

# Introduction

Thomas Bender

In an intriguing passage in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith contrasts the energy and dignity of labor motivated by interest with that of the slave. Did Smith here, as in so much else in both *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), forecast a bit of the future, in this instance the emergence of the antislavery movement out of the dynamic of the rise of an interest-driven commercial society?<sup>1</sup> Is there something to be made of the near simultaneity of the rise of capitalism and the emergence of organized antislavery? Mere chronological conjuncture does not, of course, imply causal connections. Yet it is hard not to wonder about the possibility that there was some connection between the final loss of legitimacy of slave labor after centuries of tolerance, if not always full acceptance, and the process whereby another form of economic production and distribution rather quickly secured itself in the Atlantic world.

Modern historical inquiry into this question, particularly in reference to the English movement to abolish the international slave trade and slavery in the British West Indies, has been on the agenda of professional scholarship for nearly half a century. The line of inquiry was boldly and provocatively opened by Eric Williams in his *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944).<sup>2</sup> Williams, an Oxford-trained historian who became prime minister of postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago, argued that it was economic interest, not any moral claims by abolitionists, that brought slavery to an end in the British West Indies. He claimed that antislavery was a function of the declining importance of West Indian plantations and the concomitant rise of industrial

1. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776; New York, 1937), esp. 80, 364–67, 524, 553, 648. Smith attacked slavery rather severely, insisting that it deprived society of the benefit of interest, as well as representing an indefensible form of social power.

2. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1944).

capitalism to dominance in the British economy (and thus, in Marxist terms, politics).

As all seminal works ought to do, Williams's book stimulated decades of monographic response, but as is often the case with such works, the scholarship it called into existence did not sustain its thesis. It is not at all clear that the plantation economy was in decline, nor is the rather crude explanation of interest that Williams employed any longer compelling. Yet the legacy of the work survives. If his formulation of the argument has proven vulnerable, the larger issue of identifying the relationship between the rise of capitalism and the decline of slavery has remained stimulating.<sup>3</sup>

Few historians today discount the possibility of some connection between capitalism and antislavery. The question of the moment is how to phrase that connection and what explanatory weight to give it. The debate over antislavery in this book focuses precisely upon this question, and it does so in a way that illuminates one of the central issues of contemporary historiography—the relation of social structure, practice, and change to culture, ideas, and ideology. More narrowly, it addresses ways of using—indeed the very usefulness of—the notion of cultural hegemony to explain the form of culturally constituted power in modern democracies.

The debate that takes shape here is at once tighter in focus and broader in implication than the debate that has surrounded *Capitalism and Slavery*. What is at issue is not the likelihood of a link between capitalism and antislavery, but rather various theorizations of that association. Although the historical problem being examined here is the emergence of organized antislavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the discussion is conducted, rather self-consciously, in terms that make it rather easily understood as a general debate about historical explanation. It is clearly a case study of how one might approach questions of the relation of society to consciousness, of interests to ideology, of social practice to cultural formation. Most important of all, the debate puts considerable pressure upon the working assumptions of current historical practice and, especially, upon words and concepts common in historical discourse but not so stable as we might have thought them to be. The debate is about concepts as much as evidence, and the principal harvest is a raised self-consciousness with re-

3. The best book on this is David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1987). See also two other important works: Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1977); and *idem*, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Context* (New York, 1986). There is an outstanding recent symposium on the legacy of Eric Williams: *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery*, Barbara Sollow and Stanley Engerman, eds. (Cambridge, 1987).

gard to the need for clarity about the concepts and words that are in the tool kit of contemporary historical practice.

All of the contributors to this volume would agree that the debate rests upon the magnificent foundation supplied by David Brion Davis's multi-volume inquiry into the meaning and consequences of freedom and slavery in the modern Atlantic world. The first volume, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (1966), is a wide-ranging exploration of the intellectual (theological and philosophical) sources of the justification and rationalization of slavery throughout Western history, and, then, of emergent anti-slavery conviction in the eighteenth century. It traces a profound shift in Western moral perception from blindness to insight into the moral problem of slavery. After centuries of either justifying slavery as appropriate to certain classes or kinds of people or of rationalizing it as an unfortunate but tolerable evil, Euro-Americans, or at least a significant number of them, began to insist that slavery was an intolerable evil and a blot on civilized society.

