

Cultural or Social Determinism:

Cultural or Social Determinism emphasizes the human element: "Our Thoughts determine the previous nature of the world" (James, 1932: 318). Since human interest, Desires, Prejudices and group value vary across space, there is a consequent variation in the cultural landscape and levels of socioeconomic development. The modification of an environment largely depends on our perception, ideas and decision-making processes.

This philosophy, advocated by American scholars, can be summed up as the principle according to which the "Significance to man of the physical and biotic features of his habitat is a function of the attitudes, objectives and technical skills of man himself". For example, a country that is richly endowed from the point of view of the hunters, might appear poor to an agricultural people; the importance of coal is not identical to those who can and those who cannot make use of it. All these truths are self-evident. What is also true is that as technology develops, the importance of the environment does not decrease but changes and becomes more complex.

The Philosophy of cultural determinism is fairly widespread among American geographers. Eduard Ullman, for Example, wrote that "the environment is essentially neutral, its role being dependent on the stage of technology, type of Culture and their characteristics of a changing society". The assessment of a mountain pass for Example. Will Differ for those who possess horses automobiles, aeroplanes: the assessment of soil fertility will not be identical from the point of view of a Japanese farmer, on the one hand, or an Amazonian Indian, On the Other, Similar

natural conditions may call forth different reaction on the part of man, and within similar sets of conditions, different cultures can take place. George Carter singles out three fundamental factors in human geography. He has laid greater stress on cultural forces and writes that "ideas remain as the primary cause of Change...., It is these ideas that determine the human use of physical world". He also emphasized the point that human will is the decisive factor .

After the Second World war the School of social determinism became quite popular in Austria, Holland and Sweden. Social Geography deals with the spatial distribution of Societies. It, however, Does not enable us to achieve a profound understanding of Social relations or landscape. Social groups can be distinguished with reference to ethnic, Religious, professional and certain other features, while social changes are only noted but rarely linked with any fundamental economies causes of the Class structure of society.

The Study of the influence exerted by these groups on landscape is reduced to the definition of purely external factors of the cultural landscape (Type and deployment of house, land use, field patterns, etc.) right down to the morphological and functional changes within the confines of a single street. Infinitely painstaking 'Micro- Territorial' Research of this type is usually purely empirical in character and cannot provide the Basis for scientific conclusions of any real significance. Social or cultural determinism thus does not adequately assess the environmental factors, i.e., the influence of natural environment upon 'cultural geographical defenses'. Social determinism is thus also rigid like environmental determinism and therefore cannot be accepted in its crude form.

