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The State is the Great Forgetter

Rexroth and Goodman as Antecedents of Cultural Ecology, Political Ecology, and the New Cultural Geography

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Introduction

I would like to see this session as a memorial to James Parsons, who pioneered many of the concerns expressed in it and indeed helped inspire the topic of this paper (Parsons 1996). Jim exemplified a wide ranging intellect who transcended the academic world; he was always searching for movements and ideas which involved fundamental themes of geography. For him, geography was exploration and discovery, with unashamed ties to journalism, popular movements and concerns, and the aspirations and intellectual enthusiasms of the young.

This particular paper represents a work in progress; if any of you know of ideas or sources which may pertain to this topic I would enthusiastically welcome your help.

The paper grew out of my interest in alternative, decentralist solutions to social and environmental problems — as part of my intellectual upbringing as a student at Berkeley in the 60s, but also maintained by more recent generations of writers concerned with these issues. I have been intrigued, and more recently a bit concerned, by what appears to be a kind of amnesia about writers who flourished before about 1975.

My focus is especially on two writers, Paul Goodman and Kenneth Rexroth, associated with east coast and west coast intellectual life respectively. I believe both were influential in defining issues that are still with us; both represent a kind of indigenous American non-academic radicalism; and both embody a kind of "revolutionary hope" which pretty much vanished from the scene after the Vietnam War.

These writers identified themes which have resonance with cultural ecology, political ecology, and the new cultural geography. The early identification of these themes is not just of antiquarian interest; the connections imply that the possibility exists of rooting cultural ecological work in American literary and intellectual history, as well as with currents in France, Britain, and Germany.

Life and Work of Goodman

Paul Goodman was born in New York City on September 9, 1911, or German-Jewish and middle class origins. A fourth child, his father abandoned the family — making Goodman a classic radical in the currently fashionable birth-order logic. He was educated in public schools and CCNY, and pursued a bohemian life style in the New York City area, publishing stories in the Partisan Review and New Directions. His first major book, *Communitas*, was written with his older brother Percival and published in 1947. His book *Gestalt Therapy* (with Perls and Hefferline) was published in 1951. About this time he taught at Black Mountain College. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in 1954, and then traveled in Europe. His eleven major books appeared between 1959 and 1970: *The Empire City*, *Growing Up Absurd*, *The Society I Live in is Mine*, *Community of Scholars*, *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals*, *Making Do*, *Compulsory Mis-Education*, *People or Personnel*, *Five Years*, *Like a Conquered Province*, *New Reformation.* During this period he taught at Sarah Lawrence, University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee (Urban Affairs), San Francisco State, and the University of Hawaii. He purchased a farm in New Hampshire where he lived intermittently since 1961. He died of a heart attack in 1972 at the age of 61 (Widmer 1980)

Environmentalism

Goodman was strongly concerned with ecology, and his main arguments about the subject were already formulated by 1960 (Stoehr 1990) Part of his attitude is a form of geo-piety:

"In a passage that I often repeat, Goethe speaks of that patient finite thing, the Earth. "The poor Earth! — I evermore repeat it — a little sun, a little rain, and it grows green again." So the Earth repeats it Goethe repeats it, and I repeat it" (Goodman 1994: 82).

Goodman often refers to historically given nature or ecology as the "Creation," not due to any firm religious belief but because the term has been in use for thousands of years, has been "polished by handling," is "resonant in a poet's vocabulary," and is meaningful for the highly alienated young. In contrast, secular terms for nature lead to more pedantic and polemical conversations (Goodman 1994: 91–92). Similarly, the appropriate language for dealing with ecology, nature, and even technology is for Goodman "literary language" (Goodman 1994: 132).

By 1970 Goodman was speaking of the environment in terms of "delicate sequences and balances." A simplified and modest technology would permit "the environment to persist in its complexity, evolved for a billion years"(Goodman 1970: 12–13). This and the use of systems terminology seems to make Goodman an "ecosystemicist." Elsewhere, however, Goodman makes clear that he has a strong adaptationist, evolutionary perspective. Creation is not perfect. "The execution is often exquisitely minute. Yet there are clumsy or unfinished sentences, missing transitions, characters left hanging" (Goodman 1994: 96). The complexity makes nature unpredictable, even to systems science; therefore decision-making involving the environment must be decentralized, modest, and subject to continual adjustment. In this context, both positivist experimental methods and natural history methods have validity in appropriate situations (Goodman 1970: 12–15).

