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CONTROVERSY ON THE *NOBLESSE* *COMMERÇANTE* BETWEEN ABBÉ COYER AND CHEVALIER D'ARCQ

By Kiyoji KISAKI*

I The Background of the Problem

i. Introduction

In the beginning of 1756 an anonymous booklet entitled *La noblesse commerçante* consisting of about 200 pages in 12° was put on the market in Paris.¹⁾ As the title implies, the book, written by Abbé Coyer, demanded that nobles should be engaged in commerce. His opinion was soon refuted by another booklet entitled *La noblesse militaire* also consisting of about 200 pages in 12°. The anonymous author of this work was Chevalier d'Arcq. From that time on, the controversy began to spread and within the same year 1756 *La noblesse commerçante* went through several editions. By 1759 the problem of whether or not nobles should be engaged in commerce was discussed, as far as we know, in more than twenty books, pamphlets and periodicals.

It must be admitted at the outset, however, that these arguments including those of the above two authors, were by no means of a high level either as political, economic, or social theories; these writers could never rank with Montesquieu, Rousseau, Quesnay, etc. But the fact that *La noblesse commerçante* did not only go through several editions but also gave birth to more than twenty other writings will allow us to judge that the arguments for and against the commercial activities of the nobles were one of the utmost concerns of the intellectuals in the middle of the 1750's. This was the period between Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des loix* (1748) and Quesnay's *Tableau économique* (1758) and it was also when the following works were published: *Encyclopédie* (Vol. I, 1751) by Diderot and d'Alembert, *Siècle de Louis XIV* by Voltaire (1751), *Elémens du commerce* by Forbonnais (1754), *Essai sur la nature du commerce en général* by Cantillon (1755), *Discours sur l'inégalité parmi les hommes* by Rousseau (1755), *Code de la nature* by Morelli (1755), *L'ami des hommes* by Mirabeau (1756) and *De l'esprit* by Helvétius (1758). Obviously, this decade which produced these important works is noteworthy especially for the formation of modern political, economic and social theories.

The noisy controversy on *La noblesse commerçante*, which was made in the shade of a host of great works, is almost forgotten today. To the eyes enclosed in the commercial society of today, the controversy of whether the nobles should be engaged in commerce or not may at first sight appear out of date. It would not be difficult, however, to understand

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1) Refer to the next section as to the details of the literature.

that the subject involves such complex problems as are inseparably linked with the politic, the economic, the social, and the ethic (*moeurs*). Therefore, the survey of the controversy will provide us with a certain means to comprehend an important aspect of the social thought, or the general spirit, in the 1750's in France.

However, we are not going to trace the entire body of the controversy. In this paper an emphasis is placed only on the controversy between Coyer and d'Arcq. To begin with, it will be convenient to make a bibliographical survey, and then to sketch both some aspects of the prohibition of the commerce of the nobles and the general character of the opinions which supported the prohibition.

ii. Bibliographical survey

We are going to list up all the editions of all the writings which took part in the controversy, as far as we have confirmed in our research. The list will make it easy to grasp the public opinions of the age and, at the same time, serve as a starting point of further bibliographical research.

The different editions of *La noblesse commerçante* by Coyer will be shown first. The parentheses at the bottom of each title show the pages and the location of the book. Those whose locations are not shown have not yet been identified by us. The abbreviations which indicate the locations are as follows: GKL=Goldsmith-Kress Library Microfilm (Ryukoku University), BF=Burt Franklin Collection (Hitotsubashi University), T=Tezuka Library (Otaru College of Commerce), Schelle=Bibliothèque de G. Schelle (Otaru College of Commerce), and HR (Hitotsubashi University Rare Books).²⁾

- 1) *La noblesse commerçante*. A Londres, et se trouve à Paris Chez Duchesne, Libraire, rue S. Jacques, au-dessous de la Fontaine[sic] S. Benoît[sic], au Temple du Goût. m. dcc. lvi. (141 p. GKL-9145.4).
- 2) *La noblesse commerçante*. A Londres, et se trouve à Paris. Chez Duchesne, Libraire, rue saint[sic] Jacques, au-dessous de la Fontaine saint[sic] Benoît, au Temple du Gout[sic]. m. dcc. lvi. (117 p. BF).
- 3) *La noblesse commerçante*. A Londres, et se trouve à Paris, Chez Duchesne, Libraire, rue S. Jacques, au-dessous de la fontaine[sic] S. Benoît[sic], au Temple du Goût, m. dcc. lvi. (215 p. GKL-9118, T, HR).
- 4) *La noblesse commerçante*, A Londres, Chez Fletcher Gyles, dans Holborn. m. dcc. lvi. (202 p. GKL-9117).
- 5) *La noblesse commerçante*. Par M. l'Abbé Coyer. Nouvelle édition. A Londres, et se trouve à Paris, Chez Duchesne, Libraire, rue S. Jacques, au-dessous de la Fontaine S. Benoît, au Temple du Goût, m. dcc. lvi (215 p. GKL-9119, 9145.5).
- 6) *La noblesse commerçante* (215 p. BF. The letters and the design on the title page are quite the same as reference (5) but the type-setting is different to some extent).

2) The author thanks the libraries of Ryūoku University, Hitotsubashi University and Otaru College of Commerce for their aid concerning the access to the related literature.

3) DEPITRE, E., Le système et la querelle de la Noblesse Commerçante (1756-1759), *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 6^e année, 1913. t. II, pp. 137-138.

Besides these, Depitre listed four different editions³⁾ which do not correspond to either of the above six. In addition, another three kinds of editions consisting of 216 pages are listed in the catalogue of the *Bibliothèque nationale*. If both of these two listings are correct, it follows that at least thirteen editions appeared in 1756. At any rate, more precise research will be necessary.

The translations of the book are as follows.

- 1) *Der Handelnde Adel Dem der Kriegerische Adel entgegen gesetzt wird, Zwey Abhandlungen über die Frage: Ob es der Wohlfarth des Staats gemäß sey, daß der Adel Kaufmannschaft treibe?* aus dem Französischen übersetzt und mit einer Abhandlung über eben diesen Gegenstand versehen von Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi Königl. Großbritannischen und Churfürstl. Braunschweig=Lüneb. Bergrathe und Ober=Policey=Commissario. Göttingen Im Verlag der Wittwe Vandenhöck 1756. (288 p. GKL-9120).
- 2) *La nobiltà commerciante* del Signore Abate Coyer Traduzione dal Francese di Giovanni de Carniel Coll' Introduzione, ed alcune Note illustrative dello stesso Traduttore. In Firenze MDCCLXXIII Apresso Allegrini, Pisoni, e Comp. Con Approvazione. (224 p. BF).
- 3) *La nobleza comerciante*. Traduccion del tratado que escribió en Frances el Abate Coyer, hecha para la utilidad de la Real sociedad económica de los amigos del pais de Mallorca, con un discurso preliminar, y varias notas. Por don Jacobo María de Spinoza y Cantabrana... Madrid, I. Ibarra 1781. (iii-Lxxxv-217 p.).

The above reference (1) is a German translation coupled with that of d'Arcq's *La noblesse militaire*. The translation is worth noting because of the two facts: that it was published as early as in 1756 and that it included Justi's thesis in addition. The original book was translated into German, Italian and Spanish but there was no sign of publication of the English translation. This absense may be quite natural in a sense but the fact may well be noted.

Next, the editions of d'Arcq's *La noblesse militaire* are as follows.

- 1) *La noblesse militaire, opposée à la noblesse commerçante; ou le patriote françois*. A Amsterdam. M. DCC. LVI. (iv-213 p. GKL-9145.1).
- 2) *La noblesse militaire, ou le patriote françois*. M DCC LVI. (v-210 p. GKL-9138).
- 3) *La noblesse.....* (v-210 p. T. The letters on the title pages are the same as reference (2) but the design is different).
- 4) *La noblesse militaire, opposée à la noblesse commerçante: ou le patriote françois*. A Amsterdam. M. DCC. LVI. (201 p. BF).
- 5) *La noblesse militaire, ou le patriote françois*. Troisieme[sic] edition[sic]. M. DCC. LVI. (v-210 p. GLK-9139).

The one referred to by Depitre does not correspond to either of these five.⁴⁾ It follows in that case that there were at least six kinds of editions.

Finally, the editions of Coyer's *Développement et défense du système de la noblesse com-*

4) *Ibid.*, p. 138.

merçante are as follows.

- 1) *Développement et défense du système de la noblesse commerçante*. Par M. l'Abbe Coyer. Première[sic] Partie. A Amsterdam; et se trouve à Paris, Chez Duchesne, Libraire, rue S. Jacques, au-dessous de la Fontaine S. Benoît, au Temple du Goût. M. DCC. LVII. (2 parties en 1 vol. 1^e partie 152 p., 2^e partie 206 p. GKL-9241, T).

- 2) *Développement...* (BF, Same as the above except the design of the title page).

In addition, in 1758 the three books cited above were published in one volume.

Trois pieces sur cette question, les nobles doivent-ils commercer? I. La noblesse commerçante, par l'Abbé Coyer. II. La noblesse militaire, par le Chevalier d'Arcq. III. Développement et défense du système de la noblesse commerçante, par l'Abbé Coyer, suivant la copie de Paris. M DCC LVIII. (I. 100 p., II. 84 p., III. 180 p. GKL-9363.5).

The item I above is mentioned as a new edition and the items I and III are Duchesne editions. The item II is a fourth edition, but its publisher is not mentioned. After all, these three do not correspond to either edition previously mentioned.

Next we are going to list all the writings of other disputants besides Coyer and d'Arcq. The listing is in sequence of the years of publication. Within the same year it is in alphabetical order of the names of the authors.

- 1) *Année littéraire, ou suite des lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*, Amsterdam; et Paris, 1756, t. I, II, III.
- 2) [BARTOUILLE OU BARTHOUIL, abbé], *Lettre à l'auteur de la Noblesse commerçante*. A Bordeaux, le 1 Juin 1756 (40 p. GKL-9111).
- 3) [BILLARDON DE SAUVIGNY, Louis-Edme], *L'une et l'autre, ou la noblesse commerçante et militaire. Avec des réflexions sur le commerce et les moyens de l'encourager*. A Mahon. 1756. (134 p.).
- 4) [CAHUSAC?], *Le citoyen philosophe, ou examen critique de la Noblesse militaire*. Dédié à M. l'Abbé Coyer. 1756. (51 p. GKL-9114).
- 5) *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, 1756.
- 6) [GARNIER, Jean-Jacques], *Le commerce remis à sa place; Réponse d'un pédant de Collège aux novateurs politiques, adressée à l'auteur de la Lettre à M. F.* M. DCC. LVI. (78 p. [misprinted as 87]. GKL-9127, 9145.10).
- 6^{bis}) *Journal encyclopédique*, 1756.
- 7) [LA COSTE, Jean de], *Lettre de M. D*** à M. D*** au sujet de la Noblesse commerçante; où l'on démontre la facilité de remédier à la dépopulation dont on se plaint, tant à l'égard de la France que de nos Colonies, & spécialement de la Louisianne: et les moyens de rendre le commerce du Royaume plus florissant que par le passé & supérieur à celui d'Angleterre. Avec quelques observations relatives au Memoire des Protestans*. M. DCC. LVI. (74 p. GKL-9145.11).
- 8) [MARCHAND DE BURBURE, Jean-Henri], *La noblesse commercable ou ubiquiste*. A Paris, De l'Imprimerie de la Noblesse commerçante. M. DCC. LVI. (93 p. GKL-9129).