It is, however, the second volume that provides the focal point for the antislavery debate here. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823*, which appeared in 1975, differed from the first volume not only in its chronological framework but also in its mode of historical analysis. Whereas the first volume had been a study in the tradition of the history of ideas and sweeping in its chronological coverage, the second volume concentrated on a quite restricted historical period, about half a century. The second volume is also denser in historical context, and it evidenced a deeper philosophical awareness of interpretive issues, something signaled by an early reference to Hegel's famous discussion of the bondsman and master. It had as well a different explanatory task. Now, rather than tracing and delineating a tradition of ideas, Davis undertook the most difficult burden of historical narration. He sought to explain how ideas, antislavery in this instance, became social facts, cultural attitudes, and motives and means for collective action.

The subtlety with which he addressed this vexing problem of historical explanation made the publication of *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* a historiographical event with implications beyond its special field. For all historians who hoped to bring together social and intellectual history on terms more complex and compelling than those of the Progressive historians or the Marxists of the 1940s, both of whom in varying degrees understood ideas as mere reflections of material interest, Davis's book invited close and very exciting scrutiny. Haskell's critique and reformulation

of the issue, which represents an even more radical shift in historical analysis of the relationship between social and cultural phenomena, is exciting for the same reason.

*The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* presents a comparative history of the emerging movement to abolish slavery. Yet the debate in this volume (and much of the initial reaction to the book) has focused upon one particular argument within the book. In terms of the total number of pages, the specific development of the argument may not be a major portion of the book, but it informs the whole book. This argument is the theoretically most interesting part of the book, and as moral commentary, it is its most compelling theme.

Without in any way compromising the religious sources of abolitionism among the English Quakers (a point he had developed in *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*), Davis raised the issue of class interest. Rejecting the notion that the cause of antislavery was a transcendent ideal, he announced early in the book that the movement "reflected the ideological needs of various groups and classes" (19, this volume). In the sections of the book reprinted here, Davis suggested that concern for the slave might well have served the hegemonic function of legitimating free labor.

What drew readers to Davis's text on this point was his skill in avoiding both naive idealism and reductive materialism. While he invited his readers to "look at the impulses behind the antislavery phenomenon, asking how they reflected, either consciously or unconsciously, the social orders from which they emerged," he rejected the argument that the "new hostility to human bondage" could be "reduced simply to the needs and interests of particular classes" (25). In his layered analysis, this shift and the new language of humanitarianism were embedded in and partly derived from a cultural context of religious, philosophical, and legal doctrines that he had elaborated in *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* and summarized in the first chapter of the sequel (reprinted here). Making a distinction between origin and societal acceptance of antislavery ideas and ideals, he insisted that "the needs and interests of particular classes had much to do with a given society's receptivity to new ideas and thus to the ideas' historical impact." He indicated that much of his new book would "be concerned with the ideological functions and implications of attacking this symbol of the most extreme subordination, exploitation, and dehumanization, at a time when various enlightened elites were experimenting with internalized moral and cultural controls to establish or preserve their own hegemony" (25).

In chapter 5 of *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, "The Quaker Ethic and the Antislavery International" (reprinted here), Davis portrays the English Quakers involved in antislavery as "the very embodi-

ment of the capitalist mentality" and explores the meaning of antislavery principles in the context of an emerging free labor economy (45). Antislavery, he notes, was a "highly selective response to labor exploitation," and in addition it was certainly in the interest of a capitalist class concerned with labor discipline and the legitimation of novel economic practices (61). Moreover, as Davis notices, antislavery enabled an ambitious and previously largely excluded or peripheral group to establish new and more central social connections. But Davis declines to develop this line of argument into a cynical interpretation of their motives. He does not suggest that they consciously manipulated the antislavery issue to their advantage.

He does, however, press the question of consequences for English society. "The paramount question," he observes, "is how antislavery reinforced or legitimized" the hegemony of a developing capitalist elite (70–71). The focus on one kind of human exploitation seems to have sustained a language of social concern that offered less critical perspective on other forms of exploitation, particularly that of workers suffering through the transition to modern capitalism.<sup>4</sup> "At issue," Davis concludes, "are not conscious intentions but the social functions of ideology; not individual motives but shifting patterns of thought and value which focused attention on new problems, which camouflaged others, and which defined new conceptions of social reality" (71).

