CASH IS GOOD TO EAT:

SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND EXCHANGE IN EARLY AMERICA

(An Update)

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According to Percy Bidwell and John Falconer, authors of the classic, still unsurpassed History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, family farmers before the American Revolution "produced for themselves food, clothing, house furnishing, farm implements, in fact practically everything they needed." They were "self-sufficient"--by which Bidwell and Falconer meant, not that colonial farmers lived in complete isolation from commercial relations, but simply that as a rule they produced "for home consumption rather than for sale." Reviewing the available evidence, they concluded that trade of any kind had an insignificant role in rural communities. Buying and selling there was; but only "a small amount."[1]

Of course, "small" is a relative term. The Roman legions don't seem very large when compared to a modern army, but they ought not, for that reason alone, be discounted. And the same things goes for early American trade. "Self-sufficient" just did not describe the situation accurately. If early American farmers were self-sufficient, where did the growing number of rural artisans find customers? If trade was unimportant, how then to explain the hundreds of thousands of bushels of wheat and rice, and the thousands of hogsheads of tobacco exported from the colonies in 1770 alone? If colonial farm families produced almost every thing they needed, why did every village have at least one store, and often more, stocked with a great variety of products?[2]

Some historians have answered such questions by simply turning Bidwell and Falconer on their heads, insisting that the most important fact about eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American farmers was not their self-sufficiency but their overwhelmingly commercial orientation. Darrett Rutman, for example, found a "pervasive individualism rooted in economics" in seventeenth-century Boston--an individualism encouraged by the local elite, all of whom "owned and speculated in town lots and houses, shops, warehouses, and wharves; or operated shops, leatherworks, or inns; or carried on trade."[3] Charles Grant echoed this emphasis in his study of a Connecticut frontier town during the next century, placing great emphasis on the "drive for profit" among its inhabitants, as reflected in the large number of farms that produced saleable surpluses, the high percentage of men who sought to profit from non-agricultural enterprises, the ferment of speculation by local men in local lands, and, finally, the mobility of the town population (the average Kent resident remained only five years before moving on)."[4]

Fortunately, however, most scholars have resisted such radical leveling. More than forty years ago, Rodney Loehr offered a straightforward, developmental alternative to these kinds of all-or-nothing arguments. Maybe farmers in "isolated mountain areas" or in frontier regions during the first year or two of settlement were self-sufficient, but "when the storekeeper appeared and as transportation improved self-sufficiency melted away."[5] More recently, Jackson Turner Main adopted a similar approach in his exhaustive survey of the social structure of Revolutionary America, distinguishing three kinds of rural societies in the northern states at the end of the eighteenth century. "Frontier" regions were recently settled areas where wealth differences were minimal, most persons owned some land, and there were only a few artisans and storekeepers. Communities with similar characteristics that had been settled for a longer time he referred to as "subsistence farm societies." These areas represented a "frontier in arrested development." Lastly, in areas of commercial farming, wealth differences were more pronounced; perhaps a third or more of the population were landless laborers; and merchants, artisans, and professionals were found in greater numbers than anywhere else except in the cities.[6]

Loehr's and Main's perspective on these matters is widely shared. Most historians take the existence of different types of farm enterprises and rural communities in early America for granted. Their principal concern is, first, to identify these types; and, second, to explain when, how, and why one became another. In doing so, most proceed as if there were a well-defined developmental continuum--running between subsistence (or traditional) agriculture at one pole to commercialized (or modern) agriculture at the other--upon which each known and knowable type can be located. Despite the commercial origins of the English settlements in North America, it was generally conceded, most Revolutionary-era farmers and artisans aimed simply at the provision of a comfortable sufficiency. A century later, the countryside had become almost fully commercialized. What happened in between was the puzzle awaiting solution.

Most historians accepted this framework, regardless of when they thought the transition occurred and what it involved. They presented the difference between subsistence and commercial agriculture as more a function of natural necessities than of social and cultural preferences. "If the land was good and markets were close by, or, if transportation to markets was cheap, commercial agriculture developed. Otherwise, the members of the community had to be largely, though of course never entirely, self-sufficient."[7] Almost no one concerned with the question depicted the different types of farm communities as expressions of qualitatively distinct cultures with very different, often contradictory social structures. Instead, they grounded both systems in a common grammar of motives, and simply took for granted the existence of very similar conceptions of self-interest.

Adam Smith spelled out the hidden assumptions behind the developmentalist perspective long ago. In his view, a more and more elaborate division of labor and specialization of tasks increased the potential wealth of all by raising the productivity of each. People everywhere had a "natural propensity to truck, barter, and exchange." The only limits on this propensity--and hence on the expansion of the market and the increased degree of specialization such expansion made possible--were technological and environmental.[8] Many farmers may have praised economic independence, but they were simply making a virtue out of necessity.[9] When they could find a way to market, they took it. "Self-sufficiency, if attainable," Paul Gates argued, "was not the goal of the intelligent farmers; instead they planned to produce something they could trade--better still, something they could sell." Necessity might force them to produce much of what they consumed, but it was inefficient and most farmers knew it.[10] Farmers who concentrated on providing for as much as possible of their families' needs on their own farms were either short-sighted or merely marking time. Their real goal was not a comfortable sufficiency but an acceptable profit margin.[11] Anything else was unintelligent, if not unnatural.

There are, however, other ways to view the situation. According to James Lemon, a farm of average size (125 acres) in southeastern Pennsylvania during the 1760s was likely to dispose of nearly 40 percent of its total product off the farm. Even so, Pennsylvania farmers preferred to grow a wide variety of crops and to manufacture many household necessities rather than specialize in marketable products. This was true of farms near Philadelphia as well as those at some distance from it.[12] What percentage of the surplus was traded locally, and what percentage offered for sale in distant markets? And what prevented farmers from seeking to benefit even more from the "gains to trade" that, in theory, would accrue from greater specialization?

We need to ask these same questions about many farmers in all parts of the country throughout the pre-Civil War era. Were the agricultural reformers of the U.S. Patent Office simply misguided when, in 1852, they urged that as a general rule a farmer should produce what his family consumes. "He may obtain more money from tobacco, hops, or broom corn, than from bread stuffs, but taking all things into consideration, will he be better off?"[13] With all the natural and presumably obvious advantages to specialization, why did the editor of the Working Farmer find it necessary to complain in 1861 of farmers' poor choice of crops? "We often find districts perfectly well-suited to higher priced crops, with adjacent markets, devoted to the raising of low priced staples, and thus continuing from generation to generation. We know of many farms not ten miles distant from New York devoted to the raising of corn, oats, hay, wheat, rye, etc., in competition with western New York, Ohio, and elsewhere and on lands, the interest of which is as great as the fee simple of western farms. In our neighborhood are many farmers who do not realize two percent upon the value of their farms, while market gardeners in their midst are realizing comparative fortunes."[14]

