

# FREEDOM AND VIRTUE

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MODERN POLITICAL THINKERS have consistently agreed that the goal of social action is freedom. Spinoza, for example, states that "the purpose (*finis*) of the state is really freedom."<sup>1</sup> Rousseau's opening comments of the *Social Contract* indicate that he is concerned with the liberation of mankind. J. S. Mill, in the introductory chapter of *On Liberty*, argues that the conflict between liberty and authority is the central political issue. Ancient political philosophy, on the other hand, is characterized by a rather different attitude toward the purpose of the state. Aristotle, in fact, criticizes the democrat who places liberty and equality above all social values.<sup>2</sup> For the ancients, virtue constituted the end to be sought. It is "for the sake of good actions . . . that political associations must be considered to exist."<sup>3</sup> The fundamental political choice, therefore, seems to be between a regime that promotes freedom and one that promotes virtue. Are these mutually exclusive alternatives?

## I

If a free society is defined as one in which each person may live his life as he chooses so long as he does not infringe on the rights of others by the initiation of physical force, then the classical attitude on what a political regime should seek to secure would seem to be the most defensible in all cases. Given a society whose institutions conformed to the above principle, there would be no question of the promotion of freedom. A free society could not promote freedom, because that society would already *be* free. That is to say, that freedom would not be something a society or its members could aspire to. Freedom would instead characterize their condition or state of existence. The promotion of freedom only makes sense in societies that are unfree. Virtue, on the other hand, is something that can always serve as an object of one's aspirations. A man may be born free, but he is never born virtuous. For this reason, all societies are in a position to consider the promotion of virtue. Free societies can seek to maintain their freedom, but freedom will not serve as a further goal for the members of that society. The answer given by the ancients to the question of what constitutes the central social goal is, therefore, a most profound one; for, unlike the goal of freedom, virtue is an ever-present concern even in an ideally free society.

It might be objected that people always desire to purge themselves of such social burdens as poverty, disease, and ignorance. We desire to be free of these burdens; and since actions must be taken to achieve this type of freedom, freedom can be promoted in a free society. This objection, however, is not without difficulties. In the first place, it is true that the relief of poverty, disease, and ignorance can serve as goals in any society. Yet freedom conceived in terms of the relief of burdens cannot be a primary sense of freedom. The mere aspiration to relieve certain burdens implies nothing about the context in which those burdens are to be relieved. Indeed, one is compelled to search for a more fundamental conception of freedom that will set the context for legitimizing any secondary senses of freedom. In order to claim that a given society is free, in other words, one must be able to claim that the institutional arrangements of that society (in which particular goals are to be sought) are themselves free. The definition of freedom implicit in the above characterization of a free society qualifies as a candidate for a first-order, or primary, conception of freedom. That definition does not suffer from a need for a setting in which the conditions demanded by the definition can be met. The definition itself determines such a setting. In short, the relief-of-burdens view of freedom must be derivative from or dependent upon a more fundamental conception of freedom, since the aspiration to relieve burdens begs one to search for the proper context for that relief. The relief of burdens cannot, therefore, be a primary principle or goal of social organization.

The second major defect of the relief-of-burdens view of freedom is related to the first. To relieve burdens requires action, but mere desire to obtain such relief does not specify the nature of the actions to be taken. We could, for example, solve the problems of poverty, disease, and ignorance simply by doing away with whoever is poor, sick, or stupid. Some knowledge is, therefore, required in order to distinguish between right and wrong actions. Yet once we become concerned with the distinction between right and wrong we are no longer considering freedom but rather, in some sense, at least, virtue. Right action or virtue can be promoted, but the *actual* relief of burdens cannot. To be without burdens is to be in a certain existential condition. Actions conducive to securing that condition can be promoted in order to obtain the desired result, but the result itself cannot properly be considered without giving attention to the means necessary for the achievement of that result. Thus, a society cannot literally promote freedom from any burden and cannot properly promote a certain set of means for the relief of burdens without first having a clearly defined set of ethical principles that justify the means under consideration. In some sense, therefore, the relief of burdens presupposes the promotion of virtue—that is, right action.

