



+ Humanity is an implicit and beneficial element of nature. Cultural history of the genus reveals a two million year span of successful adaptation during which people collected their food and materials from naturally productive geo-biotic regions and locales. A cultivation of the wild. + The term *primitive* refers to this long and stable phase of human culture - so persistent it survives today on the most marginal lands. + The replacement of this very successful adaptive culture with an exploitative/industrial culture occurred only very recently in the North Pacific Range. + Human presence in the New World dates back at least twenty thousand years. From Mid to Late Wisconsin glaciation, populations began to grow and spread until encountering the continental margins. + Through a process of bio-cultural evolution the journey over earth became a union with her body. ++ A simple shift in mode, in perception, in culture. . .the sheath of worldculture could drop away. . .revealing an endless & radiant landscape of the imagination. Human culture rising out of natural succession. . .its best aspiration harmonious interaction with the larger community, the ecosystem. . .a simple rearrangement of hierarchies. . .nothing to be afraid of, total security at both ends. Teaching history as an arm of biology for a generation would do it. Or do I have to lay down in front of that damned bulldozer again? + I'm walking across the field toward Fishtown. The light is very clean & soft, an early spring day. The plants & trees are radiant from within and I am alert enough to see the radiance. Fishtown is built on pilings over the river, old gillnetters' shacks now occupied by artists & contemplatives. It lies about a mile from the paved road. Half the walk is over cultivated field, half through the woods, straight up over the hill & then the river. As I walk over the hill I'm paying attention to the trees and the ground. The river comes into view and suddenly I'm stunned by the realization that I am not the same person who started the walk! I am transformed by a ceremony residing in the land itself. The place dictates the mandate for human activities there and that mandate can be perceived directly through a ceremony that lives in the woods like an almost tangible creature. I am transformed, transfixed; I am hung on the line to dry like a flapping raggedy flannel shirt. ++ We have been awakened to the richness and complexity of the primitive mind which merges sanctity, food, life and death—where culture is integrated with nature at the level of the *particular ecosystem* and employs for its cognition a body of metaphor drawn from and structured in relation to that ecosystem. + We have found therein a mode of thinking parallel to modern science but operating at the entirely different level of sensible intuition; a tradition that prepared the ground for the neolithic revolution; a science of the *concrete*, where nature is the model for culture because the mind has been nourished and weaned on nature; a *logic* that recognizes soil fertility, the magic of animals, the continuum of mind between species. + Successful culture is a semi-permeable membrane between man and

nature. + We are witnessing North America's post-industrial phase right now, during which human society strives to remain predominant over nature. + No mere extrapolation from present to future seems possible. + We are in transition from one condition of symbiotic balance—the primitive—to another which we will call the *future primitive*. . .a condition having the attributes of a mature ecosystem: stable, diverse, in symbiotic balance again. ++ Now I'm half crazed with it: I'm carrying a cockle shell in my palm as I walk & hitch around the countryside. It cuts into my hand just enough to keep me alert. I want to perceive those natural ceremonies & processions wherever I go. Maybe I'll go mad but I'm gaining a language. I can talk to almost anyone now & it's not stiff or wierd. + Hitching to the dentist this morning along Chuckanut Drive, a narrow two-lane blacktop clinging to the cliffs running up the east side of Northern Puget Sound, fine vistas of the San Juan Islands, very little traffic this time of year. A cheerful middle-aged fisherman picks me up after a while. I pocket my cockle. He fishes on the *Radio*, dragging for hake which are sold to the fish-meal plant & ground up into pellets which are fed to hatchery salmon. I know another guy on the *Radio* & I tell him that I have to smell that fish-meal process, the damned plant's in La Conner, where I live. We feel friendly toward each other. + He asks what do I do in La Conner, just foolin away my unemployment, hah? + I tell him what's in the North Pacific Rim, how it's strung together by salmon, fir, cedar, bear, the Japanese Current, the weather; how 99% of human habitation there has been successful; how there's a *real* economy which everyone shares that has nothing to do with American or Russian or Japanese bucks. He digs it at once, doesn't even care about Japs ripping off "American" fish. + He asks Are you religious? + I say Well, ah, I think the planet's alive, yes I suppose I'm religious, but it's not out there, it's all over the place, it's in here. + He says Yeah, well I'm not very religious either. But that economy, I can understand that, I've always thought I could get very close with a Japanese woman - now I could tell her, look, we're all in the same boat, whad'ya wanna do next? + I give him his next line - yeah, eat another piece of this salmon. + We laugh and drive on through Bellingham. He drops me right at the dentist's door & we part friends. I deliver to the dentist a copy of a poster we have managed to produce for the Drum concerning the rate of trade between the Japanese & the Ainu in 1792. White Rice. He's very happy to get it. Says Wow, the Hudson Bay Company was doing the same thing at the same time on this side with white flour! ++ The science of ecology provides us with a logic of integration: individuals join to form species/populations; populations join to form community/ecosystems; ecosystems join to form the biosphere. If we wish to integrate our cultures with nature we do so at the *level of the ecosystem* which everywhere has a common structure and progression but everywhere varies specifically in composition and function according to time and place. + Compare this with the

