

Introduction

This book is a study of the rise of geography in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a conceptual matrix for understanding culture and society. It is well known that during this period of extraordinary intellectual ferment European society developed a pronounced historical consciousness. The historicization of human existence lies at the heart of what we call modernity. As a temporal category, modernity is characterized by constant historical reflections, that is, by the critical self-positioning of society within historical time. While acknowledging the pivotal role played by the concept of history in the identity of modern European society, this book draws attention to the equally crucial significance of the concept of geography. It argues that the moment European society came to deem historicity to be a fundamental mode of being in the world, it also realized that to be in the world necessarily meant to inhabit the earth and that geographic space was every bit as constitutive of human existence as historical time. Modernity, therefore, has an intrinsic spatial dimension.

The Geographic Imagination of Society

The understanding of European modernity in terms of its concept of history is closely associated with the name Reinhart Koselleck. The foremost exponent and practitioner of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*)—"a methodology of historical studies that focuses on the invention and development of the fundamental concepts (*Begriffe*) underlying and informing a distinctively historical (*geschichtliche*) manner of being in the world"¹—Koselleck establishes the occurrence in the period around 1800 of an overall transformation of the semantic apparatus of European culture, with fundamental concepts in the social-political language "taking

on new meanings that in approximating our present are no longer in need of translation.”² The most crucial dimension of this profound semantic transformation that marks out the period as the threshold to modernity, according to Koselleck, consists in the temporalization (*Verzeitlichung*) of all aspects of human experience, in the discovery of specifically historical time. True as it is that European society has always had a sense of time and history, it is only in this period that it came to believe in a radical difference between historical time and natural time, with the former “tied to social and political units of action, to particular acting and suffering human beings, and to their institutions and organizations” while severed from and independent of the temporal rhythm of natural processes.³ Along with the denaturalization of historical time, myriad historical experiences, the multiple layers (*Schichten*) of historical time, are bundled together into one whole history, into the “collective singular” *Geschichte*, with a temporal structure characterized by linearity, open-endedness, and a sense of unceasing acceleration.⁴ From the perspective of the temporality of the whole of history, which overrides all other temporalities, the complexity and heterogeneity of social reality come to be experienced as the chronological simultaneity of the historically noncontemporaneous (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*). At the same time, this historical temporality begins to function as a causal force in the determination of social reality in its own right, as the relationships among diverse social groups are mapped onto the temporal axis and assessed in terms of their historical significance. Historical assessment and reflection, in turn, incite the social groups concerned to take action with a view to adjusting to and restructuring their relationships. With social reality thus historicized and transformed into historical reality, the knowledge of historical reality cannot avoid being historicized as well, as historians become aware of the temporal disparity between this reality and the standpoint from which they try to reconstruct it in retrospect, and of the gap between historical reality and the language available for representing it. Goethe’s observation that “there remains no doubt these days that world history has from time to time to be rewritten” encapsulates this keen awareness of the historicity of historical knowledge.⁵ The discovery of the historicity of both society and knowledge, Koselleck suggests, is the defining feature of modernity. Our age, the age since the late eighteenth century, differs from all previous ages in its unrelenting historical reflections, in its constant critical self-positioning in historical time. This historical reflection and critical consciousness make our age the modern age.⁶

Koselleck’s powerful account of the emergence of the modern semantics of historical time around 1800 naturally raises the question of how space might have been conceived during that period of profound semantic transformations and how the conception of space might be related to

what we call modernity. In fact, Koselleck himself occasionally addresses the question of space, albeit solely in relation to history. He stops short of inquiring into the semantics of space and its implications for our understanding of European modernity.⁷ He seems to assume that from the eighteenth century onward, time asserted itself as the measure of social reality with such tremendous momentum that it simply subsumed space, so the latter remained under the threshold of consciousness and conceptualization: "The geographical opening up of the globe brought to light various but coexisting cultural levels which were, through the process of synchronous comparison, then ordered diachronically."⁸ This assumption, however, does not stand historical scrutiny. As a matter of fact, the discovery of historical time around 1800 was accompanied by the discovery of geographic space, and the historicization of society and knowledge went hand in hand with what can be called the geographicization thereof. Indeed, one can speak of the emergence of a distinctively modern concept of geography alongside and in complementarity to the concept of history. This book provides an archaeology of geographic space and geographicization during the age commonly seen as characterized by the rise and absolute dominance of "historism."

