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To cite this article: Frederick J. Teggart (1919) Human Geography, An Opportunity for the University, Journal of Geography, 18:4, 142-148

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00221341908984799>



Published online: 22 Feb 2008.



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HUMAN GEOGRAPHY, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE UNIVERSITY*

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The war has most significantly enlarged the interest of the American people in the world and its inhabitants. There is no need now to ask how few among our number could have told off-hand, five years ago, where Togoland and the Falkland Islands, Salonika and the Dardanelles, Basra and Baku, Lake Baikal and the Murman Coast were to be found upon the map. When an American soldier was reported to have said that "Alsace" was the name of a lake, the report bore such marks of verisimilitude that surprise and amusement overtook us only when the conscience-stricken correspondent cabled a belated explanation that the "doughboy" was just fooling the Germans. Today, and as a nation, we admit our ignorance of geography; we have discovered that we do not possess a respectable atlas (except of German manufacture); and we know from experience that we may ask in vain, in libraries and book stores, for a reasonably satisfactory descriptive geography.

CAUSES FOR AMERICAN IGNORANCE OF GEOGRAPHY

If we turn to ask for an explanation of this regrettable state of affairs, an answer may be found in the fact that political geography is not a recognized subject in American universities. Physical geography we know, and economic geography, but this other is apparently reserved for instruction in elementary schools and is represented, so far as I can discover, in the curricula of but two or three universities in the United States.

It is not, indeed, to be assumed that the courses offered in institutions of higher learning are to be taken as a fair index of

* In this article Professor Teggart expounds not only the need for adequate recognition of geography in the university but also advances suggestions whereby geography, as a university subject, may be placéd on a distinctive and individual basis. In connection Professor Teggart's book "The Processes of History" (Yale University Press, 1918) should be read, especially the chapter on the "Geographical Factor."—
EDIT. NOTE.

the intellectual interests of the nation at large. As a matter of fact, the existence of societies and periodicals and the multiplication of books of travel testify to a much wider interest in geography on the part of the public than is witnessed by the meager entries in the announcements of courses issued by our colleges. Nevertheless, the failure of the university to accord suitable recognition to the human side of geography constitutes a most serious impediment to the dissemination and development of geographical knowledge.

EXTENSION OF GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

The explorer, by his personal exertions and sacrifices, makes additions to knowledge; but the recognition accorded to him would be greatly extended by the enlargement, through university teaching, of the audience sufficiently well-informed to appreciate what he has done. The utilization of his results and their incorporation in the accepted body of knowledge would be greatly facilitated by that continual reformulation of the knowledge available which is an all-important part of the work of the university professor. Moreover, what the traveler sees in any area he may visit is conditioned, as we all know, by the stock of ideas and information with which he starts out, and hence the broader his training the more will he be able to turn his labors and hardships to account. Therefore, however great may be the support given to it by the general public, the recognition of geography as a teaching subject by the universities is essential to its extension and development; while the lack of such recognition means not only present ignorance but also a similar limitation of knowledge in the next generation.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY

We are, then, in a situation where a subject whose interest and importance is widely recognized by the public is virtually unrepresented in the American university. We are thus led to infer, contrary perhaps to what we should expect, that the university does not take the initiative in the promotion of new lines of study; and indeed there are many instances which might be cited to show that, as a rule, it follows but tardily in the wake of

public opinion. On the other hand, it may be urged in the present case that the interest of a subject, more expressly in the form in which it appeals to the public, is no guarantee of its suitability for university instruction.

Political geography has not been neglected by educators, it has simply been relegated to the schools; and, as at present understood, it would seem to be fitted only for service in school "recitations." Indeed, there would appear to be involved in it too many unrelated details—represented by proper names—and too few ideas to make it an acceptable basis for university work. Unlike history, it does not lend itself to chronological narrative and is enlivened by no dramatic situations; unlike biology, it is wanting in those necessary scientific hypotheses around which great bodies of fact tend to cluster.

Obviously, then, the failure of the university to accept political geography as a teaching subject is a consequence of the failure on the part of those more directly interested, whether inside or outside the academic group, to develop some form of interpretation, some scientific hypothesis, in accordance with which the multitude of facts of which the subject must take cognizance, may be systematically formulated and presented.

"GEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY"

With this clue to work upon, we are in a position to account for the frequent identification of "geography" and "physiography" in university nomenclature. It is true that in such a case as that of the University of Chicago, the word "geography" is accorded its full significance and embraces not merely physiography, but political, economic, and historical geography as well; but, in the country at large, there is evident a tendency to restrict the inclusive term "geography" to the narrow limits of a subdivision of "geology." Here, indeed, we come upon the essential element in the situation. Geography, as taught, has made its way into the university under the protection of geology and has been accorded recognition because of the scientific method and principles which it has inherited from the older subject. Physical geography has been accepted, consciously or unconsciously, because it has been brought within the scope of scientific method,

and political geography can hope to receive the same measure of consideration only when it shall have been established upon an equally sound foundation.

ATTEMPT AT A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO THE SUBJECT

The problem with which we are confronted is, therefore, one of some magnitude and presents difficulties which cannot be readily met. If geography is to respond to the new responsibilities which success has brought to the American people, then the exponents of this subject must face the emergency and formulate, at least tentatively, a scientific approach to the study of the earth in its relation to man.

It is very fortunate that any study of geography is compelled to begin with physiography; for this subject, through its close connection with geology, is organized upon a scientific basis and may be utilized to present to students a clear conception of scientific method. At the next step, however, the problem arises as to how we may apply, in a field to which the method of science has not yet been extended, not the results but the method employed by geology, palaeontology, and physiography.