A second objection to the conclusion that freedom cannot be the central social goal might be that a society could promote freedom by insuring the freedom to *do* certain things, such as obtaining a better job, receiving an

education, or having the leisure to travel. The freedom to engage in certain activities, however, is also a second-order view of freedom and suffers the same defects as noted above. The freedom to do  $X(s)$  calls for a determination of the context in which  $X$  will be done. That is to say, the freedom to an  $X$  raises the question whether  $X$  is good for human beings, and also the question of the appropriate setting for pursuing  $X$ . Once these questions are raised, one is compelled to search for both a more fundamental conception of freedom and some standards for determining which things are worthy of our aspirations. The latter concern again raises the issue of virtue; for the virtuous person is able to distinguish the good things from the bad.<sup>4</sup>

The foregoing arguments indicate that reflection moves us to transcend the concern with secondary senses of freedom. We must justify that primary context in which our actions will take place and determine those moral principles that establish the permissible within that context. Concern for the relief of certain burdens and the attainment of certain goods must give way to a concern for gaining the wisdom necessary to understand what must be secured to relieve *any* burden or gain *any* good. Wisdom, in this sense, means not only practical knowledge of the means to certain ends but, most importantly, knowledge of those principles that should guide and set the context for all of our actions. Right action is itself dependent upon wisdom; for it would make no sense to claim that one ought to do  $A$  and, at the same time, have no conception of why alternatives to  $A$  are either wrong or less than satisfactory. Knowledge of moral principles is thus more fundamental than concrete moral acts. In the end, one comes to recognize the myopic nature of doctrines formulated exclusively in terms of secondary freedoms.

The promotion of virtue is of fundamental importance because persons stand in need of standards to guide their actions. A society without a sense of its own fundamental moral principles is one in which the members of that society are not able to perceive clearly the worthiness of their actions. Moreover, as indicated above, a society whose sole focus is upon the secondary freedoms is one out of touch (or soon to lose touch) with more fundamental concerns. The United States is today a country that has lost sight of its earlier concern with a primary conception of freedom.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the secondary freedoms now dominate the public consciousness. Since the "pursuit" of secondary freedom is argued for on moral grounds, the interesting question is whether a primary sense of freedom is compatible with the demands of moral virtue. The foregoing discussion has argued for the importance of moral virtue and has also shown the deficiencies inherent in an exclusive concern with secondary freedom. Thus, can a primary conception of freedom (such as that implicit in the mutual-noninterference definition of a free society) also set the context for the advancement of virtue in society? In the next section I argue that moral virtue cannot be achieved by the coercive measures so common in contemporary social life. I conclude that freedom in the primary sense not only depicts the proper setting for social

interaction but also specifies the conditions for a meaningful sense of moral virtue.

## II

*Virtue* is a moral term—that is, a term understood within an ethical or moral context. The nature of the ethical theory one adopts is therefore likely to determine one's view of virtue. Without developing a full ethical theory here or even outlining one, I can look into a specific moral question that is relevant to our present theme. The conclusions drawn below should be sufficient to indicate the necessary connection between freedom and virtue.

Given the assumption that freedom ought to be maintained and virtue promoted (that is, given the argument of the first section), the question whether there might be some conflict between freedom and virtue still remains. This question arises because freedom, as earlier defined (mutual noninterference), seems too weak a condition for securing virtue. The apparent weakness of mutual noninterference has led many to call upon certain coercive agencies to act in behalf of virtue or moral goodness. We shall, therefore, examine the moral significance of the methods used by that agency which puts checks on our freedom for the sake of the "morally proper"—namely, we shall examine the methods employed by government. Government is an institution sometimes utilized by those who seek to undertake moral actions. Certain individuals claim moral worth or credit for actions that employ the coercive power of government. The question under consideration is whether, in fact, one does deserve moral worth or credit when utilizing the coercive power of government to perform certain alleged "good deeds."

If it can be shown that the employment of coercive methods can never be morally worthy (and is indeed morally unworthy), then freedom and virtue will not be in conflict *politically*, since it will be for ethical reasons that this traditional role of government will be criticized. Our primary definition of freedom, in other words, will not only serve to define the context in which other secondary senses of freedom might operate, but that definition will also serve to define the ethical context in which virtuous actions must derive their meaning. Thus, mutual noninterference will be primary with respect to both freedom and virtue and will serve as the condition that must be presupposed before any meaningful sense can be given to freedom and virtue. Freedom and virtue, therefore, will be seen to be inextricably linked.<sup>6</sup>

Coercion can be defined as the use (or threat) of physical force. There are two types of coercion. The first is initiatory—the initiation of (or threat of) the use of physical force. Most present-day governments are greatly expanding their use of initiatory coercion. Initiatory coercion can be distinguished from the second type—retaliatory coercion, or the retaliatory use of physical force (self-defense is an example). I cannot undertake here a

discussion of retaliatory coercion, except to note the following: retaliatory coercion is not inconsistent with the definition of freedom given above. The rights people possess would have little practical significance if it were not possible to ensure the protection of those rights. Retaliatory coercion may therefore be necessary to counter the destructive effects of initiatory coercion. Moreover, retaliatory coercion may be the morally proper response to initiatory coercion.

