

## TWO CONCEPTS OF COERCION\*

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### 1 Introduction

It is sometimes said that Marxists resort more readily to coercion than do liberals, or are more prepared to condone certain kinds of coercion (e.g., the dictatorship of the proletariat) than are liberals.<sup>1</sup> This way of distinguishing Marxists from liberals is singularly unenlightening and utterly mistaken. For it assumes what needs to be proved, namely, that there is a single concept of coercion shared by liberals and Marxists alike, and that they disagree only about “its” domain, scope, and justification. The unexamined assumption is, that liberals and Marxists agree about what coercion *is* while disagreeing about the sorts of conditions and situations in which coercion is or is not justified.

Against this view I shall argue that although liberals and Marxists may use the same *word*, the *concept* is not the same.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there are two distinct concepts of coercion, each constituted according to the requirements of liberal and Marxian theory, respectively. Far from being *given*, the concept of coercion must be *constructed* in the light of, and from materials supplied by, certain ontological and methodological presuppositions and commitments. And since there is a practical, ontological, and methodological rupture between liberal and Marxian theory, “coercion” is constructed differently in each. These differing constructions are implicit.

Here I *begin* to undertake such a construction by making explicit the ontological and methodological presuppositions of the liberal and Marxian concepts of coercion. Potentially, practically, and theoretically, their respective concepts are opposed; but ontologically and methodologically they are not opposed, they are simply *different*. Despite the fundamental and irreconcilable rupture between them, the liberal and Marxian theories are not wholly

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incommensurable. There is, I believe, common ground on which liberals and Marxists may at least *begin* to communicate. For both, coercion is a causal concept. Yet liberals and Marxists differ markedly in their views of causation, and these differences are in turn predicated upon radically different ontologies. Liberals subscribe to an individualist ontology which holds that the world is composed of discrete, distinct, and wholly separate entities (“individuals”); therefore, causal – and coercive – relations are seen as contingent relations between individual elements. Marxists, in contrast, subscribe to a relational ontology which holds that the world consists not of entirely distinct objects or things, but of *relations*. Therefore, for them, causal – and coercive – relations hold between elements in a socially structured ensemble of relations. These two concepts of coercion I explicate by means of two ideal-typical models: the “agency model” of liberalism, and the “structural model” of Marxism. I conclude with a critique of the agency model.

## 2 Causation and Coercion

One can view coercion as a type of social causation, although it is not the only type: power, force, persuasion, control, compulsion, influence, authority, etc., are also types of social causation.<sup>3</sup> Yet while there are good reasons for distinguishing and differentiating these concepts from one another, all appear to be alike in one respect: each suggests some sort of *causal relation*. If *A* coerces (forces, exercises power over, persuades, influences, etc.) *B* to do *x*, and if *x* is something that *B* would not otherwise do, then *A* may be said to have caused or determined *B*’s behavior. That is, statements about coercion (power, influence, etc.) may be replaced without loss of meaning by statements about causation or causal relations.<sup>4</sup> This sort of reduction is not, in and of itself, problematic. What *is* problematic is to specify the sense(s) in which one’s behavior is caused when one is influenced or persuaded, as distinguished from the sense in which one’s behavior is caused when one is forced or coerced.<sup>5</sup> *A* may cause *B* to do *x* in any number of ways – for example, by physically forcing *B* to do *x*, by making *B* unfree to do anything other than *x*, or by producing what are, in *B*’s view, good reasons for *B* to do *x*.<sup>6</sup>

This paper is not, however, concerned with drawing these distinctions, for this is not an essay in conceptual analysis but in conceptual *construction*. My aim is to show how two different concepts of coercion – the liberal and the Marxian – may be constructed along different lines and upon very different ontological foundations.

### 3 The Agency Model

According to the agency model, coercion is a causal relation between individuals. One individual – the “agent,” in Hobbes’ term – causes another individual (the “patient”) to do something that the latter would not otherwise do.<sup>7</sup> Before one can say that *A* coerced *B* to do *x*, one must know that *A*’s intention is to cause *B* to do *x*, knowing full well that *B* would not otherwise (wish to) do *x*. The agency model thus directs our attention to individual agents who act intentionally. Thus Hayek: “... we presuppose a human agent if we say that we have been coerced. Coercion occurs when one man’s actions are made to serve another man’s *will*, not for his own but for the other’s *purpose*.”<sup>8</sup> Thus also Berlin: “Coercion implies the *deliberate* interference of other human beings within the area in which I could otherwise *act*. You lack political liberty or freedom only if you are prevented from attaining a goal by human beings.”<sup>9</sup> One person cannot inadvertently or unintentionally coerce another; coercion presupposes intention. Coercion is a causal relation between individuals, one of whom intends that the other do what the other would not otherwise do. This way of viewing coercion is widespread, and is indeed something of an orthodoxy among academic writers.<sup>10</sup>

It is a common practice to treat “coercion” as a “type” or “subcategory” of “power,” the latter being synonymous with socio-political causation.<sup>11</sup> What is said about power generally is understood to apply to coercion (and the other subcategories of power) as well. Thus I can say something about the agency model of coercion by looking at the evolution of the more generalized agency model of *power*.