The human is a terrestrial being, and the earth is the abode of humankind. Given this plain fact, people cannot help asking questions about the habitable earth and their relationships to it. In their musings and inquiries, they come to form various geographic ideas—specific categories of thought meant to analyze, explain, and rationalize perceived spatial phenomena. "From the time of the Greeks to our own," according to Clarence Glacken, the author of a monumental history of Western geographic thought, there have been three main geographic ideas: "the idea of a designed earth; the idea of environmental influence; and the idea of man as a geographic agent."⁹ Glacken's history, however, stops at the end of the eighteenth century, because "the thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries requires a different kind of treatment and properly should be a separate work." "I am convinced," he continues, "that in the time span from classical antiquity roughly to the end of the eighteenth century there was a coherent body of thought gathered about these ideas. Buffon, Kant, or Montesquieu, I think, would have found the classical world strange, but the gulf between their times and classical times would have been less than that between 1800 and 1900."¹⁰ Apparently, an entirely new model of thinking about the earth and its relationship to its human inhabitants came into being around 1800, which resisted translation into the time-honored geographic ideas. Glacken provides no indication of the exact nature of this new model. I propose to characterize it in terms of the notion of the dynamic unity of man and the earth—a notion articulated, in

varying ways, by a wide range of thinkers from Herder and the early Romantic philosophers and poets to the founders of modern geographic science, Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Ritter. In contrast to the ideas of environmental influence and human agency, which both suggest causal determination, either of man by the earth or of the earth by man, the earth and human society were reconceived at the turn of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century as two complex systems of forces engaged in unceasing interaction and reciprocal determination, with each one of them acting on and reacting to the other as its environment. The outcome of this interaction at any particular juncture is then fed back into both systems so that effects simultaneously function as causes, and vice versa. At any given moment in time, the earth and the human world can be seen as equilibrating with one another and forming a dynamic unity.

Displacing and invalidating past geographic ideas, the notion of a self-regulating interaction and interchange between man and the earth heralded the modern semantics of geographic space. This interaction creates an emergent reality that can be described either in terms of the humanization of the earth or the earthing of the human. It is a social reality undergirded by the spatial structures and processes of the earth or, in other words, a terrestrially embodied social reality. One can call it the geographic reality of society. As a social reality, it is marked by a peculiar kind of spatiality imbued with human purposiveness and action, and hence distinct from that of terrestrial nature untouched by human hands and unseen by human eyes. For example, the spatial principles underlying agriculture or a landscape garden are not the same as the spatial distribution and grouping of plants in wild nature. As a terrestrially embodied social reality, however, the geographic reality can never quite break free of the recalcitrance of the earth, so its spatiality is always determined to a certain degree by the conditions of terrestrial nature. The terrestrial dimension of the geographic reality of society manifests itself in regional differences. For instance, the spatial structure of agriculture in central Europe differs from that in tropical South America. For the sake of conceptual clarity, I shall refer to the spatiality of the geographic reality of society as "geographic" and that of terrestrial nature itself as "terrestrial."

The discovery of the geographic reality of society, with its distinctive kind of spatiality, reveals the relation to the earth as a fundamental mode of being in the world, making it possible for society to imagine and describe itself in terms of specific spatial categories. With regard to the structure, form of appearance, and temporality of geographic reality, three aspects of the geographic imagination of society are especially worth pointing out.

First, emerging from the interaction between human and terrestrial forces, geographic reality represents the dynamic oneness of man and

the earth, or the essential rootedness of the human in terrestrial nature. Man's recognition of this rootedness creates a unique structure of subjectivity, which one can call geographic subjectivity. Second, human culture is henceforth to be understood in terms of the concrete forms that geographic reality takes. As such, it is intrinsically spatialized, differing from region to region, from place to place. Such a notion of the spatial dispersion of human culture contrasts starkly with the claims of civilization, the world spirit, national heritage, class consciousness, and the like in grand historical narratives. Indeed, it necessitates a radical rethinking of history. Because the interaction between human and terrestrial forces not only takes place in space but also unfolds in time, the geographic reality emerging from it is always in the mode of becoming, with man and the earth reaching ever higher levels of interpenetration. As the form of appearance of geographic reality, culture, spatialized as it is, accordingly has also a temporal dimension. History, then—and this is the third key aspect of the geographic imagination of society—has to be reconceived as the temporal making of culture, both in the sense of its formation within a specific unit of terrestrial space and its diffusion across regional and continental boundaries.

All of these aspects of the geographic imagination of society still remain with us today, albeit in variously mutated forms, contending with, even overshadowing, the historical paradigm of conceptualizing society and knowledge. Since historical consciousness has always been deemed the hallmark of modernity, the so-called postmodernism of the past quarter century has reclaimed geographic-spatial thinking as an antidote to the peremptory imperative of historicization.¹¹ Springing from the belief in the oneness of man and nature, the acute ecological awareness of our age can be read as an expression of geographic subjectivity. Having made a vital contribution to the making of cultural anthropology,¹² the geographic conception of culture and cultural difference is reformulated today in terms of “local knowledge,” “location of culture,” and so on.¹³ The geographic conception of history finds its continuation and actualization in historical thinking from the *géohistoire* of the French *Annales* school to the contemporary global historical analysis that, in studying cross-cultural trade, biological diffusions and exchanges, cultural encounters and interactions, imperialism and colonialism, migrations and diasporas, has brought to light the geographic frameworks for large historical processes.¹⁴ This spatial imagination functions, in turn, as a decisive factor in the shaping of social reality, as evidenced by environmental politics, geopolitics, and the politics of cultural difference in today's world society, to name just a few salient examples. A leading geographer of our time insists on the status of “space” as a keyword in the social-political language,¹⁵ while an eminent

colleague of his proclaims a “geographic turn” of knowledge.¹⁶ Indeed, some perceptive observers of the contemporary intellectual situation have diagnosed a “renaissance” of the concept of space: “it can neither be denied nor overlooked [that] space has returned and is undergoing an unexpected . . . even frightening renaissance.”¹⁷

