

Unit I

Human Geography

B.A/B.Sc. II Semester: 2019-2020

Geography is the science that deals with the study of the earth and its lands, features, inhabitants and phenomena. Eratosthenes of Cyrene was the first person to use the word “Geography” in 276–194 BC. Geography can broadly be classified into two branches, which are physical geography and human geography.

Physical geography is the study of the physical environment which includes the landforms, soils, climate, water and diverse flora and fauna. Human geography on the other hand, is the study of the relationship between the natural and the human world, and the spatial distributions of the human phenomena (agriculture, manufacturing, mining, trade, transport and other economies, houses, fields, roads etc.), created by the human beings through mutual interactions.

In other words human geography is concerned with the study of inter-relationships between man and environment and their resultant features as human responses on the surface of the earth. Human geography is both old and new. It is old because its intellectual roots can be traced back in the writings of Eratosthenes and Strabo and it is new because its disciplinary moorings were anchored in “Anthropogeographie” of Freidrich Ratzel.

Meaning of Human Geography

Traditionally, Human Geography is the science which studies spatial distribution of human beings and cultural facts on the surface of the earth. Finch and Trewartha have given a simple yet cogent definition of human geography as follows: “this human imprint, those features of material culture, associated with agriculture, manufacturing, trade, mining and the other economies – houses, fields, roads, factories, domesticated animals etc. become the immediate interest and object of study of human or cultural geography”. It is common knowledge that people living in different parts of the world vary greatly in several ways. They eat different kinds of food, they wear different types of dresses, they follow different types of occupations, they live in different types of houses and vary greatly in their manners and customs and have different racial and genetic strains. These multitude of cultural differences legitimately constitute the subject matter of human geography. Now the task of a human geographer is to provide a scientific description and interpretation of the variable character of the earth as the home of mankind. Some important definitions are:

E.C.Semple (1911): “Human geography is the study of changing relationships between unresting man and the unstable earth”.

Vidal De La Blache (1926): “Human geography offers a new conception of the inter-relationships between earth and man, a more synthetic knowledge of physical laws governing our earth and of the relations between the living beings which inhabit it”.

Ellsworth Huntington (1959): “human geography may be defined as the study of the nature and distribution of the relationships between geographical environment and human activities and qualities”.

Camille Vallaux (1925): “Human geography may be defined as the science which deals with the adaptation, in the widest sense of human groups to their natural environment”.

George F. Carter thinks that “human geography is primarily concerned with the relations between man, ways of life and the places in which they live.”

According to **Albert Demangeon** “human geography is the study of human groups and societies in their relationship to the physical environment”

With changing philosophy of geography the definition of human geography has modified from deterministic to possibilistic approach. In the history of geographical thoughts, there have been various approaches of study man-nature interaction. The first approach adopted by the geographers was Determinism. Environmental Determinism stresses on the dominance of environment over man. Environmental determinism is also known as climatic determinism or geographical determinism. Possibilism in geography developed as a reaction to extreme generalisations of environmental determinism. Possibilism is based on the fact that man can modify the environment. The theory of neo-determinism was developed by Griffith Taylor, which is a mid way between the two theories of determinism and possibilism. It means that human beings can conquer nature by obeying it. Human geography encompasses human, political, cultural, social and economic aspects of social sciences. It is diverse and uses both, qualitative methods and quantitative methods, which includes case studies, survey research, statistical analysis and model building.

Nature of Human Geography

Human geography studies the inter-relationship between the physical environment and socio- cultural environment created by human beings through mutual interaction with each other. Geography is ‘the study of the earth as home of humans’.

Its nature is interdisciplinary and integrative. Geography looks at the earth’s surface from two different but interrelated perspectives, known as systematic and regional.

Accordingly, it has two broad branches: systematic geography and regional geography. Human geography is a branch of systematic geography.

It studies the locational and distributional aspects of cultural phenomena, resulting from ever changing human-nature interaction.