- 8a) [—————], *La noblesse commerçable ou ubiquiste*. A Amsterdam. 1756, (111 p. GKL-9128).
- 9) *Mémoires de Trévoux*. 1756. mars et avril.
- 10) PARLEMENT DE GRENOBLE, *Projet d'édit pour donner à la noblesse du Royaume la faculté de commercer en gros sans déroger*. 1756.
- 11) [PÉZEROLS, abbé de], *Le conciliateur, ou la noblesse militaire et commerçante; en réponse aux objections faites par l'auteur de la Noblesse militaire*. Par M. l'Abbé de***. A Amsterdam, et se trouve à Paris, Chez Duchesne, Libraire, rue S. Jacques au-dessous de la Fontaine S. Benoît, au Temple du Goût. 1756. ([5]-156 p. GKL-9132).
- 12) [ROCHON DE CHABANNES, M.-A.-J.] *La noblesse oisive*. M. DCC. LVI. (23 p. GKL-9135).
- 12a) [—————], *La noblesse oisive*. A Paris, De l'Imprimerie de la Noblesse commerçante. M. DCC. LVI. (23 p. GKL-9136).
- 13) [SÉRAS, P.], *Le commerce ennobli*. A Bruxelles, 1756. (40 p. GKL-9145.14).
- 13a) [—————], *Le commerce ennobli*. A Paris. M. DCC. LVI. (42 p. GKL-9140).
- 14) [VÉRON DE FORBONNAIS, François], *Lettre à M. F. ou examen politique des prétendus inconvénients de la faculté de commercer en gros, sans déroger à sa noblesse*. (1756. 87 p. GKL-9145, 9145.8).
- 15) *Journal économique*. 1757. Jan.
- 16) [ALÈS DE CORBET, Pierre-Alexandre d'], *Nouvelles observations sur les deux systèmes, de la noblesse commerçante ou militaire*. Amsterdam; et Paris, 1758. (paginé 313–470. Depitre listed one with vii-152 pages).
- 17) [DUREY DE MEYNIERES, M^{me} BELOT, Octave-Guichard], *Observations sur la noblesse et le tiers-état*. Par Madame***. A Amsterdam, Chez Arkstée & Merkus. M. DCC. LVIII. (xxiv-113 p. GKL-9395).
- 18) [LA HAUSSE, de], *La noblesse telle qu'elle doit être; ou moyen de l'employer utilement pour elle-même et pour la patrie*. A Amsterdam, et se trouve à Paris, Chez Augustin-Martin Lottin, l'aîné, Libraire & Imprimeur, rue S. Jacques, près S. Yves, au Coq. M. DCC. LVIII. (viii-232 p. GKL-9363.9).
- 19) [anon], *Réflexions sur la Noblesse commerçante*. A Lampsaque. 1759. (23 p. GKL-9482.7).
- 20) [VENTO DE PENNES, Marquis de], *La noblesse ramenée à ses vrais principes, ou examen du Développement de la noblesse commerçante*. A Amsterdam, et se trouve à Paris, Chez Desaint & Saillant, Libraire, rue S. Jean de Beauvais. M. DCC. LIX. (iv-307 p. GKL-9482.9).

Another listed below seems to exist, which we have not yet seen.

FONTANIEU, *Recueil factice formé par Fontanieu de pièces sur la noblesse commerçante, publiées de 1756 à 1759*. 3 vol. in-4°.

iii. Prohibition of commerce of nobles

It is generally believed that the nobles in the *Ancien Régime* were prohibited by the law

from engaging in commercial activities and that those who violated the law were deprived of the title. This is however far from correct as long as the eighteenth century is concerned.

The origin of the law depriving the title—commonly called *loi de dérogeance*—is said to date back to the fifteenth or the fourteenth century. The original object of this edict was to keep all the nobles in arms. It goes without saying that the first duty of the nobles was military service. However, as the throne was stabilized and peace maintained, the nobles were apt to forget their first duty. If a war had then broken out, the nobles would not have hurried to the king. It was to avoid such a dangerous situation that the edict was issued. It must be noted, therefore, that the object of the edict was to bind the nobles to military service, having nothing to do with despising commercial activities.

Moreover, the edict, instead of being strengthened since then, tended to be relaxed. During the period from the seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century, for example, the royal ordinance to the effect that the nobles could be engaged in commerce without being deprived of the title was issued more than once. Especially, Richelieu was ardent on this point. However, the commerce in question was limited to marine commerce and to wholesale trade. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily clear whether the issue concerned is profit making activities in general or commerce in the narrow sense of the word. According to Marcel Marion, it is public opinions, not the law, that decided as to what occupation should be allowed or excluded.⁵⁾ Glass industry and mine exploitation were openly approved, and the *financiers* were sometimes titled-persons. To be appointed a domestic of a king or a prince was even a big honor to small nobles. Baron Montesquieu was assiduous in winegrowing and saling of the product.

Some nobles in Bretagne and in Artois were engaged even in retail sale. "When nobles in this district want to be engaged in commerce, they make the title *sleep*, that is to say, they never lose the title but only stop enjoying the privilege of the noble as long as their commerce continues. They take back the title when leaving the commerce, without being demanded to obtain a letter of recovery.⁶⁾" Therefore, if they so desired, they could be engaged practically in almost any commercial activity—except such a "mean" activity as peddling.⁷⁾

It should also be noted that François I himself, who was one of the kings to set up the *loi de dérogeance*, began at the same time to sale extensively the title of nobility. The system remained until the end of the *Ancien Régime*. One may say in conclusion that the merchants who succeeded in commercial activities would rise to the status of the noble, and that some nobles continued a certain kind of profit-making activity without losing the title, while many, despising commercial activities—or rather such economic activities as were judged by the public opinions to be unbecoming to the nobles—, would not be en-

5) MARION, M., *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, Paris, 1923, p. 396.

6) SAVARY, *Dictionnaire universel du commerce, etc.*, Copenhagen, 1759–65, article: Profession mercantile. This law seems to have been applied less in the cities where foreign trade were more flourishing.

7) Refer also to the following for details. MOUSNIER, R., *Les institutions de la France sous la Monarchie absolue*, t. I, Paris, 1974, pp. 109–111.

gaged in them. Depitre writes, "In spite of the permission or even of the encouragement, commerce, whether wholesale or marine, seems to have always been repugnant to the nobles of the kingdom."⁸⁾

Why then did French nobles have such a dislike to commerce? In England nobody thought it unusual for a brother of a minister to be engaged in a trade.⁹⁾ Why did French nobles, in spite of their poverty, turn their back to commercial activities and perish, their genealogical tables being the only inheritance? It is here difficult to answer the question because it concerns the general spirit of France.

Hereupon, we shall take a general view of Montesquieu's opinion on the commerce of nobles which seems to have provided a strong ground to the prohibition. His theory seems to be a peak of subtle theoretical achievement concerning this subject and consequently serve as a background of the arguments between Coyer and d'Arcq.¹⁰⁾

iv. Montesquieu's theory on commerce of nobles

Montesquieu's theory of commerce appears at a glance to be extremely in favor of it. According to him, "Commerce heals destructive prejudices. It is almost a general rule that, where gentle mores are, there is commerce, and that, where commerce is, there are gentle mores." (XX-1).¹¹⁾ He also says, "The spirit of commerce accompagnies the spirit of simplicity, economy, moderation, labor, wisdom, tranquility, order and rule." (V-6). He divides the commerce into two: *commerce d'économie* and *commerce de luxe*. He considers that the former produces small but continuous profit and is associated with democracy, while the latter produces temporary but large profit and is associated with monarchy. The principle of democracy is virtue. Since democracy must be permeated by simplicity and equality, there will be no room for *commerce de luxe*. On the other hand, the principle of monarchy is honor. As a result it must be permeated by inequality, and so in this State pride, caprice and comfort will make *commerce de luxe* indispensable.

If so, we can not but ask if the spirit of commerce the beautiful characteristics of which were listed above is consistent with the *commerce de luxe*. But the question is somewhat based on our misunderstanding, for the characteristics of the spirit of commerce—simplicity, economy, moderation, labor, wisdom, tranquility, order and rule—did not appear to Montesquieu as splendid as they do to us. He says, "If the spirit of commerce unites the nations, it does not unite the individuals as well. We see that in the nations (Holland)¹²⁾ where men are motivated only by the spirit of commerce, they traffic all the human behaviors and all the moral virtues, and the most trivial things that human

8) DEPITRE, E., *art. cit.*, p. 144. Refer to the following as to how few the nobles were who were engaged in commerce in the last half of the eighteenth century. MOUSNIER, R., *op. cit.*, p. 155. According to Mousnier here, Chateaubriand's father re-established the family by equipping forty-four ships in the period between 1758 and 1775.

9) VOLTAIRE, *Lettres philosophiques*. 1733, lettre no. 10.

10) The great influence of the Montesquieu's opposition to the commerce of nobles is especially emphasized by CARCASSONNE, E., *Montesquieu et le problème de la constitution française au XIII^e siècle*, Paris 1927, p. 232.

11) For the quotations in the following from *De l'Esprit des loix*, only the numbers of the volumes and of the chapters will be given.

12) Original reference.

beings seek for are done or given there in exchange for money. The spirit of commerce produces within human beings a certain sentiment of exact justice, opposed to brigandage on one side, and on the other to a moral virtue which does not necessarily lead them to pursue rigidly their own interest and drives them to leave it for the sake of the interest of others. Total privation of commerce produces to the contrary brigandage which Aristotle counted among the ways of acquisition. The spirit of brigandage is never opposed to a certain kind of moral virtue. For example, hospitality, quite rare in commercial nations, can be found admirably in brigandish peoples." (XX-2).

