what he took to be the hidden agenda of Fromm's popular *Escape from Freedom*. According to Goodman, books like Fromm's aimed to support the continued and more efficient working of the modern industrial system. In contrast, according to Goodman, Reich provided a more radical and confrontational view. In his move away from Freud, the early Reich insisted on more immediate physical responsiveness, including that of the sexual body, in defiance of social controls. Goodman championed Reich's activist approach and non-adjustive psychotherapy, which included contraceptives and sex counselling for working class youth. Upon entering into therapy himself with Lore Perls in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and coming into contact with her husband Fritz Perls, Goodman became interested in their mixture of Freudian analysis and Gestalt psychology. Goodman took over these ideas as his own in his dominating co-authorship of the book *Gestalt Therapy* in 1951. Goodman's relationship with Perls was based on a shared interest in Reich's psychology. But this relationship and the sources the two thinkers drew on led Goodman away from Reich's individualistic psychology to a position where he argued in *Gestalt Therapy* that the self and society could be integrated without succumbing to conformity. In an era when Freudian orthodoxy

³⁵ C. Wright Mills and Patricia J. Salter, 'The Barricade and the Bedroom' (1945), *politics* (October), reprinted in Stoehr (ed.), *Nature Heals*, p.61

³⁶ Paul Goodman, 'The Political Meaning of Some Recent Revisions of Freud', p.52

³⁷ Paul Goodman, 'The Political Meaning of Some Recent Revisions of Freud', pp.51-52

³⁸ C. Wright Mills and Patricia J. Salter 'The Barricade and the Bedroom', p.65

³⁹ C. Wright Mills and Patricia J. Salter 'The Barricade and the Bedroom', p.63

implied that mental health meant helping individuals adjust to society, Goodman insisted that society had to be made to adjust to individual needs. Goodman's version of Gestalt therapy encompassed an assertion of the centrality of the here-and-now, and the reliance on a radical phenomenology as the basis for constructing theoretical principles. Goodman's *Gestalt Therapy* owed much to American pragmatism, specifically through the image of the human organism as a problem solver, as an active creator and not a passive recipient of reality, and the notion of the open-ended nature of reality. His use of sources like Gestalt psychology infused the American tradition of Emerson and Dewey with a flavour of the European tradition of psychology.

Gestalt Therapy drew partly on the school of Gestalt psychology, which stated that human beings must be viewed as open systems in active interaction with their environment. According to this psychology, the human experiential machinery naturally organised perceptions according to inbuilt cognitive patterns. The academic Gestalt school had made valuable contributions to perception and cognitive theory, but it neglected the broader realm of personality and psychotherapy. Goodman attempted to draw out the political implication of the Gestalt perspective. Through the focus in Gestalt thinking on the relationship between the objects of perception and the perceptive machinery by which they are experienced, there was an implicit focus on the impact of individual subjectivity on the experienced structure of reality. This view implicitly highlighted the importance of lived experience and the physical environment for the formation of the human personality. Drawing on these implications, Goodman's *Gestalt Therapy* combined phenomenological and existential approaches in its view of the growth of human beings. Goodman's view started from the assertion that the human self existed at the point of contact of the organism and its environment. He posited a direct unity between the energy of the organism and the possibilities of the environment. Personality, thus conceived, was not organised according to the additive style of behaviourism, nor in associative-symbolic Freudian terms, but structured by the inner and outer aspects of human self and other awareness. In this emphasis on the organic relationship between the organism and the environment Goodman developed an anti-dualistic approach to human experience. The individual and his environment, his inner and outer experiences, constituted a unity of selfhood. The self was the system of contacts in the environment field, it was the boundary between the organism and the environment and it belonged to both: 'To paraphrase Aristotle, "When the thumb is pinched, the self exists in the painful thumb."⁴⁰ This led Goodman to reject unconscious and historical approaches to the human self in favour of a phenomenological approach to how the individual is in the world at the present moment. This fed Goodman's voluntarism and his emphasis upon political and social initiative. At the centre of *Gestalt Therapy* lay the promotion of 'awareness'. The patient was encouraged to become aware of their own feelings and behaviours, and their effect upon the environment. The way in which a patient interrupted or sought to avoid contact with their environment was considered to be a substantive factor when addressing their psychological disturbances. By focusing on the patient's awareness of himself as part of reality, new insights could be made into the patient's behaviour

