

**Academy of Thought and Industry
2690 Jackson Street
San Francisco, California 94115-1123**

**Mark Gonnerman, PhD
Founding Humanities Teacher
Information Session
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**Learning Where We Live:
San Francisco and the View from ATI**

At a certain stage of spiritual development, we realize that our practice place—be it a monastery or school—has no walls. That is, we come to understand that our practice takes place wherever we happen to be. To know just where we stand (geographically, historically, morally) is one outcome of dwelling within the human sciences, a precondition of wisdom, the ability to discern and respond to the particular circumstances (social, political, economic, aesthetic) that continually shape our lives.

During this conversation and information session, we will reflect upon the vital history, culture, and ecology of the San Francisco Bay Area, a place where human possibilities continue to evolve in ways that work both with and against the more-than-human worlds we inhabit. We will be reminded that our postmodern cosmopolis harbors timely resources in support of the necessary work of *reinhabiting* this and other places. These resources include a homegrown tradition of bioregional thinking, constructive social actions, and the community of inquiry now forming at ATI, a school with “no walls” that offers teens and their families opportunities to enjoy panoramic views of the City and of the longer story or stories of which we are now a part.



**Learning Where We Live:
San Francisco and the View from ATI**

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Becoming Cascadian

Rainier Beach, Cedar River Watershed, on Lake Washington.
May 31–June 4, 2018

Living in Place with Peter Berg & Gary Snyder in Mind

Manifesto: “Reinhabiting California” by **Peter Berg** and **Ray Dasmann** first published in *The Ecologist* in 1977. Berg first heard the word *bioregion* from poet **Allen Van Newkirk** in Nova Scotia. This essay defines bioregion as “geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness.”

“*Reinhabitation* means learning to live-in-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation. It involves becoming native to a place through becoming aware of the particular ecological relationships that operate within and around it. It means understanding activities and evolving social behavior that will enrich the life and that place. Simply stated, it involves becoming fully alive within and with a place.”

“We know more about the property lines than we know more about the life that moves under, over, and through them.” First draft on difference between *invaders* and *inhabitants* quotes **Jack Forbes** (1934–2011): “Native Californians...felt themselves

to be something other than independent, autonomous individuals. They perceived themselves as being deeply bound together with other people (and with the surrounding non-human forms of life) in a complex interconnected web of life, that is to say, a true community.”

“Reinhabitants are as different from invaders as these were from the original inhabitants.... Their...‘**future primitive**’ aims might include developing contemporary bioregional cultures that celebrate the continuity of life where they live, and new region-to-region forms of participation with other cultures based on our mutuality as a species in the planetary biosphere.”

Jeremiah Gorsline and **Freeman House** first write of the “Future Primitive” in Planet Drum’s Bundle #3 “North Pacific Rim Alive,” 1974.

Ray Dasmann (1919–2002) influenced by **Jimoh Omo-Fadaka** (Nigeria), **Theodore Roszak**, **Barry Commoner**, **E.F. Schumacher**, and **Gary Snyder**. He had a cabin on the San Juan Ridge in the Yuba River Watershed where **Gary Snyder** made his home in 1969.

Gary Snyder (1930–)

“More and more I am aware of very close correspondence between the external and the internal landscape” (1964 interview).

“To know the spirit of a place is to realize that you are a part of a part and that the whole is made up of parts, each of which is whole. You start with the part you are whole in” (1990).

***A Place in Space* (1995)**

“In January 1969 [just back from Japan] I attended a gathering of Native American activists in southern California.... I first heard this continent called “**Turtle Island**” there by a [Navajo] man who said his work was to be a messenger.... He said that Turtle Island was the term that the people were coming to, a new name to help us build the future of North America. I asked him whom or where it came from. He said, ‘There are many creation myths with Turtle, East Coast and West Coast. But also you can just hear it.’”

Turtle Island with “Four Changes” (1974).

“A *Place in Space* could equally be called ‘Meeting the Oak’ I realize—seeing how it moves from the first sentence on the political and spiritual loneliness of America and ends with the sentence “meeting the oak.” The arc between the two is a complex account of finding a way to be at home in the world, without giving up larger perspectives either” (24 Dec 1995, GSJ).

“Walking on walking/ under foot, earth turns. / / Streams and mountains never stay the same.”—*Mountains & Rivers Without End* (1996).



Peter Berg (1937–2011)

“Globalists versus Planetarians” (1978)

“It is becoming a more widely acknowledged idea [2001] that we all live in some life-place, and that maybe if we save those parts we can save the whole.”