#### 3.1 The Agency Model: Precursors and Sources<sup>12</sup>

A relationship of power, or coercion, is a causal relation between an “agent” and a “patient” – or, as we might say nowadays, between an “independent variable” and a “dependent variable.” Contemporary writers such as Dahl, March, Riker, Simon, and McFarland have quite a lot in common with earlier thinkers, and specifically with Hobbes, Locke and Hume.<sup>13</sup> It was Thomas Hobbes, and not Herbert Simon, who first asserted that

Power and Cause are the same thing. Correspondent to cause and effect, are POWER and ACT; nay, those and these are the same things. . . For whensoever any agent has all those accidents which are necessarily requisite for the production of some effect in the patient, then we say that the agent has the *power* to produce that effect, if it be applied to a

patient. . . Wherefore the *power of the agent* and the *efficient cause* are the same thing.<sup>14</sup>

More revealing still is Hobbes' imagery: causal (power) relations obtain between individuated elements, i.e. self-contained atoms whirling through a social void. Hobbes' world is comprised of matter in motion, of forces in collision, of bodies pushing ("agents") and being pushed ("patients"). Every motion (read: behavior) has as its cause an antecedent motion, viz., the "act" of an "agent." So far as causal (power) relations are concerned, Hobbes' motto might well be: "No change without push."<sup>15</sup> Of course, one cannot "push" without "touching": herein lies the fondness of Hobbes and his philosophical progeny for colliding billiard balls.

Locke also viewed causal (power) relations as involving active agents and passive patients. Indeed, he claimed that we form the twin "ideas" of power and cause only because agents act upon, and bring about changes in, patients:

. . . whatever change is observed, the mind must collect a power somewhere able to make that change [which Locke elsewhere terms 'active power, which is the more proper signification of the word power', thus explicitly echoing Hobbes -- T.B.] . . . A body at rest affords us no idea of any active power to move . . . [W]hen the ball obeys the motion of a billiard-stick, it is not any action of the ball [itself]. Also when by impulse it sets another ball in motion that lay in its way, it only communicates the motion it had received from another . . . : which gives us the idea of an active power of moving . . .<sup>16</sup>

Later Locke traded his billiard balls (which he bequeathed to Hume) for tennis balls. Individual human beings are, he suggests, like tennis balls, inasmuch as they are distinct, contiguous, contingently related entities. The main difference between them is that human beings are rational, and with the aid of reason some individuals come to dominate others, much as the tennis player controls the ball.<sup>17</sup> Human beings can act deliberately, purposefully, and intentionally, as tennis balls cannot. All tennis balls and some (perhaps most) men are condemned to perpetual patienthood; some men aspire to, and achieve, agenthood.<sup>18</sup>

Hume accepted this Lockeian (and Hobbesian) picture of power and causation, even as he attempted to put it on firmer philosophical foundations (*vide* 3.2, below). "The terms efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity [etc.]," Hume wrote, "are all nearly synonymous."<sup>19</sup> And each is synonymous with the notion of cause. More specifically, "the idea of power [and] . .

that of cause . . . both have reference to an effect, or some other event constantly conjoined with the former.”<sup>20</sup> Thus power relations are for Hume, Hobbes and Locke – and for Dahl, Simon, Riker, *et al.* – a species of causal relations.

To say that relations of power, or coercion, are causal relations does not, however, get us very far, for upon that much liberals and Marxists are agreed. In order to get at their differences, we must explicate and analyze their respective conceptions of causation and causal relations. We must, in other words, uncover the ontological bases of both the agency and the structural models of coercion.