⁴⁰ Goodman, *Gestalt Therapy*, p.373

and as such emphasis was placed on conscious activity, not the unconscious realm of dreams.⁴¹

Goodman's *Gestalt Therapy* ideas represented the full flowering of his theory of the self that was the basis for his input into the anarchist tradition. Central to his view of the self was a focus on the importance of spontaneity and creativity. For Goodman, the individual was the agent of his adjustment with his environment, and individuals had to shape reality and engage with social change as a factor in their mental health. Human creative adjustment, or growth, occurred at the boundary of inner and outer experience as the self coped with new experience. For growth to occur, therefore, there had to be an environment for the organism to contact 'because the organism's every living power is actualised only in its environment.' Thus the environment had to be 'amenable to appropriation and selection; it must be plastic to be changed and meaningful to be known.'⁴² Creative adjustment was the essential source of the growth of the self. The self was the 'artist of life', engaged in 'finding and making the meanings we grow by.'⁴³

Goodman social and political approach rested on the idea that man could act in an effective autonomous way only in the finite and concrete framework of his primary experience, in which he could actually exert his powers of creation, initiative and control. Beyond this the world became an abstraction, the individual had to rely on middlemen, specialists, and bureaucrats for managing and representing him in a world to which he had no access. The aim had to be to decentralize society and install face-to-face community so as to establish a more direct intercourse between man and his environment. If the environment presented no objects worthy of engagement by the organism, the self could not form and neurosis resulted. Goodman's emphasis was on the importance of scale, of bringing social institutions down to proportions that could be responsive to individual initiative, self-regulation, creative adjustment and utopian experiment. Under this view pragmatism and phenomenology informed ethical choices, and mutual aid and direct action served as the fundamental mechanisms of citizenship. This set of political views was developed from Goodman's *Gestalt Theory*, applied to his educational writing, and was central to his influence on early New left politics.

Growing Up Absurd and Finding an Audience

In *Growing Up Absurd*, first published in 1960, Goodman conclusively demonstrated his move from avant-garde artist to connected critic. King claims that: 'In its way *Growing Up Absurd* was to the generation of the early sixties what *Catcher in the Rye* had been to the youth of the fifties.'⁴⁴ Looking at the fashionable issue of teenage dissidents, and in particular at the extent of teenage drop-out rates from school, Goodman suggested that the problem lay not with the teenagers but the institutions they dropped out from. He argued that the young in the America experienced disaffection, frustration and eventually apathy because

⁴¹ Goodman, *Gestalt Therapy*, p.375

⁴² Paul Goodman, *Little Prayers and Finite Experience* (London: Wildwood House, London, 1973), p. 39

⁴³ Goodman, *Gestalt Therapy*, p.235

⁴⁴ King, *The Party of Eros*, p.106

they were unable to grow and mature in a society without useful and meaningful identities around which to aspire and achieve a sense of meaning and worth. They lacked the contact boundary between the organism and the environment that *Gestalt Therapy* had emphasised as the site of the development of the healthy self. The basic thesis was from *Gestalt Therapy*, that if society failed to provide a meaningful environment with which to interact, human nature was thwarted and an individual could not grow. Individuals thus became role players, or organisation men, or they dropped out. Maturing human nature, for Goodman, required significant social identities or vocations in an accessible community environment. He argued that American society had been rationalised into a 'system' that by its very nature was not referenced according to its human components for any other objective than the continuing operation of the system for its own sake. The social and physical environment had grown out of human scale, it had moved away from human logic to a mechanical logic. People relied on technology that they did not understand in order that the cycle of consumption could continue. Human relationships had become mysterious because of the anonymous nature of the new managerial code, abstract systemisation, and the indirect wielding of social control. Indirectness was a particular source of inauthenticity, subterfuge and disempowerment for Goodman. In all areas of life the sense of causality was lost through the indirect nature of experience. The philosophical anthropology developed in *Gestalt Therapy* pictured man as the productive creator with a unique need to be active and socially useful.