Montesquieu approves the function of the spirit of commerce in international relations, while he frowns at the consequences of the working of the spirit between individuals in a nation. It is because the spirit of commerce is in a way the spirit of cash account, where profit is the only principle. Therefore, Montesquieu restricts the range of operation of the spirit within the world of merchants, trying to prevent it from spreading among general public. In monarchy, though the spirit of commerce may be predominant among merchants engaged in *commerce de luxe*, the mainstay of the nation should be free from the infiltration of the spirit. Thus, a commercial republic may exist but never a commercial monarchy. In a monarchy, moral values which can never be the object of buying or selling should tower high solemnly and the spirit of honor which ignores private profit should prevail to its full extent. Montesquieu thus recognizes the indispensability of *commerce de luxe* to give life to the monarchy but at the same time he attempts to limit the commercial activity only to the outskirts of the State, preventing the spirit of commerce from eroding the spirit of honor.

It is now easy to understand Montesquieu's antipathy against the commercial activities of nobles. According to him, the aristocracy is the essential prop and stay of the monarchy. He says, "There will be no nobles without a monarch, nor a monarch without nobles." (II-4). For the noble does not only support the monarchy which is apt to fall to despotism but intervenes in a clash between the monarch and the people. In other words, the role of the class of the nobles consists in a political duty, that is, to make the monarchy moderate to maintain liberty.

Therefore, "it is against the spirit of commerce that nobles are engaged in commerce in monarchy." (XX-21). It is because "commerce is an occupation of equal men" (V-8), and also because, as was previously explained, the spirit of counting contradicts with the nature of the noble. On the other side, "it is against the spirit of monarchy that nobles are engaged in commerce in it" (XX-21), because love of honor and concern for interest do not coexist. The natural profession of nobles is to sacrifice their blood and their property for the sake of the State. This is what has made up the glory of France. If commerce is allowed to nobles, they will forget their first duty, devoting themselves entirely to pursuing wealth. This means the dissolution of the aristocracy and then the collapse of the monarchy itself. Fortunately in France, merchants can enter into the class of nobles. This will motivate them to become more assiduous in their occupation. "I do not examine if it is a good thing to give in this way to wealth the value of virtue: there exists such a government where this method can be of great use." (XX-22). With

a smile we approve of this painful confession of Montesquieu. He saw already well the political implication of commercial activities in a State. Thus he can not but support the merchant class who makes the country rich, and approve the system of ennoblement of merchants which produces favorable effects on their activities. Moreover, traditional nobles are too wrecked economically and politically to maintain themselves without personal as well as material support of this new rising class. However, Montesquieu, as a noble, tries persistently to preserve the value of the noble as distinct from the spirit of commerce.

Thus, while Montesquieu introduces all the consequences of commercial activities—both the wealth produced and the men who produce it—into the monarchy, he refuses to accept the commercial activities and the spirit which they accompany. The merchant class is not considered by him as an independent class which supports the monarchy from inside, but as a source of its nutrition which is kept in the outskirts of the kingdom or as a recruiting center for new nobles who will fortify the State.¹³⁾

II Coyer's *La noblesse commerçante*

Gabriel-François Coyer was born in Franche-Comté on November 18, 1707.¹⁴⁾ Having received Jesuitic education in the district, he served for eight years as a teacher of humanities. Then he came to Paris and was engaged in 1741 in educating Turenne's son. In 1743 he was appointed head-priest of cavalry, and served in a few wars. After a while he left the position and began writing. When a serious slip of the pen compelled him to flee from his country in 1761, he travelled to Switzerland where he met Voltaire.¹⁵⁾ In 1763 he was invited into the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Nancy. Then he travelled to various countries in Europe, and in London he was recommended to be a member of the Royal Society. He died on July 18, 1782.

He wrote more than forty books and his complete works were published after his death. Among them, *La noblesse commerçante*, which is discussed in this paper, *Bagatelle morales* in 1754 and a novel entitled *Chinki* in 1768 seem to have been especially well-known. In this last work he criticizes bitterly the abuses of French guilds under the guise of a Cochinchinese story and the book was welcomed by some economists. Turgot later called it "a marvelous work."¹⁶⁾ The *Ephémérides*, organ of Physiocrats, recommended this novel in a series of articles.¹⁷⁾

Therefore, he was a pretty well known, if not prominent, author. He seems to have

13) Refer to the following for the details of Montesquieu's theory of commerce. KISAKI, Kiyoji, *The Formation of Political Economy in France* (in Japanese), Miraisha, 1976.

14) The following was referred to for the personal history of Coyer. LEBRETON-SAUVIGNY, J., *Les idées économiques de l'Abbé Coyer*, Poitiers, 1920.

15) Voltaire called Coyer "the man of esprit and philosophe" (*Siècle de Louis XIV, souvenirs contemporains*). When Coyer was exiled, Voltaire was much worried (Lettres à M. le comte d'Argental, le 1 avril et le 3 avril 1761), but he seems to have been disappointed with Coyer when he actually met the latter.

16) *Œuvres de Turgot et documents le concernant*, par G. SCHELLE, t. V, Paris, 1923, p. 257.

17) *Ephémérides du citoyen*. XI.1768~I.1769.

had a certain association with the *philosophes* of that time. While he embraced an opinion which had something common to the Encyclopédistes and the Physiocrates, Coyer appears to have been independent of the philosophical schools. According to Mr. Takumi Tsuda,¹⁸⁾ in a work of Coyer are the figures of economic statistics which are recorded in an unpublished manuscript written by Gournay. If so, he may have been one of the hidden disciples of this commerce intendant who had died to a great loss to the world without any acknowledged successors. Coyer can never be said, however, to have developed Gournay's philosophy, at least from the viewpoint of economics. Nevertheless, the plan of the French economic development presented in *La noblesse commerçante* and in *Développement et défense du système de la noblesse commerçante* and his argument against the guild for the freedom of trade which is developed in his novel *Chinki* may safely be regarded as a succession to what Gournay has presented, and at the same time as a premonition of what Turgot, as controller general of finances, would put into legislations.

Before arriving at such conclusions, however, we will have to survey Coyer's opinion on *noblesse commerçante* in his own works.

As to his literary style, individual sentences do not lack clearness but as a whole the book lacks logical consistency with many repetitions and with many arguments scattered in disorder. Nonetheless, he often exhibits subtle and vigorous talent in observation of the reality, which makes contrast with d'Arcq's vain eloquence.

Abbé Coyer begins by criticising Marquis Lassay's opposition to the commerce of nobles.¹⁹⁾

1. The nobles should not be engaged in commerce as in England.—Against this general observation Coyer asks what inconveniences this English system has brought about to England, where brothers of a minister are engaged in commercial activities. "Instead of living an idle, dependent and uneasy life at their elder brother's charge, they made themselves rich by increasing public wealth. And their sons, by the wealth they inherited, become even more qualified to assume high positions." (p. 8)²⁰⁾ Now the impoverishment of most of the French nobles is widely recognized. The problem is not "those brilliant nobles living in palaces but those obscure nobles who saw the castles of their ancestors crumbling down day by day, without being able to repaire them." (p. 9). Is commerce not the only help to these poor nobles? The general public of today do not look down upon commerce, owing to the example of England and to the light of philosophy which has destroyed prejudices. Under the feudal government the nobles did not need commerce. For the noble owned all property, securing the subordination of the

18) TSUDA, Takumi, "On Cantillon's manuscript *Essai*", *Keizai Kenkyu*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Oct., 1978) p. 330.

19) The thesis by Lassay is the following. LASSAY, Armand de Madaillan de Lesparre, marquis de, *Réflexions sur différentes question, Marcure de France, décembre 1754*, t. II, pp. 86 et seq. Since Marquis Lassay was born in 1652 and died in 1738, the thesis was posthumous.

20) The quotations from Coyer's *La noblesse commerçante* are from the following edition. *La noblesse commerçante*, A Londres, et se trouve à Paris, Chez Duchesne, etc., M. DCC. LVI, 215 p. This is the reference (3) previously listed.

public. Swords settled everything. Under the system of liberty, however, commerce becomes necessary.

2. Nobles supply many officers, who alone compose the greatest part of the military force. The system of the *noblesse commerçante* would result in the curtailment of officers.—Coyer's answer to this problem is simple. Sons of the nobles far outnumber the posts of officers. Indeed, even after a war has begun, many nobles are unsuccessful in securing posts. Even if officers are insufficient, a large number of sons of the nobles will be released by closing seminaries.

3. The nobles themselves have saved France in crises.—Coyer agrees with this. However, did those who came from bourgeoisie not contribute as much to the State? In addition, can military commanders not render distinguished services in the battle fields simply because they have brothers who are owners of merchant ships or who are managers of factories?

4. Nobles should be brought up since childhood following their fathers' example as soldiers and under their instructions.—Coyer rather laughs at such education. Sons of the nobles "learned from the childhood to rail, quarrel, insult everybody except nobles, manipulate weapons, shoot at lookers-on of a near-by hunting ground, tread on barley fields, cripple peasants and confound right with force. In this way, we acquired the soul of a tiger and so here we are educated perfectly for the sake of wars." (p. 18-19). Moreover, "what to do with our swords when we have no other enemy than hunger?" (p. 19). Contribution to wars is not the only contribution we are due to the nation. Commercial activities need neither king's favor, intrigues, mean behaviors nor crimes. Here, "people depend only on themselves, their labor and industry." (p. 20).

5. If commerce is allowed to nobles, they will choose the easiest way and indulge in pleasure.—Against this statement, Coyer answers that commerce is never an easy way. A fortune can not be made at a stroke within a day. The life of a merchant is quite different from that of a soldier, who is showy, has leisure and desires only to enjoy it, while a marchant is sober, works without rest and endeavors to accumulate. Why do fathers who send their sons to a monastery not send them to commercial world? If they are engaged in commerce, they will still prefer wars. "To take away from the nobles the means of enrichment so as to orient them totally towards wars would very often fail to attain the object. They would remain poor and would not fight. For, in order to fight, horses, weapons and the base of wealth will be necessary." (p. 25).

6. When nobles become merchants, the military spirit which characterizes French nobles will disappear and there will be only merchants and no soldiers.—Coyer answers that all the nobles will not become merchants. "Why do people suppose that nobles would be more constant in the occupation which they would have taken up only by necessity and by reason? A father who would have decided to become wealthy by carrying our luxurious goods to foreign countries would soon send back to wars his sons whom he would have brought up in the business world. Then his descendants would be soldiers until, by the expenditure for military service or by brilliant profusion which is quite ordinary in this rank, he fell poor again to reestablish themselves by com-

merce." (pp. 28-29).