Goodman favored biological over chemical pest control, following Rachel Carson. Goodman referred in 1970 to a "tribe in Yucatan" that "educates its children to identify and pull up all weeds . . . then what is left is a garden of useful plants that have chosen to be there." This seems to be a garbled reference to the geographer Burton Gordon's recent discovery of orchard-garden thickets (forest fallow management); since Gordon taught at San Francisco State (where Goodman also taught) this is a potential connection with geographical cultural ecology.

Cultural Geography

For Goodman, culture is the set of survivals of past thought, spiritual and scientific insight, and wonder to be glimpsed in religious and civic occasions, music, art, architecture, the practice of farming, cooking, child-rearing, and most other jobs and crafts. However, for Goodman some cultural achievements are higher than others, and culture must be continually re-appropriated by each generation, a process which is not always successful. Daily life is not always culturally rich. At critical times, young people may choose not to take on any of the major traditions at all. Such times were the end of the Middle Ages and the 1960s. Goodman's perspective on this is nuanced — he believes that it is better to freely take on a minor tradition which can be appropriated as experience than be forced to take on a major tradition which cannot. Yet at the same time, many of the great figures of Western Culture "were real people and meant what they did" (Goodman 1994: 61–63).

In more disinterested terms, Goodman accepted "the old principle of acculturation" that practical techniques diffused rapidly while religious, familial, and aesthetic innovations, based on phenomenology, diffuse slowly. This justified for him his combination of practical progressivism combined with a fundamental conservatism and conservationism (Goodman 1994: 72).

> Vocation is taking on the business of the community so it is not a drag . . . If I find what I am good at and good for, that my community can use and will support, securely doing this, I can find myself further." Thus it is "lifeless" to be adaptable to play various roles. The only common role that everyone plays is citizen, "loyal pride in the place where he is thrown . . . even an idiot patriotism of nationalism is better than none (Goodman, 1994: 65).

Place was extraordinarily important in Goodman's vision of culture and education. "For the first five school years there is no merit in the standard curriculum. To repeat Dewey's maxim, for a small child everything in the environment is educative if he attends to it with guidance" (Goodman, 1970: 100). Goodman proposed a model of schooling in which field trips and opportunities in the community played a major role.

Goodman shared Wordsworth's "good insight of the beauty and morality of rural life." "The ecology of a country scene is so exquisitely complicated . . . [it] has been so worked over . . . that it is bound to have unity and style, heroic in scale, minute in detail" (Goodman 1994: 70).

This perspective on culture stimulated in Goodman a continual reflection on architecture and urban landscapes as products of the battle between authenticity and arid structure, means and ends. This reflection is most visible in his travel writing and journalism of the 1950s, especially the books *Five Years* and *The Society I Live in is Mine.*

The focus in 1947 was on fit between architecture, plan, and society:

> The background of the physical plant and the foreground of human activity are profoundly and intimately dependent on one another . . . Men have fought wars and shed their blood for . . . details of plan and decoration. Just so, if we look at the town plan of New Delhi we can immediately read off much of the history and social values of a late date of British imperialism. And if we look at the Garden City plan of Greenbelt, Md., we can understand something very important about the present American era of the 'organization man' (Goodman, 1960 [1947]: 3–4).

Soon afterward, however, Goodman delighted in observing the surprising elements of chance and adaptation in the human habitat:

> The childishness of St. Mark's [Venice] comes from how they picked up pretty pebbles on all those beaches they plundered. The prettiest are here; the left-

> overs are scattered in the other churches. Nothing fits together exactly, yet the conception is strong and cunning and the whole glitters harmoniously (Goodman 1969: 110).

> Hitler's concrete bunkers that dot the beach are popular retreats for quickie love, a good example of beating swords into plowshares (Goodman 1969: 112).

> The Florentine monuments are not very adaptable to community need . . . Nevertheless, the Florentines have gone on among them and do not live as if in a museum . . . it might be seriously worthwhile to question the man in the street and ask . . . What has been the effect of living with their past the way they do (Goodman 1969: 116).

Cultural Ecology

Goodman saw the human organism and environment in dynamic relationship. "If we envisage an animal moving, continually seeing new scenes and meeting new problems to cope with, it will continually have to make a creative adjustment . . . And the environment, for its part, must be amenable to appropriation and selection; it must be plastic to be changed and meaningful to be known." "Sometimes I state my program in the form, 'How to take on Culture without losing Nature,' but that is already too abstract." (Goodman 1994: 51).

