

Racial Fallacies

Lehrbuch der organischen Geographie:
Vorschule und Einführung in das Studium. Von
Prof. Ewald Banse. Pp. ix + 626 + 5 plates.
(Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter und Co.,
1937.) 18 gold marks.

THE author claims that his book marks an epoch in the supersession of mechanical by organic thought about the world. It would almost appear that the discovery that "Landschaft und Volkheit" should be treated together is claimed by him as his contribution to knowledge. Surely, not to go farther back, we all acknowledge our debt to Ferdinand von Richtofen and Paul Vidal de la Blache in this matter, the more so as we do not feel that Banse gets as far in that direction as they and others have done. Banse claims that he does not follow out details in the way that 'liberals' would, but makes the presentation of *Ganzheit* (wholeness) his aim. One could wish that he did this more carefully, but for that purpose some insight is needed that he clearly lacks. Looked at as a product of a mechanistic mind, the book has its value as a work of reference for its immense series of definitions. It is regrettable that the author should find it necessary to overstate his own claims, for example, to be the chief author of a system of major regions (1912), dismissing the Herbertson scheme (1905), as a timid effort.

The book begins with physical geography of the still or non-moving *Landschaft* and its evolution under the influence of endogenous and atmospheric influences, and the chief forms it demonstrates to us. One notes that the author includes in this section a review of the facts concerning rivers, lakes and seas, as well as a study of the earth's vegetation. He then proceeds to the moving *Landschaft* which, for him, includes the atmosphere and animal life. Already, in each of these sections, he includes some paragraphs about the relations of man and the various natural phenomena with which he deals. This element in his work would be more valuable were it not for a continual reiteration of the view that war is, apparently, the chief end of life. But that is in keeping with the fashion that the author seems to be so anxious to follow.

Much of the third chief section of the book is devoted to generalizations concerning *Rasse und Volk* as seen in the totalitarian State. A race is defined as a group within mankind which is distinguished from all others by its inalienable heritage of spiritual and corporeal qualities, and

it is stated that it is to be distinguished from a 'folk', within which one finds examples of several races side by side or mixed. It is well to say that the earth's peoples practically all show diverse biological types living side by side. To assert that a supposed spiritual (or mental) heritage is inalienably attached to each corporeal type is pure speculation. This hypothesis is followed by the claim that the language and the energy of will of the Germans are derived from the Fälisch-Nordisch Oberrasse, which has thus given the spiritual, linguistic, cultural and national heritage to the people, but is unfortunately bound to live side by side with other 'races' in Germany. The author makes a special point of 1933 as the beginning of a great advance in the spiritual influence of this Fälisch-Nordisch Oberrasse. One would regret to ascribe to it the cruelties and oppression which have marked recent developments in Germany. Would it not be better to think of the liberalism and toleration so characteristic of the peoples of Sweden, Norway and Denmark as a Nordic feature?

To a Germanophile, these unfortunate characteristics seem rather an example of the mutability of psychological traits under social and political influences. As to the Fälisch-Nordisch idea, it is probably of little use to reiterate that the immense majority of the German people are broad-headed, and that most of the great figures of German life in the past are far from the Nordic type, even if we twist the facts of observation to suit a prejudiced outlook, and call Nordic anyone whose colouring is light. No mention is made of the services of German Jews to German culture.

In the matter of origins of man we find a restatement of the ideas of Klaatsch, which, it has long been understood, he abandoned before his death. The notions of a separate descent of man from perhaps even Palæozoic ancestors, of an infinite gulf in descent separating white men from Africans and so on, are all expounded in a not very skilled fashion, and unfounded claims about Fälisch-Nordisch origins of cultural features are implicit as well as explicit in many paragraphs.

The German people have a great tradition; their contributions to civilization have been outstanding in almost every field. It is to be hoped that German thought may yet recover from the petty vanities and prejudice that have affected so much of it in recent years.

H. J. F.