“Learning to Partner with a Life-Place” (‘04)

“**Green City**”: “I think there’s a new urban settler, a new urban person who belongs in the ecological era, who is much more conscious of resources, what they use, what they require, what they provide for themselves, what they do with their time...”

“I think our working together to discover our own wildness, the wild homo sapiens being within us, is very liberating, very exciting. It is the future from my point of view, and it’s pivotal in terms of human civilization” (1989).

Future Primitive: “The phrase future primitives refers to human beings as Mutualist members of a species who in the future would ensure for themselves the full dimensions of consciousness that a regional identity would provide, a regional/ planetary identity. It doesn’t mean wearing loincloths. It doesn’t mean trying to become Indians. It means ...[w]e are going to identify ourselves as part of a species in a bioregion on the planet. That’s actually a new place. We’ve never been in that consciousness terrain before.”

“The people in this book might be going to have lived a long, long time from now in Northern California.”—**Ursula Le Guin** (1929–2018), *Always Coming Home* (1985).



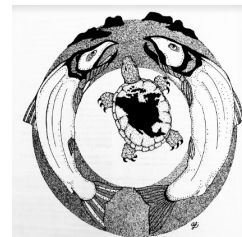
Resources

- “Raymond F. Dasmann : A Life in Conservation Biology,” interview by Randall Jarrell, Regional History Project, UCSC Library (2000), 165pp.
<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4j9397s9>
 - Cheryl Glotfelty and Eve Quesnet, eds. *The Biosphere and the Bioregion: Essential Writings of Peter Berg* (Routledge, 2015).
 - Planet Drum Foundation | planetdrum.org
 - *Home! A Bioregional Reader*, ed. by C. Plant V. Andruss, J. Plant, E. Wright (New Society Publishers, 1990).
 - Gary Snyder, *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds* (Counterpoint, 1995).
 - Yuba Watershed Institute
<http://yubawatershedinstitute.org>
- Prepared by Mark Gonnerman, PhD**
Founding Humanities Teacher
Academy of Thought and Industry, SF CA
mark.gonnerman@gmail.com

Convenor: Mountains & Rivers Workshop, Stanford Humanities Center, available as *A Sense of the Whole: Reading Gary Snyder’s Mountains and Rivers Without End* (Counterpoint, 2015).

Home: Shasta Bioregion, San Francisco Bay, Guadalupe River Watershed, Near the Confluence of the Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creek.

Visit: futureprimitives.info



Peter Berg, Counterculture, and the Bioregional Impulse* by Gary Snyder

I got my start at matching my visionary and scholarly impulse to rethink North America with the actual landscape when I started snow peak mountaineering in the Pacific Northwest. One can't help but see large space of mountains, a few rivers, and think—there are no political boundaries on this, it is a matter of its own shapes and lineaments.

Later as a student at Reed, I came across A. L. Kroeber's "Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America" with its marvelous pouch of maps in the back (Tribal boundaries, four maps of differing Vegetation Areas, Native Cultural Areas, and Physiographic Areas of Native North America) and saw it as a guide to better understanding what North America was and could be. It also proved to be an introduction to a perspective on the entire planet. I ordered a bought a copy, and still have it and use it, in spite of the magic of G.I.S. (U of Ca. Press, 1947).

Then I spent some years in East Asia, mostly Japan. In letters and a few essays my friends and I pursued this line of thought further, if lightly, and when I returned to the West Coast for good, in 1968, I was soon in touch with Peter Coyote, Jim Dodge, Jerry Martien, and Freeman House and soon met Peter Berg.

There was a large gathering, at Muir Beach early in 1969—when Sandy Stewart still ran a restaurant there—and I met Peter Berg then. I right away liked his sparky, funny, fiercely questioning streak and noted that he looked like Lenin.

Soon after (even while I was busy staging up to go to the Sierra Nevada and planning the building for the Kitkitdizze house), Peter spoke of his Planet Drum project, and though I was drawn into mountain carpentry and local community building labor for many years, I tried to stay in touch.

Peter's circle developed around him, his lovely wife, Judy Goldhaft, perfected her sinuous water dance, and they all began to do workshops from place to place—dances—games—and participating in sexy salmon drama. Raise the Stakes got started. And David Haenke and many others were holding bioregional gatherings in the Ozarks, in Kansas, and in various places—we had one in northern California—it was a lively time. Peter and I were once invited speakers up in Missoula, talking our watershed and community ideas to a host of scholars and counterculture people at the University.