This bears on property relations.

> The issue of property has been wrongly put . . . between "private property" and "social property" . . . to be a private individual is largely pathological. For a society to be a collective is largely pathological." "Giving access to the young, conserving the environment, helping the needy . . . are necessary for society to be tolerable at all [and thus] . . . cannot be an object of economic activity." As for sustainable development: "both socialists and capitalists make a disastrous ethical mistake, mortgaging the present to the future." As for the smallholders, so recently extolled by the cultural ecologist Robert Netting, "freehold farming . . . kept open the possibility of anarchy . . . a farmer . . . can . . . withdraw from the market, eat his own crops, and prudently stay out of debt (Goodman 1994: 66–67).

Urbanism and Political Geography

Goodman, like Rexroth, was an antistructuralist. The starting point for his social analysis was the assumption that for the most part "Society" is a fictitious and superstitious abstraction. For Goodman, "most people mostly live their lives" in a "loose matrix of face to face communities, private fantasies, and shifting subsocieties." Goodman found Marx's concentration on Society — and dissidents concept of "the System" pathetic (Goodman, 1994: 49–50).

Goodman did admire the concern of dissidents for a simpler standard of living, nonviolence, and direct action, and the thinkers most connected to these concerns — Kropotkin, Malatesta, Bakunin, Ferrer, William Morris, and Thoreau (Goodman 1970: 145). He suggested as a viable option a "mixed economy" of big and small capitalism, producers cooperatives, consumers cooperatives, independent farming (Netting's "smallholders"), municipal socialism, and pure communism for decent poverty (Goodman 1970: 149).

Goodman refers to the 1969 "People's Park" episode in Berkeley as an example of the inevitable clash between the "hostile inexperience of the young . . . fortified by ideology" and "the latent lunacy of the reactionaries. For Goodman this episode is especially poignant because in this case his "guess is that in the School of Architecture of the university, the do-it-yourself method of the hippies . . . is being taught as a model of correct urban landscape architecture, to encourage citizenship and eliminate vandalism, according to the ideas of Karl Linn . . . The chancellor could just as well have given out academic credit and an A grade" (Goodman 1970: 56). This event was one in which I participated. Although I mildly regret the imputation that I was a hostile, inexperienced, hippie, the overall characterization of this episode in retrospect seems fair.

For Goodman, "good conservatism" meant the conviction to give up everything to conserve community bonds. "Phony conservatives" are those who are more concerned with vested interests than the community. Edmunde Burke was a good conservative, because he acted to preserve the American community. Coleridge also was, because he argued that the property expropriated by Henry VIII should have been consigned to other moral and cultural institutions, and because he argued that villages which did not take part in national trade were still important. Other good conservatives included Lord Acton, George Washington and the other chief leaders of the American Revolution, and Danton and other early pre-Jacobin leaders of the French Revolution (Goodman 1970: 192–193, 195).

For Goodman, the focus is on

> a more elementary humanity, wider, less structured, more variegated. The thing is to have a National Liberation Front that does not end up in a Nation

> State, but abolishes the boundaries. This was what Gandhi and Buber wanted, but they were shelved . . . Some boundaries, of course, are just the limits of our interests . . . But as soon as we begin to notice a boundary between us and others, we project our own unacceptable traits on those across the boundary, and they are foreigners, heretics, untouchables, persons exploited as things. By their very existence, they threaten or tempt us, and we must squelch them, or with missionary zeal make them shape up (Goodman 1970: 194).

This quotation makes it clear that Goodman's vision, like Rexroth's, was profoundly critical of cultural, ethnic, gender, or class particularism. It has something to say for our current interest in territoriality, geomatics, and cultural politics.

Relationship to Other Intellectual Figures

Paul Goodman has also been linked to Black Mountain College and the Black Mountain School of Poetry, on the grounds that he taught there (in 1950), published in their journal, and was friendly with a number of the school's members. However, the College refused to endorse his request for continued employment. Soon after, the College came under the leadership of Charles Olson, who resented Goodman as a threat to his authority. In general, Goodman stands apart from the main group of the Black Mountain School of poets (Horowitz 1989)

Kirkpatrick Sale, in a recent laudatory article in *The Nation*, has argued that Goodman was one of the four major intellectual forces in the "counterculture" of the 1960s (along with Mills, Norman O. Brown, and Herbert Marcuse) (Sale 1995).