### 3.2 The Ontological Basis of the Agency Model

Hobbes and Locke first formulated the agency model, but it remained for Hume to make explicit its ontology. This he did in his analysis of causation, and particularly in his argument that a (genuine) causal relation may obtain only between discrete things or events which are both *contingent* and *contiguous*.<sup>21</sup> Causal relations may obtain only between distinct things or events; that is, causal relations hold only between *individuated entities*. One must be able to identify and describe the cause independently of the effect.<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, Hume takes the collision of billiard balls as his paradigm case. For it is an easy matter to distinguish cause (“Ball *A* struck ball *B*”) from effect (“Ball *B* moved”). And it is at least logically conceivable that the first event could occur and the second would not:

When I see . . . a billiard-ball moving in a straight line towards another; even suppose motion in the second ball should by accident be suggested to me, as the result of their contact or impulse; may I not conceive, that a hundred different events might as well follow from that cause? May not both these balls remain at absolute rest? May not the first ball return in a straight line, or leap off from the second in any line or direction? All these suppositions are consistent and conceivable. Why then should we give the preference to one, which is no more consistent or conceivable than the rest? All our reasonings *a priori* will never be able to show us any foundation for this preference. In a word, then, every effect is distinct from its cause.<sup>23</sup>

To say that the effect must be “distinct” from the cause means two things. First, cause and effect must be empirically distinct in the sense that they occupy different time-space locations: they must, in a word, be *contiguous*. Secondly, cause and effect must be logically or conceptually distinct. Causal

relations obtain, in Hume's words, between "relations of things" rather than "relations of ideas." Or, statements about cause and effect are not analytic but synthetic. Thus, for example, Jim's being male and unmarried cannot be considered causes of his being a bachelor, because the "tie" or "connection" between being an unmarried male and being a bachelor is not contingent but conceptual, i.e., to be a bachelor *means* to be male and unmarried. We need not worry ourselves that researchers might one day discover a married female bachelor, for such a possibility is *a priori* inconceivable. In contrast, it is entirely possible that billiard balls might behave oddly and erratically, so that what we believe to be the cause of Ball *B*'s moving (namely its having been struck by *A*) may be a mistaken belief in need of revision. But at least billiard-balls are readily individuable.

So too are the "individuals" of liberal theory, who are *ontologically autarkic*; that is, they are discrete, separate and distinct. These primary entities are distinct in that they exist in time and occupy space; they are defined temporally and spatially (or extensionally) as *bodies*. No two bodies being able to occupy the same time-space location, each is readily distinguishable from the other. The body is the *sine qua non* of the individual: which is why liberal theorists from Hobbes and Locke onward seem to be preoccupied with physical safety. Indeed for Hobbes and Locke the "body politic" has as its *raison d'être* the preservation of the individual bodies composing it.<sup>24</sup> This political conclusion has an ontological premise, viz., that individuals exist because individuals have bodies. If that premise be a tautology, it is nevertheless an instructive one. For it suggests why the problem of individuation is not viewed by liberal theorists as a problem: the "solution" to the problem is built into the theory's very foundations; or, more accurately, the problem is prevented from arising in the first place by virtue of the meaning of the theory's constitutive concepts. Individuals exist because they can be individuated, i.e. one can be recognized, identified, and described without any reference to the other. Moreover, their "human nature" – the properties or characteristics shared by individuals *qua* individuals – is fixed and unchanging. According to contract theorists, particularly Hobbes and Locke, individuals do not undergo any qualitative changes when they affix their signatures to the social contract: their human nature remains the same. Even Mill held that "Men . . . in a state of society, are still men; their actions and passions are obedient to the laws of individual human nature. Men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance with different properties."<sup>25</sup>

In sum: Through all their contact, collision and interaction, human individuals, like billiard balls, retain their separate identities. Individuation is,

liberal theorists maintain, a simple and straightforward matter: as distinct bodies can be observed and described, so too can “individuals.”

This ontological individualism has its methodological counterpart in methodological individualism – indeed methodology recapitulates ontology<sup>26</sup> – and its political-theoretical counterpart in liberalism. All are presupposed by the agency model of coercion.

#### 4 The Structural Model

If the agency model of coercion is easily characterized, the structural model is not, in part because, in a liberal milieu, the former seems solid, familiar, and commonsensical, while the latter seems insubstantial, unfamiliar, and an affront to common sense. Yet, as Marx averred, “all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.”<sup>27</sup>

We begin constructing the structural model of coercion by positing it as the antithesis of the agency model: what the latter affirms, the former denies. In this sense the structural model is defined negatively. Secondly, we begin to construct an alternative model of coercion by working from the ground up; that is, we begin with an explication of the ontological foundations upon which the new concept of coercion is to be built. My third move is to subject the agency model to an internal critique so as to bring to light its inherent weaknesses and contradictions. Without this third move, the first move – in which the structural model is posited as the negation or antithesis of the agency model – would necessarily be *a priori*, not to say arbitrary and utterly without justification. The agency model will not fall because an antithetical concept has been introduced: it must fall from the weight of its own internal contradictions. The structural model cannot be constructed until the agency model has been negated, not merely in the abstract (by “positing” its antithesis), but from within.