In awareness of the reassertion of space in contemporary social and cultural thought, this book undertakes to uncover the beginnings of the geographic imagination. Its overarching goal is to document, in different dimensions and on different levels, the operation as well as the cooperation of a variety of discourses around 1800 that helped constitute the geographic paradigm of thinking society and culture. It provides, as it were, an archaeology of geographic space and spatialization. The concept of space plays a role in exceedingly diverse fields of knowledge, ranging from mathematics and physics to the social sciences and aesthetics.¹⁸ It should be emphasized that this book is concerned with geographic space. Other notions of space and spatiality are examined only insofar as they bear on geographic space. As an archaeology of geographic space and spatialization, this book does not harbor the ambition of developing a new theory of space and refrains, as far as possible, from tackling the thorny philosophical problems of space and its relationship to time.

*Three Axes of Inquiry: History of Science,
Historical Semantics, Literary Analysis*

Just as the historicization of society culminated in the establishment of historical studies as a science in the early nineteenth century, the geographic imagination of society crystallized in modern geographic science, the disciplinary matrix of which took shape at exactly the same time as that of professional historical studies. This book revolves, first of all, around the emergence of modern geographic science, tracing its origins to three main factors: the internal dynamic of the transformation of geographic knowledge, the poetics and aesthetics of nature, and Herder’s as well as Romantic philosophers’ challenges to the Kantian-Fichtean critical philosophy.

True as it is that modern geographic consciousness found its paradigmatic expression in modern geographic science, it can be as little confined within the disciplinary boundary of this science as historical consciousness can be within professional historical studies. In fact, the geographic imagining of human society was carried out in a wide and complex discursive field, encompassing not only science but also philosophy and literature, not only verbal but also visual representations, such as maps and paint-

ings.¹⁹ The second axis of this book is the making of the modern semantics of geographic space through the cooperation and interplay of a variety of discourses and forms of representation, with a focus on Romantic philosophy and poetry as well as geographic science.

In reconstructing the emergence of geographic science and the modern semantics of geographic space, this book puts the literary and philosophical discourses of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries into a new perspective. It is thus also a study in literature and philosophy, offering new interpretations of a number of key poets and thinkers of the period.

The Emergence of Modern Geographic Science

Historians of geographic knowledge are wont to emphasize its antiquity: "Geography is as old as man's first search for a bit of soil to dig for plantings, for a path that leads to water, for a trail to a place where hard rock for arrowheads may be found."²⁰ Indeed, societies, whether ancient or modern, whether primitive or civilized, all have their geographic lore. In the European tradition, from Strabo on, and especially since Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (1544), geography staked out a domain of objects so vast as to encompass virtually everything remarkable under the sun: the four elements, the products of the three kingdoms of nature, spatial forms such as the shape of mountains and the flow of rivers, forms of human association such as the state and ethnic community, manifestations of human ingenuity, customs, and ways of life. In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this heterogeneous domain of objects increasingly came to be topically described, eventually divided into three main categories: the earth as an astronomical body, physical objects and phenomena on the earth's surface, and facts about humans. In the decades around 1800, a profound epistemic transmutation brought about the demise of topical description, inaugurating an entirely new paradigm of geographic studies.

Laying claim to the status of a modern science, this new paradigm distinguished itself from previous geographic studies by its preference for "the connection of facts, which have been observed, to the knowledge of insulated facts,"²¹ or in the words of a historian of geography, by "a major shift . . . away from description and toward explanation."²² The explanatory impulse propelled the investigation of physical structures and processes of the earth on the basis of instrument-aided empirical observation, quantification, and other methods of empirical research and analysis.²³ This impulse was no less powerful when it came to human phenomena. However, in its attempt to explain structures and processes in human society, modern geography ran into a dilemma: in order to become

a science, it needed a theory of the relation between terrestrial nature and the human sphere; yet theory militated against empirical study of the particularities of the human sphere. For instance, in asserting a direct causal relation between physical conditions and the mental as well as social constitution of humans, the age-old climatic theory, most recently elaborated by Montesquieu in his *Spirit of Laws* (1748), rendered any serious study of human phenomena in relation to the earth nugatory. Why would one bother studying anything if its cause has already been specified? Modern geography resolved this dilemma by conceiving of phenomena in the human world not as causally determined by physical conditions but as the result of the interaction and reciprocal determination between terrestrial nature and human forces. In other words, it replaced the causal model of the relationship between nature and man as postulated by the climatic theory with, broadly speaking, an ecological model that envisioned the two as complex systems in constant interaction with each other. There are no point-to-point correspondences between individual elements in these two systems. Rather, every phenomenon in one system must be explained in terms of the interaction between this system and the other system as a whole. Geographic studies true to this model turned out to be ultimately a science that centered on the interrelation between man and the earth, explaining all human phenomena as manifestations of an emergent reality arising from the human interaction with a terrestrial nature that was, in itself, explicable in terms of natural science.