Toward the end of his life Goodman bemoaned the accelerating ahistoricity of the young. "They no longer remember their own history . . . Each incoming class is more entangled in the specious present . . . I am often hectored to my face with formulations that I myself put in their mouths, which have become part of oral tradition two years old, author prehistoric" (Goodman 1970: 55).

After his death in 1972, Paul Goodman's work has primarily been kept alive by Taylor Stoehr, his friend and literary executor, and Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts — Boston since 1971 (Stoehr was born in 1931).

Life and Work of Rexroth

Rexroth was born in 1905 in Indiana, moving to California in the twenties. Self-taught, he was involved in a variety of radical and bohemian activities through the twenties and thirties. He moved to San Francisco in 1927, living there until 1968, when he moved to Santa Barbara. He published about 25 books of poetry and plays and 13 books of translations during his life.

He also wrote many notable essays, beginning with his forward to a book of D.H. Lawrence's poems in 1947. The essays have been published in 8 collections between 1959 and 1974, including *Bird in the Bush*, *Assays*, *Classics Revisited*, *The Alternative Society: Essays from the Other World*, *With Eye and Ear*, *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*, *The Elastic Retort*, and *Communalism*. Most of the essays were on literature, arts, or religion, but also included analyses of Northern California life and culture, global economic development, African-American liberation, the student movement (beginning in 1960), environmentalism, and urbanism. The essays of literary and art criticism frequently touch on environmental and geographical issues, particularly his essays on Lucretius, Marco Polo, Izaak Walton, Gilbert White, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and Chinese nature poetry and landscape painting.

He taught at San Francisco State University (1964) and the University of California at Santa Barbara (from 1968). He wrote a series of columns for *San Francisco Magazine* and had a weekly book review program on KPFA radio in San Francisco. After 1974 he spent an increasing amount of time in Japan, and after 1979 he suffered from increasingly poor health. He converted to Roman Catholicism on Easter Sunday, 1981, and was immobilized in bed until his death on June 6, 1982.

San Francisco Culture and Renaissance

Rexroth participated in a cultural milieu which anticipated current norms. He was fond of pointing out that San Francisco's interwar bohemia, with its North Italian influence (largest contingent from Lucca) had a strongly Mediterranean flavor. The attitude of *dolce far niente*, the habit of drinking wine at parties, and an "atmosphere of wholesome orgy" enveloped Telegraph Hill (Rexroth 1973c)

Rexroth's environmentalism was displayed in the lectures and seminars in the Libertarian Circle (which met in the building of the mainly Jewish and Italian Workman's Circle in the Fillmore District) about 1944; later he asserted (probably with exaggeration) that the Circle's "whole emphasis was on ecology as a scientific foundation for a philosophy of social reorganization" (Rexroth 1969) Weekly educational meetings discussed anarchist theory and practice, there were frequent jazz and folk dances in the Mission District, picnics in Marin County, and poetry readings (some marked by the use of marijuana); the Circle participated in the founding of the first listener-sponsored radio station (KPFA) and the San Francisco Poetry Center. Rexroth frequently asserted that the Libertarian Circle and its offshoots were directly responsible for most post-war counterculture, including the San Francisco Renaissance, the Beats, and the Hippies. He traced the origins of The East Village to members of the Libertarian Circle who migrated to the Lower East Side in New York City. "The ideas and lifestyle for which we stood have spread across the world" (Rexroth 1991: 571–521). There is general agreement that Rexroth's presence was essential for the emergence to the San Francisco Renaissance (Tritica 1989), and, in particular, for Gary Snyder, whose focus on culture and ecology carry Rexroth's concerns into the 1990s.

My notes of Rexroth's KPFA broadcasts around 1970 contain a wide range of book reviews, on Asian art, communitarian and utopian communities, anthropology, religion, urbanism, and ecology. He reviewed Harner's book on the Jivaro of Ecuador, in the same broadcast with books on the Tupamaro guerillas of Uruguay, Ann Swinger's book on land above the trees, and Saint Simon's anarchism. His influence in the Bay Area continued to be a force for environmentalism, decentralism, and an expanded literary and cultural frame of reference up until the final years of his life.