The focus of human Geography is human world in terms of man-environment interactions and its nature can be viewed through:

Human geography is human ecology: Barrows in 1923 in Association of American Geographers declared that ‘geography is the science of human ecology’ and the focus was the study of human ecology of specific areas.

Ratzel’s organic conception of state, the environmental determinism of Semple and Huntington; Stop and Go determinism of Taylor; the regionalization of Herbertson and many other works to prove that human geography is human ecology but this concept was criticized on the basis that principles of ecology do not apply on human societies with same magnitude as they apply on plants and animals.

Human geography is man-centred geography: Freidrich Ratzel in his book Anthropogeographie pointed that geography of man and his work could be put to systematic analysis as the elements of the non-human world. In his first volume he focused on in what manner man’s life upon the earth is shaped by the physical environment and in the same time Ratzel’s contemporaries started studying human geography by analyzing human activities and human cultures in relation to the physical environment, thus, focusing man-centered geography. Proceeding this trend Ratzel’s second volume was written from reverse perspective.

Human Geography is a social science: human geography includes all those interests and topics of geography that are anyhow related with the cultural environments like economic, social, cultural, political and historical environment. Human geography adopts principles, concepts, rules and laws of different social sciences for spatial analysis of various social matters of its branches (economic, population, settlement, urban, political, social, cultural etc.). Thus, proving that human geography belongs to family of social sciences.

Human Geography is a spatial science: human geography studies spatial distribution of human population, cultural facts and landscape on earth. It studies environmental adjustments and spatial organization made by human societies of different regions. Human geography presumes an awareness of humanized space or cultural landscape created by man. It is the prime focus of human geography to analyse spatial distribution and process of localization of human facts.

Facts of human geography are related to terrestrial unity: eminent human geographers including Ratzel, Blache, Brunhes, Demangeon, Huntington, considered principle of terrestrial unity (all terrestrial phenomena, physical or cultural are interrelated and form the unique associations of land and man on the surface of the earth) as fundamental unifying concept of human geography.

Agriculture is influenced by natural factors (climate, soil, economic, social, technological); location of industries (raw material, power resources, labour, market, transport, capital, technology etc.). So, finally cultural landscape

is concrete expression of the interaction of man and environment, proving human geography is related to terrestrial unity.

Scope of Human Geography

Human geography is a wide subject for studying different aspect of human phenomena. The majority of great thinkers from Hippocrates to the present day have defined the subject as the study of relationship of man with his environment.

The subject matter of human geography was divided into two sections by Finch and Trewartha as:

- Physical environment
- Cultural environment

Ellsworth Huntington divided the subject matter into:

- Physical conditions
- Human Conditions

Paul Vidal De La Blache's work on Human geography deals with the worldwide distribution of population and settlements, types and distribution of elements of civilizations and various forms of transportation.

Jean Brunhes studies the subject matter incorporating:

- Connected with unproductive occupation of soil
- Conquest of plants and animals
- Pertaining to the destruction occupation of soil

Thus, it can be said that the human geography varies from region to region but concerns the same principle, i.e: studying the relationship between man's action and his physical environment and also effect of natural environment on man's functions and forces in different parts of the world.

Branches of Human Geography

Branches of established academic disciplines are defined more by the course content (subject matter) than by their methodologies. The various branches of Human Geography include the following; Economic Geography, Socio-cultural Geography, Historical Geography, Political Geography, Population Geography, Tourism Geography and Urban Geography. Let us now explain the various branches listed above:

Economic Geography is the study of the location, distribution and spatial organization of economic activities across the earth. It studies economic activities including agriculture, industry, trade, transport, tourism among others. Economic Geography is a subfield of the discipline of Geography. Given the variety of approaches, Economic Geography has taken to many different subject matters including i) the location of industries, ii) economies of scale also known as "linkages", iii) transportation, iv) international trade and development, v) real estate, vi) ethnic economies, vii) gendered economies, viii) core periphery theory, ix) the economics of urban

form, x) the relationship between the environment and the economy (tying into a long history of geographers studying culture-environment interaction) and globalisation.