7. France, which was established by weapons, must be maintained by weapons.—Against this proposition, Coyer repeats that all the nobles will not become merchants. Then he adds, "It is said that this kingdom was established by weapons. I should rather like to be taught by someone that this kingdom was founded by justice." (p. 31). Not only that. "I could demonstrate that, in the present state of Europe, France can be maintained only by commerce; hence, I could conclude that all the nobles should be engaged in commerce." (p. 32). However, truth lies in between. Even if nobles supply men both for military service and for commerce, those who defend the nation will not decrease in number. Although the number of officers necessary is thirty thousand at most, there exist three hundred sixty thousand nobles in the kingdom. Commerce is the only way to save poor nobles who account for the greater part of them.²¹⁾

After criticizing Lassay's opinion in this way, Coyer in turn commends the advantages of the *noblesse commerçante*. Only commerce is the way leading to wealth. Prosperity of London, nay, of commercial cities in France are the examples. Commerce is useful not only for nobles, but also for the nation. "It is the necessity of order that small wheels of individual wealth gear with large wheels of public wealth." (p. 45-46). "The nobles in France is a parasitic group without movement and without action, I could say, without idea." (p. 48). They are doing bad because they are doing nothing. "Is it not a continual stealing from the people to want to live without working? It would be good to keep working all the ranks in the monarchy by any means whatever. But it would be a masterpiece of politics to keep them working usefully." (p. 52).

Then Coyer points out four advantages of the commerce of nobles. Though his enumeration is not logical here again, it will be convenient to follow him for the time being.

1. Enlargement of cultivation.—"Cultivation of the earth is the primary object of legislation." (p. 54). However, in order to increase harvest, nobles must employ labor and "force the land by money." (p. 56). But nobles are generally poor and a great deal of land is in idleness. Wealthy men and *laboureurs propriétaires* cultivate the land well. Poor nobles do not. When nobles are engaged in commerce, cultivation will be enlarged. "Agriculture and commerce always go together at the same pace." (p. 65). Commerce alone can supply funds which are necessary to enlarge farming. "Commerce puts England in the most vigorous action. Agriculture favors the multiplication of livestock, which in turn supplies raw materials for manufacture. This golden chain which has been cut off by the poverty of nobles will be connected again by their commerce, and the land covered with abundant crops will also provide all sorts of goods of the first necessity." (p. 70).

2. Increase in population.—"There is no one but knows that a country is rich in proportion to its population.....Moreover, as everybody knows, a country is powerful

21) Lively description by Coyer of the poverty of nobles in pages 37-39 is excellent.

in proportion to its population.”²²⁾ (p. 71). The reasons for the decrease in the population of France are generally thought to lie in the religion or the system of taxation. Setting these reasons aside, the decrease in the number of nobles is the most salient. Property, bright future and certain luxury are necessary for marriage. These requirements are quite lacking to the sons of the nobles except the eldest. Subsequently younger sons remain unmarried, either to enter monastery or to ruin themselves in dissipation. For nobles, in addition, wives mean a troublesome burden, but for merchants wives are cooperators. Consequently merchants can not but be married. If nobles become engaged in commerce, population will increase and the prestige of the king will be enhanced to an unequalled height.

3. Augumentation of consumption.—The volume of the consumption of goods by poor French nobles is small and even smaller than that by Dutch or English peasants. Luxury will not be defended, but “the luxury law, if necessary, should be aimed at foreign goods which are harmful to ours.....It should be aimed at only such fanciful goods which take up our gold to put it in the foreign hands. I regard as luxury only what will impoverish the State. If silk, gold or diamond were produced and worked in France, coming from the hand of the nature, it would be good to make best use of them.....As to the products of our earth or the manufactured goods in our factories, it is desirable to consume them as much as possible in order to aliment arts and manufactures. Those who hoard are harmful subjects, because they rob the State of the circulation which makes up its life. The same is true with the poor who do not consume.” (pp. 89–91).

4. Enlargement of navigation.—The geographical position of France is suitable for navigation. Further, “What makes a country affluent is not domestic commerce. It only circulates wealth without increasing its mass.” (p. 93). We do not possess a gold mine, but “big commerce is the richest of all the mines.” (p. 94). Nonetheless, French marine commerce is handled by foreign countries. Holland gets a large gains by buying cheap luxurious French goods and by selling dear raw materials necessary for France. England deals with five or six thousand slaves only in her slave trade with Gambia, while France handles no more than six hundred slaves in the trade with entire Guinea. Holland and England are devastating the French colonies and doing even more than that. Nobles who lead an idle life at present must be driven to the sea. There they will acquire seaman-ship and, when a war breaks out, they will render distinguished services as sailors. Mercantile marine is a training center for war ships. Who commands the sea will command all. The oracle of Delphi, “Defend and offend by the walls of wood”, will hold beyond Athens.

Coyer, having discussed the economic and political merits of the *noblesse commerçante*, takes up finally the public opinion which looks down upon commerce. First, Coyer simply rejects Montesquieu’s theory against the *noblesse commerçante* as a dogmatic prej-

22) Because of this statement, Coyer was called a “populationist.” But more emphasis is placed later on money. Though it is doubtful whether a pure populationist can exist in economic theories, at least Coyer is not one.

udice. Next in the similar way as he has refuted Marquis Lassay, he brings up several propositions to criticize them one after another.

1. Does commerce not hurt the honor of the noble?—First of all, neither Lassay nor Montesquieu says that commerce is dishonorable, though they both oppose to the commerce of the nobles. Now then, what is honor? What is the virtue of the noble? Is it superior to the virtue of the merchant? The virtue of the merchant is not a vanity. “If he plays, it is after the application; if he gives himself to pleasure, it is after toil; if he spends, it is with wisdom; if he gives, he has paid his debt; if he introduces the sweetness of the art to his home, he has taken a good care of his family, and his workers do not wait for the payment of their wage.” (p. 120).

2. Did ancient peoples not despise commerce?—Indeed there were such cases, but there also existed contrary cases. As to Rome, “the city where people were interested only in election, artifices or law suits, and the State which wanted to dominate only by weapons, was easily blind to the importance and the dignity of commerce.” (pp. 126–127). Opinions concerning commerce are different from period to period, and so French nobles had better ask themselves about it. However, it should be reminded that in every State commerce has been held in high regard in the most prosperous period. In some cases, nobles were engaged in commerce, while merchants were in military service. Moreover, though it is permitted today to sell such products from one’s own lands as wheat, wine or livestock, why is it to be blamed to buy and sell the products of others? Further, is there a man on the earth who does not transact? “Commerce is the soul of the entire society. An orator sells his eloquence, a writer his spirit, a warrior his blood and a statesman his knowledge. Nobles who do not possess such things to throw into commerce would traffic the fruits of our arts and manufacture.” (p. 139).

3. What glory befitting the noble exists in commerce?—Then, we should ask to the contrary as follows: “Is it better for nobles to crawl on their small territory in obscure vegetation, in contemptuous idleness, and in lethargy as harmful to their families as to the State?” (p. 139). If they do not like small businesses, they had better go to the sea, where there is limitless possibility. Is it not true, indeed, that the American colonies owe their existence to merchants? “Force simply came after. Such is the science of commerce.” (p. 143). Allies are necessary for glory. In order to get allies, money is needed. Money is brought about by commerce. Merchant ships and war ships help each other. The money which our luxury transforms into tableware (*vaisselle*) must be transformed into war vessels (*vaisseaux*). “Money, this tyrant of the world, has enlarged its empire since the use of cannon and firearms. Wars have become the spending of money rather than the spending of human beings.”²³⁾ (p. 151). The iron age is gone and this is the age of money. As sea battles which will command the world increase, money will become more necessary. Therefore, commerce alone is the nerve of the State. “It is not only the life of the peoples but also the health of the State.....The balance of commerce and the balance of power have now become an equivalent.” (pp. 158–159).

23) Refer to (22) above.

4. When nobles are engaged in commerce, what will become of their privileges?—They had better keep their privileges as they are. Nobles might as well have such privileges of “displaying the crest of the family, complaining against the bourgeois who have come to possess those crests, telling stories of your ancestors to those who do not ask them, keeping devotedly that extra first syllable which lengthens your name, bearing a sword as others do, proposing or accepting a duel, maintaining the tax exemption on condition of paying it under a different name, wearing a frock or a veil according to your sex in the noble cloister, in order to attain your salvation as men of high ranks, depriving peasants of crops relentlessly, beating down these good people to death, and being beheaded if necessary instead of being hung in a bourgeois fashion”. (pp. 163–164).

5. Does commerce not derogate the rank of the noble?—In the savage times when only weapons were counted on, commerce was made little of. Then theologians appeared and, fascinated by the philosophy of Aristotle, they, “confounding interest and usury, condemned both.” (p. 167). In this way, commerce was also condemned, and absurd laws came into existence. Moreover, “the *financiers* who carry on commerce of money hold unblemished the pure title of the noble; that is to say, the commerce which impoverishes the State is preferred to the commerce which enriches it.” (p. 168). Agriculture is permitted and so is the manufacture of glass. Then why not the transaction of woollen cloth? The bureau of commerce must be enlarged and nobles must be employed there. No, the ministry of trade and commerce should be established. In London this ministry has produced great diplomats. Diplomats who will have the experience of having served in this new ministry will have abundant practical knowledge and, in the negotiations with foreign countries, they may not conclude such disadvantageous treaties for France as the present ones. To this end, the honor must be given to commerce. Sculptors must carve statues of merchants, and historians must speak out as much about commerce as about wars.

6. Our ancestors were not engaged in commerce.—No. “This is just what makes their descendants so miserable and so useless for their mother land.” (p. 207). They may well examine the nature of commerce before they despise it. It is not by stirring up the ashes of your ancestors that you will find the treasure to accomplish the sacred duty. This is the time that nobles become aware of their serious mission. “The reign of *Louis le Grand* was the century of genius and conquests. May the reign of *Louis le Bien-aimé*²⁴⁾ be the century of philosophy, commerce and happiness!” (p. 215).

The above is the summary of Coyer’s rather disorderly enunciation in *La noblesse commerçante*, to which we are going to add some comments.

First of all, the given condition for Coyer was the stern reality of the decline of France. This decline is grasped through the following four points: 1) economic decline, 2) decrease in population, 3) defeats in the wars, and 4) impoverishment and idleness of the nobles.

The economic decline can be divided into two, i.e., the decline of cultivation and that

24) *Louis le Bien-aimé* is a nickname for Louis XV.

of trade. As to cultivation, Coyer says that the existence of idle land is salient and that the greater part of it belongs to nobles. The existence of the idle land of nobles is due to their ruin which causes also the lack of fund necessary for managing their land. As to the decline of trade, since commerce is made little of in France, the leadership of foreign trade is in the hands of Holland and England. France is forced to be subject to disadvantageous treaties and foreign merchants are devastating her colonies. The amount of trade of France is far less than that of the other countries.