The neo-classical answers to such questions typically involve an appeal to the difficulties inherent in any fundamental change.[15] But ultimately they do not satisfy--for such explanations usually assume the inevitability of the result they intend to explain. Neo-classical theory is a powerful and impressive intellectual tool. But the formal rigor and mathematical logic that makes it so powerful and impressive also leaves it unavoidably ahistorical. In the general equilibrium world of neo-classical theory's simultaneous equations, the periodicities are determined, the adjustments are instantaneous, and the processes are reversible. Moreover, as there is only one mathematics (at least at the applied level where most economists work), there is, in neo-classical theory, only one economic system. Upon close inspection, the neo-classical account of a subsistence economy, will reduce to the neo-classical account of a commercial economy. In a neo-classical world, people do not live in qualitatively different cultures or have qualitatively different ways of life; they seek simply to maximize their income under different natural and technical constraints with alternative allocations of their scarce resources.[16]

Unfortunately, by suppressing substantive differences between subsistence and commercial agriculture in favor of the underlying formal similarities, a neo-classical approach tends to leave the sharp conflicts that accompanied the transition from the one to the other almost wholly out of the picture. For example, Clarence Danhof might note that the "test of family need in determining production did not readily give way to the view that a farm was a source of net money income, with all activities subject to scrutiny from the point of view of money income maximization."[17] But he had little to say about the reasons for this resistance. Nor could he--so long as he viewed the matter simply from the outside, from the standpoint of the commercial system.

From that angle, the resistance to commercialization often appeared (to both contemporary reformers and latter day historians) as little more than lethargy, backwardness, or recalcitrance. But seen from the inside, it has a different, more active aspect--concerned not only to resist the impositions of one way of life but also to enjoy a little longer the benefits of another.

Truly to get inside the subsistence system of early America, however, requires that we try to think of it as an independent and viable form of society--what Marx called a "mode of production." From inside such an alternative, resistance to commercial farming would appear as more than just the absence of conditions favorable to the market; also important would be the presence of traditions, secure in their own "rationality," opposed to a commercial orientation. Such differences can not be reduced to matters of character or personal beliefs. Subsistence farmers had as many reasons to conserve their soils and maximize their output as did their more commercial neighbors, and neither had a monopoly on either knowledge or the willingness to work. The differences were more intractable. Early American farmers found themselves presented with two different ways of doing things, two different ways of life. The inefficient allocation of labor that commercially-minded reformers criticized could be legitimately described as the requirements of independence, just as the avarice of market society could be easily defended as enterprise. The argument between them is not about facts; it is about values. We must try to get to the bottom of their differences.

II

Was the subsistence economy of early America a distinct mode of production? Marx himself devoted little attention to the distinguishing features of such systems, and nothing that he had to say on the subject grew out of any sustained research.[18] Nevertheless, Marx made several interesting suggestions about how to proceed. The first chapters of Capital, in particular, set out an extremely useful framework for distinguishing two different kinds of modes of production--those based on commodified (or commercialized) trade, and those based on other, non-commercial forms of exchange. This framework is the starting point for the analysis that follows. Over the last decade or so, a group of neo-Marxist scholars has demonstrated the importance of so-called "simple commodity production" in the agricultural history of the United States during the last one hundred years. The emphasis here, in contrast, shall be on a non-commercial (or non-commodity) "household mode of production" (as I shall call it), that provided American farmers with a viable, thriving alternative to both simple commodity and capitalist farming until the middle of the nineteenth century.[19]

A "mode of production," for Marx, was a specific way of producing, distributing, and consuming the material and cultural requirements of human life. At first glance, then, it might seem simply another word for "the economy." But the notion of an "economy" and of a "mode of production" have very different genealogies. The neo-classical ancestors of today's economic historians believed economics was "the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses."[20] The propositions discovered by such the science were thus universally applicable to any economic system, regardless of its distinctive social and political features. Marx disavowed such universalist pretensions, arguing instead that different economic systems--different "modes of production"--were governed by their own laws of motion, which it was the job of the economist (or, more precisely, of the political economist) to isolate and describe. At the risk of over-simplifying, an economy can be thought of as the process of production viewed from the standpoint of price system; and a mode of production can be thought of as the same process viewed from the standpoint of the labor system. Where the goal of economics is to explain the relative prices of things (and to predict the effects of changes in those prices on both the production and distribution of wealth), Marx tried instead to understand the ways in which different labor systems effected the distribution of income, wealth, and power in the wider society.

In his analysis of the capitalist mode of production, for example, Marx laid equal stress on two distinct but interrelated characteristics of the system having to do, respectively, with the distribution of products and the organization of labor. First, in the capitalist mode of production, those who actually do the work do not own their own means of production (land, buildings, machinery, raw materials, etc.). Instead, if they were to work (and to live), they had to hire themselves out to a capitalist who did own them. Second, in return for a wage, those who did the work gave up exclusive control over the work process and surrendered their right to the whole product of their labor. Instead they bargained with capitalists (whether formally or informally) to establish, as the terms of their employment, both their working conditions and their wages.[21]

In Marx's usage, then, a mode of production consists of an articulated combination of particular organizations of work (who does it and who doesn't, the techniques and materials used, and the purposes for which it is undertaken); and of particular systems of exchange (who gets what, in return for how much, and for how long).[22] Every mode of production can be classified according to the distinctive features of either system. In keeping with Marx's original discussion of the capitalist system, most of his intellectual heirs have preferred to emphasize the former, distinguishing the various modes of production on the basis of their labor systems--whether slave, bound labor, or wage labor. But modes of production can also be classified according to the distinctive features of their exchange systems.

In fact, despite the usual emphasis, analyzing modes of production from the standpoint of their labor systems depends upon the prior analysis of their distinctive exchange systems. In Marx's view, the labor process did not distinguish one mode of production from the next; rather, the labor system as a whole did so--in particular, the rules that govern its allocation among alternative tasks. For example, Marx defined the capitalist mode of production as that system of production in which the rights to an individual's labor power could be bought and sold independently from the rights to his or her whole person (in contrast to slavery), and for almost any period of time without any continuing obligations (in contrast to feudal systems of bound labor).

Moreover, the analysis did not simply stop there. Marx also insisted that the system of labors and the system of products must necessarily be brought into alignment in every mode of production. He called this necessity the "law of value." And he distinguished modes of production on the basis of the distinctive ways in which the law of value asserted itself--that is, according to the different ways in which the distribution of labors and products affected and reinforced each other.[23] In a commodity mode of production (or, if you will, a commercial economy), the distribution of labors and the distribution of products aligned itself through the exchange value or prices of the products.[24] Commercial (or commodity) producers do not directly associate with one another either to organize their work or to distribute its fruits. Work is performed by private individuals whose social relations are mediated by the exchange of the products of their labor.[25] As a result, the necessary alignment of the labors and products in a commercial or commodity system brought in its wake periodic disruptions of the process of social reproduction, the booms and busts known as "the business cycle."