Thematically, Economic Geography can be divided into

- a) Geography of agriculture,
- b) Geography of industry,
- c) Geography of international trade,
- d) Geography of resources and
- c) Geography of transport and communication.

Economic Geographer will take a more holistic approach in the analysis of economic phenomena, which is to conceptualize a problem in terms of space, place and scale as well as the overt economic problem that is being examined.

Socio-cultural Geography is a sub-field within Human Geography that studies cultural products and norms and their variations across and relations to spaces and places. It focuses on describing and analyzing the ways language, religion, economy, government and other cultural phenomena vary or remain constant, from one place to another and on explaining how humans function spatially.

Historical Geography is the study of the human, physical, fictional, theoretical, and "real" geographies of the past. Every region has undergone historical experiences before attaining the present day status; even geographical features undergo changes that need to be understood through time. Historical geographers study geographical patterns through time, including how people have interacted with their environment, and created the cultural landscape.

Political Geography is concerned with the study of both the spatially uneven outcomes of political processes and the ways in which political processes are themselves affected by spatial structures. Political Geography looks at space from the angle of political events and studies boundaries, space relations between neighbouring political units, delimitation of constituencies, election process and develops theoretical framework to understand the political behaviour of populations. Sub branches of Political Geography include; Electoral Geography, Geopolitics, Strategic Geography and Military Geography.

Population and settlement Geography is the study of the ways in which spatial variations in the distribution, composition, migration, and growth of populations are related to the nature of places. Such issues as population growth, distribution density, sex ratio, migration, occupational structure are core in the study of population dynamics. Settlement Geography studies the characteristics of rural and urban settlements.

Tourism Geography is the study of travel and tourism as an industry, as a human activity, and especially as a place-based experience.

Urban Geography is the study of urban areas with specific regards to spatial and relational aspects and theories. That is the study of areas which have a high concentration of buildings and infrastructure. These are areas where the majority of economic activities are in the secondary and tertiary sector e.g. manufacturing, retailing and commerce.

Stages and thrust of Human Geography

Early Colonial Period (approach was explorations and descriptions): imperial and trade interest prompted the discovery and exploration of new areas. Thus, the description of the area formed an important aspect of the geographers account.

Colonial period (approach was regional analysis): Elaborate descriptions of all aspect of a region were undertaken. The idea was that all the regions were part of a whole Earth; understanding the parts in totality would to an understanding of the whole.

1930's through the inter war period (approach was areal differentiation): The focus was on identifying the uniqueness of any region and understanding how and why it was different from others.

Later 1950s to the later 1960s (approach was spatial organisation): Marked by the use of computers and sophisticated Statistical tools. Laws of physics were often applied to Map and analyze human phenomena. This phase was called the quantitative revolution. The main objective was to identify map-able patterns for different human Activities.

1970's (Emergence of humanistic, radical and behavioral schools): Discontentment with the quantitative revolution and its dehumanized manner of doing geography led to the emergence of three new schools of thought of human Geography in the 1970s. Human geography was made more relevant to the socio-political reality by the emergence of these schools of thought.

1990s (Post-modernism in geography): The grand generalizations and the applicability of universal Theories to explain the human conditions were questioned. The importance of understanding each local context in its own right was emphasized.

Approaches to study human geography

Human geography has passed through various stages of conceptual development in geographical thought and approaches as follows:

I. Traditional Approach

1. **Systematic approach**: this approach selects a particular aspect of physical or human phenomena in a defined geographical space. Studies presents it in an orderly manner according to a system or plan. Oscar

Peschel (German) initiated the movement and carried by Ferdinand Richtigthofen favouring the application of genetic approach to deal with man nature relation. Similarly Ratzel viewed the earth as an integral whole and interacting unity and treated human geography systematically and from a Darwinian point of view.