Goodman's answer to the flaws of the rationalised environment was his programme of a system of free schooling. The aim was to decentralise education, bringing it out of the schools and giving children access to the educative functions of society, through very small street schools and a wider, more flexible apprenticeship system. At the same time the schooling experience would no longer be compulsory.⁴⁵ Goodman's writing on education drew the attention of emerging youth movements and his initial faith in their programmes led him to support the causes of the young in America. As Roszak noted: 'For the New Left he has functioned as the foremost theoretician of participative democracy, bringing back into lively discussion a tradition of anarchist thought'.⁴⁶ Goodman saw the youth as the actors of change and looked hopefully to the activities of emerging political movements. Specifically, he had high hopes for the Free Speech Movement that emerged at the University of California at Berkley in 1964. Students reacted vigorously to university attempts to limit their attempts to recruit civil rights workers for Southern campaigns and were confronted with university police. One of his statements in support of the Berkley students included the comment: 'Our society has been playing with the fire of mass higher learning; it is our duty to let it feel the blast of University truth.'⁴⁷ Goodman was implying, that though modern universities were complicit in the state apparatus through corporate and defence research and suppression of democratic activity, the university still retained some of its essence as a centre of questioning and investigation. As part of this vision of the university Goodman enthusiastically

⁴⁵ Paul Goodman, *Compulsory Miseducation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), pp.32-33

⁴⁶ Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, pp.200-201

⁴⁷ Paul Goodman, 'Berkeley in February' (1965), *Dissent* (Spring), reprinted in Stoehr (ed.), *Drawing the Line*, p.129

supported the creation of free universities. When he went to California to cover the events in Berkeley, he saw a direct relationship between this movement and the political vision of self-willed action, democratic participation and decentralised activism that he had helped to articulate. He claimed that ‘its ferment will spread not only to other campuses but finally to other institutions of society.’⁴⁸ He argued that the young had recognised the dehumanising impact of modern organised society, and that anarchism underlay the wave of student protest. He stated that ‘The spontaneity, the concreteness of the issues, and the tactics of direct action are themselves characteristic of Anarchism.’⁴⁹ By the mid 1960s, as Mattson notes: ‘When an organizer needed a speech made for a protest, Goodman made it. When a group needed a pamphlet, Goodman often promised to write it.’⁵⁰

Examining Goodman’s role in the development of the ideas that influenced the early New Left fills a gap in the history of the movement. The term ‘anarchist’ has often been used to describe part or all of the New Left, particularly its earlier phases. Whilst it is regularly observed that anarchism was evident in notions of personal revolt, anti-bureaucracy, and anti-authoritarianism, insufficient attention has been paid to Goodman’s role in conducting anarchism’s influence to the New Left. Mattson has emphasised the role of Goodman’s ideas in the New Left, paying attention to his grounding of radicalism in psychological and populist traditions and his decentralism.⁵¹ However, Mattson pays insufficient attention to the twentieth-century anarchist tradition of thought. Putting anarchism at the centre of our framework for understanding Goodman’s ideas and their relationship to the movements of the period enriches the understanding of the history of student movements in America and facilitates a greater understanding of the development of the anarchist tradition in the twentieth century.

Decentralisation

One of Goodman’s most important anarchist injections into the ideas of 1960s youth and New Left movements was the emphasis he placed on the decentralist or federative aspects of the anarchist tradition. One of his key contributions to anarchist ideology was the attack on centralisation on the grounds of social psychology and political philosophy and his concrete public policy proposals for decentralisation. The evils he was addressing were centralisation, systematisation, and the treatment of people in organisational, abstract, indirect, procedural terms: ‘Overcentralization is an international disease of modern times.’⁵² For Goodman, centralisation was humanly stultifying, ruinous to democracy, and productive of anomie. Its main faults were abstraction and indirectness. For Goodman, centralisation was related to over-capitalisation, mass-consumption, mass-democracy, and mass-education. It was also the cause of modern rootlessness and helplessness, failing democracies, inefficiency and waste. Decentralisation, on the other hand, he argued, created the environment for the human organism to develop selfhood and autonomy. His support for decentralisation rested on his