Marx, of course, thought he knew a better way to do things. Under socialism, when society itself "enters into the possession of the means of production and uses them in direct association for production," then the labour of each individual, however varied, became "immediately and directly social labour."[26] In such a mode of production, the alignment of labors and products occurred automatically, according to a rational plan, and without the disruptions of the business cycle. Moreover, products in such a system were no longer "exchange values," technically speaking, and the rate of profit no longer determined the demand for labor. Instead, labor's allocation among society's multitude of needs was determined by the "useful effects of the various articles of consumption compared with each other, and with the quantity of labour required for their production."[27]

We need not share Marx's faith in socialist planning to find useful guidance in his analysis of modes of production. If we wish to argue that the subsistence economy of early America was a distinctive, non-commodity (or non-commercial) mode of production, we need first to analyze the quantitative and qualitative relations between the labors and products in each of its sub-systems. Having done so, we must then study the way in which these two systems are brought into alignment with each other--the effect of each on the overall distribution of income, wealth, and power in the wider society. In each case, we need to pay particular attention to the characteristic forms of exchange operating within and between each sub-system.

To some this emphasis might seem out of step with much past and present commentary on Marx. Such a perception, however, would be unwarranted. Production, for Marx, did not refer simply or even primarily to the transformation of raw materials into intermediate and final products. Even in his most famous and most concise statement of the "guiding principles" of his work, Marx was careful to distinguish the "relations of production" from the "material forces."[28] Production, he held, had above all to be seen for what it was: a particular organization of social labor, the labor of individuals in society. Paying proper attention to the role of exchange in defining the character of the system of labors, the system of products, and the relationship between them, did not mean focusing on distribution at the expense of production. As Marx pointed out, "the form of exchange of products corresponds to the form of production."[29]

To others, this emphasis might also seem to neglect class divisions. But this perception, too, is misdirected. Classes are defined in the first instance by the distribution of products that function as means of production. The class struggle everywhere concerns the division of the products and the labors of society--that is, who gets what and who works for whom. Focusing on the exchange system requires, first, that we show how the distribution of the concrete labors of society among the different tasks ensures the reproduction of the society as a whole; and, second, that we trace the distribution of the necessary and surplus labors of society among the different classes. Nothing less will do.

III

A "mode of production," in other words, is a set of relations between labors and products. "Self-sufficient" or "subsistence" agriculture is merely the name for one particular set of such relations. But what does this set consist of? As noted above, the traditional view that the "farm family produced for themselves food, clothing, house furnishings, farm implements, in fact practically everything they needed," can no longer be accepted.[30] The work of Grant and Lemon, among others, has demonstrated that exchange played an important part in the economic life of early American farm families.[31]

Unfortunately, their salutary corrective to the older view has led to another confusion. The mere fact of exchange can not be taken as a priori evidence of the existence of commodity exchange, as Marx pointed out in Chapter I of Capital, and as economic anthropologists have demonstrated again and again for societies all over the world.[32] The subsistence agriculture of early America was not a commodity (or commercial) mode of production. On the contrary, in the household mode of production, individuals directly co-ordinated their labor, in a decentralized way, and they exchanged products on the basis of need rather than price. Exchange value as a social category--as a form of the relations among labors and products--simply did not play the determining role in the organization of production, even though there was exchange.

Marx mentioned two conditions that had to be met before exchange value could play such determining role, one in the realm of products and the other in the realm of labors. Exchange value, he argued, only existed as an "'objective' property" of an article of trade, and thus could play a role in the organization of production, where money mediated the exchange of products; and, where individual producers worked independently of each other, co-ordinating their labor through the exchange of products. In other words, a product could have use value whenever it satisfied some need; but it could not be an exchange value until after the differentiation of products into commodities and money.

Such, at least, was the burden of Marx's argument in the notoriously difficult first chapters of Capital:

> Money necessarily crystallizes out of the process of exchange, in which different products of labour are in fact equated with each other, and thus converted into

> commodities. The historical broadening and deepening of the phenomenon of exchange develops the opposition between use-value and value [i.e., exchange value] which is latent in the nature of the commodity. The need to give an external expression to this opposition for the purposes of commercial intercourse produces the drive towards an independent form of value, which neither finds rest nor peace until an independent form has been achieved by the differentiation of commodities into commodities and money. At the same rate, then, as the transformation of the products of labour into commodities is accomplished, one particular commodity is transformed into money.[33]

From which it followed that where money did not play the role Marx assigned to it in commercial transactions, the products being exchanged were not commodities.

The existence of commodities (in the technical sense of a product whose use value has become its exchange value) also depended upon the existence of particular kinds of relations among the concrete labors of society. Where the social relations of the producers were not those of a commercial mode of production, the products were not commodities. Commodity producers have no connection to one another except that provided by the market, and co-ordinate their separate labors by exchanging products in proportion with their relative value. In non-commodity modes, on the contrary, people "bring their products of labour into relation with each other as values because they see objects merely as the material integuments of homogeneous human labour." The exchange of products takes place as an inevitable but secondary result of co-operation in labor. "The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour on the basis of commodity production, vanishes therefore as soon as we come to other forms of production."[34]

Neither of these conditions for the existence of a commodity mode of production was present in the relations between farmers and artisans in rural America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A complete and detailed proof of this proposition will have to wait for later, but the form that the proof should take is as follows: We must establish, first, that money did not mediate the exchange of products; and, second, that individuals constantly co-operated in their work. With regard to the first of these conditions, it will not be enough simply to note the persistent complaints about money shortages. Such complaints concerned the shortage of particular kinds of money--such as specie or government-backed securities--that were preferred to other instruments--such as personal notes--that were already, if inadequately, serving to mediate monetary relations. The absence of any particular kind of money does not concern us; it is the absence of the money relation itself that is significant. (In the household mode of production, if you will, there was cash but not money.) And, with regard to the second condition, we must show not only that people worked together, but also that their co-operation in work governed the character of their product exchanges rather than *vice versa*.

In order to show that the product exchanges in the household mode of production were not mediated by money, we need to reconstruct individual exchange networks from surviving account books and other related material. For instance, from the account book of Cornelius Brink, a Hudson River valley farmer who died in 1817, we can piece together a partial picture of his exchange relations during the last three years of his life. Each of the twenty-five separate accounts in Brink's book tells the same story. Henry Plough was credited with the equivalent of L12.3.0, primarily for his and his wife's labor, but there was also an entry for L1.4.0 "cash" which Plough gave Brink. Meanwhile, on the debit side, Plough owed Brink the equivalent of L14.4.0, for such things as "pasturing calf," "going to Mill," "going to the ridge with ashes," and an amount of cloth. Or consider Brink's accounts with James Dunagin. On the credit side Dunagin has made ten pairs of shoes for the Brink family, while Dunagin was debited for "100 Herring," "drawing one Load of Wood," "one bushel of potatoes," and "two bushels of rye." In each case, the exchange of products was not mediated by money and separated into "two independent and antithetical acts." Rather, it appeared as one act involving two different producers, each with a direct interest in the concrete labor, or actual use values of the other.[35]

Of the many possible objections to this analysis, there are three that must be confronted here. As indicated above, "cash" was involved in some of the transactions between Brink and his exchange partners. What role did this "cash" play? Might we not be dealing with an example of commodity exchange mediated by the so-called "credit-money" that Marx analyzed in the third section of the third chapter of Capital? "Credit-money," Marx wrote, "springs directly out of the function of money as a means of payment, in that certificates of debts owing for already purchased commodities themselves circulate for the purpose of transferring those debts to others. On the other hand, the function of money as a means of payment undergoes expansion in proportion as the system of credit itself expands."[36] However, the credits these small rural producers granted each other did not circulate in the same fashion as the bills of exchange merchants passed back and forth between one another, often over very long distances. It was an exceptional circumstance for a credit that Mark had in Matthew's book to come round and cancel out a debt that Mark owed Luke. In fact, people were more likely to swap work than promissory notes, with Matthew performing work for Luke that Mark would have otherwise performed. There is even positive evidence of this negative event in the local archives. Executors occasionally obtained promissory notes from an estate's debtors, formally acknowledging their obligations. But of the hundreds of such notes in the probate records of Ulster County, only a handful were endorsed and passed onto a third party.