Environmentalism

Rexroth constantly refers to ecology in his writings, which he identified with the geography of Elisee Reclus and Peter Kropotkin — "in those days they called them [ecologists] geographers" (Rexroth 1969)

Rexroth's view of nature is conditioned by Whitehead (Rexroth 1961: 86), Buddhism, Tu Fu, Boehme, and Christian sacramental theology; the universe is a "continuing shifting and flowing organism of relationships," "a concourse of persons, all reflecting and self-reflecting and the reflections and the reflective medium reflecting" (Rexroth 1952: 12–13). "Space-time . . . is no more real in an absolute sense than the ruler is part of the cloth which the tailor measures" (Rexroth 1952: 31). Nature is also inherently unstable: he liked to quote Buddha, "the combinations of the world are unstable by nature" (Rexroth 1991: 516).

Rexroth's nature poetry is based on Tu Fu and the other East Asian writers who invented the wilderness ideal and wilderness poetry. Many of Rexroth's poems are based on his long backpacking and skiing trips into the Sierra and coast ranges of California. But he also embraced the “geo-piety” of Izaak Walton (Rexroth 1968: 200) and Gilbert White:

“a philosophy of living things, a philosophy we now call ecology . . . The very lack of specialization gave White his enduring significance. Since he saw . . . all things together, all the time . . . his book is permeated with an unobtrusive emphasis on the interrelatedness of life . . . he is never polemical, the conclusions of Piotr Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid* . . . are immanent rather than explicit On [his book] is formed the whole very English tradition of amateur natural history . . . [he] communicates the beauty and quiet drama of the English countryside through the seasons, one of the two most beautiful, with Japan, of the thickly populated parts of the world. . . ”(Rexroth 1973b: 70–71).

Rexroth worked on the WPA guide to California in the 1930s, writing sections on National Parks, forests, lakes, and deserts; he also worked on an unpublished “Field Handbook of the Sierra Nevada” with information on plants and animals (Hamalian 1991: 83).

Rexroth supported David Brower in the Sierra Club, Ed Ricketts, “the brain trust of John Steinbeck and the ‘Doc’ of his novels,” and what he called the “ecological revolution in the Bay Area” in the late 1960s (Rexroth 1969).

In 1969 he continued to extol ecology as “the science that automatically produces evaluation without ceasing to confine itself to purely scientific methods.” He urged his audience to read Frederick Clements and Paul Ehrlich as well as Kropotkin. He contrasted the ecologists with the “value-neutral” approaches of vulgar Darwinism, Leninism, and most forms of Marxism (Rexroth 1969). However, by 1972 he recognized that “ecology” had become the most misused term in the American language, subject to manipulation by public relations and advertising, particularly by the oil and lumber industries. He was distinguishing between the genuine environmentalism of David Brower and what he called “Establishment conservationism” of the Sierra Club and the like (Rexroth 1972a) At the same time, he consistently pointed out that Russia was more ruthless than Brazil or the USA against nature (Rexroth 1972b).

Cultural Geography

Rexroth was a passionate reader of anthropology and ethnography both popular (the eleventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica) and professional (the Bureau of American Ethnology). He approached “indigenous” poetry and art from the perspective of a practicing artist who appreciated its power and beauty — but also from the perspective of a seasoned anarchist who tried to root practices in the social context.

Rexroth refused to believe that cultures or periods constituted insuperable barriers to understanding. Rather, it is possible to find “events and relationships that are invariant in the life of all men”:

> The unity of human experience is determined by the narrowness of the range of action and interaction of organisms and environments, for all men everywhere. Eskimos, Polynesians, Romans, Chicagoans — all men have the same bodies and the same kind of brains and cope with an environment in ways that would seem more uniform than not to an observer from another planet . . . the contemporary novel that embodies paradigms of the great tragic commonplaces of human life seems precisely ‘novel,’ fresh, and convincing, while literature that deals with contemporaneity on its own terms is hackneyed before it appears in print (Rexroth 1968: ix-xi).

> What is most impressive about Marco Polo is not that he finds men in distant lands strange and their ways outlandish but that he does not . . . He had what we have lost, an ecumenical mind, an international sensibility. As [a medieval merchant], he . . . had the tolerance that comes of thinking of one world linked together . . . the tremendous civilizing force of business as business in the face of the most anomalous customs . . . the opposite of the ruthless destructiveness of trade, flag and Bible in Victorian days (Rexroth 1968: 151).