⁴⁸ Goodman, ‘Berkeley in February’, p.128

⁴⁹ Goodman, ‘The Black Flag of Anarchism’ (1968) *New York Times Magazine* (July 14th), reprinted in Stoehr (ed.), *Drawing the Line*, p.203

⁵⁰ Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action*, pp.129-130

⁵¹ Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action*, pp.142-143

⁵² Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.72

perspective on nature and human nature and his ideological position against power. In fact, the term ‘decentralization’ in Goodman’s writing seemed to stand as a synonym for anarchism, as in the following statement: ‘Decentralization is not lack of order or planning, but a kind of coordination that relies on different motives from top-down direction, standard rules, and extrinsic rewards like salary and status, to provide integration and cohesiveness.’⁵³

Goodman’s first argument for decentralisation focused on the inefficiencies and organisational deficiencies of centralisation. The centralised system, Goodman argued, was designed for the discipline of armies, the keeping of records, the collection of taxes and other bureaucratic functions, and for the mass production of goods, but it had become socially and politically pervasive.⁵⁴ Centralisation in the organisation of administration, production and distribution ‘mathematically guarantees stupidity’.⁵⁵ Information was abstracted at each stage of its passage to the decision making centre, it lost a layer of useful, relevant content at every level. By the time it reached the decision making, processing centre, it was entirely irrelevant. Also, the transmission of information to the centre owed more of its content to the prediction of the desires of the holders of power by subordinate figures. In centralised systems of organisation information was abstracted and moulded into a standardised form. The result was that the decisions or conclusions reached at the centre were applicable to nobody, and fitted no particular case. As Goodman argued, the standard ‘misfits every actual instance’ and ‘particular appropriateness is ruled out like any other peculiarity.’⁵⁶ Such abstraction approximated, generalised, omitted, standardised, and lost appropriateness, quality, and fit. Under such systems of organisation meaning was lost, people did not understand their work, and they were incapable of initiation or responsibility. The whole system was characterised by ignorance and waste, systems became run for their own sake, and there was a total loss of connection to function. Decentralisation, on the other hand, allowed projects to be organised autonomously ‘by professionals, artists, and workmen intrinsically committed to the job’, and the result was the multiplication of economies in every direction. People were creative, inventive, and resourceful regarding the means at hand. They paid attention to what worked rather than standard procedures, they improvised, and all available skills were put to use. These efficiencies resulted from the fact that ‘The task is likely to be seen in its essence rather than abstractly.’⁵⁷

Efficiency was not the main benefit of decentralising function. More important for Goodman were the implications of decentralisation for the quality of democratic society that resulted. The human implications of decentralisation were voluntarism, cooperation, engagement, decision-making, community, independence, and autonomy. This led to greater public association and community activity. It created social dynamics that worked against authority, coercion, and alienation. This type of voluntaristic society, in Goodman’s view,

⁵³ Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.6

⁵⁴ Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.4

⁵⁵ Goodman, *Little Prayers and Finite Experience*, p. 49

⁵⁶ Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.78

⁵⁷ Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.113

‘has yielded most of the values of civilization.’⁵⁸ The principle at the core of his moral approval of decentralisation was the attack on the concept of power: ‘Living functions, biological, psychological, or social, have very little to do with abstract, preconceived “power” that manages and coerces from outside the specific functions themselves.’⁵⁹ This kind of extrinsic motivation was not needed in healthy human society, which had its own drives and capacities for decision-making, and its own adjusting mechanisms. The exercise of abstract power operated against the development of those very skills and dispositions by which society could do without external management and coercion. Multiplying the centres of decision-making led to increasing awareness and initiation and direct engagement in function. The principle of decentralisation was related to the capacity for spontaneity and direct action. Real initiating and deciding, grounded in acquaintance and trust, and all the other virtues of decentralisation added up to enhanced prospects for participatory democracy: ‘The operative idea in participatory democracy is decentralizing in order to multiply the number who are responsible, who initiate and decide.’⁶⁰