##### 4.1 Structure vs. Agency

If the agency model of coercion can be summarized in several theses, the structural model may be summarized in several antitheses.

##### *The Agency Model*

*Thesis 1:* If  $A$  coerces  $B$  to do  $x$  ( $=ABx$ ),  $A$  and  $B$  must be individuals.

*Thesis 2:* If  $ABx$ , then  $x$  must be an action (actual or prevented).

*Thesis 3:* If  $ABx$ ,  $A$  must actually *do* something to or with  $B$ ; that is,  $A$  must engage in some overt observable behavior.

*Thesis 4:* If  $ABx$ , then  $A$  must know that  $B$  would not otherwise (wish to) do  $x$ .

*Thesis 5:* If  $ABx$ , then  $A$  must *intend*  $Bx$ .

### *The Structural Model*

*Antithesis 1:* If  $ABx$ ,  $A$  and  $B$  need not be individuals.

*Antithesis 2:* If  $ABx$ , then  $x$  need not be an action; that is,  $x$  may be a state, condition, disposition, etc.

*Antithesis 3:* If  $ABx$ ,  $A$  need not actually *do* anything to or with  $B$ ; that is,  $ABx$  by virtue of  $A$ 's being  $A$  and  $B$ 's being  $B$ , and  $x$  being a state or condition characteristic of  $B$ -type beings.

*Antithesis 4:* If  $ABx$ ,  $A$  need not know that  $B$  would not otherwise (wish to) do (or be)  $x$ .

*Antithesis 5:* If  $ABx$ ,  $A$  need not intend  $x$ .

In both models propositions 2–5 presuppose the validity of proposition 1. But since the first proposition is unintelligible without the prior supposition of their respective ontological bases, an explication of their underlying ontologies is essential to the intelligibility and validity of the two models.

## **4.2 The Ontological Basis of the Structural Model**

The structural model of coercion presupposes a “relational” conception of reality. According to this view, the world consists not of discrete and readily individuable “things” but of “relations.”<sup>28</sup> That which the commonsense of Hume calls a “thing” is not an individuated object, but a *relation* which is viewed abstractly, i.e. one-sidedly. Even “solid” and “distinct” objects – for example, the tables and chairs of which some philosophers are so fond – are individuable in the first place only because they are viewed one-sidedly as physical objects, i.e. as *bodies* occupying different time-space locations. But it is not the shape, size, weight, or space-time locus that makes a table a table or a chair a chair; it is the human use to which each is put. Tables, chairs, diners, food, eating utensils, etc., constitute an ensemble of relations; and it is by virtue of its location *within this ensemble* – and not its mere bodily existence or space-time locus – that each of these elements *is* what it *is*. All relations are, moreover, *human* relations. An object is not a table until and unless it exists *for man*.

This relational ontology might be further clarified by means of another

example. Take some very simple object – say, a hammer. On the commonsensical Humean view, a hammer is one distinct thing, a nail another: they are individuated entities. A contingent causal relation could conceivably hold between the movement of the one and the subsequent movement of the other. That a causal relation exists between them is established by “observation” and “experience”: The striking of nails with hammers is “constantly conjoined” with the movement of nails.

The relational view is quite different from the Humean view. Hammers and nails cannot be individuated in the way that Hume requires. For consider: a hammer *is* a hammer because it has certain uses or functions, e.g. driving nails. What a hammer *is*, is defined relationally. *Qua* physical object or body, a *hammer* does not even exist. A thing is not a hammer unless and until it is used as a hammer, which is to say, put to human uses (driving nails, building shelters, etc.) by human beings (carpenters). A hammer is what it is by virtue of its being a constitutive element in an ensemble of relations, and not merely by virtue of its size, shape, weight, or other physical characteristics. Thus, for instance, an archeologist may unearth an object that *looks* like a hammer; but he cannot say that it *is* a hammer until he can say to what human uses it was put. He must, in other words, locate it within an ensemble of human relations in order to *identify* it in the first place. Even the humblest, most solid thing *is* what it is because certain other things are what they are in relation to it. This is true not only of tables and chairs, hammer and nails, but even, I daresay, of billiard balls.<sup>29</sup> But is it true of individuals as well?

It is a basic (ontological) tenet of liberal theory that individuals and only individuals exist: the world is a succession of individuated things and events. Translated into social-political terms, the claim is that the social-political world consists of individual human beings who perform actions. Some of these actions are acts of coercion, exercises of power, etc. – which means, as I noted in 3, that some individual actions cause or determine other individual actions. Since causal relations can obtain only between individuated entities, so coercive relations can obtain only between individuals. Thus we return to the agency model of coercion outlined in 3.0 by way of the discussion of Humean causation in 3.2.

