

# Economic Determinism—A Superconscious Phenomenon

By IRVING M. KASS

EDWIN S. ROSS, in his article on Economic Determinism (in the March-April issue of *LAND AND FREEDOM*), commits a fault common to many advanced economists—that is, confusing philosophy with science. If we discuss Determinism (or anything else for that matter) philosophically, every shade of opinion has substantiation by reasoning from what is “self-evident” truth and using “irrefutable” logic to arrive at separate effects. Now justice and morality are proper subjects for philosophy, and from discussion on these has developed action. The court and church are our evidence of this action. But there are laws which are not just and within the church there is conflict. To get a more infallible guide to action, philosophy must be supplemented by science.

Mr. Ross says that “economics is not a science, like astronomy, that permits of accurate predictions.” This writer attests to the fact that Sidney Armor Reeve\* not only makes economic predictions based on calculations and observations that are like those of astronomy, but he finds them on the astronomical calculations of Johann Kepler, at the very beginning of modern science.

Economics is a science. And Reeve shows scientifically, by collected historical observations, that economic determinism is not a false doctrine.

Reeve observes that topography molds people of different tribal origin into a certain pattern peculiar to latitude, temperature, rainfall, soil, sunlight, etc. The topography of the British Isles, the southern part, has historically demonstrated that whatever tribe lived there has determined the sociological development of the country. Also that people have always had advances forced upon them, against their will or wit; that they refuse to accept willingly a benevolent advance, resisting it unto death. The Magna Carta is signed entirely by French names, but for the benefit of “all Englishmen”; the Magna Carta was never intended to do away with the privileges principally associated with the very persons that signed it. The House of Burghers that resulted from the Carta was so unpopular that for several generations, in order to force attendance, the burghers were fined for not attending. The Parliament that evolved from it met for 300 years without passing a law. Its development into what it is today was the result of what it was forced by circumstances of evolution to become—it never was what was consciously wanted. Charles I miscalculated and abandoned his subjects, and Parliament was forced to establish an orderly government, thus becoming the modern Parliament. This was not the result of a conscious desire; events forced the issues incidental to which Charles I was decapitated.

Today, in the same Britain, we see that in an empire hitherto dependent upon its naval force, the people failed to accept the lesson aviation had taught in the last war until circumstances forced them into the inevitable. But only after they had resisted unto death the change.

Topography determines the pattern of economics at any locality. Economics determines the ethics, politics and morals of the people. At the tail-end of this parade of determinism comes the will and wit of man, the least important consideration in the molding of evolution or economics.

Man is always forced into benevolent evolutionary changes against his own conscious will. He fights to the death any change from old to new régimes.

We as a people were 87 per cent by count determined to remain at peace in 1938, and every politician from local assembly to senate voted neutrality. We struggled to stay with the old system—but it was not to be so. We are at war because we have no method that works in *practice* to evolve without the resistance of war. Wilson was committed to peace, but we had war, and democracy was advanced by the deposing of the Kaiser and the Tsar.

Lincoln was committed to Union, and said on eight important occasions that slavery was a small price to pay for Union. More than a year after the Civil War was engaged the North was returning escaped slaves to their “owners” back over the line. The Emancipation was signed to wean English sympathy to the Northern cause. England had her fleet off shore, Russia stood off New England with a fleet and a world war was imminent, when Lincoln in one diplomatic stroke gained favorable English opinion and united differing local political shades of thought behind his prosecution of the war. After the war Emancipation passed Congress by only four votes. Today we recognize that the greatest democratic advance this country has thus far made was to end “ownership” of man by man. But the act was never performed for that purpose; it was forced upon us.

Science is the rule for practice and can have no truck with philosophy. If we want people to listen to our reasoning that land ownership is a hangover from slavery, we must be able to demonstrate our own understanding by the accuracy of scientific calculations on sociological and economic energetics. We must be able to predict from accurately and carefully assembled data events that will be useful for the people to know, something they can use as a guide in their affairs, as they now use astronomy to tell them when to plow and how to steer their ships and airplanes; as they now use modern meteorology, with comprehension as to limitation, as to when to hang their wash and remove their winter underwear.

I agree with Mr. Ross' conclusion to promote Georgean economics, but to get something done we must use science, not philosophy. A thousand scientists will conclude from a set of experiments identical theory for action. No two Georgeists can precisely agree on action, although they already agree on theory.

I therefore ask that Georgeists take note of science as a basis for action and proceed along this line. We will then be able to announce events that are going to happen—events that economic energy have already made inexorable and uncontrollable by the will or wit of man.

We are now in a social convulsion that began in 1930 and will last until 1970. One part of this convulsion is the present resistance of man to a benevolent change that will eventuate at the above later date, this resistance resulting in the human friction called war. One inexorable result will be a United Nations. Our modern communications system has made this inevitable. It makes no difference that we do not want it now, did not want it when Wilson first created it, and that the present League of Nations is as disgregated as was the old House of Burghers. We will get a United Nations governed by a League with arms and teeth.

As a demonstration of accuracy I propose that we predict complete Prohibition, fully enforced, by 1956. Modern machinery becoming more powerful will demand sobriety or grave disaster. Several such disasters will force opinion towards Prohibition (abhorrent to the writer). This is a scientifically demonstrable calculation. The force is beyond my will or wit. It is Superconscious.

\* See my article on Reeve in the January-February *LAND AND FREEDOM*.