To enact the whole program of *Southern Regions* would have required an immense effort and many powerful allies. To manage a fragment was more practical, especially if it was the most familiar of ambitions, the rationalization of the infrastructure of the Southern intelligentsia by means of foundation money. And changes in the world of New York philanthropy made the task more urgent, for they were threatening the very existence of the Institute for Research in Social Science.

Odum’s ability to practice sociology in the South, and to continue the development of a Southern sociology, rested on the Rockefeller Foundation. For more than a decade the foundation had supported the social sciences. Odum’s slice was only part of a much bigger pie, in which diverse organizations like the Social Science Research Council, the Institute of Human Relations at Yale, the London School of Economics, and others had shared. But the trustees, in the inner sanctum of the foundation, had always been a little skeptical of a wholesale commitment to an imprecise and controversial “science.” One of the most skeptical was the foundation’s later historian, Raymond Fosdick. He was to remember in 1952 that sociology was “a new field and it involved serious possibility of public misunderstanding. Still vivid in the minds of some of the trustees was the recollection of the Congressional investigation and the bitter criticism which had followed the Foundation’s attempt ...[in 1914] to make some approach to the problem of industrial relations.” In helping Odum, the foundation had been careful to walk softly and carry no stick at all. When Odum had sought financial support for the University of North Carolina Press and *Social Forces* in 1925, one foundation executive had scribbled on Odum’s request as advice to his colleagues: “Don’t let either Memorial or any other foundation give one penny directly to their press or the Journal of Social Forces. That would arouse another kind of fundamentalism that would be fatal and set their whole publishing activity back.”

The charter for the foundation’s involvement was a 1924 memorandum. Under its aegis, Odum had prospered. Four points are especially pertinent. The memorandum advised that no money be given to organizations “whose purposes and activities are centered largely in the procurement of legislation”: no attempt should be made directly “to secure any social, economic or political reform” or “contribute more than a conservative proportion toward the current expense of organizations engaged in direct activity for social welfare”; no influence should be exerted on research findings “through the designation of either personnel, specific problems to be attacked, or methods of enquiry to be adopted.” This was hard to sustain, as Odum’s experience with Beardsley Rum in 1927 had indicated. But it
tended to make the foundation emphasize the training of social scientists in university centers and the accumulation of raw data.2

In 1934, a new committee chaired by Fosdick recommended a change. With some complacency, it judged that the intention to train social scientists had been largely fulfilled. Moreover, it expressed a disillusionment with the sterile quantity of research the old mandate had generated. Fosdick was eager that there be more emphasis on ends, and less on means. “This would not mean, of course, the relinquishment of research as a method,” the committee report remarked. “It would mean that we have no interest in the promotion of research as an end in itself . . . . The mere accumulation of facts, untested by practical application, is in danger of becoming a substitute rather than a basis for collective action.”3

Immediately this affected Odum. The foundation’s support for the institute was reconsidered. In 1935, he was offered a five year grant that would fall each year by five thousand dollars from $25,000 to $5,000. The understanding was express that this marked the beginning of the end.4 This presaged a large hole in the Odum empire. As usual, he had a plan to plug it.

Odum had long wanted a Southern Institute, an Institute for Research in Social Science writ large for the whole region. The new situation seemed to demand that this was not only desirable, but necessary. In 1932, he had confided to Louis Round Wilson that, after “excellent conferences lately with some important people,” he was hopeful of a “pool endowment for the Southern Region.” In 1933, some foundation executives came to Chapel Hill for a visit and Odum raised the possibility of making the Southern Regional Study into a permanent “Southern Regional Institute instead of a local, state and regional one.” Edmund Day discouraged the idea, without closing the door on it.5

Early in 1934, just before the Kendrick fracas, Odum had begun to feel the cold wind of the new foundation policies. As he told Wilson, “the foundations are seemingly very critical of us now.” While Odum had corresponded with Charles W. Eliot of the National Planning Board, a division of the Public Works Administration, to suggest that “our state planning boards might need to be enlarged,” Edmund Day had lectured Odum severely in New York on the dangers of spreading himself too thin. It seemed prudent to abandon the project for a while.6

During the next few years, Odum intermittently kept the idea before the Rockefeller Foundation without receiving substantial encouragement. The publication of Southern Regions, however, helped him to recover some impetus. During 1936, three “Institutes on Regional Development” were held at Chapel Hill, Charlottesville, and Nashville to discuss his findings. In April, he mentioned to Frank Graham the need for a “unified Southern
policy group." Not until late in 1937, however, did Odum decide to act on a new approach.

During 1935, Will Alexander had become increasingly involved in managing agricultural policies in Washington. This had detracted from his attentions to the Interracial Commission. As a surrogate, he had asked Odum to make suggestions for the commission's future. From this germ, Odum took the chance of realizing his thwarted ambition for a centralized Southern Institute. In October 1937, Odum wrote to Alexander: "If I am asked for a recommendation, it would be that the Commission on Interracial Cooperation merge with a Southeastern People's Institute, or something of its kind, in which the four corners of emphasis would be interracial relations, agricultural reconstruction and farm tenancy, labor and industrial relations, and public administration." Feeling that the fate of the Negro and interracial work was no longer an isolated or separable issue, he was persuaded that carrying on the commission's old approach would yield diminishing returns. To this, Alexander returned a prompt, encouraging, and purposeful reply. "At the Board meeting we had a full discussion of your suggestion," he told Odum. "The idea was new, but the members of the Board were openminded. They were quite ready to accept the approach which you had in mind. . . We all decided that the way to work it out was to ask you to become President of the Commission." Odum accepted.

Things began to happen quickly. On 1 November, Odum was urging the new concept on Jackson Davis of the General Education Board. This was a shrewd move, for Davis, as Southern representative of the board, was more amenable to such an approach than the parent foundation in New York. This time Odum was careful to make New York his last stopping place, not his first. If he could not persuade the Rockefeller Foundation to aid in organizing the South, perhaps he might have more luck in organizing the South himself and presenting a fait accompli in New York. Could they then turn him away, unfunded?

On 22 November, Odum's new position as president of the Interracial Commission secured his election to the board of trustees of the Rosenwald Fund. On 13 December, he found his way on to the Advisory Committee on Southern Education for the General Education Board. On 15 January 1938, he made his bid for organizing the Southern intelligentsia by convening an "Interim Southeastern Regional Advisory Committee" in Atlanta, in the stolid surroundings of the Biltmore Hotel.