post-industrial ideal of *stewardship* whereby a single species assumes management of the biosphere in order to turn to its advantage all biological and physical processes. A single species dead-end. ++ Technology on the North Pacific Rim is boat technology. You can't *walk* around the Rim without a bulldozer in front of you to clear the trees. Bigfoot is a 22 year old ex-logger, tractor driver, peaviner, a friend of mine. Maybe a month ago he decided that the only reasonable way to live around here was to get into a boat that would row & sail, which would open up for him a 500-mile radius in which he could forage & cultivate the wild. Live that way, forget about logging hernias. He found a 26 foot Columbia River bowpicker hull which was sinking, raised it, put a foredeck & new gunwhales on it, intends to step a mast soon. It's a big boat with a lot of beam, but so well-shaped that one person can row it standing up with 14 foot sweeps. + Last week he & Peter & I took it out. We rowed it up the channel a couple of miles against the current and then through the fish hole in the jetty, a tricky business. It was one of those typical days on the Rim - water above, water below, the definition of the horizon obscured into a dozen tones of pearl gray. A person in a boat on such a day floats in the center of a dimensionless cosmos; up, down, here, there, all obscured. A person in a boat is in the center of it. + We worked our way along the jetty until we saw a cedar log big enough to cut shake bolts out of it. Drift-wood. We took a chainsaw, bucked it up, loaded it in the boat. Then found a big alder, perfectly seasoned, bucked it up for firewood & loaded it. As the tide goes out the fish hole dries up, so we hurried back out into the channel so as not to be stranded on the wrong side of the jetty. We rowed back on the channel, trying out various rowing styles: facing backwards, facing forwards, two men rowing together, etc. We got back before noon, not tired, but laughing, with more than half a cord of mixed shake-bolts & fire wood. + *Anxiety about survival has always been beside the point.* The air was moist and tasty that morning and we felt good for the rest of the day. ++ A narrow climatic zone adjacent to the temperate North Pacific. Sea level to coast-mountain divide. Within this range there is a procession manifest in its life process. + With the retreat of glaciers came the first communities—the lichens, mosses and grasses—forming a living cover over raw glacial till; reducing soil erosion and evaporation; building up organic matter. + Next, willow and cottonwood seedlings, prostrate on the nitrogen-impoverished soil. + Then, the alders: hosts to nitrogen-fixing bacteria. Nitrogen compounds leak from roots to soil. Leaves form a nitrogen-rich detritus. Organic matter accumulates. + Community succession continues. + As the alder thicket matures hemlock and red cedar surge upward and shade out the alder. The new stands thicken. More organic matter is added to the soil. Conditions continue to change. Succession slows as energy is increasingly relegated from production to maintenance and protection. Growth slows. Life cycles elaborate webs of association working toward symbiotic

balance, more complex food chains, nutrient conservation and stability. + In two hundred years the alder's gone. Incorporated into the forest soil. ++ This past month we ate nettles, many oysters, dandelion greens, salmon, cat-tail shoots, smelt, lambs quarter, clams, mussels, and a lot of stuff from the grocery store. Less dependence on the grocery store than last year. The last of last summer's frozen strawberries for breakfast this morning. Five pound Dolly Varden trout in the channel, but I haven't learned to catch them yet. Garden still half an inch under water but the leeks & garlic holding tough. Milk from local cow-farmers. It's very early spring. ++ Rain forest. + Hemlock-wapiti-deer-red cedar-sitka spruce biome. + Duff and organic soil is deep. + Wapiti browse, deer browse. Trails through the forest. Beds where they sleep. + The challenge is to fit ourselves to this range in a way appropriate to the strategy and particulars of its regional succession, so that our cultures are once again a ceremony of interaction between species and ecosystem, matching the regional diversity. Events related to landmarks; a mythology of place; a landscape of events. The locale one context containing the indigenous culture, appropriate to its time and place, ritualizing connections between species and habitat. Continuous with biology. + A community of beings joined by rim and basin, air and watershed, food chains - ceremonies. + Inhabiting river basin, estuary, mountainside and island, we proceed as part of the ceremony of this evolution. There is no independent existence. ++ Whispers from Suwa-no-se Island, in the Japanese Archipelago, poetry in the Micronesian Senate, Tlingit newspapers 300 miles in the back country. Neighbors & allies. My feet are here and my head's everywhere. Various locales are speaking through various people, communes, peoples. Wallace Stevens said, "There are men of a valley/Who are that valley...the soul...is composed of the external world." + Geobiotically, there is no sense in centralized national governments. + Biologically, the industrial state is a travesty. + Economics has been misunderstood for two thousand years. + Growth economics and bio-engineering are thrusting us into an encapsulated toilet of a future. + There will be corresponding committees, regional caucuses, continental congresses to deal with these considerations. + We will strive for indigeneity and regional self-sufficiency. + We will be informed by earthworms & plankton. + We will study that authority which resides in place and act out our lives accordingly. + There is no separate existence.

Future Primitive is spoken here as two voices with images. In reality, these voices represent the best cullings from readings in dozens of authors and scholars and from months of discussions with many people up and down the west coast of North America. It is an ongoing collaboration which has hardly begun. . . . JG & LH

Image by Daniel Stolpe