2. **Regional Approach:** it is based on the fact that 'the earth surface is divided into a mosaic of different regions' each of which has a particular character as a consequence of the symbiosis between the physical environment and the society occupying it. In the early 20th century Vidal de La Blache developed a regional school in France and focused on the relationship between man and immediate surroundings by studying small homogeneous areas popularly known as 'pays'. Supporting this concept A.J Herbertson proposed scheme of natural regions of the world (1905). Thus Vidal in France, A.J.Herbertson, C.B.Fawcett and J.F.Unstead in Britain, D.Whittlesey in U.S presented regional schemes for economic, social and political purposes with environmental settings. In Britain Patrick Geddes put forward the idea of regionalism where as H.J.Fleur presented the concept of human regions.
3. **Historical Approach:** historical approach denotes the temporal trend or the direction of stages of growth. In this analysis process is interpreted as a set of rules which transforms map forms through time. This concept involves the study of cultural geography, innovation diffusion, time geography, process-form approach.
4. **Environmental approach:** this approach studies geography since very beginning and changed substantially. Its views are very much similar to determinism i.e. environment controlling all human activities- psychological, economic, social, political etc. determinist generally consider man as a passive agent on which the environmental factors are actively acting and determining his attitude, decision-making process and even lifestyle. The rise of determinism provided new dimension by some scientific validation of the concept of determinism. Friedrich Ratzel (Anthropogeographie and political geography); E.C. Semple (Influence of geographic environment); Ellsworth Huntington, Halford J. Mackinder were the most influential determinist of early 20th century. After World War II this approach was criticized and gives way towards the possibilism.
5. **Possibilistic approach:** this focuses on the role of man as a geographic agent and modifier of natural environment and developed in early 20th century by Vidal de La Blache but the term possibilism was first used by French scholar Lucien Febvre of France. Isaiah Bowman, Carl O Sauer of U.S. and Jean Brunhes of France were devoted to possibilism. Possibilists think that nature is never more than adviser. Man by

his skill and technology is able to alter the obstacles of nature which come in progress and believed that there are no limits to human choice in the use of land.

II. Contemporary Approach

1. **Ecological approach:** concerned with the vast man-environment interacting system. Barrows was a pioneer who declared geography is the science of human ecology and expressed that geographers should concentrate on human ecology which is a sub-field of ecology (a science that studies relationship between the organism and their physical environment and among organisms). Stoddart has stated with the formal development of new science of ecology, there were several attempts to restate fundamentals of human activity in biotic terms and from about 1910 'human ecology' was used for the study of man and environment for man's place in the 'web of life' or 'economy of nature'.
2. **Spatial/locational approach:** this approach started in U.S. around mid 1950's. the notable contributions are made by Harold Mc Carty, John Weaver, W.L. Garrison, Edward Ullman, J.Q. Stewart etc. spatial approach is treated as quantitative approach because of application of quantitative techniques in analysis. It started with quantitative revolution in 1950's. the use of explanatory models and regression, correlation, variance etc. increased in this field. Spatial analysis with application of quantitative methodologies and with concept of 'space' as fundamental variable influencing both society's organization, operation and behavior of its individual got popularity in 1950's.
3. **Behavioural Approach:** this concept was based on the "realization that decisions may be based on subjective or perceived reality rather than an objective reality. This approach was adopted by the geographers in late 1960's. This concept was originated in 1920's and 1930's but William Kirk introduced the term behavioural environment in 1951 by presenting difference between behavioural environment and the phenomenal environment. According to him behavioural environment and emerging patterns have different meanings to different people of different cultures at different stages in the history of particular culture. Julian Wolpert, Peter Gould (1966); Gould and White (1974); Downs (1970), Downs and Stea (1973) contributed to this field.
4. **Humanistic approach:** this approach gives geography human awareness, human agency, human consciousness and human creativity. It attempts to understand human significance of life events. It views 'what the human person is and can do'. The recent humanistic approach is found in the seminal works of Anne Buttimer and Yi-Fu Tuan in 1970s and 1980's. this approach is mainly based on the philosophies of-
 - Idealism: reality residing in or constructed by mind

