

Book Reviews

Human Communities in Their Environment

Scholarly English-language texts on human geography are rare. The excellent British series Geographies for Advanced Studies now affords such a book, **Human Geography** (Wiley, New York; Longmans, Green, London, 1966. 542 pp., \$7.75), by Aimé Vincent Perpillou of the Sorbonne. The text was prepared in French in the late 1950's, translated by the late E. D. Laborde and Mrs. Laborde and by the editor of the series, S. H. Beaver. The lapse of time between the writing and the final printing required the introduction of numerous modifications. The writing nevertheless retains the flavor of the author's views at mid-century.

The field of human geography is variously defined in the French and English geographical literature. In its broadest sense the field incorporates the whole range of man's relationships with the land and includes economic, cultural, social, and political geography; in its restricted sense it refers primarily to the distribution of man and of material manifestations of him and his culture. Because of its indefiniteness the term is usually avoided in the American geographical literature.

Perpillou gives to human geography a broad interpretation. His definition, paraphrasing Vidal de la Blache, is that "... human geography is above all the study of human communities in their relation to environment in so far as they are societies and groups working together." Within this framework, the author outlines three fields of investigation open to the geographer: (i) the study of the human race, its numbers, distribution, and varieties; (ii) the study of the occupation of the land, from modest hamlets to the state; and (iii) the study of the utilization of natural resources. By this definition, the whole field of economic geography is incorporated within the framework of human geography.

Perpillou's attempt to unravel the puzzle of the tapestry constructed by man on the land surface is minutely

reflected in a more than 500-page presentation of the humanized landscape. The statement that "... there is still in human geography no real unity of method and indeed no real homogeneity of content" will probably not find general consensus among the practitioners of the discipline, unless "unity" and "homogeneity" are interpreted in a most narrow sense. There is more than one method in human geography and a great diversity of objects studied, but this is not peculiar to any scholarly discipline. Human geography stands between the physical sciences with their own rigorous methods and the social sciences with their nondeterministic conceptions and classifications; it nevertheless has its own body of subject matter, not homogeneous but sufficiently integrated. The search for an explanation of human behavior in the ecological conditions on one extreme, and the stress to explain human activity by the sociopsychological mechanism on the other, with many other approaches in between, leaves a researcher with a great variety of possibilities; none of the possibilities are suitable for all the problems, but each, in its own way, contributes to the illumination of the canvas of the human image in space. The author identifies the American school with E. Huntington (an identification that will be received with some reluctance by American scholars) and ignores Carl Sauer and his disciples. His consideration of Otto Maull as the spokesman for the German school of human geography will encounter equal dissatisfaction and will be quite misleading to the general reader. Undoubtedly, human geography gained scholarly recognition primarily through the work of French geographers, Vidal de la Blache and Jean Brunhes and his disciples, among whom the author has special regard for A. Demangeon. It searches for answers and explanations in history and historically oriented social sciences rather than in the natural sciences, which incline more to determinism.

The author rejects the determinism and neo-determinism of "some North American schools" without identifying them; he also rejects the tendency shown by social sciences to "elaborate general theories rather than to grasp what is peculiar and perhaps unique in phenomena. Geography is not a science of abstraction." Human geography, according to his views, "leads neither to laws nor to definitions." He advocates the continuous checking of generalizations with reality, which he equates with a territorial basis. Furthermore, he stresses the significance of the map, paraphrasing Demangeon's advice that "geographical facts acquire precise meaning when placed on a map." The scarcity of maps in the book does not support the statement. History is used to provide an explanation of the origin and evolution of the geographical facts. The descriptive analytical methods and syntheses suggested by the facts themselves are repeatedly advocated. Such a characterization of human geography, its content and approaches, illustrates the author's intention not to depart from the traditional approach of the French school of the first half of the century; he shows no inclination to venture into any new grounds or to try any new and controversial tools.

The four major divisions of the book focus first on man and the factors of human evolution—natural environment, civilization, and societies; they proceed into the examination of man's adaptation to the environment—in the cold, temperate, tropical, dry, mountainous, and coastal regions. In keeping with the introductory statement, possibilistic emphasis is ever present. The third part consists of a review of economic geography under the heading of "technical factors and stages of human emancipation." Perpillou presents the development of techniques, the rise of the industrial mode of life, the evolution and distribution of the industrial economy, and the development and permanence of the key industries; trade and its routes are treated in the concluding part of the third section. The final part of the study concentrates on human settlements—the growth and distribution of population, migrations, settlements, and cities. The concluding chapter deals with states and nations. This comprehensive array of topics indicates the author's broad interpretation of human geography. Perpillou's enthusiasm for numerous examples and cases fol-

lows the precedent established by Jean Brunhes and other French writers, but the depth of his analysis leaves much to be desired. Frequent short descriptions make the reading tedious; often it is difficult to establish the documentary significance of the examples selected—and the reason for omission of some better known cases. The generalizations drawn from the examples do not go beyond a descriptive typology. The contention, emphasized in the preface, that geography is not geared to abstraction, is amply documented in the lack of theoretical interpretation of the humanized world and in the constant reference to the historical precedents that gave rise to present human institutions and molded what we can observe today.