The list of attendants was impressive, if uncomfortably confined to Odum's familiar allies. There was Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University, the leading Southern black sociologist; Oliver Carmichael, the new chancellor of Vanderbilt University; Wilson Gee of the University of Virginia, who had labored long for the Southern Regional Committee; David Coker,
a pioneer of scientific agriculture; Virginius Dabney, Jonathan Daniels, Mark Ethridge, and John Temple Graves, all liberal editors of considerable influence; Edwin Embree, Arthur Mann, and Jackson Davis, representatives of the Rosenwald Fund and the General Education Board; Herman Nixon of the Southern Policy Committee and a contributor to I'll Take My Stand; and Charles C. Spaulding, the black insurance magnate from Durham, North Carolina. With these came a number of lesser figures.

To this group, Odum made his proposal for a Southern Institute. He made much of the inability of the universities to carry the burden of social reform. Their resources were badly overextended and, like the foundations, peculiarly subject to reprisals if they should promote specific measures. But this new approach might serve by the consolidation of the Interracial Commission, the Southern Policy Committees, and liaison work with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the American Federation of Labor, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Odum wanted the institute to undertake the adult education program that he had suggested in Southern Regions: “an effective set-up for new service to the public, broader adult aducation and promotion in the main fields of interest and special contact with public administration and political groups.” And he wanted the institute to formulate a twelve-year plan.

Without difficulty, Odum secured the backing of this meeting. This was not too surprising, as he had handpicked the members. But he had been given a mandate by a certain spectrum of Southern leadership, a rough blueprint and a call for “about two million dollars.” Things looked hopeful, for he had the backing of the Interracial Commission, the Southern Policy Committee seemed to be leaning towards amalgamation with the institute, and the foundation executives in Atlanta had seemed sympathetic. Moreover, Odum had an important promise from Will Alexander that the latter would return from Washington in 1940 to head the new institute. Meanwhile Odum engaged himself in a widespread and largely successful canvass for Southerners and non-Southerners willing to attach their names to the new project. In time, Odum was to send a thick folder of acceptances to the General Education Board. And it included some weighty names, such as Thurman Arnold, Stuart Chase, James H. Dillard, Clark Foreman, O. Max Gardner, James Weldon Johnson, Walter Lippmann, Dumas Malone, Maury Maverick, S. C. Mitchell, George Fort Milton, Lewis Mumford, William F. Ogburn, William Alexander Percy, Carl Sauer, Beardsley Ruml, T. S. Stribling, Jerry Voorhis, and W. D. Weatherford.

All this took time. In the meantime he could not act, because Will Alexander took a well earned rest in Europe during the summer of 1938. On his outward voyage, however, Alexander had been encouraging. “The time is ripe,” he had written from the Cunarder Antonia, “for this sort of non-governmental approach to southern problems. This point should
be stressed with our prospective supporters.” And Alexander offered some modest influence mongering through Edward Lowry, a Georgian and ex-political correspondent for the *New York Evening Post*. Lowry was glad to help the Odum scheme and try to open a few doors in New York. “I count strongly on his help being effective,” Alexander said.

The strategy relied heavily upon the marshalling of a united front in the South. The January conference in Atlanta had, however, betrayed disquieting signs of disagreement. There was a consensus about general objectives, but each had seemed to place the emphasis differently. David Coker, for example, had insisted that the first priority was to establish the health of tenant farmers. “It is impossible,” he had said, “to build character or a farm setup made with sick people. Ought we not to start with such problems and with the education of illiterates on farms before going into interracial and other problems?” For Virginius Dabney, a journalist, the priority was an enlargement of the reading public in the South. As for Thomas Staples of Hendrix College in Arkansas, he thought that a general improvement in the quality of education, from the elementary school upwards, was essential.

While there had been some feeling that agriculture and race relations were the main problems, there had been disagreement over their relationship. Harvey Couch of Arkansas had stuck with the Booker T. Washington tradition in thinking Negro education a sufficient lever of progress, while another even denied that there was a special race problem. From the standpoint of the black bourgeoisie, Charles Spaulding had criticized the functioning of the Jim Crow system. In his opinion, the facilities for Negroes in places such as railroad stations were such that “no decent Negro” would want to use them. Both he and Edgar Stern of New Orleans had urged greater openness in talking about racial matters. But Spaulding could scarcely have been happy at Stern’s way of expressing support. The Negro problem, he had said, had been too much hushed up in the South. It should be brought out in the open, along with such issues as the elimination of syphilis.

Charles Johnson echoed Odum in stressing that race was no longer a problem separable from other issues. Mark Ethridge had already made this point. However, the journalist had been most insistent that the institute be a direct action group. He was interested on no other terms, for he saw the crucial issue as a bypassing of a corrupt and unresponsive political system. Johnson, on the contrary, had seen no serious hope of securing agreement in such a diverse group. “At this stage,” the black sociologist had commented, “a common denominator on a great many issues would be rather meaningless.” John Temple Graves had also seen the institute as a clearing house or forum. Pessimistically, he had said that “the organization could not agree on so many questions.”
Around this issue had hung the unresolved question of the institute's organization. There had been some sympathy with Odum's idea of a fourfold division, with each segment concentrating on either race, industrial relations, administration, or agricultural matters. But it was unclear how integrated the leadership or direction of the institute should be. Walter Matherly of Florida had suggested a large "federate with a fairly large board of advisers, maybe 100, coming from two or three groups, such as one-third from federate agencies, one-third from each State and one-third from the public at large." But Wilson Gee, with a certain Virginian elitism, had wanted a small directorate, deciding policy and handing it out to the separate groups.

These were significant, but not yet grave dissensions. The discussion had been even-tempered, with the feeling general that social reform was a shared objective and Odum's plan would be a suitable vehicle for change. Nonetheless, O. C. Carmichael, summing up in an evening session, had felt it necessary to address himself to the "great divergence of views." An observer might have felt that these small cracks would have widened into substantial fissures, if the organization had been established.14

This had been a gathering of fairly like-minded liberals. In the world outside, differences were more profound and were to crowd in upon Odum's delicate planning. Things started to go sour in the summer of 1938. Even in February, scarcely back from Atlanta, Odum had received a tentative program for the Southern States Industrial Council. This had been established in 1933 as a response to the National Recovery Administration: it had wanted to preserve wage differentials and keep Southern wages low, lest their improvement attract foreign labor and affect the South's "racial purity." It seems that in 1938 it was seeking to revive its impetus. To Arthur Mann, Odum had expressed his concern that there might "continue to rise up groups that are mere advocates for economic or industrial development or for special pleadings."15

The probability of this was increased during the summer, when the political climate warmed up with the weather. In July, the President's Report on Economic Conditions in the South was published. In itself, the document was harmless. Indeed, it was largely a précis of research done at Chapel Hill. But Franklin Roosevelt had seen fit to hang around the South's neck the contentious label, the "Nation's Number One Economic Problem." This started a furor below the Potomac that was only intensified by Roosevelt's linking of the report with his attempted purge of conservative Southerners from Congress. The feeling rapidly grew that the Administration's policy towards the South was in the melting pot and it was imperative to move quickly to influence it. This cut clean across Odum's desire to move with only deliberate speed.16