Goodman answered the objection that decentralizing put too much faith in human nature by reversing it and arguing that power destroys character: ‘Imagine being deified like Mao-tse-tung or Kim Il Sung, what that must do to a man’s character. Or habitually thinking the unthinkable, like our Pentagon.’⁶¹ The concentration of power had to be avoided precisely because human nature was fallible. Democracy, because it divided power, did not cause the atrophy of the human moral sense but encouraged the potential for intelligence and grace in human activity. A social order built to the human scale possessed the elasticity for evolutionary trial and error and could absorb fallibilities. Goodman added that large organisations engaged people officially in behaviour, as a matter of course, that people individually would react to with revulsion.⁶² In Goodman’s own words: ‘Our mistake is to arm anybody with collective power. Anarchy is the only safe polity.’⁶³ The personalisation of collectivity was exactly the evil that centralisation embodied: ‘In a centralized enterprise, the function to be performed is the goal of the organization rather than of persons.’⁶⁴

From 1964 to 1965 Goodman worked at the Institute for Policy Studies, a major progressive think tank, drawing on his experience of decentralisation, direct action, and participatory democratic currents in the civil rights and peace movements to develop practical policy suggestions for decentralisation. Goodman saw the institute as a real and practical attempt to engage with the need for new political approaches outside of government administration. His contributions included numerous proposals based on the principle of decentralisation; ideas for youth camps, arts projects, workers self management, breaking up the mass media, and community planning based on the ideal of an integrated

⁵⁸ Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.4

⁵⁹ Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.180

⁶⁰ Paul Goodman *Like a Conquered Province* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968, first published 1963), p.292

⁶¹ Goodman, *Little Prayers and Finite Experience*, p. 45

⁶² Goodman, *Like a Conquered Province*, p.391

⁶³ Goodman, *Little Prayers and Finite Experience*, p. 45

⁶⁴ Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.3

neighbourhood working in partnership with federal power and local initiative. Goodman's attempt to translate anarchism into public policy, even though it employed government to his decentralist ends, demonstrated that he saw anarchism not as an outsider philosophy but as part of the range of public policy options. He saw anarchism as the inspirational force for practical and applicable democratic solutions to policy issues concerning public space and social behaviour. For Goodman, anarchist perspectives were part of the family of political ideas in a healthy democratic society. This view was related to his interpretation of anarchism which saw it as part of the Western tradition of thought and experience and not 'merely utopian dreams and a few bloody failures'. He saw evidence of anarchism throughout the Western tradition, including 'guild democracy', the 'liberation of conscience and congregations since the Reformation', 'the abolition of serfdom', and some of the developments in 'progressive education'. He added that these 'bread-and-butter topics of European history are never called "anarchist", but they are.'⁶⁵ The point to emphasise regarding Goodman is just how pertinent he considered the ideology of anarchism to be to modern problems of public policy and political philosophy.

A feature of Goodman's decentralist philosophy was its American flavour. He placed himself, his anarchism, and his decentralism, within the cultural tradition in which he saw himself belonging. Demonstrating the American taste for decentralist politics, Goodman stated that: 'The Americans have always been quick to form voluntary associations.'⁶⁶ He had at his disposal a long American tradition of hostility to the state and defence of personal autonomy. The tension in Goodman's work between his disillusionment with the products of modernity and his abiding faith in essential humanism is strongly reminiscent of the American literary figures Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. This included his optimism about the resilience of the creative, free essence of individuals. Further reflections of the relationship between his thought and the American romantic tradition were his idolisation of nature, his preoccupation with heroism and idealism, and his sense of the artist as individual creator and purveyor of spiritual truth. The American romantic writers championed self-reliance and combined it with a suspicion of society, with its insidious creation of passive majorities, and a reverence for the virtues of nonconformity and independence. Like Goodman they defended an absolute right to exercise moral judgement in the face of law and the coercive institutions and the pressure for conformist behaviour in modern civilisation. They recommended decentralisation and informal patterns of voluntary cooperation as part of a gradualist strategy of withdrawing from and standing aloof from an allegiance to the state. This was part of an attempt to manage the disintegrative forces of both democracy and technology under the conditions of rising affluence and materialism in nineteenth-century America. They emphasised the failure of American politics under these conditions to express the highest values of a democratic society.