- Phenomenology: world of experience (Relph, 1970)
 - Existentialism: human geography becomes history of mans encounter with himself
5. ***Welfare approach:*** it emphasizes questions of inequality. It deals with poverty, hunger, crime, discrimination and access to social service (health care and education). D.S.Smith progressed this approach and focused on ‘who gets what, where and how’ (who-population, what-goods, where-area). Most of the welfare studies are descriptive.

Determinism

Determinism refers to the idea that everything in human life is caused inevitably by natural environments. It is also known as environmentalism. It is philosophical concepts that stresses the influence of environment on man and his activities and treat man subordinate to environment. Philosophy of Determinism is based upon the interaction between primitive human society and strong forces of nature. This is an older philosophy which persisted till World War II.

It says that the strong forces of environment control the course of human action. This implies that the history, culture, mode of life, and the level of development of the societal groups and countries are exclusively or largely controlled by the physical environment.

According to Determinism, man is a passive agent, and nature is active agent, which controls and determines the action and decision-making processes of man.

As per determinism, the human actions can be explained as a response to the natural environment.

The tradition of environmentalism can be traced back to ancient classical period when the Greek and Roman geographers like Hippocrates, Aristotle and Strabo.

Hippocrates contrasted the easy going Asiatics endowed by nature with favourable environmental conditions from the Europeans living under poor and Harsh environmental conditions.

Aristotle believed that people inhabiting the warm climates of Asian countries were intelligent but lack in spirit, courage and therefore subject to slavery. According to him, the inhabitants of colder countries of Europe are brave, but deficient in thought and technical skill and as consequence of this they remain free longer than others but lack in political organizations. So they are unable to rule their neighbours. He conceptualized the varying habitability with differences of latitude and climate.

Strabo the Roman geographer focused the influence of physical factors like relief, slope, shape, climate etc on the rise and growth of Roman Empire.

Middle ages was dark period for the development of scientific views in Europe. Most of the Arab geographers of medieval period were supporters of environmentalism /determinism like **Ibn-Hawqal, Al- Masudi, Al Biruni, Ibn Batuta and Ibn Khaldun.**

Renaissance period gained momentum in Europe. Explorations discoveries, voyages and expeditions to various part of the world supported the ideas of determinism with new informations.

Eighteenth century, Montesquie (French philosopher) was influential in his work 'spirit of laws' he stressed that economy and society of islands was the product of their insular location and climate. According to him monarchies are more frequently found in fruitful and republic in sterile ones.

Nineteenth century, Humboldt and Ritter (founders of modern geography): Humboldt viewed determinism in clean scientific way. Basically Humboldt was determinist but he believed in the real associations of natural and organic phenomena and on other side Carl Ritter viewed Geography as anthropocentric but regionalized the environmental influence on human character.

Friedrich LE Play the renowned French Sociologist of nineteenth century postulated “*Place-Work-Folk*” which stated that place (environment) determined work(economy) which in term determined folk(society).

Freidrich Ratzel known as founder of human Geography pointed influence of physical environment on man and published ‘*Anthropogeographie*’. His first volume pioneered systematic human geography on basis of Darwinian philosophy. Ratzel modified his deterministic thought in his second volume and discussed distribution of population, settlements, migrations and diffusion of cultural traits in terms of physical conditions, historical and cultural setting but in work ‘*Political Geography*’ Ratzel used Darwinian concept of ‘*selection and struggle*’ in his own concept ‘labensraum’ (living space).

Nineteenth century witnessed maximum development of environmentalism. Darwin’s book ‘The Origin of Species’ (1859) provided new dimension to it.