As to the decrease in population, he points out the avoidance of marriage by nobles, though he also counts religion and taxation among the reasons. Seen from the percentage of the nobles in entire population, this approach taken by Coyer may not be fully persuasive. In addition, the relation between the population and the wealth of a nation which is to annoy Marquis de Mirabeau later, is here left ambiguous. An emphasis is sometimes placed on the size of population and sometimes on the bulk of money.

As to the defeats in the wars, the reason for the military inferiority of France since the last years of the reign of Louis XIV is found by Coyer to lie in the economic difficulty in France. Coyer has already perceived that what brings the final victory is not the bravery or the skillfulness of a general but the large wealth of the nation. Quesnay will also place an emphasis on this point later.

Lastly, the reason for the impoverishment and the idleness of nobles is found by Coyer especially to lie in their despise for commerce. The idea of the historical transition of the European economic system has not yet taken a clear form in *La noblesse commerçante*.

Coyer presents his opinion on the *noblesse commerçante* as a universal remedy for stopping the economic and political decline of France which was described above. This is the universal remedy in its literary sense. Coyer elucidates four effects which his remedy would produce, but in fact the commerce of nobles is to cure *all* the economic and political weaknesses of France.

First, this system will increase the working people by absorbing the surplus population within the noble class, thus effecting appropriate industrial distribution of the French population. Second, the training of sailors for merchant ships will also be useful as the training for navy men and therefore it will lead to the reinforcement of the naval force. Moreover, the increase of practical knowledge of commerce among political leaders will place France in more advantageous position in the negotiation with foreign countries. In other words, the system of the *noblesse commerçante* will bring about the reinforcement, let alone of the economic power, of both the military and the diplomatic power. Third, the system will lead the nobles to wealth by the decrease in the number of surplus population of landed nobles on one hand and by the increase in the number of the *noblesse commerçante* on the other. Fourth, the enrichment of nobles will invite the enrichment of the entire nation. For the wealth accumulated in the noble class will make possible the investment in agriculture and at the same time increase the demand for agricultural products. This will motivate cultivators to enlarge cultivation to augment the general wealth, leading again to the increase in population. In this way, the four difficulties with which we supposed Coyer was confronted, will disappear all at once.

What is left to be done is to remove the opinion against commerce. Coyer analyses the history and the present state of this opinion. Then he insists that it is nothing but a prejudice. In order to break this down, he seems to present three arguing points. First commerce is useful, not only useful but indispensable for the State. It is the very foundation of the State and the prop for wars. Second, commerce has its own virtue. The virtue of a merchant is as valuable as that of a soldier, and is worth receiving the national respect. Third, the *loi de dérogeance* is unreasonable. Agriculture and glass manufacturing are permitted; then, why not commerce and manufacture of woolen cloth? Wholesale business is permitted; then why not retail sale? Activities of financiers who impoverish the State are permitted; then why not activities of merchants who enrich it? Domestic service to the princes is permitted, then why not the free and independent commercial activities? There are not any reasonable grounds on which these problems can be explained.

In this way, Coyer's theory on the *noblesse commerçante* seems to be completed perfectly without any inner defect. However, it was immediately refuted by d'Arcq in his *La noblesse militaire*, which we must now examine.

III D'Arcq's *La noblesse militaire*

Philippe-Auguste de Sainte-Foix, Chevalier d'Arcq was born on July 12, 1721 as an illegitimate son of Comte de Toulouse.²⁵⁾ The latter was also an illegitimate son between Louis XIV and Madame la Marquise de Montespan. Therefore, he was one of Louis XIV's grandsons in a direct line. He was younger than Abbé Coyer by fourteen years. He entered military service and displayed prowess in the battle of Fontenoy. In 1748 he left the army and began a literary life. Imitating Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, he wrote a novel *Lettres d'Osman*, he wrote also on history and other various themes, but it is said that he had many other works left unfinished. There now exist about ten works among those published. After the exile in 1770, his later years appear to have passed in disappointment and poverty. He died in Paris on January 21, 1795.

Born as a member of the royal family of Bourbon, he seems to be far inferior to Coyer as a writer. As far as *La noblesse militaire* is concerned, only vain eloquence is conspicuous. It has no strong appeal to readers lacking that vivid images and tangible concreteness which characterise his rival's work. However, d'Arcq sticks persistently to his theme, contrary to Coyer, who mentions everything in every place. In this sense, this work of d'Arcq possesses a certain order so that it is easier to summarize it. Seen from a different angle, however, it means that his tone of argument is simple and infantile.

First, d'Arcq deplores of this age in which the spirit of the noble has become less respected. He says that *noblesse* and *militaire* used to be synonymous but that we must use these two words together now.

25) See the followings: SGARD, J. *Dictionnaire des journalistes (1600-1789)*, Grenoble, 1976; LEBRETON-SAUVIGNY, J., *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38; MOUSNIER, R., *op. cit.*, p. 156.

D'Arcq also agrees with the proposition that commerce is the nerve of the State. This proposition is, however, limited by three conditions. They are (1) the location of the State and the capacity of her commerce, (2) the character and the ability of the people, and (3) the form of the government.

As to the first, in a mountaneous country, for example, commerce can not be a main object of the government, because of the scarcity of surplus products and of the lacking of traffic facilities. As to the second, when the people is timid, idle, slow and awkward, for example, commerce is not fitting to them. The Cappadociens did nothing but look on the trade and colonial activities of the Phoenicians and the Greeks. As to the third or the form of the government, commerce can not existe in the despotic State, because of the danger of the confiscation of goods by the tyrant. "A monarchy has always a tendency of expanding. The spirit of conquest, however, is not harmonious with the great establishment of commerce, and, if this spirit did not animate the monarchy, it could not be maintained." (pp. 17-18).²⁶⁾ A monarch must cultivate the spirit of conquest among his subjects and be feared and awed by neighboring countries. Otherwise, the monarch will be attacked and conquered. A peace treaty will be of no avail. "The monarch who is given to the spirit of commerce without desiring to maintain the spirit of conquest will find himself without defense. Therefore, commerce can not be the sole object of a monarchical government. It must not even be the principal object." (pp. 20-21).

Since a republic aims at maintenance rather than conquest, it can completely devote itself to commerce which is often an indispensable nourishment for itself. Here, commerce can be enlarged limitlessly. Neither population nor money can be too abundant.

In a monarchy, on the other hand, the more the population, the better; but not so with money. When money is in the hand of citizens, the price of commodities will increase. When money is in the hand of the monarch, it will invite the danger of despotism. The monarch and the people must be in need of each other. The augmentation of money caused by commerce enlarges luxury which will make people rotten and double these evils.

One may refute d'Arcq by taking England as an example, but it will be answered through examining the following three points: (1) form of government, (2) location of the country and (3) prejudice, the way they use money and the scarcity of luxury.²⁷⁾ "In England, the inconveniences of the republic is fortunatly moderated by the very inconveniences of the monarchy." (p. 30). There, "both from the public opinion which always tends to destroy the sovereign power and from the sovereign power which always tends to draw diverse opinions towards only himself results the solidity sufficient enough for the conservation of the State..... The monarch in England is so to speak nothing but a representative,..... he has only the executive power." (p. 31).

In fact, there is a limit to commerce as well in a republic. First, commerce must be

26) The quotations from d'Arcq's *La noblesse militaire* are from the following. *La noblesse militaire, opposée à la noblesse commerçante; ou le patriote françois*. A Amsterdam, M. DCC. LVI, 213 p. This is what is put first in the list already given.

27) As is seen below, d'Arcq examines only the first of these points.

conducted under the planning of the State and, second, the profit must be equally distributed among the citizens. Otherwise, the rich increase in number, inequality intensifies, and the conversion of the republic into a monarchy becomes inevitable.

In a monarchy, however, the inequality is natural as well as indispensable. Here distinguished are the three classes, i.e., (1) priests, (2) nobles and (3) the third rank. This distinction must be maintained. Promotion within each class should also be controlled as much as possible. Since the distinction in rank is the very foundation of a monarchy, a member of each class must devote himself to his duty. Equality of citizens in elevation produces a republic, while equality of citizens in debasement produces a despotism.

We will not discuss the duty of priests. The duty of nobles is "to maintain the glory and the interest of the prince and of the nation, to shed all their blood in order to defend those whose daily works contribute to their subsistence and their welfare and to judge the citizens under the authority of the law that they should maintain, that is a part of the sovereign power which the monarch entrusts with them." (pp. 41-42). On the other hand, the major duty of the third rank is "to utilize resources of the State, land, industry and money". (p. 42) Therefore, no relation exists between the duties of these two ranks. Consequently, "it is impossible to introduce commerce into nobles or to draw nobles into commerce without shaking the great axiom of the monarchical government. Therefore, it is impossible to make them merchants without damaging the harmonious inequality of those ranks, and so it is impossible to make them merchants without doing damages to the State". (pp. 43-44).

Moreover, extension of commerce, that is, increase of money, goods and population, is not necessarily good. First, money may be too abundant to circulate. Second, in spite of the abundance of goods, most of them may be luxuries, those necessary for living being scarce. They may be too expensive to satisfy the people. When goods become expensive, people can not but become merchants to get money, which will bring about an extreme equality. Unless goods become expensive, people want luxurious goods from their vanity. Here again people will inevitably become merchants. At last, equality will prevail and the monarchy will perish. Third, if increase in population is to be of any avail to the country, it is important that the population of each class should evenly increase. Those who increase in number through commerce are "the calculators whose sole object is to become rich themselves by providing their fellow citizens with everything that will weaken courage. They are the people ready to migrate to other countries as soon as their own interests go away. They are the people who know anything to do in order to increase opulence, magnificence and luxury of their country and nothing to do in order to guard the freedom." (p. 53).

To be sure, commerce increases sailors, but there is something more important than that. It is to secure the defenders of the State, which the nobles should assume. Courage and love for glory are the spirit indispensable to maintain the State, and the courage is a product of prejudice and self-love. This prejudice should be kept within the military, to which only the nobles are suitable. However, commerce destroys the prejudice and the honor. The object of commerce is profit, while that of honor is consideration.

In this way, contrary to Coyer's opinion, a wall must be built between the noble and the other classes. Otherwise, all the nobles will become merchants. Coyer forgot that "the prejudice, imaginary in itself, which has nothing real but the effect it produces and the consideration people confer on it, could do nothing against the fascination of the fortune. In the career of honor all is hope; in that of fortune all is enjoyment. And, when people have enjoyed and can enjoy even more, they never care to hope." (pp. 73-74). Commerce is an occupation of freedom and independence, and most merchants will succeed. If commerce is permitted to nobles, a country will consist only of some priests and merchants. Then, who will defend the accumulated money and the commerce itself?