According to the alternative – indeed, antithetical – structural model, coercion is not and cannot be, a relationship between individuals for the simple reason that individuals do not exist (except perhaps in the heaven of liberal theory). The ontologically autarkic individual of liberal theory, i.e. the individual who can be described without reference to other individuals, is a fiction, and – for purposes of social and political theory – an irrelevant and misleading (i.e. ideological) fiction to boot.<sup>30</sup>

To use a dramaturgical analogy: individuals fill and perform roles; they encounter each other not as individuals but as players of roles.<sup>31</sup> “Motorists” encounter “traffic policemen”; “lawyers” encounter “clients”; “physicians” encounter “patients”; “representatives” encounter “constituents”; “husbands” encounter “wives”; “robbers” encounter “victims”; “capitalists” encounter “proletarians”; “masters” encounter “slaves.” This last relationship, analyzed with great insight by Hegel,<sup>32</sup> is a most instructive one.

To begin with, there can be neither master nor slave without the institution, or social practice, of slavery (and of course vice-versa). Nor can a “master” exist unless a “slave” exist: in order to *be* a master, *A* must have a slave (*B*); conversely, if *A* does not have a slave he is not a master. Moreover, *A* cannot become *B*’s master, or *B* *A*’s slave, except according to socially defined rules and norms. *A* cannot tap just anyone to be his slave; most other people are ineligible for that role. And *A* must, if he is to become a master, engage in certain normatively and institutionally defined transactions – e.g., going to a slave auction, bidding on a prospective slave (*B*), being the highest bidder for *B*, paying for *B*, etc. All these are “institutional” or “societal” facts, i.e. they are (recognizable as) facts only within social and institutional contexts and settings.<sup>33</sup> In any case *A* and *B* do not meet as the atomic individuals of liberal theory but as role-players and bit-players in a collective drama written by no one and by everyone.<sup>34</sup>

To extend this Hegelian parable still further: *A*, not being a Kantian, uses *B* as a means to *A*’s ends, denominated *x* (leisure, freedom from toil, pride of ownership, social status, etc.). Let us also suppose that all the things denoted by *x* are the ends of slave-ownership in this society. Now *A* could not enjoy *x* without *B*: *B* is the *conditio sine qua non* of *A*’s enjoying *x*. Thus the connection between *A*’s owning *B* and *A*’s enjoying *x* is not merely instrumental but intrinsic: to *be* a master *means* to enjoy *x*. In other words, the enjoyment of *x* being essential to *A*’s very identity *as A*, and *B*’s being necessary for *x*, *B* is therefore an essential aspect of *A*’s identity. Without *B*, *A* is not *A*. *B* thus becomes part of the meaning of *A*. Who says *A* necessarily says (or implies) *B*. *A* and *B* are, then, defined and identified relationally, that is, as non-individual elements in an ensemble of social relations.

Marx’s critique of liberal individualism is the political-theoretical counterpart of his critique of ontological atomism.<sup>35</sup> The individual, Marx declared, is no Democritean “atom”:

. . . the members of civil society are not atoms. The characteristic quality of an atom is to have *no* qualities, and consequently no relations deter-

mined by its own nature with other beings outside itself . . . The egoistic individual of civil society may in abstractive and lifeless conceptions inflate himself into an atom, that is, into a being without relations, self-sufficient [etc.]. But profane, sensuous reality has no concern for his imagination.<sup>36</sup>

If the “individual” of liberal theory is a fiction, so too is the liberal conception of society: “Society does not consist of individuals; it expresses the sum of connections and relationships in which individual find themselves.” That men do not so much “play” their roles as they are “bearers” (*Träger*) of them, is a *social* fact. Outside society there are neither masters nor slaves, citizens nor aliens, etc.: “To be a slave or to be a citizen are *social* determinations, the relationships of Man A and Man B. Man A is not [a master, nor B] a slave as such. He is a slave within society and because of it.”<sup>37</sup> This “structural” perspective thus directs our attention away from motives and intentions of individuals, and leads us to focus upon objective relationships.<sup>38</sup> Thus coercion is a feature of structures, not a product of intentions. In this respect as in every other, the structural model differs markedly from the agency model.