Somebody else will have to do that history, but what I remember was that Peter himself was always at the core of so much. Other groups elsewhere flourished, but San Francisco remained the center of much bioregional thinking for many years. By the same token, my area got deeper into its own local work—the Yuba River watershed, forestry, wildlife, and water issues, and the return of a few larger animals like cougar and bear as well as the now ever-present wild turkey. I was less in touch with Peter and Judy in the last two decades but well-employed locally, as well as periodically visiting the burgeoning local bioregional groups in Japan. Peter Berg maintained his unique style, language, wit, and occasional critical probing, through it all and to everyone's advantage. A hardy, scrappy, super-smart and sardonic alpha, Peter provided leadership and made a contribution that has been immeasurable;

and what a guy.

3.III (Girls Day in Japan) 2012

* In Cheryll Glotfelty and Eve Quesnel, eds. *The Biosphere and the Bioregion: Essential Writings of Peter Berg* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 248–49.

Peter Berg (1 October 1937– 28 July 2011)



Mark Gonnerman

Peter Berg and Judy Goldhaft, 8 July 2011

Peter arranged for his 1 October 2011 memorial service to be a gathering of friends at the site of the Josephine Randall Museum in Corona Heights Park, San Francisco. Many came from all directions. Clearly it was Peter's intention that we should enjoy the panoramic view of San Francisco from atop the exposed terracotta red Franciscan chert bedrock.

(Josephine Dows Randall [1885–1968] was a Stanford graduate [BA, MA in Zoology, 1913] who was the Superintendent of Recreation for the San Francisco Department of Parks from 1926–1951, when she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of California.)

—Mark Gonnerman

REGENERATE CULTURE!

The bioregional movement is an educational exercise, first of all. Next, when you really get down to brass tacks, what it really means is that you have people who say: *I'm not going to move*. That's where it gets new. People say I'm going to stay here, and could count on me being here 20 years from now. What that immediately does is make a politically-empowered community possible. Bioregionalism has this concrete based that it builds from: human beings that live in place together for the long run. In North America that's a new thing!

Human beings who are planning on living together in the same place will wish to include the non-human in their sense of community. This also is new, to say our community does not end at the human boundaries, we are in a community with certain trees, plants, birds, animals. The conversation is with the whole thing. That's community political life.

The next step might be that you have an issue, and you testify at a hearing. You say: I speak as a local, a local who is committed to being here the rest of my life, and who fully expects my children and my grandchildren to be living here. Consequently, my view of the issue is a long-range view, and I request that you have a long-range view in mind. I'm not there to talk about 20 year logging plan. I'm here to talk about a 500 year logging plan. Does your logging plan address 500 years? If not, you are not meeting your responsibility to local people.

Another person by this time takes the stand, from your same group, and says: I'm a member of this community who also intends to live here in the long run, and one of my friends, Douglas Fir, can't be here tonight. So I'm speaking for Douglas Fir. That point of view has come to me by spending time out in the hills, and walking with the trees, and sitting underneath the trees, and seeing how it seems with them. Then speak a sensitive and ecologically-sound long-range position from the standpoint of the tree side of the community. We've done this in Northern California, in particular a character who calls himself "Ponderosa Pine." You can see how it goes from there. It's so simple. Such common sense. And so easily grasped by children.

—Gary Snyder, from the "Regenerate Culture!" interview in *The New Catalyst*, No. 2 Jan./Feb. (1986).

DON'T MOVE!

Without further rhetoric or utopian scheming, I have a simple suggestion that if followed would begin to bring wilderness, farmers, people, and the economies back. That is: don't move. Stay still. Once you find a place that feels halfway right, and it seems time, settle down with a vow not to move any more. Then, take a look at one place on earth, one circle of people, on realm of beings over time, conviviality and maintenance will improve. School boards and planning commissions will have better people on them, and larger and more widely concerned audiences will be attending. Small environmental issues will be attended to. More voters will turn out, because local issues at least make a difference, can be won—and national scale politics too might improve, with enough folks getting out there. People begin to really notice the plants, birds, stars, when they see themselves as members of a place. Not only do they begin to work the soil, they go out hiking, explore the back country or the beach, get on the Freddie's ass for mismanaging Peoples' land, and doing that as locals counts! Early settlers, old folks, are valued and respected, we make an effort to learn their stories and pass it on to our children, who will live here too. We look deeply back in time to the original inhabitants, and far ahead to our own descendants, in the mind of knowing a context, with its own kind of tools, boots, songs. Mainstream thinkers have overlooked it: real people stay put. And when things are coasting along ok, they can also take off and travel, there's no delight like swapping stories downstream. Don't Move! I'd say this really works because here on our side of the Sierra, Yuba river country, we can begin to see some fruits of a mere fifteen years' inhabitation, it looks good.