One may maintain that nobles have practically been engaged in commerce through the management of their land, the employment of the inhabitants, and businesses concerned with finance. However, commerce is to bring home the goods which lacks in our own country through the exchange of goods among more than three countries. Consequently, at present, nobles can not be said to be engaged in commerce.

To be sure, there are poor nobles. In order to save them, luxury must be abandoned. The value of the noble do not lie there. Kings themselves must be the model. Conversely, luxury can be allowed in other classes. For, if common people ruin themselves from luxury, it will not produce any serious consequence.

The picture of the *noblesse commerçante* described by Coyer is attractive. But, how can nobles without means do big business? On the other hand, wealthy nobles do not have to do business. Nobles will devote themselves to their own duty, however small the royal bounty may be. They would rather be poor than become apprentice to common people. If nobles become wealthy by commerce, they will be idle in three generations, wealth going away and laziness remaining. Though the population of nobles may increase, that of the third rank will decrease. Land will be abandoned and cities will be filled with evils. Cultivation of land is the base of everything. Therefore, nobles then must be made engaged in agriculture, the result of which is *noblesse commerçante*, *noblesse cultivatrice* and *noblesse industrielle*. In other words, all the people will be noble and so nobody will be noble. "General equality among citizens necessarily destroys the monarchy." (p. 106). It can not but be led to despotism. Moreover, if all were merchant, could they carry arms? Could a strategy be worked out? In addition, big merchants would not be aboard a ship. A danger in war is different from that in commerce. Nobles in marine commerce would not know how to fight on land.

To be sure, it is necessary to enlarge commerce. To that end, it is reasonable to praise those who have contributed to commerce, by giving them the rank of the noble. However, these cases must be rare and in a different way from the case of warriors. Moreover, the enlargement of commerce has its limit, which France is now approaching. The French commerce of today is prosperous, which will be easily observed in her ports. The advantageous part of trade is monopolised by the Company of India, the slave trade of America does not have future, and there is no big merit in the trade by way of Spain and Holland. There is indeed still some future in Indian trade, but it is not necessary to invest nobles in the commerce anew.

Since population is the real wealth for the State, a family with many members should be given tax exemption, privileges, allowances, pensions and marriage portion. Rewards should be also given to those who cultivate virgin soil or idle land or to those who have reaped a rich harvest. Further, it is advisable to build public warehouses for storing grains against natural disasters.

When these measures are taken, there is no need for nobles being engaged in commerce. It is a dishonorable thing not to do what their ancestors did. The robe can not stand above the sword and merchants can not stand against either of them. Reward to a merchant is the profit which is acquired day by day. In old times those who had physical strength became the noble. Then, official posts were sold only to the nobles. Later, the system of selling official posts were introduced in military service, and the posts that nobles were supposed to hold came to be sold freely. When one became a noble, one usually abandoned commerce, but now only money is needed for assuming the rank of the noble. In a monarchy, a change is always a danger.

When nobles begin to obtain respect through wealth, they will not be concerned about damages done to the title. If the title is not respected, it will be only despised. There can be no midway.

If nobles are too numerous, it is because common people are doing the duty that the former should do. "What becomes a motive for the common people to obtain consideration becomes an evil for the State." (p. 164). The problem lies in the fact that money is involved in granting the ranks of military service. "Perhaps a son of a financier or of a merchant is as well capable to exercise the employment as a noble. It is certain at least that the desire he shows to serve his motherland must merite general respect and particular consideration among his fellow men. What is certain as well is that it is better for the State that he does not obtain the preference to a noble. There still remains a way for him to serve his motherland by succeeding to his father's occupation." (pp. 165-166).

Therefore, superior military positions should be given only to nobles, and the number of officers increased. Further, it will be advantageous to establish a volunteer corps organized only by nobles, for it will serve as a training center for officers. A common man who is especially excellent as a soldier may be admitted into the corps as a noble man only in his generation.

On the other hand, the title may be deprived of any nobleman who will hold no office at the age of thirty years. "An idle, and therefore useless, citizen is a criminal against his motherland; he steals from her what he consumes. A man from a distinguished family is a citizen before he is a noble." (p. 192).

It this way, all the members of the State will "work according to their natural destination." (p. 204). Thus, the nerve of the State will be maintained by the prejudice called honor. The fate of the State which has lost that prejudice and where only the interest prevails is clearly seen in Carthage.

The gist above summarized of d'Arcq's *La noblesse militaire* will be rearranged a little more logically.

To begin with, the presentiment of the decline of France, which formed the background of Coyer's *La noblesse commerçante*, is almost ignored in this work of d'Arcq. Here, the presentiment, if any, is not of the general crisis of France but only of the decline of the nobles. Consequently, his emphasis is laid on the reconstruction of the nobles and, in particular, on the maintenance of the ethos of the military. Thus, his argument is rather political, military, social, or socio-philosophical than economic.

D'Arcq's primary concern is to maintain the monarchy of France. The monarchial government, contrary to that of the republic, is based on the principle of inequality, which is supported on one side by the strict observance of the distinction of ranks and on the other by the prejudice of each rank. What will deform the structure of the monarchy must be jealously excluded. The theory of the *noblesse commerçante* presented by Coyer is just what will give a monarchy a fatal wound. If commerce is permitted to nobles, all the nobles, contrary to Coyer's expectation, will be drawn into commerce by its charm. Then, first, soldiers who are responsible for the defense of the State will cease to exist. Second, enrichment brought about by commerce will augment luxury and make interests stand above honor, with the martial virtue vanishing away. Third, augmentation of money will produce a danger of despotism. Fourth, an increase in money within a class will extinguish the distinction of ranks, invite equality and thus lead to the collapse of a monarchy.

While Coyer thinks that there will remain some nobles who will not be engaged in commerce even if it is permitted to them, d'Arcq says that all the nobles will become merchants. This ironically results in showing that the latter who is a defender of the martial virtue puts less reliance on it than the former. While d'Arcq thinks that the sense of honor can not resist the temptation of wealth and that a wall must be built around the nobles, Coyer appears to put more reliance on the traditional ethos of the nobles. D'Arcq's praise for the martial virtue of the nobles should have been more reserved. On the other hand, it is another question whether or not Coyer believes what he has written concerning the competency of the virtue of the noble.

D'Arcq also can not but recognize at least that nobles are impoverished. Without searching for the causes of the impoverishment, d'Arcq proposes: first, that the noble should resume its original virtue, eliminating luxury. Second, that the central parts of the military posts should be occupied only by nobles²⁸⁾ and that the corps organized only by nobles should be established. In other words, only the prejudice of honor fitting to the structure of the monarchy is allowed in this State through a strict distinction of ranks and the elimination of the principle of wealth or of interest. Third, that allowances and marriage portions should be given to poor nobles or their daughters. Fourth, that—the object hereafter is not limited only to nobles—pensions should be given to a family with many children. Fifth, that rewards should be given to those who have exploited wild land or cultivated idle land or gathered a rich harvest. Sixth, that public warehouses for grains should be built.

28) In fact, by the edict in 1781 military posts above the officer were given only to nobles.

D'Arcq also perceives the importance of the increase in population and of the enlargement of commerce. However, according to him, it must be avoided that the increased population be merely men who calculate. The existence of the defenders of the State is of utmost importance. He thinks also that there is a limit to the enlargement of commerce. According to his judgement, French commerce is approaching to her limit, to exceed which it is harmful to the State because of the reasons previously explained.

In this way, the political, economic and social structure of France pictured by d'Arcq is what existed in the past rather than will exist in the future. D'Arcq, as well as Montesquieu, tries to preserve as intact as possible the French monarchy which has maintained itself over several centuries. As well as Montesquieu, here again, d'Arcq can not but recognize, to his regret, that this structure of the State can not be maintained without suffering some change. D'Arcq does not dare to object king's giving honor to merchants. While he thinks that the military leadership should be given only to nobles, he can not but propose that excellent common persons should be included among officers as nobles only for one generation. He can not but state that nobles who fail to do their duty should be deprived of the title. In direct opposition to Coyer who maintains a thorough circulation of ranks, d'Arcq insists that a wall should be built around the rank of the noble. But he can not but make a hole, however small, in the wall.

La noblesse militaire by d'Arcq is a serious defense of the French monarchy and her noble class, and at the same time an attack on the weaknesses of the argument by Coyer. For example, are there still some nobles who will be responsible for the defense of the State when commerce is permitted to nobles? Does the increase in money not invite an economic confusion? Does economic prosperity not shake the foundation of the French monarchy? More concretely where do poor nobles get the funds necessary to be engaged in commerce? Conversely, is there any need for wealthy nobles to be engaged in commerce? Big merchants whom nobles are supposed to become will not be aboard a ship. Consequently, can they be the potential man power for the navy as Coyer maintains?

It is now the time for Coyer to answer these questions and to make his plans more precise and concrete.

IV Coyer's *Développement et Defence*

Coyer's *Développement et défense du système de la noblesse commerçante* was published in 1757. It is a laborious work with 358 pages in all, consisting of two parts. Many critiques of *La noblesse commerçante* seem to have been published by that time, as previously mentioned, but Coyer's numerous arguments are exclusively directed to d'Arcq's objections with a very few exceptions.

In spite of the size of this work, however, Coyer's enunciation hardly goes beyond the repetition of the previous work, new issues being few. In addition, his detailed statement, though it may show his profound learning, rather belongs to the bypaths from the theme of this book and is of little use for reinforcing his advocacy. If he had limited his

pen only to what is essential to the task undertaken by him here, one hundred pages would have been enough. In short, this book is redundant. Therefore, we will omit the points already developed in his previous work, taking up only the new issues presented in this book.

Chapter 1—Is an establishment of big commerce fitted for a monarchy?—A big monarchy like France needs a large population because of “the vast land to be cultivated, big establishments to be maintained or to be formed, immensity of arts to be practiced, big navigation to be desired, all kinds of big enterprises to be undertaken and big rivals to be controlled.” (p. 1–10).²⁹⁾ Commerce is the most effective means for the increase in population. Furthermore, only commerce activates various big enterprises needed for a great monarch. In order to save France from her ruin it is more important to foster manufactures rather than to build hospitals. “Finance, high official posts, great dignities and large lands accumulate wealth at the expense of the public. Commerce divides it.” (p. 1–17). Commerce corrects a harmful maldistribution of money and brings about its even distribution over the whole country.