The argument below will concern only initiatory coercion, which has traditionally been considered consistent with a virtuous and moral society. We shall first examine whether those who initiate coercion (or advocate that initiation) for the sake of some "good" thereby gain or deserve moral worth. Second, we shall examine whether coercion ought ever to be employed.

The notion of "responsibility" is the key concept for understanding morality and human rights. The entire enterprise of moral worthiness or unworthiness depends upon responsibility, or what might be called moral agency. Moral consideration cannot be given to a person's deeds unless that person was responsible for doing those deeds. There can be no good or bad deeds without actual doers of the deeds, and in order to qualify as a doer of a deed, in the morally relevant sense, one must be responsible for the deed done. As we shall see immediately, this seemingly obvious point has been almost completely ignored in contemporary society.

A word needs to be said here about the relation of moral agency, or responsibility, to moral predicates (terms such as *good*, *bad*, *noble*, *just*, applied to persons and their acts). We have already assumed that if a person is not responsible for taking an action, that person cannot be held morally responsible for the act. "Moral agency" is thus a notion whose full intelligibility necessarily depends upon the notion of responsibility. To be responsible or to act responsibly means to be an adult human being who undertakes an action by his own choice.<sup>7</sup> A person is not held responsible for an act if he was forced to do that act or if he is mentally defective or incompetent. By the same token, if a person does not do an act he is not responsible for the act (e.g., when we find out someone else did the act). It is quite obvious, I believe, that if a man did not do an act or was forced to do it, moral worthiness or unworthiness cannot be attributed to him.

Now, just as a man cannot be held responsible for an act he did not do or was forced to do, the act itself cannot be of any moral significance if there are no responsible agents performing the act. In a community of sleepwalkers or zombies, there would be no morally good or bad acts. The reason for this is quite simple. In order for an act to be called good or bad, that act must be of the sort that would allow one to say, "One ought to do this" or "One ought not to do that." It would make no sense to tell sleepwalkers or zombies that they ought or ought not do *X*, because they are not responsible agents—that is, they have no choice in what they do. The term *ought* would simply be misapplied in such communities.

To give another example: if all the agents involved in an action (call them group A) were performing the action under coercion, *ought* and *ought not* would not be applicable to them or *to anyone else not in group A*. It makes no sense to say of those being coerced (group A) that they ought or ought not do X, since they have no real choice in the matter.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, one cannot propose to anyone outside of group A that he ought to take action X in the same way and under the same conditions that the members of group A are taking that action. The reason for the foregoing proposition is that one cannot properly recommend, "You ought to do X" *and also* (in the "same breath") recommend, "The way you ought to do X is by being coerced to do X." The second recommendation negates the first. When one is coerced to do X, one does not have any choice in doing X; but when one asserts that "one ought to do X" one necessarily implies that the proposed action is open to choice. One *can* choose to be coerced into getting X done, but one cannot be considered to be *doing* X in the sense of being responsible for X.<sup>9</sup> This last line of reasoning points to the following: there is something strange (to say the least) about the proposition, "One ought to be coerced into doing good deed X." The strangeness, I believe, stems from the separation of choice from the applicability of an *ought* statement. Since moral recommendations presuppose choice, the actions of a coerced party lack moral significance.

The general conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing discussion is that in order for an action to be termed morally good or bad it must be possible to say one ought or ought not to do the action. In situations where there are no responsible agents, *ought* and *ought not* are not terms applicable to those agents; nor are the terms *ought* and *ought not* appropriate as guides to moral action in situations that do not permit moral agency. Consequently, those situations which contain *no* responsible agents and in which moral predicates are inapplicable, are situations in which no one can rightly claim moral worth.<sup>10</sup>

It is necessary to point out that actions with no responsible agents may have beneficial or deleterious consequences; thus the actions that produce those consequences might in everyday speech be called good or bad. For example, a sleepwalker might aid someone in his walking, and we might therefore conclude that a "good" action was done. The sleepwalker's "good" action is without any real moral force, however, since it is not possible to say of that action that one ought to perform it.<sup>11</sup>