—Gary Snyder
Upriver / Downriver No. 10 (1987).

Excerpts from Rebecca Solnit, "The Ruins of Memory," in *After the Ruins, 1906–2006: Rephotographing the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire*, ed. Mark Klett and Michael Lundgren (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 18–31.

"One of the principal problems in making human beings face our history is that sudden events get our attention while slow ones do not – even though the cumulative force of, for example, global warming will prove far more dire for the Arctic than the Exxon-Valdez oil spill. Our minds are better suited to oil spills than climate change, and so are our media and our stories. The crash of the airplanes into the World Trade Center is unforgettable, but the violent destruction of the South Bronx on a far larger scale throughout the 1970s and 1980s is barely remembered and will likely never elicit a memorial. Yet tens of thousands of intentionally set fires – many of them landlord arsons – devastated this community and turned block after block into ruins. There were an average of thirty-three fires a night in the first half of the 1970s; fires had increased dramatically since the early 1960s. In the last year that insurance companies paid out claims for fires, the Bronx lost about thirteen hundred buildings to flames. Then, 'in the first year without payoffs,' Marshall Berman reported, 'it lost twelve. In the second year, it lost three.' But the fires were never blamed on economic interests" (p. 25).

"Ruins stand as reminders. Memory is always incomplete, always imperfect, always falling into ruin; but material ruins themselves, like other traces, are treasures: our links to what came before, our guide to situating ourselves in a landscape of time. To erase the ruins is to erase the visible public triggers of memory; a city without ruins and traces of age is like a mind without memories. Such erasure is the foundation of the amnesiac landscape that is the United States. Because the United States is in many ways a country without a past, it seems, at first imagining, to be a country without ruins. But it is rich in ruins, though not always imagined, for it is without a past only in the sense that it does not own its past, or own up to it. It does not remember officially and in its media and mainstream, though many subsets of Americans remember passionately" (p. 20).

"In another sense, everything is the ruin of what came before. A table is the ruin of a tree, as is the paper you hold in your hands; a carved figure is the ruin of the block from which it emerged, a block whose removal scarred the mountainside from which it was hacked; and anything made of metal requires earth upheaval and ore extraction on a scale of extraordinary disproportion to the resultant product. To imagine the metamorphoses that are life on earth at its grandest scale is to imagine both creation and destruction, and to imagine them together is to see their kinship in the common ground of change, abrupt and gradual, beautiful and disastrous, to see the generative richness of ruins and the ruinous nature of all change. 'The child is the father to the man,' declared Wordsworth, but the man is also the ruin of the child, as much as the butterfly is the ruin of the caterpillar. Corpses feed flowers; flowers eat corpses. San Francisco has been ruined again and again, only most spectacularly in 1906, and those ruins have been erased and forgotten and repeated and erased again.

A city – any city, every city – is the eradication, even the ruin, of the landscape from which it rose. In its fall, that original landscape sometimes triumphs. One day, I looked up and saw to the south the undomesticated crest of Bernal Heights, with its coyote and wild blackberries, and to the west the ridgeline of Twin Peaks and with a shudder perceived, still present as a phantom, the steep natural landscape that underlay the city, the flesh beneath the clothes, the landscape that that reappeared amid the miles of ruins and that someday will reassert itself again... A place like San Francisco could be imagined not as one city stretching out since 1846 but dozens of cities laid over each other's ruins" (p. 18).

Thoughts On Walking

The actual universe is a thing wide open,
but rationalism makes systems, and systems must be closed.

—William James*

Walking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primary to humankind. Walking is the exact balance of spirit and humility. Out walking, one notices where there is food.

—Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* (1990)

*Walking on walking,
under foot earth turns.*

Streams and mountains never stay the same.

—Gary Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers without End* (1996)

“I like walking because it is slow, and I suspect that the mind, like the feet, works at about three miles an hour. If this is so, then modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought, or thoughtfulness.” —Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2000)

One does not stand still looking for a path.
One walks; and as one walks, a path comes into being.

—Mas Kodani, Senshin Buddhist Temple, LA

**Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975 [1907]), 20.