If, for Davis, class interest provides the link that connects capitalism to antislavery (though not, he would argue, a sufficient causal explanation), Haskell asks whether the Gramscian notion of hegemony, to which Davis refers, is conceptually coherent and empirically warranted. He acknowledges that the "rise of capitalism" may have had an influence on "ideas and values through the medium of class interest," but he is not persuaded that such a linkage is developed adequately by Davis. The force of his argument, moreover, invites some reconsideration of whether the concept of hegemony, quite underdeveloped in Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, can bear the particular interpretive burden that many historians today place on the notion.<sup>5</sup>

4. This point has been made in a different context and in a different form in Eric Foner's *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York, 1970). More indirectly, but powerfully, the point is made by Eugene Genovese's work. See, especially, his *The Political Economy of Slavery* (New York, 1965) and *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (New York, 1976).

5. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds. and trans. (New York, 1971); and T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony," *AHR*, 92 (1985): 567–93. Although he refers to Gramsci, it is not at all clear to me that the multicausal interpretation Davis offers either depends upon Gramsci or has been sufficiently developed to ex-

But Haskell is, in fact, interested in another sort of association of culture and capitalism, which has hitherto received little attention. Defining the pertinent aspect of capitalism to be a market economy (rather than a system of class relations), Haskell argues that capitalism had a "more telling influence on the origins of humanitarianism through changes the market wrought in *perception* or *cognitive style*" (111). If Davis's emphasis on class points toward a consideration of interest, Haskell's focus on the market introduces the concept of "conventions" and habitual modes of understanding causation and responsibility.

Haskell acknowledges that "by insisting that the reformers were unaware of the hegemonic function served by their ideology, Davis opened a crucially important space between their intentions and the long-term consequences of their ideas and activities." It is here, in this "zone of indeterminacy," that Davis rejects the reductionism of an argument for the direct expression of class interest (116). Many readers were drawn to Davis's interpretation precisely because of the complexity of this narrative strategy, but not Haskell. He worries that Davis is trying to have it both ways. What some see as flexibility, Haskell sees as incoherence. He insists that the idea of "interest" implies intention, whether conscious or unconscious. Davis's interpretation relies on "self-deception," or unconscious intention, which Haskell regards as difficult to verify in any case and not successfully verified in this one.

Rejecting the terms of class interest and hegemony proposed by Davis, Haskell commends Max Weber's notion of "elective affinity." As an explanatory device, elective affinity, which also posits a zone of indeterminacy, is not far from the structure, though not the phrasing, of Davis's explanation. One of the questions to be pondered here is whether the issue is analytical or about the moral vocabulary of the historian. Davis's rhetoric has a moral edge that dissolves in the notion of elective affinity. Is that the implication of Haskell's rephrasing of the issue?

Since Haskell considers all humane action to be inescapably "selective," a notion both Ashworth and Davis reject, he holds reformers blameless for the fact that their efforts were almost exclusively in aid of chattel slaves, who were, after all, the most oppressed class of their era.<sup>6</sup> The intensity of

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emplyf Gramscian analysis, which is concerned more to explain consent than to delineate ruling-class motivation, or the relation of interest to act.

6. Lest Haskell be misunderstood here as a moral relativist, it is worth noting his interest in theorizing a secure moral foundation in the midst of an intellectual culture skeptical of moral claims, whether on historicist, nihilist, or just plain cynical grounds. See, e.g., his "The Curious Persistence of Rights Talk in the 'Age of Interpretation,'" *Journal of American History*, 74 (1987): 984–1012.

the debate about interest ought not divert our attention from the importance of Haskell's novel vocabulary and his provocative interpretation of the cultural meaning of the social practices inherent in commercial society or capitalism. He asks us to shift our attention from class relations under capitalism to the cultural or cognitive style associated with the capitalist market.

Capitalism, he argues, has a subliminal curriculum, and one of the principal lessons one learns is perceptual: a "widening of causal horizons," a heightened awareness of the remote consequences of both one's acts and (equally important in moral matters) one's inactions. The premium the market notoriously placed on such bourgeois virtues as forethought, calculation, and delay of gratification habituated English and American reformers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to thinking and acting within a temporally and spatially enlarged sphere. They lived not only in the present but also in the future, which they felt able to shape in accordance with their wills. The resulting sense of empowerment meant for most people only an expansion of the realm within which they pursued self-interest, but for the scrupulous it meant something quite different: a new consciousness of power to relieve suffering and, correspondingly, unprecedented feelings of guilt and responsibility for evils that had previously seemed remote and irremediable. What had once been a tolerable or "necessary" evil might, with new perceptions of causation and responsibility, become intolerable.