## 5 The Agency Model Criticized

The way is now prepared for my internal critique of the agency model. In a nutshell, my argument is this: since (as Hegel certainly recognized) *A* would not even *be A* without *B*, then the relationship between them is conceptual and not contingent. Therefore it cannot, by the terms of Hume’s account, be causal; therefore it cannot be coercive. For consider: *A* and *B* cannot in the first place be satisfactorily individuated, inasmuch as *A* is (or counts as) *A* by virtue of *B* without *B*, *A* is not *A*. In other words, *B* is essential to *A*, in the sense that *B* is a thing without which *A* is not *A*. *B* is therefore a *property* of *A*, in both senses of the term: *A* owns *B*; and *B* is an essential aspect or feature of *A*.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, *B* is a defining feature of *A*. Clearly, then, the relationship between *A* and *B* is not purely contingent. Indeed it looks like a *conceptual* relation: for is it not part of the *meaning* of being a “master” to have a “slave” to do your bidding? And yet the relationship between *A* and *B* also looks like a causal relation: *A* is “master” because *A* causes or determines *B*’s behavior, and not the other way around.<sup>40</sup> But then, according to the agency model, if the relation between *A* and *B* is conceptual, it cannot be causal; and if it is not causal, it cannot be coercive. This dilemma enables us to expose a fatal flaw in the agency model of coercion: there is a contradiction between ontological “base” and political “superstructure” in the agency model.

The agency model of coercion breaks down internally. Liberals (and Marxists) would agree that the relationship between master *A* and slave *B* is coercive, and indeed constitutes a veritable paradigm case of coercion. And since the master-slave relation is coercive, it is *eo ipse* causal. Yet, as we have seen, what *A* is, or does, cannot be described without reference to what *B* is, or does; therefore the elements in the relation cannot be individuated in the way that Hume requires that cause and effect be individuated. Of course this renders the agency model self-contradictory and paradoxical, and leaves liberal theorists on the horns of a genuine dilemma from which there is no escape. The dilemma is this: acts and relationships that liberals would ordinarily describe as “coercive” cannot be so described as long as they remain committed to the agency model of coercion. The reason is simple: in order for the relationship between *A* and *B* to count as a *coercive* one, it must, according to the agency model, qualify as *causal in the contingent Humean sense*. But this last requirement cannot be met, since *A* and *B* cannot be individuated, i.e. recognized and described without reference to one another. This being the case, one who subscribes to the agency model *must* say that the master-slave relation is *not* coercive! And yet this is utterly at odds with what one would ordinarily say, whether one be a liberal or a Marxist. The liberal concept of coercion, constructed according to the terms of the agency model, is thus reduced to absurdity.

### 5.1 Objections and Replies

My rather harsh verdict might be appealed on the following grounds. A critic might object that I collapse, or ignore, the crucial distinction between what one *is* (being) and what one *does* (acting). What *A is* requires reference to *B*, and thus *A* and *B* cannot be satisfactorily individuated in the way that Hume requires. But what *A does* is not at all equivalent to who or what *A is*, and likewise for *B*. If statuses and roles cannot be individuated, i.e. if they are conceptually interdependent, at least *actions* can be individuated; and it is with actions that the agency model is concerned. And since actions can be individuated, they can figure as contingent Humean causes. Therefore the agency model remains internally consistent and intact.

This objection is not nearly so sound as it may appear. For the distinction between being and doing, far from being crucial, is politically and conceptually otiose. *A* would not be doing what he does — e.g., issuing commands to *B*, punishing *B*, etc. — if *A* were not who or what he is, namely a slave-owner or master, and *B* who or what *B* is, namely a slave. My critic might as well try to draw a distinction between what a hammer *is* and what it *does*: for a hammer *is* what it does, i.e. the role or function it performs. As with hammers, so too with masters and slaves, or indeed any social roles and relations.

This reply might not satisfy my critic. While acknowledging that the structural model of coercion entails an elision of what someone is and what he does, my critic might still object that this elision is illegitimate. My argument rests, he rejoins, upon the dubious supposition that roles or positions within a social structure exhaustively determine actions.

To this I should reply: far from being dubious, my remark is merely a *reminder* concerning a logically (or, if you prefer, conceptually) necessary truth, viz., that what it *means* to occupy a social role depends – *logically* depends – upon the occupant’s being able to perform certain actions. What should we say, for example, of a master whose commands were never obeyed? We should not say that he was a queer or peculiarly inept master but rather that he is not a *master* at all. For to *be* a master *means* to be able (or in a position) to command and be obeyed. That, after all, was the point of Hegel’s excursus on lordship and bondage: the master’s very *identity* as master is (logically) dependent upon the slave’s continued subservience. *Qua* individual, his remaining subservient may to some degree be a matter of choice and contingency; but, *qua* role-player, his continued subservience is a matter of logical necessity. My point in remarking that, *qua* role-player, what one *is* and what one *does* are indistinguishable, was *not* to make the dubious (and probably false) empirical claim that roles or positions within a social structure exhaustively determines individual actions. Far from it. My point is rather that the connection between occupying a role and performing characteristic role-related actions is not a contingent (Humean) causal connection but a *conceptual* one. My critic has mistaken my simple logical reminder for a highly dubious causal claim.