If the credits between Brink and his partners did not circulate as "cash," the transactions between them did not exemplify monetary/commodity relationships. Neither, therefore, did the occasional appearance of "cash" in the accounts signal their presence. When "cash" changed hands in these transactions, it was not, in Marx's terms, a "means of payment", where the "value-form of the commodity, money, has...become the self-sufficient purpose for the sale."[37] On the contrary, the "cash" in these exchanges functioned merely as a particular use value, an object of definable qualities and particular uses, which was required from time to time in order to meet the particular needs imposed on the community by its unavoidable relations with the larger world. In this context, it is significant that one can find entries for "cash" on either side of the ledger, in the middle of a long list of other items, and with no visible interest charges. The aim of these transactions was not the maximization of a monetary surplus at the end of a certain period, when the balances were struck and the accounts called in. They did not result in "surplus values" flowing repeatedly toward, and being accumulated by, some members of society, while flowing continually away from, and being lost to, everyone else. Rather they facilitated the co-operative, locally-planned sharing of labor among the several members of an exchange community.

Second, what should we make of the fact that "money of account" was used to record each of the transactions in Brink's book? Does that alone reveal them to be "monetary" relations? No. The fact that each product or act of labor was equated, in the imagination, to the prevailing standards of price was by no means the same thing as exchanging them for money. "Every owner of commodity knows," Marx observed, "that he is nowhere near turning them into gold when he has given their value the form of a price or of imaginary gold, and that it does not require the tiniest particle of real gold to give a valuation in gold of millions of pounds' worth of commodities."[38] Why certain money-equivalents and not others were used remains to be determined, but the use of money-of-account can not hide the social relations characteristic of the household mode of production. People entered into exchanges with one another in this form not in order that they might transform their own products into a universal equivalent, but in order that they might obtain with it particular equivalents--specific use values--directly, and without the mediation of money.

Finally, it could be objected to this whole line of argument that if commodity exchanges were taking place, there would be no need to enter them into an account book. Thus, even if the recorded transactions were not traces of monetary relationships, strictly speaking, how do we know that there were not many other unrecorded transactions which were examples of monetary/commodity exchange? Truthfully, we can never be absolutely sure one way or another.[39] But there is evidence that the transactions people failed to record were no different than the ones they did record. To begin with, we know that it was common practice for tradesmen to accept in payment various kinds of "country produce." The advertisements of merchants and artisans in local papers habitually included an announcement to the effect that "all kinds of grain, viz., wheat, rye, flax-seed, etc., etc., will be received in payment."[40] The usual interpretation given such announcements is that other products besides money could represent exchange value--becoming thereby an instance of "commodity money"--and serve as means of payment. But couldn't we equally well reverse matters, and consider "cash" merely another product, one useful item among many?

This reverse identification was explicitly made and fully recognized in Ulster County in the 1790s. Samuel Freer, editor of the Kingston Rising Sun, reminded his readers that "wheat, rye, Indian corn, as well as cash, or anything that is good to eat," would be accepted in payment for the paper.[41] Calling "cash" something "good to eat" is a better way of saying that it was most properly a use value. "Cash"--the ultimate means of payment--appeared to be merely another product. Why else would merchants have advertised for farmers to bring them their products and then offered to give them "cash" for these products "if required?"[42] Such an option makes no sense in a system of commodity exchange, in which cash is always required. Because of the nature of the social relations among producers in a commodity mode of production, taking money in return for one's products or labors is not an option but a necessity. Only in a non-commodity mode of production, where "cash" functioned as a particular use value, necessary for some purposes but not for them all, is it reasonable to assume that "cash" would be either so infrequently asked for, or so infrequently offered, that a storekeeper would want to advertise that it was available to those who _might_ need it.

Without a more thorough analysis of many accounts, the case against money-mediated exchanges and _a fortiori_, against the existence of commodity relations among households in early America, must remain inconclusive. There is, however, considerable circumstantial evidence in support of this case. When we shift our attention away from the exchange of products toward the relations among the people themselves, the case becomes stronger. Even incomplete attention to well known facts about the organization of labor in early America demonstrates that personal relations in co-operative work governed the exchange of products rather than the reverse, as is the case in a commodity or commercial mode of production.

In the household mode of production, products followed labor rather than _vice versa_, and we can see evidence of this priority everywhere. The accounts of Brink and Dunagin, for example, record shared labor rather than shared products. Entries for "two bushels of rye" were only a short hand for what was really being exchanged: the labor necessary to grow and harvest two bushels of rye. This custom of "changing work" was very general, according to Ulysses P. Hedrick, a member of the staff of the Geneva, New York, Agricultural Extension Station from 1905 to

1938. As he correctly pointed out, the custom "depended upon the same principle as that of bartering products of the farm for products of the store."[43] Farmers in Pennsylvania before 1840 "often swapped work," as their historian, Stevenson Fletcher, has told us, "and there was free exchange of equipment," a practice that was necessary "since both hired help and money to pay them or to purchase equipment was scarce."[44]

Such acts of "neighborliness" are even less likely than other exchanges to appear in the records left to us, but their importance in the daily routine of early American householders must not be underestimated. Borrowing and lending were vices of the average farmer that agricultural reformers felt compelled to advise against frequently.[45] Even now non-monetary exchanges of this sort remain important in North American agricultural communities, as John Bennett's study of farmers and ranchers in Western Saskatchewan has shown. Ninety-five percent of the ranchers and cattle farmers in his sample participated in cooperative brandings and round-ups; 80 percent lent or borrowed at least one piece of agricultural equipment each month; 95 percent were members of "dyadic partnerships;" 50 percent were members of one or more exchange networks involving three or more people.[46] Piecemeal, small-scale sharing of labor and tools was occasionally supplemented by larger, cooperative enterprises. A nineteenth-century account of farming in early York County, Pennsylvania, remembered that "neighboring farmers assisted each other" in the harvest. "Ten, fifteen and sometimes as many as a hundred reapers, both men and women, worked in one field."[47] Building houses, husking corn, butchering hogs, making cider and spinning could all have been the occasion for collective work.[48] And sometimes, "faced with the manure accumulation of years, farmers often invited neighbors to a 'dung frolic'."[49]