Haskell's resort to such an argumentative mode in itself bears remark. Such ease with philosophical argument and theory is rare in historiographical discourse, especially among Americanists. Haskell not only draws upon philosophy but constructs a self-consciously theoretical argument. While Davis and Ashworth are evidently comfortable with conceptual issues, they ground themselves, more conventionally, in historical sources. The content of the culture—rather than the logic (or possible logic) of the culture—is central not simply to their theses but to their mode of thinking and arguing. Haskell, by contrast, is less inclined to quote from sources. His argument, like his historical work generally, does not rely on the "interestingness" or revelatory power of archival sources. Rather he writes a theoretical and conceptual history, a history not too far from the historical sociology of Max Weber, whose substantive leads Haskell pursues here. This debate, then, combines two modes of argumentation, producing a rich mix of historical data and philosophical reflection.

The question one has for Haskell is just how far he wishes to press his argument. Is the market-driven transformation of conventions of causal attribution and the consequent extension of what he calls "recipe" knowledge

a sufficient explanation for the rise of a humanitarian sensibility that focused particularly on slavery, or merely a necessary condition? In his first essay, Haskell seemed to argue that the role of capitalism in antislavery was fundamental but limited. It contributed "a *precondition*, albeit a vital one: a proliferation of recipe knowledge and consequent expansion of the conventional limits of causal perception and moral responsibility that compelled some exceptionally scrupulous individuals to attack slavery and prepared others to listen and comprehend" (155–56). Hence the market and a new structure of perception account for the emergence of the movement and its reception, without any recourse to interest. Yet if we are really speaking of a precondition, there may yet be room for interest as well as elective affinity in the selection of a focus for this extended humanitarian concern. Later in his argument, however, Haskell seems to want to foreclose this possibility.

Haskell's argument is liable to misunderstanding, and it is important to recognize that he is not arguing that either capitalism or the market is inherently humane. Nor is this an effort to "defend" capitalism. Indeed, he explicitly acknowledges the terrible forms of exploitation that have occurred under capitalism. He is seeking to make an analytical rather than a moral point, to explain a connection between capitalism and cultural perception. To do so does not necessarily deny the possibility of a connection between capitalism and consciousness through the medium of class relations. But he does argue that historians who would link consciousness to capitalism through the notion of interest will have a difficult empirical task before them. There is no evidence in his essays that Haskell rejects Davis's account in *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* of the creation of new values, though his focus is consistently elsewhere. What he does argue, however, is that capitalism created a new circumstance that changed the relation of moral values to action in the world.

At this point John Ashworth joins the debate. He doubts that the links that Haskell postulates "between capitalism and humanitarianism via the market" can explain why the "conscientious reformer" selected slavery but not "wage labor" as the focus of concern. The South, for example, was "connected very firmly with the international market," but antislavery was not the result (184, 187). Class interest, Ashworth insists, was surely involved. Like Davis, he also rejects Haskell's notion that intentionality, whether conscious or unconscious, must be specified before one can incorporate class interest into an explanatory narrative. He suggests that one need only recognize that a partial social experience based on a specified social location, which implies a pattern of interest, can nourish a "partial



view" in one's moral and social outlook. From such a partial experience and with such a partial view, one might overlook the seriousness of the injustices involved in wage labor while agitating against slavery. He, unlike Haskell, would consider this an interested act.

The heart of Ashworth's argument, however, rests upon a fuller analysis of the moral history of capitalism. He criticizes Haskell's narrow focus on the market as the essential experience of capitalism, arguing that wage labor and commodification were understood as novel and worrisome aspects of the new economy. The rise of wage labor, with its acknowledgment of self-interest, made the foundations of public and private morality uncertain. Those who embraced the new economy needed a theory of social morality for a self-interested world. Ashworth, who directs his attention to the antebellum American case rather than to Britain, argues that Americans dealt with this problem by establishing "a rigid separation between those areas of life where the market could rule and those where it was forbidden" (194). People awash in a sea of commerce, where the labor market determined the social relations of a community, turned to home, family, and individual conscience as a new foundation for morality.