The fundamental unity of humankind meant that it is possible to discern a canon of classics of literature, art, music, and other arts. Value judgments are possible and desirable in the arts to distinguish between the universal, dealing with “the tragic commonplaces of human life,” and the ephemeral contemporary. No society or group is immune from producing bad art or bad culture, but none has a monopoly on great achievement.

Much art has a social function, or is forced to serve one. Traditions and texts to serve the needs of a people (or a nation-state) are often manufactured, but invented traditions often come to play an authentic role. “The Aeneid . . . The Kalevala, the Shah-nama . . . are all synthetic myths, made by intellectuals, which succeeded. They did provide foundations for the structural relationships through which their peoples saw themselves”(Rexroth 1961: 36).

The Native American Ghost Dance, he noted, “protected and sustained the Indian in his struggle to adjust to the gradually all-enveloping white civilization.” (Rexroth 1961: 52–55).

Rexroth in 1955 described the development of a world culture:

> Colonial & subcolonial countries have got to develop a really critical assimilation — a digestion [with] organic acceptance & rejection . . . in any acculturation process assimilation & revolt go hand in hand & begin [with] the deracinated . . . (Bartlett 1991: 198–199).

This appears to anticipate Escobar's discussion of hybridity by 40 years.

Rexroth constantly was attentive to the cultural landscape. One of his earliest projects was his participation in the WPA Guide to California, where he authored sections farm hamlets and fishing villages as well as on natural landscapes (Hamalian 1991: 83). Although he doubted that architecture was "a direct expression of a kind of social sensibility [or] . . . Folk Soul," (Rexroth 1972c), he analyzed buildings, churches, places in his poetry and criticism. Usually his analyses combine an awareness of brutal political and economic realities with a sensitivity to the role of the architect, the taste of the sponsors, and the potential of place to evoke religious and community loyalty. Rexroth's analysis of the church of Sainte Cécile in Albi France is — with all its brevity, poetic license, and polemics — comparable to David Harvey's analysis of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart (Sacré-Coeur) in Montmartre, Paris (Harvey, 1985: 221ff)

> The finest integral work
> Of art ever produced north
> Of the Alps, a palisade
> Of sequoias, the Karnak
> Of Europe, the behemoth
> Of orthodoxy that devoured
> Langue d'Oc . . . (Rexroth, 1952: 44)

The reference of course is to the Albigensian crusade, which Rexroth links to the struggle between regional economic and cultural systems. (Indeed, Rexroth often tried to understand history in terms of the tension between regional and sectional cultures — North, South, and West in the US; North and South in France, Europe as a whole, and China; England vs. Wales).

Rexroth was a consistent opponent of modernism in architecture and design, although he appreciated the revolutionary impulses of many of its practitioners (and some of their achievements). He called the high-rise "the outward material sign of the inward reality of an inhumane social order." He was a post modernist before the term was invented. He pointed to Gaudi as the exemplar of an architecture for "radical young people, hippies, and freaks" (Rexroth, 1972).

Rexroth was a lifelong reader of travel and exploration literature, "one of the most absorbing of all forms of reading matter." Favorite authors included Marco

Polo and the geographer Owen Lattimore (Rexroth 1968: 153). In this context, it is interesting to note his 1964 proposal to write a travel book on the wine regions of Europe, which was to combine commentaries on cuisine, pre-Gothic architecture, current affairs, and literary and historical connections. This "travel book" apparently failed to attract funding and was never produced (Bartlett 1991: 235–237).

Cultural Ecology

Rexroth's concerns touch on those of cultural and political ecology. In a radio broadcast late in his life, he noted that "all cultures are ecologically conditioned" (Rexroth 1973d) If his statements on the subject often sound oversimplified or even wrongheaded to us today, they certainly seem mainstream enough or even avant-garde in the context of 1960s cultural ecology as practiced by Rappaport, Geertz, and Harris.

Rexroth wrote in 1956 that Wittfogel's (and Needham's) emphasis on the "influence of waterworks, canals, and dams for drainage . . . on Chinese history and social structure . . . is unquestionably fruitful" (Rexroth 1961: 85).

A discussion of Njal's Saga leads Rexroth to a discussion of Malthus and the interaction of population, habitat, and adaptation, (which closely relates to Nettings work in the Alps and the cultural ecological discourse about Bali):

> Islanding produces rapid evolutionary change and demands full use of the potentiality of a species . . . closed communities are not just inbred: they are social, moral, intellectual . . . as well as biological forcing beds, self-isolating and concentrating . . . (Rexroth 1961: 22).