More tellingly for my argument, the exchange of products took the form of the direct exchange of labor not only among farmers but also between farmers and artisans. Townspeople, for example, often helped in the harvest.[50] Rural artisans did not produce for general sale to anonymous buyers. Instead they solicited "custom work" from their neighbors, producing a finished product to the specifications of their "customer," who often provided the raw materials, too. Lemuel Winchel, upon opening a forge in Marbletown, New York, advertised in the local paper, promising "to have a constant supply for all who will please to favor him with their custom."[51] John DeWitt arranged to pick up wool cloth "with proper directions" from "all persons who please to favor him with their custom," at convenient spots to which he would return the finished product.[52] In eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, "butchers, shoemakers, tailors, and tinkers were often itinerant, using the raw materials provided by consumers to finish goods."[53] "Most articles that artisans made, Carl Bridenbaugh concluded in his study of colonial craftsmen, "were what were known as 'spoken' or 'bespoke goods'; that is, made to order for a customer." This was especially so in rural villages.[54]

The exchange of products in early America occurred most frequently as the result of the direct cooperation of different labors. Local governments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enacted a welter of economic regulations restricting the free exchange of products. An entire judicial and legislative edifice had to be dismantled before commodity production could gain sway in the countryside.[55] For example, the Board of Supervisors of Kingston, New York, situated directly on the Hudson River in the heart of the supposed commercial farming district, required that the rent returned by inhabitants of the town for parts of the commons be paid in winter wheat, the price of which the Supervisors regulated. The wheat received in this way was not exported but kept for local use, and an upper limit of two to four bushels was set on the amount any inhabitant could buy from the common store.[56]

Moreover, the law against what we could call "commodity practices" did not have to be written down to be felt. Hoarding a store of grain in hopes of higher prices instead of selling at the going rate to people in need was frequently and roundly condemned.[57] Established practice determined the expected rate of exchange between products or kinds of work. Any change in these rates was resisted. As late as 1838, a farmer reported to Jesse Buel, the editor of the Albany Cultivator and the Whig candidate for governor of New York in 1836, that he had for some months been weighing the grain he carried to the gristmill to be made into flour. Much to his surprise he discovered that the miller was exacting a toll of 20 percent rather than the customary 10. Isn't there a law, the farmer wanted to know. As far as Buel knew, there wasn't. But he agreed there should be. "At present custom, which in the absence of law, has the binding force of law, seems to have settled the toll at 10 percent. If the miller can with impunity take twenty, he may by the same rule take 50 percent."[58] Indeed he might. And in a world where he might, the farmer would be well advised always to weigh every thing, and to pinch his pennies. Such is the law of commodity practices.

Besides setting restrictions on the free flow of commodities, local law and custom governed the overall division of labor in the community. If the concrete requirements of labor governed the exchange of products between individuals in the household mode of production, the "public good" governed the proportional distribution of the total social labor, to the degree that such an elusive object could be determined by the deliberations of the citizens of the region and ensured by the accumulated custom. The "law of value" in the household mode, in other words, was more a matter of politics than economics. The minutes of the Board of Supervisors in Kingston, for example, are filled with the efforts of the Trustees to allocate portions of the town commons to those with legitimate needs for it, and to control the exploitation of the rest of it so that all the residents of the town might enjoy its resources in common. Even the practice of requiring prospective residents to post a bond before being allowed to settle in the community can be seen in this light. Such procedures not only ensured that indigent persons did not become public charges; they also regulated the number of people practicing a trade in the area. Thus, in Kingston in the 1790s a resident was asked to assume responsibility for a blacksmith who wanted to settle in the area.[59] Such functions for "warning out" would, of course, be of little moment in a new and expanding community. But in the older and long settled regions of the East, they would serve to protect established traders from potentially ruinous competition.

A commodity is a "social hieroglyphic" whose secret lies in the fact that in commodity modes of production the exchange of products is the only way in which the private labors of independent producing units is co-ordinated. The household mode of production is a different animal. Where money does not mediate the exchange of products, the social relations among producers cannot be commodity relations. If they were, money would "necessarily crystallize out of the process of exchange." The absence of any universal equivalent playing its assigned role is *a priori* evidence that we are dealing with a non-commodity mode of production.

Commodity and non-commodity modes of production are to be distinguished from each other in particular by the fact that the relations between product exchanges and labor exchanges are reversed. In commodity modes of production labor follows products. Relations between people present themselves as relations between things. In a non-commodity mode, products follow labor. The organization of labor is accomplished directly through personal relations among the producers. Early American farmers were not self-sufficient, but the fact that their connections with each other were more often labor exchanges than product exchanges may have contributed to the illusion that they were. Observers used to a commodity world usually only see market relations. The inhabitants of early America, for their part, lived in a non-commodity world. Money did not mediate exchange. Exchange took place as a natural part of the co-operation of the concrete labor of individuals and groups within the community.

IV

In a stimulating essay on household production and agrarian societies, Harriet Friedmann has insisted upon the importance of distinguishing clearly between peasants and simple commodity producers. In each case, the household is the primary unit of both production and interaction with the rest of the world. But the similarities end there. Peasant households reproduce themselves outside of the market, through "direct, non-monetary ties" to other households or classes, which guarantee them access to land, labor, credit, and trade goods. Simple commodity producers, in contrast, depend upon commodity or commercial relations to obtain both their means of production and subsistence. As a result, the former have over and over again proved themselves remarkably resistant to commercialization (or commodification), while the latter have always been necessarily integrated into and dependent upon the wider capitalist economy.[60]

Obviously, there are striking similarities between

Friedmann's "peasants" and the household producers described above. Nor is the resemblance accidental. Immigration to the New World has always been closely linked to the disintegration of "traditional" peasant societies in Europe and elsewhere, and the spread of "modern" commercial relationships. Settlers came to North America not only intent upon reproducing the way of life they had known, but also determined to escape those structures of power that had enabled an unproductive aristocracy to appropriate for its own enjoyment a burdensome share of the social product. In doing so, New World immigrants did not seek immediately to become individualistic commodity producers, dependent for their livelihood upon what Jefferson called "the casualties and caprices of customers." They sought rather to reproduce the reciprocal communal ties, both egalitarian and hierarchical, that had been the best guarantee of their family's security, despite the taxes laid upon their labors by a self-important aristocracy given to conspicuous consumption. At the same time, they also did everything in their power--not excluding war and revolution--to resist not only the commercialization (or commodification) of these ties, but also the continual attempts to re-establish aristocratic power and pretense in North America.[61]

The so-called "subsistence" agriculture of Revolutionary America represents an intriguing instance, therefore, of the "independent household production" that Friedmann included on her list of identifiable "forms of 'peasant' production."[62] For one thing, they were among the first in modern times successfully to establish their complete political and economic independence from aristocratic and capitalist Europe. Having done so, for most of the next half-century, they continued to insist that commercialization occur (if at all) on their terms, and they strongly resisted every attempt by home-grown capitalists to win for themselves the perquisites and privileges enjoyed by the moneyed men of Europe. On the contrary, the class of small producers brought to power by the Revolution enabled the United States to pursue, during their first several decades, a uniquely enlightened set of developmental policies that not only raised the living standard of the vast majority of the population but also continued the democratization of American society begun by the Revolution. It is a record almost without parallel in modern history.[63]

There will be more to say about these themes later on. Here we need only remember Friedmann's salutary insistence that we distinguish clearly between the effernescent "form" of 'peasant' economy I have called the "household mode of production" and other commodity (or commercial) systems. Unless we do, it will be impossible to understand the difficulty of the transition to capitalism in the United States. **During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the dominant social base of opposition to capitalist forms of production in the United States was the non-commodity household economy found throughout the countryside. Simple commodity producers invariably find themselves deeply implicated in capital's survival, and the failure to distinguish between them and non-commercial household producers has misled many students of the transition.** Fortunately, there is a growing literature on the distinguishing characteristics of household, simple commodity, and capitalist production. For our present purposes, we need only be concerned with the following four areas: 1) the conditions for social reproduction; 2) the formal conditions of exchange; 3) the goal of production; and, 4) the character of the social structure (or class relations).