It seemed as though pressure groups were crawling out from the woodwork
with the summer's cockroaches. The Progressive Education Association started to plan a series of regional conferences. A Louisiana group had in mind a Southern Conference in Public Welfare. Most importantly, the Alabama branch of the Southern Policy Committee moved to call a major conference of reform groups in Birmingham. This was to be the Southern Conference for Human Welfare. With not very mock excitement, Odum grumbled in August 1938: "Between the Right Honorable FD, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, and twenty other groups that are literally taking the lead to do what the Council ought to do, I think I'll presently go heat-wave hay-wire!!"\(^{17}\)

It was worrying for Odum that many of his Southern Council supporters offered their backing to the Southern Conference, and that it seemed to attract the political and labor union contacts he so noticeably lacked. Eleanor Roosevelt was to come to the Birmingham meeting. William Dodd, the ambassador to Germany, threw in his support. And one could find on the list of sponsors people like Lister Hill, Bibb Graves, Luther Patrick, Brooks Hays, and H. L. Mitchell of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Odum was concerned, but Charles Johnson reassured him: "Looking over the list of sponsors of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, I believe it has possibilities for constructive projection into the future, and can help rather than injure the chances for establishing our Council ... on a sound foundation ... Not only should this Conference have before it a statement about our Council, but I believe the fact of the growing frequency of these south-wide service groups might have some weight with the General Education Board or the Rockefeller Foundation in deciding to help support a substantial Council." Without great conviction, Odum came around to repeating Johnson's analysis.\(^{18}\)

In October, Odum was asked by the SCHW's field agent, Herman Nixon, to join the organization and preside over a race relations panel at the Birmingham meeting. After canvassing friends, Odum returned an ambivalent reply. He suggested he might present his council plan to the conference, if it had "matured sufficiently." This was a probably intentionally crippling proviso. With the conference but six weeks away, he must have known that he had little chance of securing backing by then. Part of Odum's view of the SCHW was offered by Wilson Gee: "I do not know that it will prove to be as significant as the old Southern Sociological Congress was but I rather look for it to follow a somewhat similar course. It will stir up a great deal of enthusiasm and do some good work over a period of a few years and, as is true of so many organizations of that nature, it will likely dwindle and pass off the stage ... you and I both have watched many organizations appear on the horizon and vanish off the scene." Such sentiments encouraged Odum's stand-offish attitude. He held to the point he had made at the preliminary meeting of the council in January: "The difference
between the agency and the conference is fundamental; namely, the agency is a permanent, full-time functioning organization, well endowed and with its staff composed of men everywhere comparable to our university presidents and faculty members.\textsuperscript{19}

In late October, Francis Miller made it clear that he was unwilling to merge his Southern Policy Committee with the Southern Council. This weakened Odum's hand with the foundations, who had indicated that unanimity was important in determining their attitude. The only encouraging moment was a November trustee meeting of the Rosenwald Fund in Atlanta, when Odum talked Edwin Embree into presenting his scheme to the next board meeting in Chicago in April. Moreover, a Rosenwald trustee had hinted that the Rockefeller Foundation was in the mood to acquiesce.\textsuperscript{20}

Meanwhile the conference in Birmingham had begun, with Odum purposely absent. After the heated imbroglio over segregated seating in the auditorium and the confused, if stimulating, proceedings, Charles Johnson and Mark Ethridge reported back to Odum that the Southern Conference need not inhibit the Southern Council. But the racial tensions that Odum had been diligently downplaying had been violently exposed in Birmingham. Disharmony was further stressed when the Southern States Industrial Council decided to meet in Atlanta and answer the "radical" Southern Conference. And the conference did not plan to go away, as Odum devoutly hoped. Herman Nixon was eager to carry on and was backed by the conference's new president, Frank Graham. It was embarrassing enough to have Odum's own university president as the head of a "rival," but it was worse when Franklin Roosevelt himself warmly commended Graham. As usual, Odum and Graham had diametrically opposed views of social reform. While Odum wanted a controlled planning organization, Graham with his customary optimism believed that democracy should run its course, that the more pressure groups the merrier. While Odum twitched anxiously at every sign of independent initiatives, Graham was benign.\textsuperscript{21}

Will Alexander continued to do his best, mainly through Edward Lowry. A protege of Lowry's had assumed an editorial post with the \textit{New York Times}, and offered publicity and an endorsement for the council. But it was becoming clear that Raymond Fosdick was a major stumbling block within the Rockefeller Foundation. Lowry volunteered to go to New York, but he was unsure how to get at Fosdick himself. Alexander had gathered from Jackson Davis that a holding grant might be recommended, "unless our friend Fosdick steps on the whole thing".\textsuperscript{22}

Through the spring of 1939, Odum remained stubbornly optimistic. He would have been less so, if he could have read the reports that the General Education Board itself had been gathering from the South. The Board had not been idle, or been content to take Odum's word for what Southerners were thinking. Some twenty interviews were conducted.
They were not markedly against Odum's proposed council, but very few were unreservedly in favor. When it was endorsed, too often it was thought that a legislative pressure group was neither practical nor desirable. It might be tried for a few years, on a limited research basis, but in time it would be best replaced by having its policies assimilated by existing state and federal agencies. A few were not too keen on Will Alexander, who had become identified with the New Deal. Several were unsure how the "public administration" division of the council could be made to work. Even Alexander himself, interviewed in Washington in March 1939, was unclear about the "labor and industrial relations" division.

Before the interviewing, the board had had serious reservations. As early as May 1938, Arthur Mann had cautioned Odum that it was not the board's practice to "assist in enterprises which may contain a considerable element of reform or controversy," and this might be fatally inhibiting. In March 1939, an interoffice memorandum with the board had questioned the wisdom of Odum's application. As was so often the case, Odum suffered from wording his proposals with sweeping vagueness. "The listing of a variety of efforts without indication of why such a council as is envisaged would be particularly fitted to perform the several tasks or how or through what agencies it would work to perform them seems to me to leave much to be desired," the memo continued. To this a more fundamental criticism was added: "The inherent weakness of the program lies in the conception of assembling an unofficial group that will develop wise programs of action with the expectation that those who control policy will accept such a self-constituted group's recommendations. There is a further weakness as I see it of organizing a group to represent a very broad region when there is no official machinery for dealing with the problems of that region when it might be more effective to organize the research agencies upon the basis of much smaller units." It was to become apparent that many Southerners shared this latter doubt. Wilson Gee, when interviewed, was to question the practicability of such a comprehensive proposal, and rather thought that existing agencies were "safer bets." Paul Gross, professor of chemistry at Duke University, echoed this sentiment. The council, he thought, might be useful in three or four states for a few years but "it could not possibly serve the entire southeast." The president of the University of Virginia, John Newcomb, was to express the strong opinion that the only practical course was on the basis of state and local units, not regional.