A king has different kinds of big expenditure and so he needs a large income. At present people have a heavy burden of taxes and king's income is small. Commerce alone can provide people with a means to shoulder the heavy burden easily. “It is important not only for the happiness of human beings but also for the strength of the State that her people lead a safe and easy life.” (p. 1–19). The strength of a monarchy lies in the strength of money and of military forces, and it is the strength of money that fosters the latter. “The combination of real and relative wealths decides the fate of the State.” (p. 1–25). Increase in the quantity of money is not in itself harmful. What is harmful is its unequal distribution. Increase in the quantity of money is sure to invite an increase in the prices of commodities but this increase is a sign of an economic prosperity. Through this prosperity, wages rise beyond the rise of prices. What is important is high wages rather than low prices. Poor people in Paris are richer than rich people in the country because the former acquires more money than the latter. Only *rentiers*, nobles and idle people suffer from the price increase. They are the very people who should throw themselves into commercial activities. “Everything is expensive for those who always draw up from the wealth that will not regenerate.” (p. 1–33). The real cause of the rise of prices lies in heavy tax, decrease of population, suspension of commerce and of labor, or civil wars.

There are two kinds of men. One kind is the people who are active. Cultivators, laborers, artisans, sailors and merchants belong to this group. The other is the people who do not produce any wealth. Priests, men of war, of justice and of finance, *rentiers*, lackeys, beggars, idlers and lords of manor belong to this group. Since the money that must be transferred to the latter amounts to 1 billion francs, money can never become

29) The quotations from Coyer's *Développement et Défense* are from the following. *Développement et défense du système de la noblesse commerçante*. Par M. l'Abbé Coyer. A Amsterdam et se trouve à Paris, Chez Duchesne, etc. M. DCC. LVII. 1^e partie 152 p., 2^e partie 206 p.

superfluous in France. As Las Casas says, money is dangerous when it comes from gold mines, in which case it does not originate the movement of wealth in the State. Money must come from commerce.

Further, the State must be prepared for a war. To that end, too, money is a requisite. "A king is nothing but a manager of the tributes of the people." (p. I-43). Therefore, we can not blame a king for his poverty, nor have we to be afraid that a king will adopt a despotic system by means of money. In addition, all the money does not flow into the hand of a king. "The State and the individuals should be in abundance. As commerce enlarges, the chief and the member become vigorous. This vigor born from the wealth, far from useless for liberty, will reinforce it". (p. I-48). While the rich escape not only from despotism but even from laws, the poor are easily stamped as slaves, of which a king is apt to take advantage. Only the wealth gained through the enlargement of commerce becomes a barrier against despotism.

As to luxury, if it is prohibited, unemployment will increase. Only through luxury, a few rich men can give many poor men some jobs. Newly born peoples may well live without luxury. It should also be banned within military service. However, it is impossible to ban it generally. Those who waste may well ruin themselves from luxury; at least their expenditures will give jobs to poor people. Nevertheless, luxuries which were made in foreign countries or those which will take people away from agriculture must be banned. Luxuries to be allowed are what is based on commerce. France should control foreign countries by the export of luxuries made in the country.

The monarchy is said to possess the spirit of conquest, but there is a limit to the size of a monarchy. "A happy reign always passed in moderation and peace." (p. I-63). It is proved in history that conquest and commerce co-exist. Though commerce is sure to prefer peace, it will support a war once it begins. Money is certainly a target to be attacked but at the same time it provides a defense power. It is not right to say that commerce is more fitting to England than to France. It is fitting to any State.

Chapter 2—Is the system of the *noblesse commerçante* suitable to the French monarchy?—The present French monarchy is firmly founded, and it is not necessary to summon all the nobles to a war. In ancient times Nobles possessed land or wealth all to themselves. But now the land has escaped from the hand of the nobles. Instead of the noble and the land, the common people and the money have gathered strength. "The situation of the monarchy has changed. Can the noble not change with it?" (p. I-79).

The distinction of ranks is necessary, but nobles have already been mixed with the third class in marriage and in occupation, through which the strength of an alloy will be produced. The real confusion of ranks will occur when every rank attempts everything and this is not the same as the mixing of ranks. In addition, has the *loi de dérogeance* not been invalid?

Chapter 3—Can the spirit of the soldier and the spirit of commerce co-exist?—Not all of the nobles but a few of them will be engaged in commerce. Moreover, do the people complain of the collision between the spirit of the soldier and that of commerce, since some of the third class have already become soldiers? According to d'Arcq, a soldier has

God, honor, motherland and a king as his masters. We might as well add poverty to the four. He can serve God but he can serve neither honor, nor his motherland nor his king when he is in poverty as he is. A merchant has four masters, too. They are "the God of peace but not that of weapons, honor which vivifies but not that which destroys, motherland covered with flowers, fruit, people, labor and industry but not that always stained with blood, and the king who loves to be the father of the people of his country rather than to conquest other peoples but not the king who is always armed with thunders of the war." (p. I-123).

Enrichment does not take defense power away. It is commercial countries that have resisted most pertinaciously against the invasion of foreign powers. Only wealth offers the means of defense. What is to be defended is most abundant here. "They are not willing to live if they are forced to give up living in happiness." (p. I-128). On the other hand, the poor do not have their motherland nor adhere to anything. Contrary to d'Arcq, it is not commerce that made Carthage perish. It is thanks to commerce that Carthage prospered for such a long time and was able to resist so persistently against the most formidable power of Rome.

As to the issue of honor, the honor of nobles is not the sole honor. Commerce, too, has its honor. Does honor not disappear from idle nobles? One may condemn the pursuit for profit, but all the achievements of soldiers is paid for in money, and with reason. "In a big machine of government, nothing will go well unless public good is geared into particular good and virtue into fortune." (p. I-145).

To be sure, merchants do not know well about a war, but is it not the same with idle nobles?

In short, a big State must possess various spirits within itself. General strength will be created only from the combination of the spirits of agriculture, of literature, of war, and of commerce. If a war is sometimes necessary, commerce is always useful.

Chapter 4—Has French commerce attained its maximum?—First of all, it will be noted that there is no limit to economic prosperity. Besides, the foreign trade of France has been at an ebb. The amount of trade by the Company of India is not big and its monopoly of the trade is of harm to the nation. We seek for a free commerce. By this means Holland and England has been prosperous. Compared with England, France has much fewer merchant ships, sailors, and merchants engaged in foreign trade. The rate of interest is 5% in France against 4% in England. Besides, the number of people aboard one ship is much more in France. In addition, there are fewer holidays in foreign countries, which means more days for labor.

The kings of France have always encouraged commerce; the French have only to display their talent. Even if commerce does not need nobles, the nobles need commerce. When nobles are engaged in commerce, this latter will be ennobled and many people will throw themselves in it. Since common people can not approach the king, nobles should report to Him the program of trade. "The system of Europe has changed. Commerce has been entered, or almost so, into all the treaties as *raison d'Etat*." (p. II-84). Nobles engaged in commerce alone can become good diplomats, for common people can not

become diplomats today.

D'Arcq feels uneasy about the appearance of the *noblesse cultivatrice* after the *noblesse commerçante*. But agriculture is looked down upon and commerce involves wider knowledge and wider sphere of activities than agriculture. To be sure, agriculture has been at an ebb, but it will be revived through the prosperity of commerce. Through the free trade of wheat, wheat production will increase. "If agriculture is the basis of a State, commerce is the soul of agriculture." (p. II-98).

Chapter 5—How do the nobles without means begin commerce?—The first step is always difficult in any enterprise. Big merchants are not big from the start. A life of a merchant, even with pains at first, is better than a life of a poor noble. Outside commerce, nobles have already been engaged in inferior works.

Commerce is said to make the people who calculate, but why is it not good to become a calculator? Was Colbert not a great calculator? This is the age of wealth and industry. It is also said that nobles would not serve merchants. However, training is one thing and serving is another. Prejudices around commerce must be lifted. Before long, great men will be born from commerce. According to d'Arcq, a noble merchant becomes wealthy and wasteful, and then ruins himself, the result only being his devastation. However, poor nobles are already idler; and, the noble merchants, if ruined, may well begin commerce again.

The last chapter—Can the several means presented accomplish the objectives?—First of all, the prohibition of luxury from nobles will not succeed, and the problem is the poor nobles who do not have luxuries. Military service will be well performed only when it is given both to the nobles and to the common people. Besides, a noble will not enter a volunteer army as an ordinary soldier. The other proposals are impractical since they need big expenditures from the king. There are big public works to be done rather than to give pensions to large families. In addition, if the king has fund, it will be more advantageous to lend money to the nobles who will be engaged in commerce.

As is shown from the above summary, the enunciation by Coyer in *Développement et Défense* hardly contains any new "development." Nonetheless, it is possible to draw a few characteristics.

First, pointed out by d'Arcq, the relation between prices and wages is discussed with much concern. According to Coyer's conclusion, the increase in money resulting from economic prosperity may invite a rise of prices but not so much as that of wages. However, this proposition is rather asserted than proved. He says that the poor in Paris are richer than the rich in the country because of the great amount of money circulating in Paris. But this statement is far from sufficient to resolve the issue of the enrichment of France as a whole. By distinguishing active people from those who "do not produce anything", Coyer at least established the concept of productive labor, but he fails to develop the concept nor to utilize it. The above fact may foretell the defect of the analysis of the relation between prices and wages.

Second, the proposition that only the State under commercial prosperity can resist

pertinaciously against both enemies from outside and despotism from inside is set forth all the more clearly against d'Arcq's proposition to the contrary. For commerce procures weapons and population necessary for a war, and those who possess something to lose exhibit a stronger resistance against invaders. Coyer even says that the poor do not have their motherland. According to his judgement, Carthage did not perish because of commerce, but it was so formidable because of commerce. Further, he thinks that enrichment prevents a king from degenerating to despotism. While the poor are liable to offer their head to the yoke of the king, the rich try to guard their wealth lest the hand of the king should extend over it. They have independent and free spirit based on their wealth.

Third, Coyer places an emphasis on the change of the times. Externally, the system of Europe has changed and the age of wars has transformed itself into that of commerce. Those who command commerce will command the world. Moreover, it commands directly the world and not through commanding wars. Thus, Coyer can assert that commerce loves peace. This is consistent with his theory of free trade and with his attack against the Company of India. Internally on the other hand, the French monarchy has undergone a change and the age when nobles displayed the commanding power is gone. Most of the small nobles have lost their lands, as well as their mission of military service. Seen from Coyer's viewpoint, nobles look backward. This is why he, more than once, throw a contemptuous laugh over the nobles. Their poverty, attachment to genealogy, adherence to the prejudices already without any value, arrogance without any real foundation, contempt toward others without any reason—these Coyer continues to laugh at.