The first part of the book examines the emergence of modern geographic science, underscoring three of its preconditions: the reorganization of geographic knowledge, the configuring of its basic unit of analysis through landscape aesthetics, and the philosophical reconceptualization of the relation between man and nature by the challengers to the critical philosophy.

Based on a comprehensive assessment of geographic literature from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, Chapter 1 charts the complex and multidimensional reorganization of geographic knowledge around 1800, which underlay the rise of modern geography. In the wake of Rousseau's pedagogical revolution, topical classification and memorization of factual knowledge about the earth and its inhabitants were abandoned in favor of the methodical construction of geographic knowledge on the basis of the knowing subject's own spatial experience. While the gaze of reason was being supplanted by the lens of subjective experience, the domain of objects of geographic knowledge—the earth—began to be seen as a cultural space made and inhabited by humans. This simultaneous redefinition of both the modality and the object of knowing led to the modern conception of geography as man's study of his own relation to the earth.

Scale was as crucial to geographic science as the concept of period was

to historical science. Drawing on specialized studies of all the operative factors of the earth-system, modern geography focused on individual units of terrestrial space—generally referred to as “landscapes” or “regions”—as its objects of analysis, in the conviction that their functioning revealed the nature of the earth as a whole. This idiographic approach implied that all phenomena, both natural and human, were to be seen as local in character. Yet the individual holistic spatial unit is not something naturally given but a symbolic construct created by the knowing subject. Chapter 2 traces the origin of the notions of landscape and region so vital to modern geographic science to the late eighteenth-century landscape aesthetics that originated with the young Goethe and culminated in Romanticism.²⁴ It makes the argument that the transition from the descriptive and moralizing landscape in the early eighteenth century to the highly subjective landscape of mood (*Stimmungslandschaft*) and allegorical landscape in Romanticism prefigured, indeed enabled, the transition from descriptive geography to modern geographic science. In winning its object of analysis from landscape aesthetics, modern geographic science transformed the aesthetic subject of landscape into a geographic subject imagining his identity in relation to a particular region of the earth.

Modern geographic science operated with a dynamic model of nature such that the earth no longer appeared as a static array of discrete objects and phenomena to be described but as a vast system of interacting and interweaving forces. Humans were regarded as contained within this productive nature, and their actions as particular kinds of forces interacting with countless other natural forces. This notion of the dynamic unity of nature and man, however, was accompanied by the belief in the special status of man, that is, the belief that man was not only part of nature but also stood above it in his ability to reflect on his relation to nature. Chapter 3 examines the genesis of this geographic model of the relation between nature and man from a primarily philosophical perspective, tracing it back to Herder's and Schelling's challenges to the Kantian-Fichtean critical philosophy. In contrast to the overarching insistence of the critical philosophy on the reign of the spontaneous, unearthly reason over nature, Herder and Schelling sought to root human reason in a productive nature, obviating the divide between man and nature, subject and object. Reinterpreting Spinoza's notion of *natura naturans* in light of the explanation of nature in terms of vital forces in contemporary life sciences, they envisioned, in different ways, an all-encompassing, self-organizing nature.²⁵ Man emerged from nature as its highest level of organization, characterized by the capacity for self-consciousness and reflection. This capacity enabled him to objectify nature and interact with it in specific ways. Such a conception of nature and man's relation to it prepared the ground for modern geography.

The Semantics of Geographic Space

The second part of the book turns to what this discursive event, the emergence of geographic science, made possible, examining systematically some key spatial categories of the modern geographic imagination. Yet not only geographic science itself but other discourses as well, notably literature and philosophy, were involved in formulating these spatial categories. The geographic imagining of society, as suggested previously, implies the understanding of society as an emergent reality produced by the interaction and interchange between humans and their terrestrial environment, that is, as a geographic reality. This reality is marked by a spatial structure distinct from that of terrestrial nature itself—a spatial structure that I characterize as geographic spatiality. One can distinguish between two principal modes of interaction between man and the earth: orientation and inhabitation. The former concerns man's determination of directions in space, whereas the latter concerns man's engagement with objects, structures, and processes in space. Accordingly, there are two kinds of geographic space to be noted: oriented space and inhabited space. The human inhabitation of the earth, however, both takes place in space and unfolds in time, leaving its traces—to quote Friedrich Hölderlin, whose poetry will be invoked frequently in this book to bear witness to the modern semantics of geographic space—in “boundaries of space” (*des Raumes Grenzen*), on the one hand, and in “figures of time” (*Gestalten der Zeit*), on the other.²⁶ The spatial dimension of inhabitation manifests itself in the cultural landscape, whereas its temporal dimension manifests itself in geohistory, the history of the interaction between man and the earth. The last three chapters of the book deal, respectively, with the discursive figurations of oriented space, cultural landscape, and geohistory.