Reproduction. The first and most decisive difference between the household mode of production and both simple commodity and capitalist production is that the former can reproduce itself outside the market. In the household mode of production, families obtain their means of subsistence and reproduction either from within the family itself, or through their reciprocal communal ties with others in their circle. It is of no consequence how much of the family's total income accrues to it in this manner--whether 5 percent or 95 percent.

The only issue is whether the family can, if they so desire, acquire the amount necessary to sustain and reproduce the family unit through time without, so to speak, spending a dime.

Simple commodity producers, on the contrary, secure the income necessary for their reproduction through the market, where they are in direct competition with other producers, including capitalists. This circumstance forces simple commodity producers continually to degrade the value of their labor, and to find ways of increasing its productivity so that they cannot be undersold. Artisans and farmers who own their own means of production and are caught in a market squeeze can, as Marx noted, exploit themselves if they wish, playing the wage laborer to their own capital. But in most occupations--farming being the most prominent exception--they must eventually succumb to the squeeze, becoming either a petty capitalist, exploiting the labor of others, or a full-fledged wage laborer.[64]

Exchange. In a capitalist mode of production, the exchange of both inputs and outputs is mediated by money, and at the end of a given period of production the money realized through the sale of the latter must be greater than the amount necessary to replace the former. The existence of capitalists as a class depends upon this condition. In simple commodity production, the exchange of inputs and outputs is also mediated by money; but the enterprise (in most cases, a family) need not earn a profit. It is enough that the revenue realized from the sale of the output equals the cost of the inputs used up in the process. As Friedmann showed, this difference explains the survival of family farms in spite of direct competition from capitalist farmers--with whom, according to the received wisdom, all the advantages ought to lie.[65]

Household producers, too, need not earn a profit. But where simple commodity producers must keep each of their separate business or trading accounts paid up to avoid interest charges, families in the household mode of production can be in debt to one another for years without any interest being charged, often without any payment whatsoever changing hands. Commodity producers threaten their credit worthiness--and therefore their independence--if they fail to balance their accounts. They thus have a much greater demand for cash, or an equivalent means of payment. Householders, who reproduce themselves independently of the market, are not under the same compulsion. They can, if necessary, defer their obligations almost without limit. In the household mode of production, people can remain continually in debt to some trading partners, so long as others are willingly to extend further credit to them. This feature of the reciprocal exchange networks characteristic of the household mode of production both reduces the mystery behind the "vast tangle of debts" that historians have found in rural communities during the eighteenth century, and explains why these debts were not a burden.[66] Rather than separating people into classes, they bound them together into a community.

Production. The household mode of production also differs from the capitalist and simple commodity modes of production because enterprises in each system are managed to achieve different goals. The purpose of capitalist production, of course, is to make a profit equal to that which could be earned elsewhere. Simple commodity production, in contrast, is governed by the individual needs of each enterprise. Commercially-oriented family farmers need only earn as enough to ensure themselves and their families a decent standard of living. Household production, however, is regulated by neither profit nor individual needs alone; it is regulated by perceived social need. Householders produce use-values for themselves and use-values for others. The latter, of course, is a necessary condition for any exchange. But unlike the situation in capitalist or simple commodity production, the use-values-for-others are not produced to meet a generalized demand. Instead, they are usually produced for specific persons, to meet their specific needs.

Social Structure. Each of these modes of production also has a different social structure. In the capitalist and simple commodity modes of production, owners of products confront each other in the market as so many private producers of different commodities. The social character of their labor is expressed indirectly as a relation of exchange, and directly as a relation of production--that is, they cooperate in production through the market. In the household mode of production, in contrast, individual producers cooperate directly in the process of production, through personal ties and reciprocal exchange relationships.

Each mode also has a distinctive class structure. In capitalist production, the only commodity some people have to sell is their labor power. Those with more to sell than their labor power become potential capitalists, those with only their labor power, potential proletarians--each confronting the other in the market as two great, differentially advantaged classes, exploiters and exploited. In simple commodity and household production, class relations are not market relations but personal. In them, the exploited class very likely consists of family members, or those who live among them. At the same time, the distinctive requirements of reproduction in the household mode of production enable householders to be in the market but not of it. Simple commodity producers have no choice but to be both. As a result, however, they occupy a contradictory class location--both capitalist and worker.[67]

Many complex issues remain to be resolved. I have only been able to present a preliminary account of the "household mode of production" as it really existed. All the hard work remains to be done. Modes of production do not stalk around on the surfaces of society, immediately visible to the untutored eye. Rather they exist underneath the surface of everyday life as faint but discoverable patterns in the way people relate to one another. To see one requires intellectual work and empirical research. We will have proof of the existence of the household mode of production when we are convinced that its concept is necessary to understand early American society and the way it functioned to reproduce its distinctive social relations despite the contradictory demands of private ownership and a social division of labor.

Of course, it shares this challenge with commodity modes of production. The difference between them is that each suspends the contradiction in a different fashion. As Marx noted in Chapter 3 of Capital, "the exchange of commodities implies contradictory and mutually exclusive conditions. The further development of the commodity does not abolish these contradictions, but rather provides the form within which they have room to move. This is, in general, the way in which real contradictions are resolved."[68] In the household mode of production, one did not find the further development of commodities into commodities and money. One did not, therefore, find commodities at all, strictly speaking. But there are other ways to resolve the tension between private ownership and socialized labor, as the history of early American society can teach us. The household mode of production is the concept of one of those ways.

In fact, if I may draw this point out a bit more, many of the ambiguities of democratic republicanism in the United States seem to be litle more than ideological reflections of contradictions within the household mode of production. The fact each unit possessed its land in fee simple, and confronted other units in society as the absolute owners of their product, resulted in both independence and equality--the former the result of the system of production and the latter the result of the system of exchange. However, as I have argued, the requirements of the local division of labor set strict limits to this equality. Each household could be only independent only if it willingly surrendered its autonomy to other households by entering into a network of entangling transactions and reciprocal obligations that nearly everyone indebted to someone else. Each household was, in other words, singularly bound up with the "public good."

