

# Spiritual Geography

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(Based on talks by Reverend Robert Patterson, given in Lima, Peru, July 26, 1999 and Manfred Schmidt-Brabant, given in Honolulu, Hawai'i, on June 15, 1996, as well as on conversations with Rev. Erk Ludwig and Wolfgang Rommel concerning the work of Rev. Dr. Friedrich Benesch).

The human head can be compared to a microcosmic picture of the world. In a similar way the earth may be imaginatively viewed as a macrocosmic head. Rudolf Steiner says as much in his spiritual scientific approach to geography. Following his lead one researcher has considered twelve major rivers throughout the world and likened them to the twelve nerve streams of the human head. Another investigator has suggested that the twelve earth nerves are twelve mountain ranges that descend from the Arctic Circle region in the north. It has also been put forward that the Mediterranean Sea is like a huge watery eye while the Himalayan mountain range is a second, mountainous eye. The Jordan Rift, the deepest, open incision in the planet creates a kind of facial axis or line of symmetry with an indented nose between the liquid and solid eyes.

Living into such imaginations, unusual as they may be, can provide insights into the universe, the earth and the human being that might otherwise be difficult to approach.

Rudolf Steiner suggested that after the departure of the sun from the earth (one could also say the expulsion of the earth from the sun), all the slowly solidifying continents of the earth were clustered together around Africa and positioned near the North Pole. Known in earth science as Gondwana, this group-continent offset the larger southern part of an oblong planet. The earth was not yet solid and it rotated only slowly. As it began to cool only two souls were able to incarnate into the inhospitable environment. Designated in Judeo-Christian tradition as Adam and Eve, these two souls were able to survive the early earth atmosphere but only in a subtle, etheric nature—in a special paradisaal setting. When the southern, denser portion of the earth separated off to become the moon, the wound left behind by its departure—the Pacific Basin—was healed by the continents separating from each other into independent organs, i.e. geographic beings. The continents and by extension the

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tectonic plates that support them express the earth's particular structure and form. The edges or seams of the plates are warmer and more active than their centers. However, "hot spots" like Hawai'i demonstrate shifting plates and a dynamic living earth.

Earth movements may be just as prevalent now as they were when the earth was soft. After the 1964 earthquake in Alaska, Montague Island was raised twenty feet higher above sea level and offshore depths were thirty feet lower. In 1812, an earthquake in mid-western North America caused church bells to ring in Boston. A lake seven miles wide and twenty miles long appeared in Tennessee as a result of these earth



Figure 1

movements. Krakatoa, Mount St. Helens, and numerous other examples of earth changes have occurred in historic times.

If one gazes at the face of the earth an interesting three-folding or division into threes can be seen. (Fig. 1) The Jordan Rift, the deepest open trench in the world, geographically divides East from West, running through the Dead Sea, the Red Sea, and continuing toward Antarctica as the East African Rift System. The Marianas and Philippine Trenches are other vertical features in the earth descending to as much as 36,000 feet below sea level off the coast of eastern Asia. Running through the western Pacific Ocean along Japan and the Philippines they are part of what is called the Ring of Fire, a hot and active tectonic plate edge that encircles the Pacific basin. The third great geographic feature of the earth's surface is the Rocky and Andes Mountain Ranges that run north/south along the western side of the American continents. Rather than descending to the depths of the ocean or creating a vessel-like open trench they project skyward as some of the youngest major mountain ranges in the world. An inverted tetrahedron of forces is formed by these three geographic lines of force.

They direct magnetic energy to a point at the South Pole (fig.2).

The Alps and the Himalayan ranges run east/west as if to intersect the three vertical streams of force. If one imagines the western Rocky and Andes mountains as seen through a transparent earth, they form a great cross with the Alps of the center and the Himalayas of the East. A giant, geographic Cross of the World is formed.

If one looks at the "language" of land formations from West to center and East, there is yet another three-folding that becomes apparent. The southern coastal areas of North America, Europe and Asia, as they respectively gesture toward South America, Africa and Australia, have three prominent east/west land features. In North America there are the peninsulas of Baja California and Florida with Mexico as a solid, large landmass in between them. Europe has three peninsulas: the blockish Iberian Peninsula with Spain and Portugal, boot-shaped Italy, and the dispersed mainland and isles of Greece. Asia demonstrates a similar arrangement of transforming land areas with the solid, blockish Arabian Peninsula, then the pointed Indian subcontinent, and further to the east the Indochina Peninsula dropping down and dispersing into



Figure 2

the islands of Indonesian (fig. 1). It is indeed striking how repeated three-fold gestures appear in these landforms with a general breaking up in an easterly direction.