Chapter 4 examines the figuration of oriented space in cartography, philosophy, and poetry around 1800. Defined by Kant as “the feeling of a difference in my own subject, namely, the difference between my right and left hands,”²⁷ spatial orientation means the determination of direction based on a subjective, bodily experience of difference. Oriented space is a space with which an individual is bodily at one, a space in which one feels at home. This is the wonted space of daily activities. Cartography around 1800, as my analysis of the theories of cartographic representation and the pedagogic discourse of cartographic literacy from Rousseau onward demonstrates, sought to help the individual orient himself in unwonted spaces, that is, to make the vast territory of his country, indeed the entire world, into an oriented space by imparting to him a specific kind of spatial judgment called the *Augenmaß*, the visual sense (literally, the “measure of the eye”). The early Romantic philosophy pursued the

same goal of making the world as oriented as the home. As Novalis put it, "Philosophy is actually homesickness—the drive to be at home everywhere."²⁸ This goal of universal orientation, according to Novalis, could be ultimately reached in Romantic poetry, a symbolic praxis imbued with the extraordinary capability of "making nonpresence into presence."²⁹ In their concerted effort to transmute the world into a universally oriented space, the Romantic discourses of cartography, philosophy, and poetry developed a unique vision of the social body. Since orientation consists in the subjective feeling of bodily oneness with space, in a universally oriented world every individual is bodily at one with the whole and all individuals merge into one body.

Along with the issue of orientation, the human inhabitation of the earth became an epistemic concern around 1800 in a variety of discourses and forms of representation, including science, philosophy, poetry, and painting. Chapter 5 focuses on Humboldt's scientific and Hölderlin's poetic discourse of the human inhabitation of the earth, charting the ways in which they make visible the cultural landscape as the spatial manifestation of the interplay between cultivating efforts of humans and the structures and processes of terrestrial nature. Brief analyses of Humboldt's cartography and Joseph Anton Koch's painting further illuminate the discursive logic of the cultural landscape. For all their differences in approach and language, the scientific, poetic, and visual representations of the cultural landscape imply the same conception of society and culture as embodied in space.

The understanding of human existence in terms of its relationship to the earth calls for a new conception of history. From this standpoint, history cannot be a matter of the infinite progress of humankind toward an ideal conforming to the normative demands of reason, as postulated by the Enlightenment. Nor can it be a matter of the continuous development of singular forms of life toward national self-realization, as supposed by nineteenth-century historicism. Rather, history must be seen as the formation and development of culture through incessant human interaction with the earth. Chapter 6 documents a remarkable convergence of geography and history, an inextricable intertwinement of geographic space and historical time during the period that, as indicated at the beginning, has usually been seen as characterized by the absolute dominance of the historical paradigm. Indeed, one can speak of the emergence of geohistory around 1800. Taking into account the philosophy of history, geographic science, and poetry, this chapter argues that it was precisely the theoretical precursors of historicism from Herder to Friedrich Schlegel and Wilhelm von Humboldt who laid the foundation of geohistorical thinking. In reaction to the Enlightenment notion of the infinite approximation toward the norms of

reason, these historical thinkers maintained that every age was shaped by a singular constellation of forces, including both human forces and natural forces. Hence, each age was intrinsically and irreducibly individual, with historical development consisting in the waxing and waning of forces, as well as their continuous reconfiguration in the course of time. In the early nineteenth century, this line of historical thinking bifurcated in two distinct directions: while professional historians belonging to the school of historicism concentrated on human, especially political, forces in the fashioning of historical reality, geographers and their kindred spirits—most notably the poet Hölderlin—emphasized the vital contribution of natural forces to the making of every individual cultural form. As a consequence, these thinkers elaborated a conception of history as the origination and diffusion of culture in terrestrial space. In uncovering such a geographic conception of history, Chapter 6 paints a radically new picture of modern historical thought, contending that historicism and geohistorical thinking represented its two complementary strands.

The Poetics of Knowledge

By tracing the emergence of geographic science and the modern semantics of geographic space, this book places the philosophical and literary discourses of Romanticism into a hitherto unheeded context, making new interpretations of them possible.