Secondly, the exchange-engendered equality between households did not automatically extend itself to the relations within them. The households--or more precisely, their social representatives, married adult males--may have enjoyed considerable equality, but other members of the household did not. They were instead dependents of the household head; and it was not such a long step from such household dependence to slavery--especially when, as Edmund Morgan pointed out, slaves did not have to be created, only purchased.[69] That democratic republicans could issue a Declaration of Independence insisting all men were created equal, and still keep Africans and African Americans as chattel slaves, therefore, should surprise us no more, and no less, than the fact that they refused the Rights of Man to women.

The household mode of production existed for a long time in Europe as well as in the United States--if only as the ideal to which peasants aspired if given an opportunity. But while it had an important and still largely unappreciated place in the history of other areas of the world, I think it enjoyed its full flowering in the United States during the period 1750 to 1850. As I have suggested, the ambiguities of democratic republicanism in the United States directly reflect the ambiguities and contradictions of the actual experience. Somewhere in this direction lies the way to a radical interpretation of the American Revolution that not only pays its due respects to the important discoveries of Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood, but also establishes its links to the long tradition of peasant revolts that have always posed the greatest threat to landed aristocracies both before and since.[70]

More than that, I think we will find here a way to a more unified interpretation of the United States before the Civil War. When the household mode of production, as I have defined it, is recognized as the mediating link between slavery on the one hand and capitalism on the other--links which are specifiable--it will be possible to overcome not only the pronounced sectional bias of much recent historiography, but also the ahistorical separation of slavery itself from other parts of Southern history.[71] The requirements of household production make intelligible many of the more important features of the social movements of the 1830s and 1840s. Anti-bankism, Fourierist socialism, Mormonism and Land Reform all were specific, distorted but energetic attempts to ward off the impending eclipse of the household mode. The ferment of the Jacksonian age seems to be, as the Progressives once tried to tell us but did not know how, the symptoms of a general crisis in the mode of production that had established itself on the North American continent more firmly than anywhere else, had come to power in the first successful revolt against a modern imperial system, and then was defeated on its home terrain by an upstart capitalism. And actually, when told that way, it is not such a surprising story after all.

ENDNOTES

1. Percy Bidwell and John Falconer, History of Agriculture in the Northern States (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1926), 115, 126, 129-130.

2. Rodney C. Loehr, "Self-sufficiency on the Farm," Agricultural History 26 (April 1952), 38. There is now an large literature on the role of the market and the transition to capitalism in the U.S. countryside. For recent discussions see Christopher Clark, et al., "The Transition to Capitalism in America: A Panel Discussion," The History Teacher 27 (May 1994), 264-288; and, Michael Merrill, "Puttin g'Capitalism' in its Place: A Review of Recent Literature," The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., 52 (April 1995), 315-326.

3. Darrett Rutman, Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630-1649 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1965), 248-249.

4. Charles Grant, Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent (New York, 1961), pp. 31-32. The most influential exponent of this view, of course, was Richard Hofstadter, who taught at Columbia, where Grant did his Ph.D. See The American Political Tradition (New York, 1948) and The Age of Reform (New York,

1956). John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard organized their compendious synthesis of colonial economic history around the the role of the market and the centrality of the export trade. See The Economy of British America, 1607-1789 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985).

5. Loehr, "Self-sufficiency, 37-41. The quote is from page 41.

6. Jackson Turner Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton, 1965), 18, 39-41.

7. Main, Social Structure, p. 18; See Bruchey, Growth, 15; Robert D. Mitchell, "The Commercial Nature of Frontier Settlement in the Shenendoah Valley of Virginia," Proceedings of the Association of American Geographers I (1969), 109-113; and Paul Gates, "Problems of Agricultural History, 1790-1840," in Farming in the New Nation, D. Kelsey, ed., (Washington, D.C., 1972), 41, for other examples of this argument.

8. Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations (New York, 1937), 3-29.

9. Charles Danhof, Change in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820-1870 (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 16. See also Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth (New York, 1965), 28.

10. Paul Gates, The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860 (New

York, 1960), 413.

11. Most economic historians would probably accept Douglas Dowd's critical judgment that among those "who set the tone of farming, the intention was to make money, not subsistence from the land." Douglas Dowd, The Twisted Dream: Capitalist Development in the United States Since 1776. First Edition. (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 153.

12. James T. Lemon, Best Poor Man's Country (Baltimore, 1972), Chapter VI.

13. Danhof, Change, 23.

14. Ibid., 148-149.

15. For example, Stuart Bruchey argued that "the effects of developments that enhance the efficiency of productive effort are not felt everywhere at once. These developments make their way with varying rates of speed through the geographic regions, sectors, industries and firms of which an economy is composed. Sometimes they encounter opposition from firms desiring to protect older techniques imbedded in investment. Sometimes mere slowness of entrepreneurial imagination is at work." Growth, 32.

16. See the chapter on "Agriculture" by William Parker in Lance Davis, et al., American Economic Growth: An Economist's History

of the United States (New York, 1972).

17. Danhof, Change, 17.

18. The most important references are Karl Marx, Capital, (New York: International Publishers, 1967), vol. II, 115-117; and, vol. III, 782-813. Idem., Theories of Surplus Value, vol. I (Moscow, 1963), 407-409; and Frederick Engels, "Law of Value and Rate of Profit," in Capital, vol. III, 891-907. There are also scattered references in the important analysis of money in the Grundrisse (Middlesex, Eng., 1973).

19. For introductions to this literature, see Frederick H. Buttel, Olaf F. Larson, and Gilbert W. Gillespie, The Sociology of Agriculture (New York, 1990), especially Chapters 3 and 5; and Alison MacEwen Scott, "Why Rethink Petty commodity Production," Social Analysis: Journal of Cultural and Social Practice 20 (December 1986), 3-11.

20. Lionel Robbins, An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science (London, 1949), 16.

21. See, in general, Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (3 vols., Harmondsworth, England, 1976-1981).

22. For example, Etienne Balibar, "The Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism," in Reading Capital (London, 1970); Bob

Rowthorn, "Neo-Classicism, Neo-Ricardianism and Marxism," New Left Review 86 (July-August 1974), 63-87; and Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital (New York, 1974). I also learned a lot from Ronald Meek, Studies in the Labour Theory of Value (London, 1956).

23. Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, Selected Correspondence (Moscow, 1975), 196.

24. Ibid.

25. Karl Marx, Capital, vol. I, (London, 1976), 132; 165-166.

26. Frederich Engels, Anti-Durhing (New York, 1939), 337; and Marx, Capital, vol. I, 171-172. See also, Charles Bettleheim, Economic Calculation and the Forms of Property (New York, 1975).

27. Engels, Anti-Duhring, 338. Engels was here describing his notion of how production would be organized under socialism. As we shall see, aspects of his account are also applicable to the actually existing social relations among independent producers in agrarian America.

28. Karl Marx, A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy (Moscow, 1970), 20.

29. Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (New York, 1963), 78.