As for the subarctic, "Like the Lapps or Eskimos, [the Finns] must cooperate with nature or perish. They are still there . . . The Kalevala succeeds and endures because it . . . is a synthesis of nature, man, time, and place" (Rexroth 1961: 40).

Unstable cultures have adverse impacts on the environment — Rexroth saw western Kansas similarly to Donald Worster, "a ruined country and a ruining people," an emblem of "the decline and fall of the Capitalist system" (Rexroth 1952: 147).

Urbanism and Political Geography

Rexroth saw significant social processes as largely taking place outside the purview of the state:

History assumes the State
As the extrapersonal
Vehicle of memory,
What is important is what is
Held in the sieve of polity.
The State is the great forgetter (Rexroth 1952: 49).

For Rexroth, the state tends to act to reduce persons to "population units," just as the market economy tends to reduce persons to commodities (Rexroth 1952: 104).

Much of Rexroth's earlier social writing is based on the Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft distinction of Tonnies and Martin Buber. In view of the radical schism between community and collectivity, the appropriate action is to attach the institutions of collectivity and nourish small scale, local community:

. . . It is
Wise to keep the pattern of
Life clear and simple and filled
With beautiful and real things.
The round may be narrow enough.
The rounds of the world are narrower (Rexroth 1952: 167).

Later in life, Rexroth called for a "revolutionary ecology of the modern city" based on the city planning literature (like Goodman, he stressed the continuity of reformist ideas since 1800). This planning would emphasize environmental protection, a coordinated system of rapid transit and roads, banning automobiles from certain areas, planned community centers in tune with local needs, an end to high-rise commercial and residential buildings, and an attack on crime in the streets (which Rexroth identified as "just the slopover" of organized crime) (Rexroth 1971c) This planning would have to be politically grounded on marginalizing the influence of organized crime, narcotics traffickers, banks, and especially the small and ignorant suburban taxpayers who were the power base of Reagan republicanism in southern California at the end of the sixties (Rexroth 1971a) Rexroth's analysis of the political and economic forces attacking the environment was as relentless as any political ecologist, but more likely to include organized crime and criminal big labor, as well as dysfunctional cultures and subcultures, as part of the corrupt mix influencing events and policy.

One measure proposed by Rexroth was a partition of California to protect the more enlightened body politic of the northern half of the state from the benighted "Southern" political culture of Los Angeles (Rexroth 1971a) On the other hand, he also opposed the post colonial national partitioning of such culturally diverse areas as Ireland, South Asia, Indochina, and Palestine, which he identified as primarily rooted in post-War British government policy (Rexroth 1971b)

Rexroth noted in early 1973, the emergence of a new national political configuration alien to the goals he had striven for all his life. This included a rightward move by students and the press.

He rejected the explanations that activism accomplished nothing; that students followed their parents into the camp of Nixon; that the CIA and Mafia destroyed the movement with terror, co-optation, and drugs; that activism had gone off into radical rural communes; that the abolition of the draft had removed the main reason for opposition to the war; that Universities have corrected all their problems; and that television had finally conquered the mass mind of the new generation. He pointed out that he saw similar quietude emerging in France, eastern Europe. He ultimately saw this change as mysterious, a generational change (Rexroth 1973a) Late in life he became increasingly involved in visits to Japan, and became more disgusted with American life.

Rexroth's work has continued to sell well, but his reputation has become more complex with the publication of a magisterial biography by Linda Hamalian (Hamalian 1991). This biography revealed the angry and often violent man behind the image he presented in his writings; it at once emphasized the magnitude of his achievements and the flaws which caused many of his closest friends and associates to turn away.

Rexroth and Goodman

Kenneth Rexroth and Paul Goodman were discontents to modernist centralism and its ecological and cultural consequences during and after World War II. They moved in different contexts but their paths occasionally overlapped. Rexroth was aware of Goodman and spoke of him relatively favorably as early as 1945 (Bartlett 1991: 60,106–115). However, when he met Goodman for the first time in 1948, he concluded that Goodman was "really a square"(Hamalian 1991: 174). Goodman was also less than completely impressed with Rexroth, calling some of his letters "mythomniacal" in the 1940s (Hamalian 1991:159). The two have deep affinities, however, reflected by *American Poetry*'s decision to devote an issue (Volume 7, Number 1, Fall 1989) to essays on both of them. And on occasion Goodman helped Rexroth out (Hamalian 1991: 322).

