

Over the course of time, History, like other disciplines of study, has evolved. Additionally, like other disciplines of study, leaders in the field have often dismissed the evolutionary forms in a given discipline. This resistance stems from many factors, but the most important is reliance on earlier methods that gravitate around pre-determined conclusions. Charles Beard was a historian, like Joseph Turner, who understood that for history to be fully understood, one needed to study facts surrounding and leading up to a specific point rather than just the study of individual facts themselves in a vacuum. As both Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson have concluded, history is anything but objective. So, what is the appropriate method to approach historical research? Beard believes history ought to be analyzed and studied in light of the time at which the historian is studying, using their experiences, observations, and personal perspectives to formulate their interpretation of events while investigating the occurrences that led up to a given point which to Beard, meant an Economic Determinism Interpretation, or the individuals place in society, both as a measure of wealth and property holding, which determined many of the political outcomes that have been studied, including the formulation of the Constitution and law.

To Beard, American historical research has predominantly revolved around three schools of interpretation. The first is associated with Bancroft, who “sees in the course of our development the working out of a higher will than that of man.”¹ In this interpretation, Bancroft appeals to the idea of “Manifest Destiny,” in which all will and occurrences are that of something greater than the man himself and are a result of the divine.

¹ Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913) P. 1

Beard addressed the second school of historical interpretation as the Teutonic, which credited the achievements of “the English-speaking peoples to the peculiar genius of the Germanic Race.”² Beard explains that the Teutonic interpretation relied heavily on its beliefs that the world had been mainly liberated by the German race of Roman and British cultural influence to make way for the free governments developed and popularized in America at the behest of Germanic peoples who have come to settle.

The third school of historical interpretation was the Impartial Interpretation, which Beard interpreted as the critical interpretation of resources and an “impartial presentation of related facts.”³ This is the interpretation I have addressed in my thesis, which classifies and catalogs historical occurrences but does not analyze the cause of such events.

All of these interpretations held value to Beard but begged for completion. As Beard has stated, much of History has been a political analysis, but it did not address the provenance, or the specific class of each citizen analyzed. This is why Beard sought heavily to study history in an Economic Determinist Interpretation. Attention has often been paid to state boundaries and North and South sectional lines. At the same time, the economic interpretations have been primarily neglected when, in fact, the economic situations and relationships that crossed these very sectional lines were important material that held equal weight to the history of America.⁴ The neglect of studying history from the economic standpoint mainly had its origins in the grassroots historical approach of previous which had often not given the economic approach the time of day as it was tedious and

² Beard, Economic Interpretation, P. 2

³ Beard, Economic Interpretation, P. 3

⁴ Beard, Economic Interpretation, P. 6

cumbersome compared to writing about practical information that has been heavily studied and heavily used such as statutes and diplomatic logs, often done so with superficiality.⁵

Through Beard's historical interpretation of economic determinism, his constitutional law analysis shows the same deficiencies as early historical research. It hints at the juristic nature of the origin of the Constitution because it lacks the most elementary study and essential factors, such as "having no reference to the interest or advantage of any particular group or class."⁶ When Beard looked at Bancroft's optimistic interpretation of the Constitution, he saw it lacking major components, again, specifically in the provenance of the creators of the Constitution and with the lack of their personal economic situation and interests. He also noted that the study of Constitutional history makes very little mention of the class or classed struggle that led to its formation. Beard was critical of this because it only told a partial story, which about the Constitution is a disservice as it is supposed to be a document for the people and authorized by the people. This was problematic because "the people" which it governs applies to everyone but only benefitted the propertied class. The people who drafted the constitution accounted for a very small percentage of the population, likely wealthy landowners. Therefore, these individuals deserve an economic deterministic evaluation to improve our understanding of the Constitution and fully understand their deeper goals and agendas.

⁵ Beard, Economic Interpretation, P. 7

⁶ Beard, Economic Interpretation, P. 10

Beard also mentioned James Madison's illuminating "masterly statement of the theory of economic determinism in politics"⁷ and how Madison forwardly states that the Constitution is meant to retain the material interests of those invested and that "class and group divisions based on property lie at the basis of modern government; and politics and constitutional law are inevitably reflex of these contending interests."⁸

In summary, Beard sought to define a school of historical interpretation that would answer questions beyond the simple regurgitation of basic facts. Through Economic determinism, he explained how a historian might gain a further understanding of why something happened rather than objectively listing what has happened. It is through the interpretation of history with the economic determinism perspective that we may realize how and why we got to where we are. In terms of the Constitution, rather than relying on the faith of previous historical regurgitations of simple facts alluding to the betterment and general welfare of society through abstract justice as the guiding light for our leaders, we may realize that the "impelling motive in both cases was the economic advantages which the beneficiaries expected would accrue to themselves first, from their action."⁹ Through economic determinism, the new history school, we can remove the guise of "social welfare" and truly realize the goals of our leaders, past, present, and future.

⁷ Beard, Economic Interpretation, P. 15

⁸ Beard, Economic Interpretation, P. 16

⁹ Beard, Economic Interpretation, P. 18