In studying Kant's critical philosophy and pondering Fichte's radicalization of it, the generation that in German intellectual history is generally designated as the early Romantics (*Frühromantiker*), including particularly Hölderlin, Novalis, Schelling, and Friedrich Schlegel, came to realize that the Kantian distinction between the subjective and the objective could itself neither be a subjective nor an objective distinction, that Fichte's attempt to ground this distinction in an absolute "I" would result in an inescapable circle of reflection, and that therefore there had to be a deeper, prereflexive unity underlying it. Waging a sustained "struggle against subjectivism," they probed various possibilities of elucidating this prereflexive unity that they termed "being," or "absolute being," or "primeval being" (*Ur-sein*).³⁰ In so doing, they contributed, knowingly or unknowingly, to the making of the modern geographic imagination that was predicated on the premise of the fundamental unity of man and nature. This book examines the different ways in which the main philosophical strategies of early Romanticism in making sense of absolute being translated into the geographic explication of the unity of man and the earth, demonstrating how Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* served as a source of inspiration for Humboldt and Ritter in conceiving geographic science (Chapter 3), how

Novalis's studies of Fichte led to a philosophy and poetics of orientation (Chapter 4), how Hölderlin's philosophy of being developed in reaction to Fichte prepared the ground for the poetic figuration of cultural landscape (Chapter 5), and how Schlegel's transcendental philosophy implied a notion of geohistory (Chapter 6). It should be noted that the relation between Romantic philosophy and geography was by no means a causal one. In all of these cases, this book suggests neither that Romantic philosophy was reducible to geographic thinking nor that geography owed its emergence entirely to Romantic philosophy. But it does suggest that the rise of the modern geographic imagination presupposed varying degrees of latency in the philosophical speculation of Romantic thinkers.

Posited as absolute, being eludes rational knowledge, as every act of knowing necessarily turns it into an object, compromising its absoluteness. The early Romantics tended to credit poetry with the capacity for disclosing absolute being or the unity of man and nature. As such, poetry figured as the privileged discursive site where the geographic imaginary of the primordial relatedness of man and nature was configured. Novalis ascribed to poetry the function of transfiguring the world into a universally oriented space, a space in which all distinctions—between directions and between individual subjects—are collapsed (Chapter 4). For Hölderlin, poetry reveals absolute being by addressing itself to the spatial manifestation of the interaction between man and nature as cultural landscape, on the one hand, and to its temporal manifestation as geohistory, on the other (Chapters 5 and 6). In contrast to the representation of cultural landscape or geohistory in geographic science, which, in asserting the cognitive authority of scientific reason, reintroduces the division between subject and object on a higher level, in Hölderlin's poetry representation is always fed back into the represented so that poetic speech becomes a dimension of cultural landscape or geohistory. Continually reinscribing itself into that which it represents, poetic speech enables the represented to represent itself, thereby disclosing the absolute oneness of subject and object, man and nature. Reading Novalis and Hölderlin against the background of geographic thinking thus brings to light otherwise hidden dimensions of their conceptions of poetry.

In the case of Novalis and Hölderlin, poetry represented a discursive site where specific categories of the geographic imagination—orientation, cultural landscape, and geohistory—were formulated. In this capacity, it was on a par with geographic science, intersecting and cooperating with it, as well as with other discourses and forms of representation such as cartography and painting. But poetry, or more broadly, literature and aesthetics, comes into view also in another capacity in this book, namely, as a moment in the prehistory of modern geography. For instance, as Chapter 2

demonstrates, landscape poetry and landscape aesthetics played a crucial role in the emergence of geographic science. Thus, they were not on a par with geographic science but represented, as it were, a deeper archaeological layer. They are subjected to scrutiny here because together with other discourses they helped constitute a science in which the geographic imagination crystallized. These two different roles or functions of poetry indicate that the discourses involved in the making of the geographic imagination cooperated on different levels, at times overlapping with each other, at times enabling and enabled by each other. This book is a study of this multileveled and multifaceted cooperation, approaching it from a variety of angles, and in so doing seeking to shed new light on the individual discourses and forms of representation participating in it. As such, it is an exercise in “the poetics of knowledge” in the sense of a study of the set of discursive procedures and representational techniques by which a field of knowledge is constructed.³¹

The Geographic Imagination and the Spatial Order of the World

In the light of the geographic imagination as reconstructed in this book, it is possible to speak of the spatialization of the human world at the turn of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century. This finding neither invalidates nor challenges the argument advanced by Koselleck and embraced by many others that the profound semantic transformations and innovations that took place during this period shared the general tendency toward the temporalization of the world and society. But it does suggest that this temporalization did not entail the abnegation of space but was accompanied and buttressed by the rise of a new semantics of space.