As important as these criticisms was the board's realization that Odum did not have the mandate of the South. One of the first interviews was with LeRoy Hodges, the state comptroller of Virginia. Hodges had attended Odum's Atlanta meeting in January 1938, and was listed as a supporter of the council by Odum. Hodges, however, voiced a similar skepticism to that in the board's memo. The South was not quite so homogeneous.
He had said, the memo observed, “there would be little use for instance of preaching the lessons of a cotton economy to Virginians because they would not know what the discussion meant.” Just as damaging was Hodges’s remembrance of the Atlanta meeting: “Hodges said that he had started to voice his skepticism but had commenced by asking whether there was real reason to believe that funds upon such a scale as $200,000 for ten years would be available. He said that Odum had given assurance that if the plan could be broadly endorsed the funds would be forthcoming from foundations and others. At this point Hodges said he dropped further questioning. Here was a plan drawn out in great detail for which funds which Hodges understood to be outside funds seemed to be committed. Research in general was good. Surely the endeavor would do no harm even if it proved to be not very effectual and Hodges said that he did not see why he should throw monkey wrenches. Therefore he and the others at the conference approved although Hodges stated that from conversations that he had afterwards he was certain that some of the members of the conference shared his skepticism.” With this in mind, it was unsurprising that the board memo concluded: This “raises sharply the question of just how much is meant by the endorsements offered in Odum’s document.”

It was even less surprising that Odum was summoned to New York early in May to receive the final dismissive word. He was always resilient: for the next several years, he refused to give up. When the Tennessee Valley Authority was thinking of setting up a research institute, Odum tried to revive the project. And, indeed, in due course, a body called the Southern Regional Council did appear. But it was little more than a revamped Interracial Commission. The grand design had failed.

The year 1939 was not, after all, a good one in which to pursue regional interests. The coming war in Europe seemed to dwarf them. Long interested in international affairs, the Rockefeller Foundation had grown more and more absorbed by the war. Odum, in a letter to Will Alexander twenty-one days after the German invasion of Poland, remarked that “the war seems to demoralize New York.” Howard Odum’s lack of interest in the other side of the Atlantic—he never went there—was limiting. When Gerald Johnson, brooding on the deteriorating situation, wrote to the sociologist that “for the first time I begin to think that perhaps it is a swell idea not to be a young man any longer; if we are heading for the Dark Ages again, at least I shall never know it,” Odum replied with a chirpy indifference. “With reference to the world situation,” he said, “you may recall that I have always said that I am an optimist in general on everything except to areas of association. I always know before hand that neighbors if in too intimate contact and competition will not get along together; ditto for nations! So what? Why not, looking at it from the larger viewpoint of ‘God and freedom’ or historical evolution in the grand manner, let the nations of Europe
go into eclipse, from which we start the eternal process of the common man coming back up and up and up."

In this manner, Odum had received the practical judgment on *Southern Regions*. Its intellectual assessment had to wait a little longer. In the meantime, he had set about extending his analysis of regionalism to the whole nation. His formulations in *Southern Regions* had been national, and to see their implementation required a wider persuasion of informed opinion than just that of the South. If the whole South had been convinced and banging at Roosevelt's door for a regional planning council, Odum's regionalism would have been incomplete. It was logical, therefore, that he set about writing *American Regionalism: A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Integration*, which was published in 1938. Its fate proceeded with a discomfiting precision alongside his endeavors for a Southern Council.

It was not written without help, as was true of many of Odum works. Behind him had always been the staff of the Institute for Research in Social Science. But this time a young sociologist, Harry Estill Moore, was asked to collaborate directly with Odum. By 1937 teaching in Texas, Moore had done a brief doctoral dissertation at Chapel Hill on "Theories of Regionalism." It seemed sensible that Moore's perspective be included in Odum's general survey. With minor interpolations, Moore was to write part 2 of the three-part book: a study of the intellectual growth of regionalist thought in six major disciplines—geography, anthropology, ecology, economics, political science, and sociology. Odum contributed most of part 1 on the rise and nature of American regions: natural geographical regions, determined by such things as soil, climate, rivers and mountains; "culture regions," built upon but altering the natural configurations. To this, Moore added two chapters on "service regions." by which was meant the organizational growth of regionalism in government administration and private business. Part 3 was entirely Odum's: a survey of the six regions. Interpersed were chapters pleading the cause of regional planning.

It was inevitable that Odum should repeat himself, but a few things had changed. The experience of the 1930s was digested into his views on regionalism. He had been uncomfortable with the centralizing trend of the New Deal. And, like many American intellectuals, he feared that the totalitarian movements of Fascism and Communism posed a cruel dilemma for the American future. For Odum, a simple patriot, America was "the hope of western civilization." Naturally, he wished to unite his belief in regionalism with these fears by arguing that regionalism offered "a medium and technique of decentralization and redistribution in an age now
characterized as moving toward over-centralization, urbanism and totalitarianism." Like Frederick Jackson Turner, Odum was concerned that urbanization would make America a class society. Regionalism might hold the line, or even reverse the trend, by pitching institutions of geographical control against class divisions. It was, he wrote, "a symbol of America's geographic as opposed to occupational representation; of popular as opposed to class control." Odum wanted the South to defy and moderate modernity by drawing together.28

It was sometimes suggested that regionalism was the idle musing of sociologists with nothing better to do on warm Southern evenings. American Regionalism was eager to belie that impression. And its evidence was cumulatively impressive. Odum was able to point to the development of metropolitan regional planning. Both St. Louis and New York had organized planning commissions that went far beyond traditional municipal boundaries. There were, Odum claimed, 506 metropolitan planning agencies at the end of 1936 that included territory beyond city limits. And he could point to the evidence gathered by the Chicago school of sociology, led by Robert E. Park, which demonstrated the necessary influence exercised by cities on their hinterland. To this, Harry Moore added a survey of governmental and corporate regionalism. More than a hundred government bureaux and agencies were divided into regions of administrative convenience. But they were of varying sizes and extents, following no consistent pattern. Seven agencies had divided the country into either four or nine regions. Nine bureaux had set up twelve areas. Four agencies had split the country into only two parts, while another had no less than eighty-three divisions. Some used state boundaries, others did not. The heterogeneity of these arrangements, Moore argued, was sometimes beneficial and functional. At other moments, it led to extreme difficulty in coordinating government policy in particular areas. Moreover, as agencies transcended state boundaries, it had become difficult for states to control them. Interstate compacts helped, but these—although growing in number—dealt with political, rather than social problems.29

In this way, Moore linked these heterogeneous administrative divisions to Odum's case that a homogeneously defined regionalism would help to combat centralization. For the patchwork had made it difficult for the states to control not only the federal agencies, but even to master the burgeoning city within its borders. Squeezed between the city and the federal government, the state had become an administrative bankrupt. As Moore put it, "The traditional guardian of local initiative in our governmental machinery has become impotent in at least some of its functions." It was logical and necessary, therefore, to replace it with a regional unit that could effectively challenge both the cities and Washington.30

The growth of such regional arrangements was both a help and a
hindrance to Odum. It was useful to be able to point to existing regionalism as evidence of a growing trend. But the complexity presented entrenched agencies that would yield most unwillingly to his proposed sixfold standardization. And they left him vulnerable to the argument that their very diversity was proof of a necessary functional flexibility.