The Pacific region has its own tripartite character in the Polynesian Triangle, formed by the extreme dispersal of the "many islands" of the Pacific Ocean (fig. 3). Hawai'i in the north, Aotearoa (New Zealand) in the southwest, and Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the east form this great triangle of the Pacific. There are no large landforms here, only the connecting elements of water, air and light. Asia and the Americas flank the Pacific like two half moons creating the Ring of Fire and land boundaries around this vast watery world. It has been suggested that China and Japan express the will character

of this western Pacific region, while the Philippines and Southeast Asia are linked to the feeling, and Australia and New Zealand to cognition. On the other side of the Pacific, Peru would be connected to will, while Central America expresses the feeling element, and California cognition.



Figure 3

There are five locations throughout the world where very old rock formations, the origins of the continents, may be found (fig. 1, shading). There are also five etheric or formative force centers located in the various oceans. These etheric centers, which are directly linked to the source of weather patterns (winds, currents, storms), are mobile and changeable but loosely positioned in the north Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and three centers in the Pacific (fig. 1, spirals).

The North Pole, apart from its ice cap, is open to the cosmos. It is a water realm with no landforms and acts as a fontanel—open at the top of the head. Antarctica, on the other hand, is closed, solid ground, a firm footing for the world. It is the last of the continents to be discovered, and it is the only continent to have no indigenous peoples inhabiting it. In its snowy and icy covering it is veiled in secrecy and mystery.

Returning to the picture of the earth as a head, Europe and Africa may be seen as the center of the face with the Americas and Asia and Australia on both sides like ears. Although the British established Greenwich, England as the Mean Time for their own convenience, there is one researcher who feels the meridian line would have been better set along the longitude of Jerusalem, beside the Jordan Rift, at the planet's esoteric middle. Although superficially seen as Euro-centric, this imagination of the earth with Europe in the center has a true

significance. It also means that the dateline, at which one day becomes another, is where the center of the back of the earth-head would be, in the middle of the Pacific region. This area of least land on the planet contains two thirds of the earth's oceans. As the back of the head it is the place of least awareness, least self-consciousness. It is also referred to as the Womb of the World, this place where the moon was born (fig 3).

Looking at North America, the New World, we see a land under great geological stress. It is a land out of balance, ill in a sense. Its people die out and need to be continually replenished by people from elsewhere. North America will always need new people for it is connected with death forces (Saturn). People of the west are pulled into the will by these forces and have the potential for "the highest spirituality." At the same time, this high spirituality may be in the form of the Ahrimanic, directed toward a mechanistic and materialistic manifestation.

Over the course of geological time sea levels in North America have risen no less than 150 times, driving the Gulf of Mexico up into the Mississippi River Valley and glaciers have come down from the north carving out the Great Lakes. This chain of lakes and bays separating Canada from



Figure 4

the US is the most complex fresh water system in the world. One spiritual geographer relates planetary influences to the Great Lakes. According to him Lake Superior is linked to the planetary forces of Jupiter, Lake Michigan to the Moon, Lake Huron to Mars and the Georgian Bay to Saturn, Lake St. Claire to the sun, Lake Erie to Mercury, and Lake Ontario to Venus (fig.4) These waterways and the mid-western region as a whole can be seen as the rhythmic system, respiration and

circulation, the feeling realm of the continent. The Canadian Great Plains and the northern lakes region might be a kind of sensory system, while the south—Texas, Louisiana, Mexico, etc.—could be the metabolic region of North America. This three-folding of the continent from north to



Figure 5

south can be extended east to west creating a cross current of forces (fig 5). The east carries the nerve activity and thinking pole of the continent while the west acts as the limbs and will. The east coast that looks towards Europe is sinking while the west coast that turns its back on the Pacific is rising (Note how observations and designations from different points of view overlay one another with seeming contradiction. These observations of North America should be seen alongside the earlier considerations of the earth as a whole, where America is more generally a land of will.)

Humanity needs to experience itself once more as a spiritual organism within the context of a whole. We must expand our consciousness to embrace all regions of the earth as interdependent and related to one another. The decisive conception of East and West as polarities with an abyss between them must be re-enlivened, that a bridge may be built with heart forces for the Soul of the World to span the gap in our consciousness. More than an economic globalization or a political New World Order is needed. A spiritual revolution of human dimensions is required. To transform the earth we must start with our own head, with our own thinking.