One may wonder why we should ever be concerned with the moral issue. Why not simply seek to produce benefits and avoid harm. The justification for the necessity of a serious consideration of moral issues is a complicated one; for the areas in need of examination for such a justification range from metaphysics and epistemology to cultural anthropology. Nevertheless, I did indicate in section one that to focus only upon secondary freedoms (benefits) ignores certain substantive issues that demand attention. Moreover, this essay is directed toward those who are already convinced of the importance

of morality. Those not so convinced are generally disinclined to defend their advocacy of governmentally coerced "benefits" in terms of the advancement of moral righteousness. Moreover, it is in just such terms that such advocacy is usually advanced.

Let us now take the case of a prejudiced white homeowner who refuses to sell his house to a black man.<sup>12</sup> The selling of the house would seem to be good, for if the man could be convinced to sell, he should be praised for overcoming his prejudice. The selling of the house might, furthermore, lead to racial harmony, since those who live in the neighborhood could come to recognize that there is nothing inherently wrong with blacks. Let us also suppose however, that there is a law that prohibits such refusal of sale. In this case there would be four principal actors: the homeowner (H), the black man (B), the police who enforce the law (P), and the legislators who made the law (L). Let us further suppose that because of L, P forced H to sell to B. Now if we ask who is the moral agent (or responsible agent) in the actual selling of the house, we find that our answer to this question must be, nobody. H is not responsible for "selling" the house because he was coerced into the "sale." L and P are not responsible agents for the "sale," because they did not sell the house, since it was not theirs to sell. B, of course, does not figure into the selling act. We have, therefore, the peculiar picture of the performance of a supposedly good act without any morally responsible agents of the act.

It is true that L and P (and also H and B) are responsible in one sense, namely, *that* the house was "sold." The fact that L and P were responsible that the house was "sold," however, in no way entitles them to any moral credit. In order to discover the reason for our last assertion let us draw a distinction between "responsibility-that" and "responsibility-for." Responsibility-that an action occurs refers to the causal mode which brought about the action. Responsibility-for an action will include certain features of responsibility-that but adds the moral element of whether and in what sense the agents of the action acted by choice. There can be responsibility-that without responsibility-for. The case of the prejudiced homeowner is one example, and so is the case of the sleepwalker who is responsible-that the lamp fell on the floor but not responsible-for the lamp ending up there. Yet it was noted earlier that there can be good or bad acts only when there is (to use our new term) responsibility-for. It is possible under certain conditions to examine the moral aspects of responsibility-that; but this examination is only useful for determining the mode of action under which the responsibility-that falls. For example, one might consider responsibility-that in order to determine whether or not the action in question was initiated coercively, noncoercively, intentionally, etc.

To deserve moral credit, an action taken by an agent must be a good action. The only way any of the actions in the home-seller example could qualify as good actions would be if one were prepared to accept the notion that there can be morally good or bad actions apart from there being any

agent responsible-for those actions. I have previously indicated some problems with this position. Since no one is responsible-for the "selling" of the house, the act of "selling" the house no longer qualifies as a good act (though it may well have conferred a benefit). One cannot say, in other words, that the "selling" of the house is a morally good act and one that others ought to perform. *Ought* has no meaning when applied to H or anyone in H's position. Even if it were possible to say that the fact that the house was "sold" was morally good (which it is not), the fact that no one was responsible-for the "sale" of the house means that no one can claim moral credit for that "sale."<sup>13</sup>

The implications of the above argument are sweeping. The argument implies the following: if someone claims that he is about to do or advocate some action for the "public good" on moral grounds, and that coercive methods will be employed to secure the desired end, then the action that results from the coercion and for which the advocate of coercion attempts to claim some moral worth is not a morally worthy action.<sup>14</sup> Thus, a very large percentage of current political events do not deserve to be viewed as morally proper.<sup>15</sup> Having offered some rationale for the impermissibility of ever linking coercion to the morally good, let us now see if coercion must be considered morally bad.

There are many arguments against coercion that attempt to show the moral blameworthiness of coercion. Most of these arguments depend upon the acceptance of some standard for determining good and bad.<sup>16</sup> Instead of taking this road, I shall, for the sake of brevity, outline an argument based simply on the meaning of moral terms. If it can be shown that there is something problematic about statements claiming that coercion is morally proper, then we have gained some insight into why it is that coercion should always be avoided.