Harry Moore, dealing with the theoretical underpinnings of regionalism, had even greater problems. Theory seemed to be volatile. While Odum casually liked to see regionalism as just “the most natural thing in the world,” Moore had grasped that modern thought was divided and ambivalent.

The bedrock of Moore’s position was the old Montesquieuan perception that man was defined by his environment, the pattern of rivers, mountains, snow, and sun. But it was clear that this eighteenth-century determinism was no longer adequate. With the development of “social geography” or “ecology”—the name varied, but the standpoint was similar—it had to be recognized that man’s intelligence and social organization was a partially independent variable in cultural formation. Separate disciplines were wont to stress different starting points: geographers started with landscape, anthropologists with the culture of tribes, ecologists with the links between man and his environment, both organic and nonorganic. Interconnections, however, were evident to all. It seemed to Moore that specialization had bred an inward-looking caution. Each discipline was cagey about extending its theoretical assumptions and absorbed in internal disputes. Anthropologists doubted that one could transfer lessons from simple tribal societies to the modern world. Economists were divided between macro- and micro-economics. Historians were dubious about the concept of “culture areas,” for they inadequately accommodated temporal change.

All this was worrying to Moore. Not without quavering, however, he stuck to his guns. “Empirically and impressionistically,” he insisted, “it seems undeniable that, making all possible allowances for class differences, there are commonly recognized regions the essence of which is awareness by observers of the region as a whole of a general spirit or Weltanschauung.” This seemed sound, but it was a worryingly imprecise criterion. The approach from social psychology was a shade woolly, as Moore admitted to Robert McKenzie of the Chicago school of sociology who had taxed him with the unconvincing nature of the sectional/regional distinction. “I am inclined to agree with you,” he wrote, “that the distinction is somewhat vague and is not supported by objective data as it should be to carry statistical conviction. But, so far I have not been able to work out objective measures of this difference.” Earlier Moore had fretted to Odum: “I quite agree that the region is a function of the problem or use, but am sure also, that those problems and uses cluster sufficiently to make a region a relatively stable and permanent element in national structure. If this is not true,”
he added, uneasily, "we have been wasting a hell of a lot of time and a considerable amount of work—on your part at least." This disquiet was to find its way into Moore’s pages in *American Regionalism*. “The boundaries of culture areas are vague zones,” he was to say, “or if a definite limit is set by statistical methods there remains an indefiniteness indicated by lack of homogeneity of the traits used as criteria. The center also is often vague.” The region did seem to crumble in one’s hand. How did one escape this problem of intellectual atomism?33

Moore came up with an ingenious solution. He turned to one of the foremost antiatomistic theories in modern thought, gestalt psychology. If the argument seemed to drive one back upon psychology, it was necessary to find one that allowed one to hold the crumbling pieces together. It was ironic, but gestalt had begun as a revolt in 1912 against the dominant influence in German psychology, Odum’s old enthusiasm, Wilhelm Wundt. Three young Berlin psychologists, Kurt Koffka, Max Wertheimer, and Wolfgang Kohler, had been discontented with Wundt’s residual associationism, his “bricks and mortar” approach to the new science. While they accepted his neo-Hegelian emphasis on the study of conscious experience as psychology’s proper focus and his belief that understanding was the synthesis of assorted responses, they were philosophically unhappy at the direction of Wundt’s logic. They refused to believe that life, and psychology, could be understood or endured by the dismemberment of meaningful experiences into meaningless elements. Problems should be analyzed, not from the bottom up, but from the top down. More, they asserted this to be the normal and necessary human process. Man was not only able to organize experience with his perception, but it was in his nature for him to do so. Parts were meaningful only as segments of a whole. Taken in isolation, they meant nothing.34

Gestalt had some basis in empirical observation, but its motive force was a philosophical distaste for the disintegrative tendency of modern thought. Wertheimer put it like this: “To live in a fog...is for many people an unbearable state of affairs. There is a tendency to structural clearness, surveyability, to truth as against petty views.” Koffka, however, made the point clearest at the end of his 1935 volume, *The Principles of Gestalt Psychology*: “If there is any polemical spirit in this book,” he admitted candidly, “it is directed not against persons but against a strong cultural force in our present civilization for which I have chosen the name positivism. If positivism can be regarded as an integrative philosophy, its integration rests on the dogma that all events are equally unintelligible, irrational, meaningless, purely factual. Such an integration is, however, to my way of thinking, identical with a complete disintegration. Being convinced that such a view is utterly inadequate in face of facts, I had to attack it, and that the more since its hold over our generation is strong.”35
If Odum and Moore's intellectual discomfort had a root, it was this same positivism. Gratefully, Moore had taken the idea of gestalt, the German word for a form, configuration, or structure, and applied it to the region. It, they claimed, was intelligible only in its entirety. It too was rendered superfluously meaningless by atomistic analysis. And, in truth, this was an interesting approach to the intractable difficulties of keeping analysis as coherent as the common perception of Southern regional character.

But there were difficulties. This idea wandered, an orphan, through a few scattered pages of *American Regionalism*. It seems probable that the concept had been Moore's, rather than Odum's, though each politely attributed it to the other. But gestalt surfaces nowhere else in Odum's work, and he was never one not to repeat himself. In the confusion of coauthorship, with the younger man eager to agree with his senior partner, much was left unreconciled or hastily hammered together. For it was not clear that gestalt and Odum's folk sociology were compatible. Odum had rested his case on Wundt's extension of his psychological theories to society, but the gestaltists had repudiated that basis. Moreover, his borrowing from William Graham Sumner had emphasized the irrational human response to environment, while gestalt had insisted upon the clarity of human understanding. Moore, with Odum's apparent approval, tried to reconcile the viewpoints but with no great success.

