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QUEER THEORY

SEE *Politics: Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, and Bisexual; Queer Studies*.

QUESNAY, FRANÇOIS

1694–1774

François Quesnay was born in the village of Méré, Île de France, into a family of merchants and small landowners. As a child he received no formal training, but he learned to read and write from a gardener. Largely self-taught, in 1711 he began to study medicine and surgery in Paris. In 1717 he married; he had three children. He first earned a

living as a surgeon and contributed several essays to the controversy between surgeons and physicians in France in the 1740s. In 1734 he assumed the position of physician of the Duke of Villeroy and in 1749 of Madame the Pompadour, Louis XV's favorite, in Versailles. In 1752 he saved the dauphin from smallpox, which won him the king's favor, a noble title, and a significant amount of money. At the beginning of the 1750s he was elected a member of the Académie des Sciences, Paris, and the Royal Society, London. During this period Quesnay stopped publishing medical works and turned to economics. The years 1756 and 1757 saw the publication of his entries in the *Encyclopédie* on *Fermiers* (farmers) and *Grains* (corn). Three further entries devoted to *Hommes* (people), *Impôts* (taxes), and *Interêt de l'argent* (money rate of interest) could not be published in the *Encyclopédie* after an attempt to assassinate the king, which was grist for the mill of the enemies of the *encyclopédistes* (d'Alembert, Diderot, and others) and brought the project to a standstill. The first two articles were published only at the beginning of the twentieth century, the third in 1766.

Of particular importance to Quesnay's works in economics and their impact on the contemporary political debates first in France and then beyond was his encounter with the Marquis de Mirabeau in 1757. Mirabeau became a close follower of Quesnay and untiringly spread the gospel of the new physiocratic school. In 1758 Quesnay composed the first edition of the *Tableau économique*, which contained the first schematic account of the intertwined processes of production, distribution, and disposition of the riches of an entire nation. Mirabeau compared the importance of the *Tableau* to that of the discovery of fire and the wheel; Marx called it the "most brilliant idea" of political economy up until then and the physiocrats "the true fathers of modern political economy" (Marx 1963, p. 44). Two further editions of the *Tableau* followed in 1759. In 1763 Mirabeau published the *Philosophie rurale* in three volumes, a work that was heavily influenced (and partly even written) by Quesnay. In the same year the physiocrats began to engage in economic policy debates. Their articles appeared first in the *Journal de l'agriculture* and then in *Éphémérides du citoyen*, the "sect's" main outlet. Quesnay contributed several essays on themes such as the natural law doctrine, the so-called sterility of industry, and, in 1766, a simplified version of the *Tableau* in an article titled "Analyse de la formule arithmétique du Tableau économique." The school's influence in France peaked in the late 1760s and then steadily declined. Quesnay died in December 1774 near Versailles.

Quesnay conceived the process of production as a circular flow, with the rent of land being traced back to the existence of surplus product (*produit net*) left over after all means of production have been used up and all means of

subsistence in support of the laboring population have been deducted from annual gross outputs. With a social division of labor, the products have to be exchanged for one another in interdependent markets. In order for the process to be able to continue unhampered, prices must cover physical real costs of production, consisting of means of production and subsistence, plus, in agriculture, the rent of land. A major concern of Quesnay was with the system's potential for growth. This depended on whether the surplus was consumed productively or unproductively and whether new methods of production could be developed and introduced, which by increasing productivity increased the social surplus.

Quesnay's works had a major influence on the development of central concepts and analytical tools in economics. After him the idea of ubiquitous economic interdependence never left the realm of economics again. Marx's analysis of simple and extended reproduction in volume 2 of *Capital* drew on the *Tableau* (see Marx 1974, and Gehrke and Kurz 1995), as did Wassily Leontief's (1941) input-output analysis. Piero Sraffa's (1960) reformulation of the classical approach to the theory of value and distribution was inspired by the physiocrats' multisector analysis. Also inspiring Sraffa was the physiocrats' concern with the implications for the theory of value and distribution of the specific conditions of the transformation of matter and energy into new forms of matter and energy in given sociotechnical conditions. Quesnay's concept of production as a circular flow is in marked contrast with the view entertained by some marginalist economists such as Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk of production as a one-way avenue of finite duration leading from the services of original factors of production to final output. The concept of a closed system, as we encounter it in Quesnay, is employed in fields of economics that take into account the laws of thermodynamics, such as environmental economics.

SEE ALSO *Economics; Marx, Karl; Physiocracy; Surplus; Sraffa, Piero*

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QUESTIONNAIRES

SEE *Surveys, Sample*.

QUOTA SYSTEM, FARM

Farm commodity quotas are defined as government-administered area or quantity allotments restricting what a farmer can produce or market. Such supply controls in the United States initially rested on several presumptions, some or all of which are no longer valid. One was that farmers reacting to market forces were incapable of adjusting their resources and output in a timely manner to maintain their income at a socially acceptable level in response to shocks from weather, foreign markets, and rapid productivity advance. That presumption in turn implied that, in the absence of supply control, farmers were predestined to chronically produce too much and hence to experience perennially low farm prices, incomes, and rates of return on resources.

Another presumption was that the demand for farm commodities was inelastic. That is, a reduction in market quantity would reduce quantity proportionately less than it would raise commodity price, thereby raising commodity receipts and farm income.

Supply controls in the form of quotas or allotments can be voluntary or mandatory, on resources or commodities, whole farm or part farm, on crop area or output, and short term or long term. Under the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, the grandfather of farm commodity programs, government rewarded farmers who voluntarily controlled how much of major crops they planted with commodity price supports or direct payments.