Last of all, concern about financial problems becomes salient. However, in spite of the remark that "a king is a manager of the tributes from the people", no concrete request for the curtailment of the royal expenditure has not been set forth here. Rather, the big expenditure is taken for granted. He simply encourages the expenditure for big public works and the supply of loans to the nobles who are beginning commerce, instead of merely providing poor nobles and large families with allowances.

V Conclusion

After reviewing Coyer's theory supporting *La noblesse commerçante*, d'Arcq's criticism against it and Coyer's criticism against d'Arcq, we may add some comments.

First of all, the fact that Coyer's *La noblesse commerçante* drew such extended repercussions, as was already mentioned at the outset of this paper, shows that the issue presented by him was one of the national concerns of that time. The problem of the *noblesse commerçante* was to be discussed in France in the 1750's, when she had been driven into the arena of an unavoidable confrontation with England. We have already mentioned about the intellectual condition of the 1750's. Here we add that the year of 1756 when *La noblesse commerçante* was published was the year when the War of Seven Years broke out and when Quesnay began to write his first thesis on political economy.

What is important is the fact that the controversy on the *noblesse commerçante* could not

but involve a broad scope covering the politic, the economic, the ethic of France, beyond the narrow problem of whether a certain class should be engaged in a certain occupation. In short, the issue presented by Coyer touched the core of what the French monarchy should be. According to Coyer, the conditions of existence of the European countries have changed so that those of the French monarchy are also compelled to change. Therefore, what is offered by Coyer is not a temporary but a radical measure for reform. It was not an unjustified exaggeration that he called it a system.

On the other hand, though d'Arcq understands clearly, in his objections, that Coyer's demand is radical for the French monarchy, he does not possess any sense of the transformation of Europe which supports Coyer's demand. D'Arcq simply repeats the theory which justifies the old system of the French kingdom and which no longer has realistic propriety. D'Arcq can hardly step out from the schema that at the center of the kingdom towers a monarch under whom common people devote themselves to agricultural, industrial and commercial activities, with nobles situated between them defending the monarchy. Anything that may destroy this structure and this rank order must be alienated. The utmost concern of d'Arcq, in criticizing Coyer, is the disappearance of the ethos of the *noblesse militaire* due to the enlargement of commerce. D'Arcq hardly recognizes the decline of France about which Coyer is deeply concerned. What d'Arcq concedes to Coyer is a meager promotion of the common people in the ranks of military posts and bestowal of orders to merchants which is as meager.

To be sure, d'Arcq is a successor to Montesquieu in writing against the *noblesse commerçante*. However, d'Arcq's estimation of the role of commerce in the French monarchy falls far short of the theoretical standard which Montesquieu has reached. Montesquieu was different from d'Arcq in that he understood rather affirmatively the effect of economic development. Nonetheless, like d'Arcq, he worried about the erosion of the spirit of the noble by the spirit of commerce. How can we keep intact the principle of the monarchy while recognizing the indispensability of commerce in the monarchy? In order to solve this problem, Montesquieu developed that exquisite theory on commerce. D'Arcq hardly approves the positive significance of commerce. He goes as far as to say that the French commerce does not have to prosper beyond the present level. The French kingdom he pictures seems to be an agricultural society where the order of ranks is fixed, with the spirit of fortitude prevailing.

We must not, however, regard d'Arcq as a cranky behind the times. For many of those who took part in the argument appear to have come to the side of d'Arcq rather than to the side of Coyer. Judging only from the books concerned, it seems that the public opinion of the time supported d'Arcq. It may be said that Coyer's proposition was rather a singular demand.

As was mentioned before, d'Arcq places an emphasis on the political and ethical rather than on the economic aspect of the problem. What is of importance to him is not an economic prosperity but an ethical value. The opinion that economic prosperity and ethical value are antinomic to each other and that the latter should be preferred to the former has not only been a dominant philosophy until the modern ages but survives

even after that time. The basic tone of d'Arcq's philosophy can be said to have been loyal to the tradition. On the other hand, it may also be right to say that d'Arcq's philosophy is a prejudice of the noble, as well as Montesquieu's. The figure of d'Arcq who stands in opposition to Coyer reminds us of the figure of Marquis de Mirabeau against Quesnay.³⁰⁾

However, we should not forget that the opinion that enhances ethical value against economic prosperity is born in combination with the prejudice of nobles against bourgeois development.³¹⁾ The attitude to take wealth and liberty to be antinomic to each other can be seen clearly in Montesquieu, who also had the prejudice of the noble.³²⁾ In Montesquieu, the opposition between economic prosperity and ethical value appears as an opposition between merchants and nobles or between "a commercial republic" and "a monarchy" and at the same time it appears as an opposition between wealth and liberty. This is why the liberty conceived by Montesquieu is criticized to be nothing but the liberty of nobles, but this criticism is not perfectly right. For liberty conceived by Montesquieu has already gone beyond the limit of the liberty of nobles. Of course, it is Rousseau who establishes quite anew, on the basis of equality, the liberty which is going to burst the old frame. But let us return to d'Arcq.

When d'Arcq's opinion, which places an emphasis on ethical value rather than on economic prosperity, is expressed above all as the enhancement of the value of nobles or the martial virtue, it invites a bitter criticism from Coyer. Coyer asks what poor nobles can do. According to Coyer, far from inviting the weakening of defense power, the economic prosperity alone can provide military expenses, contribute to the increase of population, reinforce the love for the motherland, and even prevent the monarch from degenerating to despotism. Far from being antinomic, enrichment and liberty are mutually supporting each other. Enrichment secures freedom which in turn promotes enrichment. Enriched peoples do not have to fear uncivilized and barbarous peoples. In this way, according to Coyer, the significance of the distinction of ranks emphasized by d'Arcq is rejected in the name of the enrichment and liberty, and the principle of equality is thus presented without so naming. The distinction he establishes is that between "active" people and those who "do not produce any wealth", and he includes in the latter group priests, soldiers and financiers together with house servants and beggars. Pursuit for private profit is openly approved and it is taken for granted that human beings are calculators.

Facing the schema depicted by Coyer we already have an premonition of the theory of civil society that Adam Smith will construct, and perhaps this premonition is not unfounded. The road from Coyer to Smith, however, is neither short nor direct. In this

30) See the following: *Les Manuscrits économiques de François Quesnay et du Marquis de Mirabeau aux Archives nationales*, par G. WEULERSSE, Paris 1910; *Bref état des moyens pour la restauration de l'autorité du roi et de ses finances*, par le Marquis de Mirabeau avec de notes de François Quesnay, publié par G. WEULERSSE, *Revue d'histoire économique et sociales*, 6e année, 1913, t. II, pp. 177-211. Quesnay approved that nobles were engaged in commerce. cf. QUESNAY, F., *Impôt*, 1757, *Quesnay et la Physiocratie*, Paris 1958, t. II, pp. 607-609.

31) Is it improper to give Platon as the first example?

32) For example, *De l'esprit des lois*, XVIII-1-4.

sense, it is also to be noted that Coyer often cites David Hume.

At any rate, the theory of "a new system" presented by Coyer is supported by the recognition that the European world is changing. To sum up, this change means that those who hold the economic supremacy are to gain the political and military supremacy too, and that the European nations have come to compete not in the military arena but in the economic one. Though the French monarchy is forced to transform itself in response to this change of the European world, she is behind England especially in this aspect. The recognition of this fact drove many French intellectuals in the middle of the eighteenth century into the research on political economy. Contrary to what Voltaire says³³⁾, people did not move to arguments on wheat because they became tired of arguments on arts and literature. Quesnay also remarks repeatedly that the economic ultimately dominates the politic, and he feared lest shabby nobles should lose their dominance because of this very reason.³⁴⁾ For Quesnay, economic prosperity alone had to be the primary concern of the State.

Though Coyer, who set the same objective as Quesnay, arrived at the recognition that prosperity and liberty support each other, this liberty was not expressed as boundless laissez-faire. Mr. Takumi Tsuda considers that Coyer's economic philosophy belongs to the line of Gournay's.³⁵⁾ The model for Coyer was undoubtedly England. However, since England appears to be a menace to France, Coyer tries to guard the interests of France against it. Therefore, the Nativigaon Acts should be imitated and the import of luxuries from overseas should be prohibited. Coyer is more concerned about presenting various ways to promote economic profit of France than about picturing the system of economic liberalism.

Further, Coyer is already aware of the fact that commerce prefers peace to war. Diplomatic affairs, he thinks, are what concerns not so much the conditions of war and peace as the conditions of trade. He thinks that wars may occur but he expects that future wars are rather economic than military. Therefore, Coyer plays down the military aspect which d'Arcq emphasizes, and he keeps attacking the poverty in the French economic policy in the international relations. It is obvious that the weakness of France in the economic aspect, which is observed in the fact that foreign treaties have always been disadvantageous to France, is also a political weakness in this new world.

It was already stated that neither d'Arcq, who stresses the military, political and ethical aspect of the issue, nor Coyer, who emphasizes the economic aspect, could reach a high level in their theoretical achievement in the argument for and against the *noblesse commerçante*. Therefore, it may be said that, while d'Arcq simply repeats the traditional theory on the monarchy, Coyer, as he wants an economic and political revival of France through adopting to France the theory of those English economists preceding to Adam Smith, simply finds a way out of the low standard of French trade in the transformation of

33) *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Article: Bled.

34) *Bref état*, etc. (art. cit.), p. 185.

35) TSUDA, T., art. cit., p. 330. Also refer to his report at the meeting of the Society of the History of Economics, at Chiba University, Nov. 1978.

idle and poor nobles into merchants. Nonetheless, the interest of this argument seems to be found not in the simplicity of their propositions nor in their low theoretical standard; it lies, so to speak, in their confusion. On one side, d'Arcq's eloquence can not but sound hollow when he develops the traditional theory of the monarchy, and in fact he has to concede to a new system through the bestowal of orders on merchants and the adoption of common people as officers. On the other side, Coyer fails to give an adequate answer to the question of how the harmful effects of the economic development on the ethos can be avoided or how poor nobles can all become big merchants, etc. However, they are not necessarily responsible for all their confusions, which are partly what is called the reflection of the times. The inquiry into the relation between politics and economy, war and trade, economic prosperity and ethical value, or economic prosperity and liberty, honor or virtue and interest, etc. is an eternal theme given to those who take part in an historical transformation of the world, and nobody can give a final answer, either in theory or in practice.

(This article being in the press, I found that I had missed several works on this subject: L. Adams, J. Hecht, H. Lévy-Bruhl, G. Richard, G. Zeller, etc. But, as far as what I treated in this article is concerned, there is nothing new to be added. I want to refer in the near future, however, to the complicated details which make the background of this controversy.—K. K.)