The celebration of this triptych is a common theme in the historiography of the period, but Ashworth vastly expands its implication. He proposes that it enabled Americans to accept wage labor and commodification generally in the developing capitalist society. These comforting commitments in the North, however, made Southern slavery, which so blatantly violated them, an increasingly unacceptable evil. Moreover, the crusade against slavery had the effect of reinforcing these values—and thus the development of capitalism in the North. What Ashworth finds in the rhetoric of the abolitionists is a theory of capitalist morality, a morality that depended upon a set of family values and a notion of free agency denied by slavery. The same cluster of values that made wage labor or capitalism possible made slavery impossible.

The distinctive positions of Davis, Haskell, and Ashworth are established early. They are then developed with such richness of historiographical invention and dialectical skill that it would be a disservice on my part to propose a summary. The reader needs no road map and should find no difficulty tracking the debate from these starting positions.

There is, however, one new issue introduced later in the debate that ought to be noted here, for it brings a new body of historical material to the discussion. Davis raises the question of the Dutch, and as all comparative history should, it forces a sharpening of the issues. But Davis raises it for a more specific reason. Were Haskell's thesis valid, he argues, this people, the

most advanced capitalists (and slavetraders) in the world, ought to have nourished a strong antislavery movement. Yet they did not. Haskell finds the suggestion intriguing, even acknowledging that close study of the Dutch case might indeed cause complications for his own argument. In his final reply, Davis takes up the challenge, and he uses the Dutch case to deflect some of Haskell's criticism, to sharpen the meaning of key terms, and to challenge Haskell's argument.

With this turn, the debate shifts from concepts, abstractions, and analogues to an actual historical case. For historians such evidence is always the court of final appeal. Yet, as with appeals courts, the case brought before the bar is often resolved in ways that miss some of the animating purpose that sent the case to the high court in the first place. In this instance, many of the wider implications that made Haskell's position so provocative and so rich are necessarily set aside. So the Dutch evidence does not resolve the issue; the complex and pressing questions about the relations between consciousness, moral action, and social change raised at the outset remain very much open to further historiographical discussion. They have been enriched, but not resolved by the antislavery debate.

As Davis, Haskell, and Ashworth were drawn more and more fully into the logic of debate, they focused more and more on fine lines of distinction and flanks to be protected in the interest of sustaining their positions. One might argue that the debate format encourages a cognitive style of its own, one that emphasizes skill in splitting as opposed to lumping. By so effectively making such distinctions, Davis, Haskell, and Ashworth force us to critical reflection upon many words, concepts, and assumptions common to historical discourse in our time.

But if debate encourages splitting, perhaps the writing of a general introduction to a debate encourages a spirit of mediation or lumping. At the risk of damaging the purity of the positions taken and of taking too lightly the distinctions made by the rigorous splitters, let me suggest a strategy that might pull these three perspectives together into one interpretation that is fuller than any of the parts.

The different emphases of each historian's definition of capitalism provide the starting point. Although he does not elaborate upon the point, Davis seems to understand capitalism as a system of class relations. Ashworth, who is quite explicit about the matter, would agree, though he would give more focused attention to the mechanism of this relationship—the commodification of labor in the wage system. Davis and Ashworth thus share a great deal in their definitions of capitalism as a system of class relations, and both take the same "side" in the debate. Both see class interest

deeply implicated in antislavery (or two key episodes of its development), and they do this without in any way denying the religious sources of the movement and without denigrating the moral intensity or honesty of abolitionists.

Haskell, by contrast, says little about class relations. Yet he nowhere denies that capitalism is—among other things—a class system. He chooses to emphasize a different aspect of capitalism: the market. It is not entirely clear what he means by a market, but the burden of his position is that there were specific lessons to be learned by participating in the capitalist market in its eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century form. The most important lesson was an enlargement of one's capacity for recognizing remote causes and extended chains of moral responsibility.

A lumper like myself cannot resist the possibility that just as the three conceptions of capitalism can be unified, so might the consequent interpretations of antislavery's relation to capitalism. At one point, though not at others, Haskell seems to invite such a move. His aim, he writes, "has not been to supplant the concept of interest . . . but to supplement it and suggest that its explanatory power may be exaggerated" (237).