In order to assert that coercion is good, one must be able to argue that, at least in some circumstances, coercive acts ought to be undertaken. When one recommends the moral propriety of coercive acts, one implies the following proposition: "One ought to act such that the situation created by the coercive action renders the term *ought* (or *ought not*) inapplicable to the action to be done by the coerced, no matter what the nature of the action may be."<sup>17</sup> The foregoing proposition is a necessary implication of the recommendation to coerce, because of the argument given in the first part of this second section. To give an example, if a gunman sticks you up, it makes no moral sense to tell you (the coerced) that you *ought* to give the gunman your money; for one of our previous conclusions was that moral oughts are inapplicable to persons who are being coerced. Let us carry our analysis a bit further.

It is possible (a) to translate the word *ought* by substituting the word *good* (any other positive moral value term would work as well for our purposes). For example, when one asserts, "You ought to do X," one normally means



that it is good that you do *X*. Let us (*b*) also translate *the coerced* in the proposition of the preceding paragraph to "the other party to the relation." If we first apply translation (*b*), and then (*a*) with (*b*), to the proposition under consideration, we would move from, "One ought to act such that the situation created by the coercive action renders the term *ought* inapplicable to the action to be done by the other party to the relation, no matter what the nature of the action may be," to, "It is good to act such that the situation created by the coerced action renders the term *good* inapplicable to the action to be done by the other party to the relation, no matter what the nature of that action may be." Whatever our standard of goodness, this translation runs counter to our moral sensibilities. The reason we are apprehensive is that the power of the first *good* of the translation loses its force or meaning by the time we reach a consideration of the results of the action. It seems meaningless, in other words, to say that the first action of a relationship between two people is good (namely, A's coercion of B) if the second act (e.g., B's giving A the money in the gunman example) cannot bear any relationship to the moral quality of the first act. What could the first *good* possibly mean here? Does it make sense to assert that one ought to engage in a relationship with another person, who is necessary to achieve some end, when no matter what that other person does, his actions cannot be called good?

In the example under consideration it is impossible for the actions of A and B to have the same moral status. And if it is impossible for the actions of A and B to have the same moral status, then no meaning can be given to the proposal that A ought to act in a coercive way toward B. Since there is a relationship between A and B, the only way that relationship could be deemed a good one is if it were *possible* (at least) that the actions of both parties to the relationship could be good—otherwise (if it were not possible) there could be no morally good *relationship* between A and B. In short, coercive situations make it impossible for the term *good* to be applied to all parties to the relationship; and if a positive moral term, such as *good*, cannot be applied to all aspects of a relationship, then the relationship itself is suspect.

The kind of problem we ran into above does not arise if one begins with the supposition that coercion is bad or that one ought not to coerce. It is, indeed, meaningful to say that "one ought not to act such that the situation created by the coercive action renders the term *ought* (or *ought not*) inapplicable to the action to be done by the coerced, no matter what the nature of the action may be." (We can, of course, substitute *it is bad that* for *ought not* in the above.) In this last example, the entire force of the *ought not* is maintained. One can use *ought not* either to indicate that something is bad or to indicate that a relevant feature of an action may not be good. We usually use this second sense of *ought not* when we lack knowledge. For example, one might say that one ought not to do *X* because it is not known whether a relevant feature of that act is bad or good. But in situations in which coercion is used, we do

know that a relevant feature of an action *cannot* be called good (by the argument above). Thus, whether *ought not* is applicable to coercive acts because those acts are positively bad or because it is not meaningful to say one *ought* to coerce, the result is the same—coercive acts ought not to be undertaken. The initial force of the *ought not* generates no paradox. We must conclude, therefore, that the only way to characterize coercion is as an action that ought not to be undertaken.

The foregoing has shown that those who coerce (or advocate coercion of) another do not deserve moral credit for their actions no matter how beneficial the end they seek. I have also indicated why the action of one who engages in coercion can be considered morally improper. These arguments imply that the kinds of governmental initiatives that are justified on moral grounds cannot be so justified. Many contemporary political thinkers conceive of their task as one of balancing the requirements of freedom with those of morality (and virtue). This balancing procedure presupposes a fundamental conflict between these two requirements. Yet if the above analysis is correct, then—*fundamentally*, at least—there is no conflict. Mutual noninterference serves as a necessary condition for both a free and a moral, or virtuous, society. If this is so, our task becomes one of seeking voluntary means to secure those secondary freedoms spoken of earlier. This is a demanding task but one whose undertaking thereby enters the realm of the noble.