After a description of gestalt psychology, Moore hazarded a summary: "This is tantamount to saying that all the factors are mutually conditioning, at once cause and effect," he wrote. This seemed sound, hinting at the Hegelianism that the gestalt school shared with Wundt. But Moore's next step was debatable: "In still other words, regionalism points to cultural determinism in that the tools by which man has surrounded himself, both physical and mental, and by which he seeks his well-being, direct and affect his response to the physical area in which he finds himself. For both the individual and the social group, the pre-existing culture is largely determinative of the present organization. The older strata of this culture . . . form the valuable heritage of 'the folk,' and it is through the study of the folk that the significance of these elements becomes clear." This was bold, leaping from gestalt to folk sociology in one fell swoop, but it was very dubious. The jump from gestalt to cultural determinism was too long, for it underestimated the anti-Wundtian revolt in gestalt. The deterministic hand of social mores was precisely what gestalt was not about, but rather the necessity of human rationality. A psychological theory had been hastily transmuted by Moore into a sociological one, one commensurate with Odum's older line of thinking. In retrospect, the high promise of gestalt in the 1930s that it might be applicable to the wider scope of the social sciences has not borne fruit. But Moore had written in the first glimmer of hope, and snatched at it to resolve his doubts. At the last, his uncertainty
ODUM: THE FAILURE OF REGIONALISM

clashed with Odum's sanguine faith in the "naturalness" of regionalism. For Moore, gestalt was an important mode of reconciliation in an unsure venture. For Odum, it was an amiable bonus in an assured intellectual assertion.37

After this intriguing diversion, part 3 of American Regionalism was bathos. Odum turned to a description of his six regions. Like his maps and statistics, these were less descriptions of homogeneous units, but more accumulated sketches of meaningful social divisions within these regions. One could not describe a unified Middle West, but one could add together paragraphs on Chicago or the Corn Belt, Detroit or the river culture of Missouri. In the South, at least, Odum had the binding force of social consciousness. The further his pen travelled, the less that worked. In truth, Odum was trapped by the old logic of the New South school. He had been taught that sectionalism and nationalism, South and nation, were intrinsically compatible. It followed that what was true of the South's relationship to the center was true of other parts. The New South had not wanted a special relationship. But it was special, so it had become necessary to upgrade the coherence of other regions to diminish the South's peculiarity. Thus Odum had to grant the Middle West and the Far West, the Northeast and the Southwest the same shared coherence that a troublesome and welding history had granted the South. Without it, the South did, after all, bear a peculiar burden; and for Odum, that was intolerable. It diminished the region's Americanism. And no word was used with greater frequency and more normative enthusiasm than "American" in his tumbling portraits.38

American Regionalism was not substantially criticized upon its publication. It did not become the talking point that Odum's strategy required, nor create the stir of Southern Regions. Indeed, it was to be 1942 before a verdict came in and, even then, Odum had to promote the discussion personally. He published in Social Forces an article entitled "A Sociological Approach to the Study and Practice of American Regionalism: A Factorial Syllabus." Reprints were dispatched to various members of the profession and criticism requested. And Odum got it, enough that he was moved to remark: "I have never had any series of letters or critiques so important." Taken together, these responses constituted the judgment of his peers on Howard Odum, the theorist of regionalism.39

Much criticism centered on his empirical divisions of American society. Were not his regions arbitrary, mistaken, or conceptually untenable? George Renner, for instance, puzzled over Odum's "success in wishing out of existence the region of which I happen to be a native—viz the Shortgrass Country or Great Plains.... You are able to slice it up and attach the two halves to other regions to which it bears no organic relation." And Read Bain, well acquainted with the Far West, could not understand why Odum thought California, Washington, and Oregon could be lumped together.
Equally, he thought it arbitrary to assimilate southeastern New Hampshire to the rest of the state, or eastern to western Massachusetts, or western to eastern Texas. Otis Duncan, in addition, felt that Oklahoma was culturally more like North Dakota than Mississippi, despite its cotton growing and its Southern settlers. Even on the score of the South, he was unsure: “I have been in all the southern states, but I have never been in one that does not contend, in reference to most specific points, that it is different from all the rest, and I agree... There is as much variation within the region as between it and other regions.”

The feeling was general that Odum had been wrong to use states as a statistical basis. Renner hazarded that Odum had been inconsistent in arguing that social phenomena should be studied with all possible accuracy and then that such results be abandoned for the practical convenience of group-of-states administration. “Aren’t you really up against a situation like this,” he asked. “We have pies: but we want cakes: so let’s get cakes by re-combining our pies? I’m vastly interested in regionalism, but I for one, don’t readily accept the premise that a re-grouping of our pies will yield the pragmatic equivalent of cakes, and I don’t believe anyone will find the alchemist formula for effecting such transmutation.” Woundingly, he added that Franklin Giddings would have frowned upon the attempt. In this, Read Bain agreed with Renner, but with more bluntness: “If region can be defined, I’m sure it must dispense with state boundaries.”

As for social change, that was a disturbing factor. Both Maurice Davie and C. Arnold Anderson felt that even if you could devise satisfactory regional boundaries time would unfix them. Floyd House insisted that “regions as determined by cultural and commercial facts are not necessarily fixed: they may, and in cases do, expand or shrink.” Moreover, Logan Wilson was bothered by the unevenness of the regional hypothesis in different areas. “Special problems,” he told Odum, “are presented by borderline areas having heterogeneous cultures and by those lacking any highly indigenous developments. Within even the sub-divisions there are likely to be large ‘islands’ (often metropolitan centers) that depart considerably in their characteristics from the surrounding territory, and which share more in common with islands similarly situated in other regions.”

As for statistics, there was concern at the bias in Odum’s methodology. J. F. Cuber cautioned that an intention to find homogeneity obliged the statistician to underestimate the evidence of heterogeneity. Svend Reimer, in an article for Social Forces, put it more strongly. Noting that indices were not infinite but selected, he observed that “the whole process of index construction and that of the composite indices is guided by the attempts to verify empirically the existence of such regions as the theory of regionalism was decided upon in advance of statistical procedures.” To illustrate the dilemma, Otis Duncan offered a slice of his own experience: “I have
observed that I can block Oklahoma off into groups of counties on the map according to my own fancy. Then if I get averages for these groups, almost invariably they will show significant differences when compared to each other. I would almost wager that the same thing would happen if I grouped the counties shown red, blue, green, and yellow on an ordinary political map."

In his Social Forces piece, Odum had made a few suggestions for national and regional planning. He wanted a national planning council, authorized and paid for by Congress, with the power of referendum. Although it would have no coercive power, he envisaged a status "analogous to the Supreme Court." There would be nine members of the council, six from each region and a few members-at-large. Regional representation was to be a fundamental principle. The council would have three objectives: "first, to insure a continuous scientific inventory of the state of the nation and to provide essential information for the President, the Congress, the Supreme Court and special needs; to coordinate research and approximate a clearing house; to reduce overlapping and economize on congressional committee organizations; second, to act as a buffer between the President and the other branches of government and to provide a safe-guard against over-centralization and power through government by persons to serve in emergency situations; third, to act as buffer and democratic interpreter between the national government and the states and regions, and the necessary federal centralization." Below this national level, there would be similar regional and state councils.

