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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIONAL CONCEPT IN RECENT YEARS

The regional concept and the regional method have become the central objectives in modern scientific geography. What the present study attempts to do is to examine and determine the scope and nature of this concept, so that geography as a science may be conceived in all its details according to a more comprehensive and, at the same time, more exact definition of what we understand by the term region, or landscape. We thus hope to contribute to a clearer notion of its structural elements and to a deeper foundation of the scientific character of geography. The following statements and conclusions of this investigation seem to us to be essential:

1. The recent changes in geographical methodology have not reduced, but rather increased the number of diverging conceptions of landscape. The various conceptions, however, need not exclude one another. They preserve their meaning if they are regarded as attempts to interpret the totality of region seen in its various aspects.

2. Diverging interpretations have their cause in different systems of values. If we accept a variety of interpretations, we must also allow several value systems to be introduced into geography. A uniform geographical approach to landscape is impossible.

3. The term landscape or region, as we must understand it, can only stand for an absolute entity. To avoid ambiguity it should denote the absolute only, or else be altogether excluded from scientific nomenclature. It is inexpedient to apply it to any concrete interpretation.

4. The interpretations of landscape hitherto published reflect the absolute reality in various degrees. In this study they have been arranged in a systematic order revealing them as necessary steps on the way to an exact understanding of the whole of the landscape.

5. The widespread opinion that a landscape is an areal unit is fictitious. There are subjective delimitations of landscape only, resulting from a personal, and therefore limited, viewpoint. They are merely units for the sake of interpretation.

6. Several sciences contribute to an understanding of the features of a region. No geographer can do all-round scientific work anymore. He should, however, know all their results that bear upon his subject-line, and be capable of making proper use of them.

7. The task of scientific geography cannot consist in a synopsis of the knowledge other sciences have made accessible. Its highest achievement is a synthesis which requires the gift of the scientist combined with that of the artist.

8. Real science is at once analytical and synthetical. Systematic analysis makes the primary step; synthesis connects the individual results and arranges them in proper order. In this way scientific geography is to examine the tectonic-normative interrelations characterizing the landscape. These interrelations rank above the individual phenomena of a region; to penetrate them implies familiarity with the relevant results of the special branches of science. In the tectonic-normative interrelations the true nature of the landscape reveals itself.