Both were anarcho-pacifists, marked by their opposition to American participation in World War II. After the War both somewhat reluctantly became interpreters of the disaffiliated — Rexroth for the beats, Goodman for the juvenile delinquents, both for college protesters. Neither of them were enthusiastic partisans of the alienated young, however, since both felt that the young were in some respects the victims of their own lack of culture (Goodman 1994: 63).

Both were only distantly related to existentialism (Rexroth opposed it). Both were deeply involved with religious ideas; Rexroth with sacramental "high church" Anglicanism and Catholicism, Goodman with Protestantism (the "Reformers" including Luther, plus Schweitzer, Otto, and Barth, although he saw himself as an agnostic). Both were fascinated with Eastern religious ideas, although with Goodman this came late in life and was coupled with his edgy agnosticism. Both practiced a kind of geo-piety. Both identified with the noble goals of Western civilization including its modern variant, and both argued (Goodman most eloquently) for the need to finish the missed and unfinished goals of this tradition. Both contested the view that nature, including human nature, was infinitely malleable, and argued that the past created truly noble, cross-culturally negotiable ideals, albeit ones subject to further refinement (Stoehr 1990).

They both were post-Leninist anarchist radicals; but, more importantly, both were alike in being widely read but sitting lightly to theory. At the end of his life, Goodman said "I stick pretty close to the concrete and finite, that comes in sizable chunks with a rough structure and an ongoing tendency and is immersed in ignorance, a void that is sometimes fertile"(Goodman 1994: 39). Rexroth noted that ". . . It is wise to keep the pattern of life clear and simple and filled with beautiful and real things" (Rexroth 1952: 167).

Although not averse to the magisterial statement, their pronouncements were self-evidently not "politically correct"; indeed, both delighted in the mischievously controversial barb. Rather, their pronouncements were meant as the "barbaric yawps" of vital personalities in conversation with others. Both did not disguise their admiration of authors with whom they clearly disagreed politically or religiously, and both were capable of transcending their time, place, and culture. Yet both were clearly grounded and centered in Western Civilization, with which both identified. Rexroth can be seen as a man of letters only matched by Edmund Wilson and Malcolm Cowley in his generation (Tritica 1989)

Both were also strongly concerned with environment, ecology, city, place. Their concern for geography was often expressed in terms of "ecology." Thus Rexroth taught geography to workers in San Francisco.

No doubt their academic neglect is considerably due to their anti-academicism. Both were rooted in academia and even admired it; Rexroth considered pursuing a Ph.D. (Gibson 1989) and taught at UC Santa Barbara, while Goodman had a Ph.D. in aesthetics from the University of Chicago and taught in a variety of academic settings. But they were isolated from the academic community during most of their lives (Tritica 1989) Goodman felt that he "was excluded from the profitable literary circles dominated by the Marxists in the thirties and ex-Marxists in the forties because [he] was anarchist" (Goodman 1994: 108). Rexroth had similar concerns (Gutierrez 1996: 10).

Another commonality was generational. Rexroth was born in 1905 at "the end of the great experiment in Modernism" and arguably was among the last to share in the academic ostracism which modernism inspired. Adult life was spent in the atmosphere of the Great Depression and the War (Tritica 1989) Paul Goodman was born in 1911, and graduated from public high school in 1927; after graduation from the City College of New York in 1931 he too descended into underemployment in the atmosphere of the Great Depression. During their old age, both came to apocalyptic conclusions about the future. Rexroth publicly doubted that much of humanity would survive to the year 2000 due to the threat of nuclear war. Goodman thought the "probability is high (95 percent) that atom bombs will destroy my friends and children" (Goodman 1994: 101).

The commmonalities of interests are remarkable considering the very different backgrounds of these two writers. They were among the last to see themselves as part of the avant garde of modern Western Civilization. Their vision of culture and environment, politics and religion, the past and the future contain extraordinary parallels with the concerns of academic cultural and political ecology and cultural geography. I am uncertain as to how many academic geographers were directly influenced by their writings (I was one). Apart from the issue of direct influence, these writers responded to a perceived situation of environmental and cultural crisis which has become far more commonly shared. I suspect the indirect influences have been profound. It may be time to re-read these writers and recognize their early membership in our interpretive communities.

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