A spatial order underlies every society. As Carl Schmitt laconically put it, “Every basic order is a spatial order. . . . The true, proper basic order rests, in its essential core, on certain spatial boundaries and delimitations, on certain measures and a certain apportionment of the earth.”³² From the sixteenth to the end of nineteenth century, Schmitt pointed out, the world as a whole was predicated upon the *jus publicum Europaeum*, a Europe-centered spatial order with two prominent features: the distinction between Europe and the rest of the world, which Europeans regarded as a vast free space up for grabs; and the division of the soil of Europe into sovereign territorial states governed by the international law, or *jus gentium*. How was the geographic imagination that crystallized around 1800 related to this Europe-centered spatial order of the world? Two considerations are crucial to answering this question. First, the geographic imagination was

essentially a European imagination, asserting discursive authority over the earth in parallel to the asymmetrical power relations between Europe and the rest of the planet. Second, the geographic imagination was intertwined with a restructuring of the spatial order of the European continent around 1800, when the idea of nation was joined with that of territorial sovereignty to bring into being the modern nation-state.

The spatial differentiation of humanity into Europe and the vast non-European world resulted from the momentous spatial revolution generally known as the European discovery of the world. Ever since Columbus set foot on the soil of the New World, European peoples swarmed out into the wide expanses of the earth, taking possession of whatever lands and peoples they happened to discover. Initially, they invoked their mission of bringing the light of the Christian faith to infidels. Later, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the proselytizing mission turned into a civilizing mission. "It is no exaggeration," as Carl Schmitt argued, "to claim that all spheres of life, all forms of existence, all kinds of the human creative power, art, science, and technology had their share in the new concept of space" that underlay this asymmetrical spatial differentiation of humanity.³³ Geographic thought around 1800 was in a certain sense an afterthought, proffering, as it were, a retrospective explanation of a fait accompli. Rühle von Lilienstern, a Saxon officer who excogitated an idiosyncratic map of the world in the opening years of the nineteenth century, proposed dividing the world between Europe and non-Europe, the latter of which he summarily designated "India," on the grounds that Europe exercised "a direct rule . . . over a great part of the non-European earth" and that it enjoyed an "extraordinary advance in, indeed almost the exclusive possession of, scientific and commercial culture." The differentiation between a ruling Europe and the rest of the world subject to European rule was for him an obvious fact. Lacking only was a reasoned explanation for this circumstance, since "mere coincidence cannot be the cause, or the human spirit at least should not content itself with such a way of explaining without the strictest investigation."³⁴ Rühle von Lilienstern's explanation was mainly a geographic one:

Europe . . . is in a variety of ways privileged over all the other areas outside Europe. Located in the middle of the temperate zone that produces the most diverse and the most advantageous climate, it is surrounded by the sea on three sides, traversed by numerous rivers and lakes and mountains, and almost entirely free of those enormous expanses of inhabitable land to be found on other continents, especially in Asia and Africa. On the whole earth there is nowhere a region of the same size that is so fortunately located and constituted.³⁵

With a greater theoretical pretense, Carl Ritter made the same argument. Different continents have brought forth different cultures because of their

individual geographic conditions. Europe, however, is blessed with a “singular, incontrovertibly favorable distribution of spaces and forms,”³⁶ which, bolstered by other spatial advantages such as the temperate climate and a manageable size, provides the most propitious conditions for sustained cultural development. At the same time, it has such a spatial structure and shape and stands in such a spatial relation to other continents that it is best positioned to conquer the oceans and spread its culture all over the globe. Due to the “cosmic grouping and global positioning of the continents, . . . Europe, the smallest of all continents, was predestined to reign over the largest ones.”³⁷ The long-term consequence of the European reign over other continents is obvious: the local culture of Europe engulfs the planet so that “the tropical world as well as the polar circle and the antipodes of the Old World—the New World—are Europeanized.”³⁸

Nowhere is the power structure informing the geographic discourse more starkly revealed perhaps than in such analyses of the shape, structure, and position of Europe in comparison to other continents. Geography, as a historian aptly puts it, was a “European science.” Equipped with “a set of attitudes, methods, techniques and questions,” all of which were “developed in Europe toward the end of the eighteenth century,” this in the strict sense “regional” science furnished a universal explanation of the earth and its inhabitants. From its vantage, “all other geographic traditions are necessarily derivative and indeed imitative of it.”³⁹ The social-political domination of the earth by Europe was inscribed in the geographic science and translated into a discursive authority over the earth. The discursive authority of geography, in turn, justified and consolidated Europe’s social-political authority.

In enforcing its authority over the earth, Europe formed a “family of nations” governed by international law. According to Carl Schmitt,

The appearance of vast free spaces and the land appropriation of a new world made possible a new European international law among states: an interstate structure. . . . Given the fact that independent powers, with unified central governments and administrations, and well-defined borders had risen on European soil, the appropriate agencies of a new *jus gentium* were in place. The concrete spatial order of these territorial states gave European soil a specific status in international law, not only within Europe but in relation to both the free space of the open sea and to all non-European soil overseas.⁴⁰