American geographer **Miss Ellen Churchill Semple** (disciple of Ratzel) was most influential **determinist of early twentieth century**. Her famous book ‘*influenced of geographic environment*’ (1911) starts with: “Man is a product of earth surface. This means not merely that he is child of the

Earth, dust of her dust, but the earth has mothered him, fed him, set him tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted with difficulties that has strengthened his body and sharpened his wits., given him his problems of irrigation and navigation and at the same time whispered hints for their solutions. She has entered into his bone and tissue, into his mind and soul. On the mountains she has given him leg muscles of iron to climb the slope, along the coast she has left them weak and flabby, but given him instead vigourous development of chest and arm to handle his paddle or oar”.

Ellsworth Huntington (American geographer) in his book ‘*civilization and climate*’ pointed that human civilization could only develop in regions of Stimulating climate

Halford J.Mackinder in his book ‘*the geographical pivot history*’ carried forward the Darwinian idea.

Thus, the above discussion concludes that determinism proceeded with much scientific precision, explanation and validation through time.

Possibilism

Possibilism is reaction to determinism and environmental determinism. It is based upon the assumption that environment sets certain constraints or limitations, but culture is otherwise determined by social conditions. This theory says that the true and only geographical problem is that to utilisation of possibilities.

Essence of Possibilism is that: Nature provides possibilities and man utilises them according to his culture, traditions, and levels of socioeconomic development. People are not just the products of their environment or just pawn of natural environment. Nature is never more than an adviser. There are not necessities but everywhere possibilities. The range of possibilities in every region is limited more by the price man is willing to pay of what he wants than by the dictates of environment.

For instance, man through his technical skill can grow banana, rice and rubber plants in tundra, Greenland, and Antarctica, but he has to take into consideration the input cost. The prohibitive cost of production of these crops in the extremely cold conditions of these areas will compel man not to grow them in the tundra climate.

This approach has been criticized on several accounts. For example, despite numerous possibilities, man, has not been able to get rid of the obstacles set by the physical forces. The possibilities may be many in the temperate regions but they are very limited in the deserts, equatorial, tundra, and high mountainous regions.

Possibilism is a concept that views physical environment provides opportunity for a range of possible human responses and that people have a considerable discretion to choose between them. Possibilism was a reaction of German determinism *in 20th century in France*. Here *Vidal De La Blache, Lucien Febvre, Jean Brunhes in France, Isaiah Bowman and Carl O Sauer in U.S. championed cause of possibilism*. Vidal De La Blache in his article 'Annales' (1913) wrote "geography seeks to measure and localize the great part and man plays in modifying the face of earth". To Blache 'man is both active and passive' but he is more concerned with man as a geographic agent who modifies the physical environment to suit his needs. Blache tried to explain differences between groups in the same or similar environment which are not due to physical environment but are outcome of variations in attitudes, values and habitats.

Blache developed the 'School of Possibilism'. In his book 'The Principle of Geography' he strongly stated that 'Nature is never more than an advisor'. Possibilism was termed by Lucien Febvre in his book 'Geographical Introduction to History'. He strongly pointed that "there is no necessities but everywhere possibilities and man as a master of these possibilities is the judge of their use".

Jean Brunhes transmitted concept of possibilism to countries of Europe and North America and elaborated his study with the visible and tangible facts of human activity on the earth surface. According to him nature is not mandatory but permissive.

Isaiah Bowman, supporter of possibilism observed that there has never been civilization that declined because it exhausted possibilities of land.

Carl O Sauer main activist of possibilist movement of U.S. stated that man behaves in accordance with the norms of his culture and does works on the physical and biotic features of his surroundings and transforms them into cultural landscapes. To him man is the latest agent in the transformation of landscapes.

H.G. Fleure a regionalist and human Geographer in Britain carried forward the idea of possibilism. He classified the whole world into 7 human regions and stated that all human activities are directed towards the accomplishment of three functions- nutrition, reproduction and increase of well being.

Various Russian (particularly Marxist) geographers focused on 'indeterminism' contrary to environmental determinism. According to them man can master the nature and nature is the only material of his activity.