My critic might remain unsatisfied on another score. All my talk about actions, he contends, is misplaced; for actions suppose agents, and there are no agents in the relational scheme. And if there are no agents there can be no actions, coercive or otherwise. *Who* is coercing and being coerced? Have I not shown that there is but one concept of coercion, namely the liberal concept?

In supposing that “actions” require (individual) “agents” my critic merely takes granted liberal premises; and so it is hardly surprising that liberal conclusions follow. My aim, however, was to question these very premises: to ask whether there might not be two concepts of coercion, one rooted in the individualistic ontology of liberal theory, the other in the relational ontology underlying Marxian theory. Of course, if we begin by accepting liberal ontology, premises, and definitions, my question is *prima facie* absurd.

## 6 Conclusion

In this essay I have begun to construct the liberal and the Marxian concepts of coercion. The differences between them are fundamental and probably irreconcilable. That does not mean, however, that given their respective ontologies, each is valid in its own right. On the contrary, neither concept is valid if its ontological presuppositions are insecurely grounded and/or if it exhibits internal inconsistencies or contradictions. The liberal concept of coercion, explicated by means of the agency model, suffers from both of these defects. The agency model of coercion is seriously, indeed fatally, flawed. For latter-day liberals this is an unpalatable conclusion. Yet I trust that my reasons for reaching this conclusion – however dry and prolix they may seem – are accessible to everyone, liberals and Marxists alike.

## NOTES

1. See, e.g., Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (New York, 1963), vol. II, ch. 19, and *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York, 1966), ch. 18.
2. This distinction does *not* parallel John Rawls' distinction between the single *concept* of *x* and the several *conceptions* of *x* (*A Theory of Justice* [Cambridge, Mass., 1971], p. 5). Nor do I mean to suggest, although it may be true, that coercion is an "essentially contested concept" (see W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* [New York, 1966], ch. 8). The differences between the Marxian and liberal concepts of coercion are more fundamental than these otherwise useful distinctions suggest.
3. Cf. Felix E. Oppenheim, *Dimensions of Freedom* (New York, 1961), pp. 40–43.
4. See, *inter alia*, Herbert Simon, *Models of Man* (New York, 1957), p. 5; James March, "An Introduction to the Theory and Measurement of Influence," *American Political Science Review* 49 (June, 1955), esp. p. 437; Robert A. Dahl, "Cause and Effect in the Study of Politics," in *Cause and Effect*, ed. Daniel Lerner (New York, 1965), pp. 75–98, and "Power," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1968), Vol. XII, esp. p. 410; and Andrew S. McFarland, *Power and Leadership in Pluralist System* (Stanford, 1969), p. 3.
5. See my "Power, Causation and Explanation," *Polity* 8 (Winter 1975), pp. 189–214.
6. See Ronald B. Miller, "Violence, Force, and Coercion," in *Violence*, ed. Jerome A. Shaffer (New York, 1971).
7. On the agent/patient distinction see Thomas Hobbes, *De Corpore*, in *English Works*, ed. Molesworth (London, 1839), chs. 9 and 10.
8. Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago, 1972), p. 133.
9. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, 1969), p. 122.
10. See, *inter alia*, Miller, *op. cit.*; H. L. A. Hart and A. M. Honore, *Causation in the Law* (Oxford, 1961); A. R. C. de Crespigny, "Power and Its Forms," *Political Studies* 16 (1968); Robert Nozick, "Coercion," in *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, ed. Peter Laslett et. al., fourth series (Oxford, 1972); and the essays by Michael D. Bayles, Bernard Gert, Virginia Held, and Alan Wertheimer in *Nomos XIV: Coercion*, ed. J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (Chicago, 1972).