Goodman's emphasis on decentralist policy via reformist measures has been misunderstood by Widmer as 'wobbly anarchism' and a 'retreat from his earlier

⁶⁵ Paul Goodman, 'Anarchism and Revolution' (1970), *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, reprinted in Stoehr (ed.), *Drawing the Line*, p.216

⁶⁶ Goodman, *People or Personnel*, p.13

utopianism'.⁶⁷ Widmer could not comprehend a reformist, pragmatic, piecemeal, national-tradition-grounded form of anarchism. This was despite statements from Goodman which argued that 'piecemeal' was the authentic tactic of modern anarchism, like the following: 'In Anarchist theory, "revolution" means the moment when the structure of authority is loosed, so that free functioning can occur. The aim is to open areas of freedom and defend them. In complicated modern societies it is probably safest to work at this piecemeal, avoiding chaos which tends to produce dictatorship.'⁶⁸ Goodman saw the radical agenda as a mission to conserve and extend those positive social patterns, tendencies, and traditions, which the centralised state worked to destroy. The revolutionary project was thus a mission to resist change that reduced the naturalness of a society and promote changes that made individuals more free. Freedom was fostered by this combination of vigilance and initiative. Anarchism was for Goodman a condition of appropriate, freedom engendering, responses to actual situations.

Conclusion

The literature on Goodman tends to portray him as an eccentric exhibitionist and fails to take account of the ideological significance of his ideas in terms of an understanding of the anarchist tradition in the twentieth century. A greater focus on Goodman's utilisation and development of the anarchist tradition in relation to contemporary concerns contributes to a more satisfactory awareness of the steady presence of anarchist ideas in the twentieth century. The examination of his work here has demonstrated his unambiguous place in the anarchist tradition. It is clear that he developed the insights of anarchism in order to apply them to the contemporary era. The anarchist tradition provided him with the means to formulate his critique of modern political administration and organisation and his proposals for decentralising society down to a humanly comprehensible scale. Goodman's works were one of the main ways that anarchism made available to the 1960s counter-culture and early New Left an individually and communally oriented celebration of spontaneity and self-regulation, and a critique of the centralised state. His ideas were also the main channel by which traditional anarchist concerns with education fed into libertarian pedagogical currents in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Goodman was both consistently anarchist in his ideological framework and politically prominent in radical intellectual debates of the twentieth century. This understanding of him as a figure helps reconfigure the standard interpretations of the history of anarchism. Anarchism is a philosophy which carefully balanced tradition and novelty in an attempt to address contemporary concerns. Goodman utilised the anarchist tradition in order to formulate his distinctive critique of contemporary America according to the principles of decentralisation, participatory democracy, autonomy and community. He also formulated a biological grounding of anarchism in concepts drawn from the field of psychology. Goodman drew on the anti-institutional bias, the focus on community formation, and the emphasis on individuality, judgement and choice of the anarchist tradition. He combined inward and outward looking components of

⁶⁷ Widmer, *Paul Goodman*, p.63

⁶⁸ Goodman 'The Black Flag of Anarchism', p. 208

individual freedom in one phenomenological conception of self-development. This reconciled the social and individualist strands of anarchism, conventionally assumed to be starkly antithetical. Goodman's thought also drew anarchism into a careful balance of pragmatism and idealism. This was chiefly through his radical emphasis on the possibilities held in the temporally and spatially proximate context. The phenomenological conception of self-development and the emphasis on the radical possibilities of the immediate environment led Goodman to his characteristic emphasis on the necessity for an interactive, accessible environment for healthy development. The focus on the importance of the tangible and plastic human and material environment for individual and social health underpinned Goodman's social and environmental concerns. His trajectory in this respect led him from author to therapist to political intellectual whose critique of the organised system was taken up by the political radicals of the early New Left. Goodman's anarchism constituted a powerful assertion of the necessity for selfhood and engagement in the liberated human experience. This was a modern formulation of anarchism's concerns with freedom, individuality, society, and power, in response to the pattern of large-scale modern administrative systems.