Few were persuaded of this scheme. Robert Faris was unsure that social problems were sensibly divisible into regions. Even if they were, they were not as well handled "by a group representing districts, as by a group representing scientific disciplines relative to the question, and such groups would have to have different compositions for each matter to be studied.” Moreover, Faris saw no way or hope of a national council acting as a buffer between different branches of government: "It has taken a desperate war to make even a small crack in the states' determination to raise trade barriers against one another, and I don't see how an agency without power could get far against such forces.” As for F. E. Lumley, he gagged at the very thought of trying to persuade Congress of such a council, especially without the improbable pressure of public opinion.

Lawrence Frank wondered if it might not be easier to use existing organizations, like the National Planning Board. Edgar Schuler made the same suggestion, but went on to ask if the principle of regional representation implied that "the regions, in general, are supposed to be of equivalence in significance, in nature and complexity or difficulty of problems, or that planning decisions would eventually come down to majority vote.” If so, he thought the notion misguided. It might be well to adopt planning
methods from totalitarian societies, but the people must decide policy directions. Committees, he indicated, were a recipe for paralysis.46

Such methodological and practical objections were disturbing. Even more striking was the consistent rejection of Odum's theoretical framework. Many puzzled over his application of the "folk" idea. "Do we have any 'folks,' in the original sense of that term, in this country?" Lumley asked. "Isn't that something yet to be shown rather than to be accepted?" Robert Park doubted that there were any folks in the United States, outside of New England and the South. And he saw more than one folk in the South. There were Negroes, Cajuns, the mountaineers of the Ozarks, as well as the whites.47

While many correspondents criticized Odum's mingling of social planning and social science, they were divided over its general wisdom. Maurice Davie was sure that the combination was unwholesome. Edwin Sutherland took a different tack. "Regionalism ..." he suggested, "does not seem to me to be sociology or science of any other kind. Although you make statements about the science of regionalism, your interest and elaborations are definitely along the line of social control or practical planning. Your regionalism impresses me as analogous to social work or to communism, in that it is concerned primarily with social control and regards the accumulation of knowledge as concerned primarily with the techniques by which objectives can be realized." This sentiment was echoed by Edgar Schuler. To him, Odum's regionalism "was more of a philosophy, a religion, a faith, than simply an approach to science ... . In fact, I was reminded of Auguste Comte ... .there still is ... something reminiscent about Comte in the entire treatment which, in a way, merges science with belief, research with prescription, and even includes a panel of sociological (?) high priests to run the whole show."48

Otis Duncan, however, was pleased with Odum's contention that science was a mix of "the discovery of truth and the attainment of mastery." Edwin Sutherland concurred in this instrumentalism. "I believe thoroughly in Dewey's proposition that efforts at control are useful in the development of scientific knowledge," he said. "I believe that regionalism, even if it is concerned primarily with social control, may have an ultimate value in the development of scientific knowledge." Ellsworth Faris, for his part, was happy to give Odum a breezy endorsement, but by dumping Odum's sociological claims overboard. "I greatly admire both you and the effort and the program. But does it need all this elaborate pseudo-sociological dressing?" he politely inquired. "As a Southerner you have a passionate devotion to the south and as a man of vision and energy you are working on a program that ought to improve conditions, not only in the South but over the whole nation. In that effort, no one could wish you anything
but success... But... you weaken your case and do not strengthen it by the verbose and confusing argument."

Ambivalent support was offered by Logan Wilson to this position: “You state that an objective of regionalism is to discover 'the new balance and equilibrium between supercivilization and American culture in the balance between men and machines, between men and resources. If ever there was a new frontier this is one.' This logical position represents a Baconian view of science, taking for granted that the balance is just beyond some horizon waiting to be discovered. My own view is that the way out must be invented, not discovered. Consistent with this view of science as something more than fact-finding, I should say that classification is largely a matter of convenience.” This was shrewd, but it must have been hard for Odum to be accused of being a Baconian and a Comtean, all in the same week.

There was a widespread consensus that geography was an antiquated theoretical basis for any modern sociology. Robert Faris, Otis Duncan, and Pitirim Sorokin concurred on this. Sorokin summarized the objection by writing to Odum: “your regionalism assumes a paramount importance of territory and territorial basis of groups and communities. This basis—all important in the past—seems to me to have lost its importance and is losing it rapidly. Territorial adjacency, proximity or remoteness becomes less and less important factor in uniting individuals into one social unity, in making them solidarity [sic] body, in creating and destroying real communities or social systems. Its place has been taken by other cultural factors (religion, nationality, economic interests, political party, state, class and caste interests, character of culture etc.) At the present time, ‘regional’ factor is only one among many and far from being most important. Therefore, for planning any rational division of mankind into some social units, it has to be reckoned with, but only as one among many other factors and interests and bases.”

Implied in such criticism, both methodological and theoretical, was the impression that social psychology had been slighted in the pursuit of instrumentalism. H. C. Brearley thought that regions existed more in men’s minds, and less in “reality.” And J. F. Cuber was sure that “the identification of the person with the regional culture is important to the definition of the region.” But Lawrence Frank assembled the objections most acutely, especially by adding a few observations on the historical roots of Odum’s difficulties: “If you have to resort to factor analysis to delineate regions,” he observed, “is it because you are trying to force the stubborn and recalcitrant diversity of people in to a few hard statistical concepts or factors? I feel that Thurstone uses factor analysis to escape recognition of the complex diversity and individuality of personality, preferring a more or less spurious simplicity and homogeneity... If I had time and energy I'd
elaborate a bit on the handover of 19th century scientific concepts of order, regularity and uniformity, etc. which are obsolete nowadays in their original form and must be reformulated in terms of the admitted disorder, lack of uniformity (except statistical probability) discontinuity and relativity of all measures and data. Such regional studies must accept 'social relativity,' and acknowledge that every measurement or data must be ordered to the field (region) in which observed where it may be enhanced or attenuated, so that its absolute quantitative significance disappears."

To telescope these criticisms is unfair to Odum. Doubts were scattered through several minds, not concentrated in one. Many sociologists, even when they expressed skepticism, were interested in the possibilities of regionalism. Almost none, however, endorsed his peculiarly rigid version. After noting lengthy objections to Odum's case, Otis Duncan had pondered the apparent contradiction. "On the other hand," he admitted, "I am on several regional committees which are conducting research of one kind or another. I attempt to justify this apparent inconsistency with the argument that a geographical division of labor is necessary because it is impossible to study the whole country ... Regionalization ... is mainly a mechanical expedient." Logan Wilson, equally, thought there was some point to organizations like the Southern Sociological Society, but "for most purposes ... the functional principle of organization is better than the territorial." And the latter might become obsolete if transportation should become sufficiently fast and inexpensive. Regionalism, Robert Faris surmised, was useful, but it was "much more efficient to have a different set of regions for each purpose, without attempt to make them coincide. Cultural homogeneity does not coincide with necessities which are answered by such arrangements as TVA, Port of New York Authority, seaboard gasoline rationing area, and the like."

