

1974-03-11: [CLASS] Quandaries of Status & Estate in 18th Century

Play with ways of dividing up the 2nd and 3rd estates so as to make any estate cohesion undesirable, let alone unmanageable. Think of quandaries.

–For a nobleman (usually *cour/Parlement*) who had invested heavily and become a big time industrial proprietor, what meaning could his "feudal" and territorial dignity have anymore?

–For a bourgeois who had just gone over the million mark in later 1700s and was in an early noble stage, what (dis)advantages to him for having changed status from big fish in an inferior pond to small fish status in a superior one?

–For old robe which had got nobility via office, what was the use of keeping that office if its annual return of 2% compared so unfavorably with *rentes* (6%) and business (10%)?

–How preciously could *hobereaux* guard himself against derogation, and so keep himself poor, when court nobles were getting into big business and reaping vast profits?

–Is there a division between Robe and Wealth lines to noble status which would hold up statistically, and what would be the curve of their related vitality? One guesses that wealth line (being *secrétaire du roi*, z.B.) was the more lively, and the "official" line less so, at the end of the 18th century.

–Go thru normal causal relations, and as wealth leads to nobility, & reverse the direction to see if the paradigm of values inherent in the legalized class structure was not becoming anomalous vis-à-vis social realities.

–For example, were not the very attitudes of older nobility that disdained intellectual pursuits now working to make ignorance a true sign of non-nobility by the 18th century paradigm?

–The new basis of stable family power was not the landed estate, with its seignorial function (as in medieval times), which laws of inheritance had zealously guarded; and perhaps not even of family office (as of 17th & early 18th centuries), for those were *immeubles* only by a fiction; but family wealth, which would be basis of capitalistic investment and of proper upbringing of sons for office wherever but suited. What had to be protected at costs was family wealth: the inherited control of land and office carrying public power was easily dispensed with in the Revolution, if inherited control via private succession to wealth remained, for it could work privately to have public power.

–If you gather enough anomalies of status O& estate in pre-revolutionary times to make a big bouquet, and in functionalist terms can posit survival of the powerful if they have certain guarantees, no matter against how many privileges sacrificed, then the shift of paradigm is reasonable from the point of view of self-interest as well as from that of class interests in conflict.

–Yet another way of putting it: is there less sense of security in the bourgeois who hasn't quite made it, or the noble who is beginning to lose grip on means to live nobly—and, to resolve this would the noble rather discard *dérogance* and recoup his fortune or let himself be legally superior but in style of life be inferior to the non-noble?

Apply the psychology of the social skidder to French nobility.