Neo-Determinism

Neo-determinism is nearer to the real world situations than environmental determinism and possibilism and also known as scientific determinism. It is an outcome of the reaction to possibilism.

Ellsworth Huntington known as the champion of scientific determinism who attempted scientific deterministic concepts in his writings ‘the pulse of Asia’; ‘climate and civilization’; ‘main springs of civilization’. He stressed upon the importance of climate determination and considered climate as the sovereign factor of environment and has developed the ‘climate optimum theory’ for development of human civilization.

As a reaction to Possibilism Griffith Taylor (Australian American geographer) formulated his ‘stop and go determinism’ (1951). He said that the best economic programme for a country to follow has in large part been determined by nature, and it is the geographer’s duty to interpret this programme. Taylor in his book ‘Australia’ writes “man is able to accelerate slow or stop the progress of country’s development. But he should not, if he is wise, depart from the direction as indicated by the natural environment. He is like the traffic controller in large city who alter the rate and not the direction of progress”. He was of the view that Man plays a very important part but man is not a free agent. He argued that the limit of agricultural settlements in Australia has been set by factors of the physical environment such a distribution of rainfall.

It says that man follows nature’s plan only if he is wise, presuming he can act foolishly ,which admits the possible contention that within broad limits set by environment, man can choose at the very least. But wisdom and folly are human concepts. The nature knows nothing of them. This theory says that in no environment are the possibilities limitless and for every choice a price must be paid. Man makes his choice and man himself judges its relative wisdom or folly by reference to goals he himself has established.

George Tatham considered Taylors ‘stop and go determinism’ might be called ‘pragmatic possibilism’.

Contemporary relevance:

Undoubtedly, the nowadays reviving determinism has had the greatest influence, but possibilism also had a significant impact on our discipline. After we get acquainted with several works about human-environment relations, we can support the significance of this topic in our discipline. It is one of the most basic questions in geography; it gave the basis of becoming an academic discipline, and it greatly influenced its dual character in the 19th century. The nature-society dichotomy resulted different approaches in different periods and places, and it accompanied the whole history of geography. Recently, research on human-environment relationships reappeared due to the discourse of global climate change. Many scientists have denoted the risks and unscientific nature of classical deterministic thought. However, the ecological approaches, used in anthropology and archaeology, give

an alternative, which emphasizes the active role of people reacting to climate changes being in a dynamic relation with their own environment – they form and transform it. At the turn of the millennium the scientific community takes steps for the integration of ecological approaches with an actor oriented viewpoint. They would like to understand how the individuals can manipulate their own situations in the ecological, structural and cultural framework, in which they live. Despite the popularity of deterministic approach between layman and politicians, the scientific community investigates the human-environment relationships rather from an ecological point of view. *Postmodern, poststructuralist, and postcolonial approaches have radically changed the philosophy of human-environment research in social sciences. According to these viewpoints, every representation of the nature is a social construction, the manifestation of some kind of social power. Thus, these approaches turn the idea of environmental determinism inside out, and they also point to the fact that the mental separation of nature and society, which is the basic of most human-environment concepts, is a heritage of Western philosophy.* Not only the global problems or the changing ideology of postmodern world induce the science to investigate human-environment relations. Due to the information revolution, more effective equipment and better analysis methods are available for the scientific community; therefore, it is worth rethinking the relationships between humans and their environment. The geographical science has to renew not only its philosophical basis and scientific terms, but the connections between the two sub disciplines of geography (i.e. between physical and human geography) must be refreshed too. The scientific community frequently emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary research and in the case of geography, this multidisciplinary approach can be achieved by coordinating the physical and human geographical investigations. The success of this coordinated research can be a key factor in the survival or renaissance of our discipline. Human-environment studies may have an important contribution to these efforts. Perhaps it is time for geography to reconsider its suspiciousness and hypersensitivity against all variants of determinism.