Those sociologists and geographers who answered Odum's inquiry came mostly from outside the South, and were thus beyond his sphere of influence. To Raymond Bellamy of the Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee, Odum's sociology loomed more immense on the horizon. Bellamy was deeply concerned that Odum's dominance over Southern sociology was unhealthy. The intellectual structure of regionalism was part of the problem, and Bellamy illustrated his complaint with an anecdote: "Some few years ago I sent one of our graduates to Chapel Hill to do graduate work in sociology. She was a bright girl, unusually bright, and had the capacity for almost unlimited work ... But after one term she came back and reported that she could not get any general sociology at N.C. ... She went over the catalogue with me and I believe she was right ... I have the feeling that the strong development of Regionalism is rather directly the cause." When Odum protested the point, Bellamy insisted: "The quarrel I have with the Regionalists is that they seem more and more
to be crowding out the general sociology. I consider this a fatal blunder and think that in the long run it will work disaster.\textsuperscript{54}

Bellamy might have discounted Odum's protest with more alacrity, if he had seen a long 1942 letter from a disillusioned Northern graduate student to Odum. John Lansing had come from Columbia University, fresh from the influence of Robert Lynd and Herbert Marcuse, and eager to see sociologists appreciate and cultivate the element of "value judgments" in their "science." The University of North Carolina had been a disappointment. Rupert Vance did offer a course on social theory, but he was not deeply interested in it: most of his time was given to regionalism and demography. "Subconsciously I expected to find a university in the South," Lansing told Odum, "instead I found a Southern university. I thought the atmosphere would be one of a university which thought of itself primarily as an intellectual institution, a national and international center of learning in the great tradition. Instead Carolina is primarily a Southern institution." The sociology department was staffed almost exclusively by Southerners. Naturally it was making great contributions to research on Southern problems, but it thereby placed "limits on what the University and the department have to offer a Northerner not primarily interested in the South for its own sake." The message was clear. In turning from a sociology in the South to a Southern sociology, Odum had surrendered valuable perspectives for his gains.\textsuperscript{45}

Odum could only have been wounded by these accusations. Had he not proved the foolishness of the distinction between Southern regionalism and nationalism? That he had not was testified with depressing regularity by his 1942 correspondents. Two Southerners, Brearley and Bellamy, refused to acknowledge his fundamental distinction between regionalism and sectionalism. Brearley even thought that Odum's discussion of regional rights was "quite reminiscent of 1860 and the demand for 'states' rights.' . . . like the sectionalism of Thomas R. Dew and Thomas Cooper." Bellamy dismissed Odum's cherished belief that regionalism was for the national good: "The deepest dyed old sectionalist that ever got up in Washington and bellowed for high tariff on manufactured articles or stormed because Cuban tomatoes and other truck goods were allowed into the country would have insisted vehemently and possibly even profanely that he was interested in the good of the country as a whole, and he would have thought he was, too. A very large percent of Regionalism seems to me unmistakably the same thing. I am tempted to think that its very foundation is the same." A non-Southerner endorsed this viewpoint, as he puzzled: "How prevent regions becoming sections? So long as interest groups are self-conscious and our culture permits them to apply pressure, why should they be less harmful as regions than as states . . . ? Regionalism is very valuable; but I can't see that it really offers an escape from localistic
autarchic tendencies."

Odum remained sanguine under this bombardment. The criticisms were noted, but dismissed as "misunderstanding" of his meaning. But the mainspring was broken. It was not that he ever ceased his constant running after change and understanding; books continued to emerge from his scrawling midnight pen, trains were still taken to meet foundation executives, stewardship was exercised over Southern academic liberalism. And he never ceased to plead the regionalist cause, but fewer and fewer listened. When he went back to the General Education Board in 1949 to finance a revised edition of *Southern Regions*, the private comments within the foundation office were dismissively the opinions of a new generation. "The original volume," one observed, unkindly, "was essentially a cut-and-paste job which did not make an important contribution to science." And today the Institute for Research in Social Science, blessed with the financial backing of a much wealthier state of North Carolina, the backing that was unobtainable for Odum, has scarcely any interest in regionalism. Only one member of its large staff has any interest in the South, and he deals with the social psychology of sectional perception, the perspective that always just eluded Odum.  

Howard Odum had come at a peculiar moment in the history of American sociology and that of the South. He had inherited from Wundt, Giddings and "progressive" sociology the neo-Hegelian theory that society was a "whole of closely related and interdependent parts." For Odum, such an integration was natural and basic. No amount of atomistic analysis could fragment these wholes. The assumption of organicism was fundamental. On this perspective was piled the burden of the Southern idea. But the New South version of this idea transmitted an ambivalence to him. It gave him two candidates for his natural organic unit of analysis, the South and the nation. And it told him that they were substantially identical. This imposed strains that he boldly, but unconvincingly, tried to resolve by his distinction between regionalism and sectionalism.

At the same time, Odum was an ambitious empire builder for a new and contentious discipline. His region was not sure it wanted him, and his state was positive that it couldn't afford him. As in the old days, he was driven into reliance on outside sources. But, more than this, he chose to spread the load of support to the whole region and make the South his bailiwick. This strengthened his hand in New York, and it increased the chances of survival. And, as in the old days, he needed to legitimize himself and make the new seem old.

However, the step from practical necessity to theoretical respectability was a long and straining one. By the late 1930s, the comforting theory hastily absorbed in his youth had been challenged by a changing profession of sociologists. His peers and juniors were less interested in social involvement
and more involved in particularist scholarly investigation. Grand theory was no longer very respectable, unless it came marked with a European label. The new temper was strenuously positivist, the instinct was to take one thing at a time, the mood was skeptical of the old Hegelian assumptions. The mold into which Odum, with little thought, had poured his mass of statistics and plans, was broken. Few seemed to mind if the pieces were left on the floor. The old obsessions of Darwinian theory with nature, conflict, and geography were deemed less germane than the internal mechanisms of advanced social organization. Odum's nostalgic faith in the inherent strength of the farm began to make little sense to a generation raised on city blocks.

All this helped to determine Odum's fate, but he was little aware of it. He had told his colleagues that regionalism was merely natural, so fundamental that it scarcely needed a theory. He had been puzzled when the General Education Board had not found it equally obvious and refused to fund his Southern Council. He had not understood that the shifting terms of thought implied in the uncertain relativism of modernism were potentially hostile to his thought, his vision of the South. He had been sure that he was on the side of the future, but the future seemed disinclined to sustain him. Others in the South, working in other fields, writing poetry or history, understood the quagmire of intellectual modernity better. They did not necessarily like it more, but they were not to be surprised when it dealt with them harshly.