11. Cf. Felix E. Oppenheim, "Power and Causation," in *Power and Political Theory*, ed. Brian Barry (London, 1976).
12. This section draws heavily upon my "Models of Power: Past and Present," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 11 (July 1975), esp. pp. 214–16.
13. *Ibid.*; also my "Power, Causation and Explanation," *op. cit.*
14. Hobbes, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–28.
15. This is J. W. N. Watkins' summary restatement of Hobbes' view (*Hobbes' System of Ideas* [London, 1965], p. 43).
16. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. A. C. Fraser (New York, 1959), Vol. I, pp. 311–12.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
18. This claim finds its concrete meaning in Locke's discussion of property in the *Second Treatise*. In civil society those whose only property is in their body (i.e. the "Instrument" with which they labor) are patients *vis-à-vis* those whose property assumes the money-form; for with money one person may buy the labor of another. See Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch. 5, esp. §§ 44–51; cf. also in this connection C. B. MacPherson's illuminating analysis of Locke in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford, 1962), ch. 5.
19. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York, n.d.), Vol. I, p. 155.
20. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1920), p. 77.
21. The following remarks about Hume's analysis of causation are of necessity sketchy and superficial. For a fuller discussion, see my *Concepts and Explanation in Social Science* (New York, forthcoming), ch. 2.
22. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. I, Bk. I, 3.
23. Hume, *Enquiry*, sec. 4.
24. Thus Hobbes: "The final Cause, End, or Designe of men . . . in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, (in which we see them live in Common-wealths) is the foresight of their own preservation . . ." (*Leviathan* [Oxford, 1909], Part II, ch. 17, p. 128). Thus also Locke: "The great and chief end . . . of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the Preservation of their Property" (*Second Treatise*, § 124); but since most men have property only in their bodies, i.e. their labor, their very lives *must* be in danger in the State of Nature: for otherwise they would not need to protect their "property" by entering civil society. See MacPherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 247–51.
25. J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic* (London, 1906), Bk. VI, ch. 7, p. 573.
26. Steven Lukes (*Individualism* [New York, 1973], pp. 116–17) rightly warns against equating methodological individualism with ontological individualism. Although it is certainly true that they are not the same, it is no less true that the latter is presupposed by the former. That is what I mean by saying that methodology recapitulates ontology.
27. Marx, *Capital* (Moscow, 1975), Vol. III, p. 797.
28. See Bertell Ollman's invaluable explication of "the philosophy of internal relations" and its role in Marxian theory: *Alienation* (Cambridge, 1971), chs. 1–3 *et passim*.
29. If an entity were to behave as Hume avers a billiard ball could conceivably behave, then we should not say, with Hume: "Hmm. This billiard ball is behaving in most peculiar ways. I really must revise my views on billiard ball behavior." On the contrary, we should probably wonder whether the entity in question actually *is* a billiard ball. For an object's causal characteristics may serve to define it; and if it lacks those characteristics, it is not (say) a billiard ball. Hume's mistake was to suppose that a thing's *identity* has no necessary relation to its (causal) characteristics.
30. See the useful survey of criticisms of the "abstract individual" in Lukes, *op. cit.*, chs. 11–13; cf. also Gramsci's brief remarks in his *Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans.

- Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1971), pp. 361–62.
31. One must not, of course, reify the concept of social role. For a critique, see Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston, 1973), pp. 206–07.
  32. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, trans. Baillie (New York, 1967), B. IV. A. 3, pp. 229–40.
  33. Cf. Maurice Mandelbaum, “Societal Facts,” *British Journal of Sociology* (1955), reprinted in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick Gardiner (New York, 1959), pp. 476–88; G. E. M. Anscombe, “On Brute Facts,” *Analysis* 18 (January 1958), pp. 69–72.
  34. The most brilliant exploration of this theme is still Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire*.
  35. Marx, *Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophies of Nature*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works (MECW)* (Moscow, London, and New York, 1975-), I, pp. 25–73 *passim*, and ch. 2 (pp. 53–58) in particular.
  36. Marx, *The Holy Family*, *MECW*, IV, p. 120.
  37. Marx, *The Grundrisse*, ed. and trans. David McLellan (New York, 1971), p. 77.
  38. E.g., “In the investigation of *political* conditions one is too easily tempted to overlook *the objective nature of the relationships* and to explain everything from the *will* of the persons acting. There are relationships, however, which determine the actions of private persons as well as those of individual authorities, and which are as independent as are the movements in breathing. Taking this objective standpoint from the outset, one will not presuppose an exclusively good or bad will on either side. Rather, one will observe relationships in which only individuals appear to act at first. As soon as it is demonstrated that something was *necessitated* by conditions, it will not be difficult to figure out under which external circumstances this thing actually had to come into being, and under which other circumstances it could not have come about although a need for it was present. One can determine this with almost the same certainty as a chemist determines under which external circumstances some substances will form a compound.” Marx, “The Defense of the Moselle Correspondent: Economic Distress and Freedom of the Press,” in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. and trans. Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (New York, 1967), pp. 144–45; *MECW*, I, pp. 336–37.
  39. See Ruth Barcan Marcus, “Essential Attribution,” *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (8 April 1971), pp. 187–202.
  40. That is, a causal (coercive) relation is *asymmetrical*. See Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 5.