A History of Money

The Nature of Money

Next. Ingham (together with a small group of economists clustered mostly at the University of Missouri in Kansas City) has been revolutionizing the study of money. They have proved that money did not originate from barter, but was instead invented by states, as a means of collecting taxes. This casts an entirely new light on the prospects of getting rid of money: if you get rid of states you might be able to get rid of money too (although they do not draw this conclusion themselves; they argue that since money reflects the power relations in the society, if you equalize the power, money would not be a problem – to which I raise a very skeptical eye.) This book presents an
excellent overview of the debate, as well as being a good introduction to various theories of money.

This new theory of money, the State/Credit theory, is also summarized in:


Other references on money:


Hess, Moses. “The Essence of Money,” [1845], online at:


Chossudovsky, Michel. *The Globalisation of Poverty and the New World Order: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms* [1997]. Pincourt, Quebec: Global Research, 2003, second expanded edition, 346 pages. This is a thorough study of how the policies of the IMF and World Bank impoverish the world in order to enrich the capitalist ruling class.


**Debt**


The market, McNally claims, while Proudhon didn’t. This is an insightful book, and is very helpful in getting a handle on so-called market socialism, of which Proudhon’s theories were the first example, McNally claims.


Two books building on the ideas of Henry George are:


And


*Life Beyond the Market*. Special issue of Greenpepper Magazine, out of Amsterdam. See the web site at:

[www.greenpeppermagazine.org]


nists, Bordigists, and Situationists.” (from the publisher). Included are essays by Adam Buick, Stephen Coleman, Alain Pengam, and Mark Shipway, which ferret out this thin thread of revolutionary thought. There is a postscript describing other resources for each of the five currents discussed, as well as a four-page bibliography. This is a very important book.

**Miscellaneous Works**


Also relevant is the long standing debate over the labor theory of value. The basic question of course is how we are to determine the value of something, in comparison to something else, to serve as a basis for exchange? Or is determining value even necessary for exchange? What about gifts and mutual aid? To begin with, see:


This is a brilliant reconstruction of the decades-long dispute between Marx and Proudhon over the market. Marx rejected


Hudson, Michael, editor. *Debt and Economic Renewal in the Ancient Near East*. For references to many more interesting articles on money, go to Hudson’s web site at: [http://www.michael-hudson.com/biography.html]


**Usury**


**Local Currencies**

There is a lot of action now around local or alternative currencies. Here are several web sites dealing with this, most of which list other resources and references. *Community Currencies*, online at: [http://www.ratical.org/many_worlds/cc/]. *Local Currency Resources*, online at: [http://yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=894]. *Reinventing Money*. established by Thomas H. Greco. [http://reinventingmoney.com]. *Complementary Community Currency Systems and Local Exchange Networks*. Online at: [http://www.transaction.net/money/community/index.html]. *Local and Interest-Free Currencies, Social Credit, and Microcredit*. Online at: [http://www.ex.ac.uk/~RDavies/arian/local]


Dobson, Ross V.G. *Bringing the Economy Home from the Market.* Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993, 235 pages. This is mostly about the Letsystem.


**Gifts**


For those who are interested in establishing an anarchist world without money, this is a good place to begin. Graeber tackles the question of the how humans assign value to things (and where prices come from and what are they based on), relying on his extensive knowledge of the anthropological literature to help answer it. A key part of the book is his long chapter on "Marcel Mauss Revisited" (the author of *The Gift*). Thus the book is directly relevant to the current revival of interest in the so-called "gift economy." It is an extended examination of the "value" question in non-market situations.


A lot of work is now being done on the idea of a gift economy. Here are some references:

Graeber, David. "Give It Away," online at: [http://www.freewords.org/graeber.html]

This essay also includes an account of the group formed in France, of which Graeber is a member, to build off the theories in Marcel Mauss’ *The Gift.*


Leahy, Terry. “Sociological Utopias and Social Transformation: Permaculture and the Gift Economy,” online at: [http://www.octapod.org/gifteconomy/content/utopias.html]

See also the links on his web site at: [http://www.octapod.org/gifteconomy/left.htm]

Brouillet, Carol. "Reinventing Money, Restoring the Earth, Reweaving the Web of Life," online at: [http://www.womenswork.org/articles/reinventing.html]

Cheal, David J. *Gift Economy.* 1988


*A Moneyless Society*


Rubel, Maximilien, and John Crump, editors, *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.* (St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1987, 187 pages.) "In the nineteenth century, socialists as different as Marx and Kropotkin were agreed that socialism means a marketless, moneyless, wageless, classless, stateless world society. Subsequently this vision of non-market socialism has been developed by currents such as the Anarcho-Communists, Impossibilists, Council Commu-