The book contributes a thorough description and generalized coverage rather than a penetrating analysis. The approach as well as the coverage may seem unusual to an American audience, but they are quite common in the traditional French work on human geography. From this standpoint Perpillou's work is more the terminal chapter of an era of geographical endeavor than an opening presentation of new views. It serves as an example of the vast array of minute and frequently loosely related particulars, with predilection for micro-presentation, placed in a loosely defined framework; the author seems to be standing and admiring the canvas netted by man through the long past, but with his back turned to the future, and with little concern for the dynamic present which surrounds him. The concern for the social spatial interaction is missing, and the economic interrelationships are acknowledged more by their material results than by their dynamic functional aspects. The book, therefore, should not be considered as an account of where the field of advanced human geography stands in France at the present time, nor as the evidence of what is considered human geography in the mid-1960's in the United States. Unfortunately the economic and demographic information is already out-of-date, because it is based on what was known in the mid-1950's; some sporadic references to the early 1960's do not change this general impression. The rationality of descriptions is not always adequately supported by the data presented.

The wealth of details seems to be of limited significance even to a persistent American reader because most of the

examples are from European areas. The meager index and infrequent maps and diagrams are not very helpful. In details, numerous statements are quite misleading in a book published in 1966, without a reference to what period the statements refer to—for example, “. . . even today transhumance controls the economy of the Balkan peninsula in Greece, Macedonia, and Thrace . . .” (p. 162); “Australia with more than 100 million head [of sheep] . . .” [the 1963 figure is 158 million] (p. 119); and “Today . . . Italians swarm to the iron mines in Lorraine, Poles to the coal mines in the north of France, and Chinese to the nitrate workings in

Chile . . .” (p. 258). Few Americans would refer to the highways and motels with the following statement—“. . . Hence the care taken by the supervisors of motorways in America to build parking-places at intervals with little collections of huts forming ‘motel’ which make a scene rather like a seaside resort . . .” (p. 321).

The relevance of the dates used for the general theme of the book could be questioned repeatedly; are they used as ornaments, or are they building blocks that form the structure of human geography?

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Eleventh International Congress of Genetics

Genetics Today (Pergamon, New York, 1965. 583 pp., \$15), volume 3 of the proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Genetics (1963), contains a concluding group of symposia. The preceding contributions, including abstracts and plenary sessions, appear in the first two volumes of the proceedings. A list of those who attended the congress and an index of authors and discussants for all the sessions is at the end of the book. S. J. Geerts edited the volume.

Genetics is now such a massive discipline that the placing of 12 subdisciplinary symposia within the span of approximately 500 pages is a considerable accomplishment. Despite the resulting brevity of the individual contributions, many of the papers are far more than mere introductions to areas of genetic interest. For the general audience, as opposed to the specialist, there are relatively few similar volumes where a group of qualified scientists provides an account of progress in such diverse fields. The inclusion of a symposium on dermatoglyphics, and one on plasmatic inheritance, illustrates the breadth of subjects. Other symposia are entitled “Population Genetics: Theoretical”; “Population Genetics: Genetical Diversity”; “Incompatibility”; “Plant Breeding”; “Immunogenetics”; “Animal Breeding”; “Behavior Genetics”; “Human Genetics: General Problems”; “Human Genetics: Biochemical Diversity”; and “Human Population Genetics.” Each symposium consists of three or four contributions, followed in most instances by a synthesis and short discussion with audi-

ence participation. Because not all of the contributors are well known and several have the gift of originality, those who read this volume will encounter concepts and research that are not altogether familiar.

Except for an occasional lapse (for example, Fig. 1, p. 716) the book is carefully composed and edited. Without attempting to evaluate the individual contributions, some of which are in areas of considerable specialization, it is possible to note several general features. One is the breakdown of interdisciplinary barriers between microbial genetics and biochemistry, on the one hand, and more traditional branches of botany and zoology on the other. Another is the attempt to obtain more precise meanings for genetic terms widely used in mathematical branches of the subject, such as in the analysis of human populations. A further trend is technological: computers not only hasten the treatment of data but allow the preliminary testing of genetic hypotheses with variables established for maximum predictive utility. Also, the problems of natural selection, mimicry, genetic load, polymorphism, and the nature of heritable variation in the broadest sense continue to be analyzed by emphasis on more precise questions, rather than by the generation of satisfying answers.

In the recent development of genetics as a science many of the “antique” generalists have looked askance at their younger colleagues who are increasingly, and perhaps necessarily, preoccupied with acquiring proficiency in restricted aspects. The symposia pre-