Haskell's concept of "conventions" of causal attribution and moral responsibility advances and enriches the historian's craft. Although the concept itself is not novel—Haskell frankly imports it from moral philosophy and jurisprudence—it is new to historical discourse and promises to be very fruitful. His claim that conventions were fundamentally altered in the early history of capitalism is quite compelling. With the work of Max Weber and Robert Merton now well absorbed by historians, we can imagine a novel cognitive style being associated with capitalism in concert with religious sources.<sup>7</sup> What Haskell offers, then, and it is a very exciting new prospect, is an extension of the Weberian project, a cultural history of capitalism.<sup>8</sup>

Yet my inclination in this case is to consider reciprocity. If Haskell proposes to supplement the concept of interest, the concept of interest might similarly supplement his own reformulation of the analytical problem. The emergence of market discipline, upon which Haskell relies so heavily in his theory of causation, seems too global to explain the receptivity to antislav-

7. I refer here, of course, to Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Talcott Parsons, trans. (1930; New York, 1958); and Robert K. Merton, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* (1938; New York, 1970).

8. One cannot fail to notice, even *en passant*, that in important respects this debate reinscribes the classical debate between social commentators working within or even in the penumbra of the Marxist tradition (especially Ashworth, but Davis too, at least on the specific issue at hand) and the Weberian tradition of social theory (Haskell, rather explicitly).

ery of a particular political culture. The incorporation of some version of interest along with the moral beliefs that Davis describes in *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* seems to bring us closer to a sufficient cause. Yet the resort to interest must be measured. An exclusionary reliance on interest would obscure the objective iniquity of slavery, and it would fail to recognize that a person with a conscious or unconscious interest in the advance of industrial capitalism might simultaneously feel a new sense of extended responsibility (generated by market participation as described by Haskell) that resulted in a sense of complicity in a remediable evil. A sufficient explanation might well be a compounded one that relies upon both convention and interest.

If Haskell really means to invite the incorporation of interest into his concept of convention, I would propose a vital, if tightly bounded, role for it. The claims of class are still operative within the new structure of perception he describes. There is no incompatibility here. Nor is there any bar to Davis's argument that the larger and perhaps even indirect consequence of antislavery was to advance the interests of those who were transforming the British economy (not all of whom were abolitionists and some of whom were wage-earners). What Ashworth adds is an insight into the substance and breadth of moral concern. By attending to the specific language of the abolitionist critique, especially the values at the core of the critique, reinforced in the course of the antislavery agitation in public, he shows both the larger usefulness of the movement and how it helped to sustain the new capitalist society.

Early in his critique Haskell portrays himself as a "stowaway" presumptuous enough to propose a change in course. Other images come to mind. Rather than as a stowaway, I am inclined to think of Haskell as a wise sailor who urges upon the captain better riggings and navigational equipment for a journey to a destination fairly well agreed upon. The new rigging and equipment promise to make the journey safer and surer, but they do not require dismantling all the older technology. With the new ways of managing the ship, the journey will be experienced differently and it will be different in some of its implications. But it will be the same journey. Best of all, there is the prospect that the new equipment and rigging will be of use in other journeys as well.

For those considering other journeys, the value of this debate extends far beyond any discussion of possible winners here. Three gifted historians have exemplified the historical mind at work addressing (and considerably clarifying) the pressing historiographical issue of the relationship of consciousness to society, or the way consciousness works in society, or, further,

how social change and ideology are related. There is no more sophisticated conversation among historians on this cluster of issues, and we are collectively indebted to David Brion Davis, Thomas L. Haskell, and John Ashworth.

No historian who has read this debate will again casually or unthinkingly use such words as "class," "interest," "self-deception," "market," "capitalism," "intention," "unconscious," "hegemony," or, of course, "base" and "superstructure." And such historians might find themselves using some new words that represent novel analytical concepts, particularly Haskell's notion of convention.

One convention invites notice in conclusion. For all of their differences, for all the passionate commitments that divide these historians, they share a commitment in practice to a conventional (in Haskell's sense of the word) notion of historical objectivity, the marshaling of evidence, and the elaboration of rational, logical arguments that make no subjective claims.<sup>9</sup>

There is always a tendency in the discipline to become habitual in the use of very complex words and concepts. Debates conducted with the intensity and rigor that mark this one provide an indispensable service by demanding that habit be continually interrogated by thought. The historian's armamentarium is thus re-thought and re-stocked.

9. See Thomas L. Haskell, "Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Rhetoric vs. Practice in Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream*," *History and Theory*, 29 (1990): 129–57.