SCIENTIFIC METHOD

I think we will all admit that if we could only make such a beginning with the study of human evolution as Darwin was able to inaugurate with the study of biological evolution, we should have contributed in a marked degree to the solution of some of the most vexed problems of human life. Unfortunately, much misunderstanding has arisen in recent years from the notion, which seems widely prevalent, that the application of scientific method to the study of man requires a transference to human affairs of formulae arrived at in physics or biology. No view could well be more unfortunate or more carefully calculated to place a barrier in the way of progress. Science is a method applicable to any content and not a given set of formulae; and hence what we have to recognize is that the study of man must undertake to arrive at its own conclusions without borrowing from any previously developed subject.

The preoccupation of physiography is with the modifications

and changes continually proceeding upon the face of the earth; the aim of human geography is to contribute to an understanding of the changes which have resulted in the differences observable between the human groups inhabiting the earth. But the differences between human groups which we must undertake to explain are *cultural* differences, and hence the problem before us is to show how the human groups throughout the world have come to be particularized in their varying equipment of inventions, customs, and beliefs.

CONDITIONS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Now, wherever this inquiry may eventually lead, there can be no question that the study of man must begin with a study of his relation to the world in which he lives. Human development has been conditioned at every step by the irregularities of the earth's surface; and it is, in the first place, the variety presented by the earth that we find reflected in the varieties of human culture. The study of geography in relation to man thus implies the investigation of the influence of the environment in contributing to the diversity of culture.

In approaching the problem we must distinguish between (1) a study of the actual content of any given culture and of the influence of different cultures, neighboring or remote, in modifying this content—a study which is the business of ethnography, and (2) a study of the relations of human groups as affected by the physical conformation of the earth, which is a primary concern of human geography. For this second purpose we might well begin, following Vidal de la Blache, with a study of the distribution of population and observe how human aggregation has been conditioned by the natural or developed resources of a given area. But no human group, so far as we can see, has continued to occupy a given habitat in perpetuity; and present density of population requires to be explained in terms of historical development. We are thus led to recognize the fundamental importance of migrations as a clue to the explanation of human evolution. Indeed, the conception that the advancement of man has been dependent upon migrations may be said to constitute the hypothesis upon which, at the present moment, the scientific study of human geography may be commenced.

THE INFLUENCE OF MIGRATIONS

If we accept this view of the influence of migrations as a working hypothesis for our study, we must accept the importance of the physical characteristics of the earth, for obviously they have had a determining influence upon the direction of all such movements. In fact, a crucial interest for geography emerges when we observe that routes of travel, laid down, as one might say, before the appearance of man upon the earth, have had a preponderant influence upon the whole course of human development. The interest becomes acute when we observe how one group after another follows along these restricted ways; it becomes intensified when we see the late comers precipitate themselves in conflict upon the earlier arrivals; but the interest becomes scientific when we observe that these conflicts or collisions at the termini of routes have been the antecedents to human advancement.

PROCESSES GOVERNING HUMAN ADVANCEMENT

An American writer, with no thought for the past, but after observing Europe during four years of war, remarked incidentally that "war refreshes life by taking us out of our ruts. Routine," he continued, "kills men and nations and races; it is stagnation. But war shakes up society, puts men into strange environments, gives them new diversions, new aims, changed ideals." There we have, stated or implied, the fundamental processes through which all human advancement has taken place. First collision (though not necessarily warlike) of different cultures; then an awakening, a release from established habits and ideas; then a reestablishment of life upon a new level and basis. But we arrive at such results only when we have examined the routes followed by our forefathers and have made comparison of what has happened in all available cases when collisions have taken place. These matters fall within the scope of political geography.

It is quite obvious that not merely a paragraph but an extended book would be required if one were to undertake even an introductory statement in elucidation of this hypothesis of the influence of migrations upon human evolution. What I am concerned with, however, is not to write an introduction to political geography but

to point out that in this theory or hypothesis we have a foundation for a scientific treatment of cultural evolution based upon geography. It remains only to see whether, following the lead of men like Mackinder, Hogarth, Haddon, Petrie, and many others in accepting this hypothesis, we may not proceed to claim for geography a place in the American university.

THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF GEOGRAPHY*

Those who claim for geography a place in higher education are wont to be met with the challenge of the sceptical, "What is geography anyway: what is there in it for the older student?" No one questions the content and value of mathematics or English or chemistry, why must geography prove its worth? First, however, it may be as well to ask with the sceptic if that worth can be proved. A very heartening answer comes from Professor Fenneman in his Presidential Address to the Association of American Geographers at Baltimore last December.

Mr. Fenneman proceeds by a simple and effective line of inquiry: "Suppose geography were dead, what would be left?"

Geology might easily take over topography, including its genetic treatment, which is physiography; in fact, has never given it up. So also botany has never relinquished plant geography and ecology. Zoölogy does not forget the distribution of animals. Agriculture is now so specialized and so firmly entrenched that crops and their distribution, and their relation to all manner of factors, are studied without concern for geography. Meteorology has official standing in all civilized countries and could take care of climatology if geography were bankrupt. Moreover, meteorology is commercially employed and so has the satisfaction of being good for something beside being merely good "to teach." So it is not afflicted with heart searchings regarding its own content. Mining is abundantly treated by geology and economics. The geographer only borrows from these, smooths out their details, and relates their results to something else. So economics deals with all other industries and commerce, sometimes with the aid of chemistry and other sciences, and always paying its respects to engineering.

A good part of what is termed political geography is covered also in history, and history would be more rational if it included still more. Political science, ethnography, etc., cultivate other parts of the geographi-

* Printed in full in the March number of the *Geographical Review*.