Elaborating on the distinction between “Europe” and “India,” Rühle von Lilienstern established that the former exercised its power over the latter through the competition of its territorial states. The chapter “Europe in Opposition to India” is therefore followed by the chapter “England in Opposition to the Continent,”⁴¹ which analyzes the power balance of the territorial states of the European continent in relation to the British mari-

time empire. A participant in the battle at Jena-Auerstedt in 1806,⁴² Rühle von Lilienstern could even boast of a personal experience of the dynamic “interaction of opposed forces,” which constantly destabilized and restabilized this balance.⁴³

The spatial order of the territorial state on the soil of Europe became firmly established in the wake of the religious wars in the seventeenth century. The Peace of Westphalia (1648), which settled relentless bloody conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, linked sovereignty to territory, stipulating that states hold exclusive power within their territories, and thereby delegitimizing other forms of polity lacking a uniform central government and clearly defined territorial boundaries. This concept of territorial sovereignty entailed a notion of foreign relations as the relations among territorial actors. War, arguably the most important of foreign relations, henceforth took the form of a confrontation between equivalent spatial units acting as *personae publicae* in accordance with international law. In the years around 1800, partly as a consequence of the Napoleonic Wars, which unapologetically violated and then radically reconfigured territorial borders in Europe, the idea of the territorial state underwent a subtle yet profound transformation. The concept of nation became allied with the concept of territorial sovereignty, turning the early-modern territorial state of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into the modern nation-state of the nineteenth and twentieth. Upholding, as it did, the territorial principle to the point of sanctification, the nation-state rested on a semantics of space that differed significantly from the one implicit in the early-modern territorial state. The territorial state operated with the help of descriptive geography, which offered a wealth of factual information about the size, surface form, and boundary of the territorial space; about natural products as well as conditions of earth, water, and air; and about the size, distribution, and living conditions of the population. This multifarious factual information was all instrumental to the government of the territorial state, both with regard to its foreign politics aimed at maintaining the balance of European powers by means of diplomatic negotiations and military campaigns, and with regard to its domestic politics primarily concerned with enhancing the well-being of the population by means of the police (*Polizei*), that is, the technique of managing territorial space and the human life sustained by it.⁴⁴ The nation-state, however, was not merely interested in claiming sovereignty over a quantifiable territorial space and utilizing this space optimally for the sake of the weal of the population. It also endowed the territory with a symbolic quality that it took to be the source of the cultural and spiritual identity of the nation. The territory ceased to be merely a physical space, but assumed in addition the status of a primeval ground that brought forth and nurtured national culture and history. This notion

that culture and history were rooted in and grew out of a delimited terrestrial space was only possible within the modern geographic imagination. The transition from the early-modern territorial state to the nation-state, therefore, was closely bound up with the transformation of descriptive geography into modern geography around 1800.

In the nation-state consolidated over the course of the nineteenth century, the territorial space figured as a unique empirical-transcendental double. On the one hand, it remained a measurable terrestrial space that needed to be protected and, when necessary, expanded within the framework of the European *jus gentium*, and that needed to be developed, according to specific plans, as the basis and environment of the biological existence of the population.⁴⁵ On the other hand, it came to be seen as the indivisible, sacrosanct space that represented the condition of possibility of national unity and identity. This political semantics of space determined the double role of geographic studies, which the nation-state vigorously fostered and helped develop into a fully fledged scientific discipline:⁴⁶ geography performed the function of an epistemic apparatus of collecting, transmitting, and processing spatial data in the service of the state; at the same time, as a theoretical discourse, geography provided the nation with an imaginary identity by interpreting national culture and history as the result of the people's engagement with the singular conditions, structures, and processes of their terrestrial habitat.⁴⁷

A detailed exposition of the relationship between the nation-state and modern geography would go beyond the scope of this book. The Epilogue offers a cursory review of the concomitant rise of the nation-state and modern geography around 1800, and it sketches out, in broad outlines, the ways in which the geographic imagination seeped into political thinking in the course of the nineteenth century, thereby generating a distinct geopolitical imagination. In its attempt to bring to light the legacy of the geographic imagination in the nineteenth century, the Epilogue presents yet another finding: the geographic imagination semanticized terrestrial space outside Europe—the space that European powers viewed as unmarked and available for their occupation—as an array of spatially delimited ethnic cultures. In its overarching concern with the origination of culture from the human interaction with terrestrial nature, modern geography provided an important impetus to the rise of ethnology, a discourse that argued for the intrinsic value of indigenous cultures, and in so doing called into question the view of the earth as merely the free playground of European powers. The geographic imagination thus entertained a manifold, ambiguous relationship to the Europe-centered spatial order of the world. Its discursive authority over the earth mirrored the European domination of the world. Its entanglement in the political semantics of the nation-state helped trans-

form the spatial order of the European continent. And, finally, its role in the making of the ethnological understanding of the earth, particularly the non-European earth, in terms of regional cultures distinct from each other yet equal in value, challenged the *jus publicum Europaeum*, that spatial order of the world that came to be established in the age of discovery and held its own until the end of the nineteenth century. The geographic imagination was a double-edged sword.