30. Bidwell and Falconer, History of Agriculture, 126.

31. Lemon, Best Poor Man's Country, 27; Grant, Democracy, 34-39.

32. For an introduction to anthropological thinking on this question, see Paul Bohannan, ed., Markets in Africa (Evanston, Ill., 1968); Marshall Sahlins, Stone Age Economics (Chicago, 1972); Christopher A. Gregory, Gifts and Commodities London and New York, 1983); Lewis Hyde, The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property (New York, 1983); and, Marcel Mauss, The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies W.D. Halls, trans. (London and New York, 1990). My own conception owes most to Claude Levi-Strauss's distinction between restricted and generalized exchange systems as elaborated in The Elementary Structures of Kinship (Boston, 1969).

33. Marx, Capital, I, 181. A word of warning: the original, published version of this essay confused the question whether a product *has* an exchange value with whether it *is* an exchange value. I have changed the text substantially on this point. All products taken in exchange for something else have an exchange value. But only "commodities"--i.e., products in which all other properties are subordinated to their value in exchange--were in Marx's terms "exchange values," technically speaking.

34. _Ibid_., 166-169. The quote is from page 166, and betrays a certain interpretative license on my part. By my account, Marx should have written "the material integuments of directly associated human labor."

35. Box 41, Estate Papers, Ulster County Surrogate Court, Kingston, New York.

36. Marx, _Capital_, 238.

37. _Ibid_., 234.

38. _Ibid_., 190.

39. However, see the very important work of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich on the nature of the unrecorded exchanges among women in "Martha Ballard and Her Girls: Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Maine," in Stephen Innes, ed., _Work and Labor in Early America_ (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1988), 70-105.

40. Kingston _Rising Sun_, May 7, 1796.

41. Kingston _Rising Sun_, Sept. 19, 1794; Oct. 17, 1794.

42. Kingston _Rising Sun_, Sept. 9, 1796.

43. Ulysses P. Hedrick, _A History of Agriculture in the State of New York_ (New York, 1966), 205.

44. Stevenson W. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, 1640-1840 (Harrisburg, Pa., 1950), 438.

45. Albany Cultivator, April 1835; Danhof, Change, 21.

46. John W. Bennett, "Reciprocal Economic Exchanges among North American Agricultural Operators," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 24 (1968), 276-309.

47. John Gibson, History of York County (Chicago, 1886), quoted in Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture, 119.

48. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture, 439-444; Hedrick, Agriculture in New York, 205; Bidwell and Falconer, History of Agriculture, 34.

49. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture, 137.

50. Ibid., 120.

51. Kingston Rising Sun, October 31, 1794.

52. Kingston Rising Sun, January 20, 1797.

53. Lemon, Best Poor Man's Country, 115.

54. Carl Bridenbaugh, The Colonial Craftsman (Chicago, 1950), 147. See also George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution (New York, 1951), 215.

55. Richard Morris, Government and Labor in Early America (New York, 1946).

56. Kingston Board of Supervisors' Minutes, March 11, 1774; March 6, 1784; January 29, 1790; February 15, 1793.

57. Kingston Rising Sun, February 24, 1797; July 15, 1797.

58. Albany Cultivator, March 1838.

59. Kingston Supervisors' Minutes, May 20, 1791.

60. Harriet Friedmann, "Household Production and the National Economy: Concepts for the Analysis of Agrarian Formations," The Journal of Peasant Studies 7:2 (January 1980), 158-184. Despite their integration within and their dependence upon the capitalist economy, simple commodity producers have proved remarkably resiliant. In an earlier and equally fascinating article, Friedman pointed out that between 1873 and 1935 simple commodity producers relying on family labor replaced capitalist enterprises employing wage laborers as the principal suppliers of wheat on the world market. "World Market, State, and Family Farm: Social Bases of Household Production in the Era of Wage Labour," Comparative Studies in Society and History 20 (1978), 545-586. See also Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael, "Agriculture and the State System: The Rise and Decline of National Agriculture,

1870 to the Present," Sociologia Ruralis 29 (1989), 93-117.

61. Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, in Writings, M. D. Peterson, ed. (New York, 1984), 290. On the egalitarianism of the North American settlers in the eighteenth century, see Gordon Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York, 1992).

62. Friedmann, "Household Production and National Economy," 176-177.

63. For more on this theme, see Michael Merrill, "The Anti-Capitalist Origins of the United States," Review: A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center 13 (1990), 465-497.

64. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, vol. I, 407-409. On the peculiarities of agricultural production that make farming relatively less susceptible to capitalist penetration, see Susan A. Mann and James M. Dickinson, "Obstacles to the Development of Capitalist Agriculture," Journal of Peasant Studies 5 (1978), 466-481; and Susan A. Mann, Agrarian Capitalism in Theory and Practice (Chapel Hill, 1990), esp. 28-46. For another view of the matter, see Patrick H. Mooney, "Labour Time, Production Time and Capitalist Development in Agriculture: A Reconsideration of

the Mann-Dickinson Thesis," Sociologia Ruralis 22 (1978), 279-291; and idem., My Own Boss: Capital, Labour and the Family Farm (Boulder, Col., 1988).

65. Friedmann, "World Market, State, and Family Farm;" and idem., "Simple Commodity Production and Wage Labour in the American Plains," The Journal of Peasant Studies 6 (1978), 71-100. See also Max Pfeffer, "Social Origins of Three Systems of Farm Production in the United States," Rural Sociology 48 (1983), 540-562; and, Morton G. Wenger and Pem Davidson Buck, "Farms, Families, and Super-Exploitation: An Integrative Reappraisal," Rural Sociology 53 (1988), 460-472.

66. Grant, Democracy in Kent, 68. For more on the nature of these debts, and their interest-free character, see Chapter 2 below.

67. On the contradictory class location of small farmers, see, Patrick Mooney, "Toward a Class Analysis of Midwestern Agriculture," Rural Sociology 48 (1983), 563-584; and idem., My Own Boss. See also, David Goodman and Michael Redclift, "Capitalism, Petty Commodity Production, and the Farm Enterprise," Sociologia Ruralis 25 (1985), 231-247; Harriet Friedmann, "Patriarchy and Property: A Reply to Goodman and Redclift," Sociologia Ruralis 26 (1986), 186-193; and the

contributions to the special issue of Social Analysis 20 (1986) on "Rethinking Petty Commodity Production."

68. Marx, Capital, Vol. I., 198.

69. Edmund Morgan, American Slavery--American Freedom (New York, 1975), 297.

70. Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967); Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969); and idem., The Radicalism of the American Revolution. The agrarian history of the American Revolution has yet to be written. But see Allen French's account of the mobilization of the Massachusetts countryside in The First Year of the American Revolution (Boston, 1934); and Richard Bushman, "Massachusetts Farmers and the Revolution," in Richard Jellison, ed., Freedom, Society, Conscience: The American Revolution in Virginia, Massachusetts, and New York (New York, 1976).

71. Eugene Genovese, "Yeoman Farmers in a Slaveholders Democracy," Agricultural History 49 (April 1975), 331-342. Steven Hahn made an indispensable contribution to this process in The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890 (New York,

1983). See also Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America (Chapel Hill, 1985).