1. *Tractatus-Theologico Politicus*, ed. A. G. Wernham, (Oxford, 1958), chap. 20, p. 231.
2. *Politics* 5. 9. 1310a25–38.
3. *Ibid.* 3. 9. 1281a3–4.
4. See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 6. 5. 1140a24–1140b30.
5. See my article "Government and the Governed," *Reason Papers*, no. 2 (Fall 1975), pp. 41–64.
6. It must be noted, of course, that mutual noninterference does not guarantee a virtuous society but serves only as a necessary condition for a truly virtuous society. Once this primary condition is secured, more would have to be done to secure a fully virtuous society. Though I also believe that a society based upon mutual noninterference is more likely to secure virtue, I shall not argue for that here.
7. The fundamental significance of choice in morality goes back at least as far as Aristotle. See the *Nicomachean Ethics* 3. 1. 1109b30–33: "Since virtue is concerned with passions and actions, and on voluntary passions and actions praise and blame are bestowed, on those that are involuntary pardon, and sometimes also pity, to distinguish the voluntary and the involuntary is presumably necessary."
8. I recognize the possibility of certain emergency cases (e.g., war) where the context is so radically altered that our above analysis may not fully apply. For the proper attitude toward such cases, see Ayn Rand, "The Ethics of Emergencies," in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York, 1964), pp. 43–49.
9. It would seem that the foregoing could lead to the following problem: given the general drift of our argument, it appears that one could absolve oneself of moral responsibility by asking to be coerced into an immoral action (e.g., "coerce me into stealing from X"); for if one was

coerced, one would not be responsible for the act. This case is only apparently a problem. Basically, there are two ways to consider this case: either one is free to back out of the deal to be coerced (in which case one is not coerced), or one is at core actually being coerced—that is, one is not free to back out or change one's mind. In the latter case one *would not* be fully responsible for what one did (though one may be responsible for initiating the situation). The point is that one's being coerced and one's not being coerced are mutually exclusive states of affairs. One cannot have the characteristics of both states of affairs at the same time. If one uncoercedly asks at time  $t_1$  to be coerced at  $t_2$ , one is either uncoercedly following the conditions established at  $t_1$  or one is actually being coerced at  $t_2$ . One cannot at the same time ask to be coerced and actually be coerced, because whether one is or is not coerced is a decision or action one cannot make oneself. One is coerced only and exclusively as a result of the decisions and actions of others.

10. I emphasize the qualification made in n. 8.

11. It should be apparent from what has been said that the view offered here is not a utilitarian one. The question of benefits is not a morally decisive factor. Almost any action appears to "benefit" somebody; thus a moral calculus of the distribution of benefits is required. I cannot undertake a critique of utilitarianism here, but my argument may still apply to those who desire to construct a utilitarian calculus that includes governmental coercion. (Indeed, I believe my argument does so apply.) I myself accept a position that looks, not to benefits (or consequences) of an action, but rather to the nature of the action itself and the conditions in which that action was undertaken. For a more complete account of my view, see my article "Ethical Egoism and Gewirth's PCC," *Personalist* 56 (1975), sec. 1.

12. I am not arguing in favor of racial prejudice, which I consider to be wholly immoral. I chose this particular case only so that I would not be open to the charge of selecting examples that gloss over the full implications of my position.

13. At this point the following question may arise: if L is not morally praiseworthy for the good act he produced, then would he be morally blameworthy if he coerced another to perform a *bad* act? It could appear by the above argument that he would not be morally blameworthy for the resultant bad act. If this is the implication of my argument, then that argument must be mistaken. This is not an implication of my argument, however. In our above case with L, H, P, and B, the mode of action taken by L (ignoring P for the sake of simplicity) ends with H. In other words, the following sort of relation obtains: L (coerces) H (non-coerces) B. This schema helps indicate that L is not the responsible moral agent in "selling" the house and that the mode of activity which L utilizes (coercion) ends with H and not B. Insofar as L is morally responsible, it is with respect to H and not to B. While H must "sell" the house to B, B has the option of refusing to take the house. Yet, now consider the schema for P coercing R to steal from Q: P (coerces) R (coerces) Q. Because the mode of activity is the same between (P and R) and (R and Q), and because P initiated the sequence, the moral agency of P now extends through R to Q. P is thus responsible for what happens to Q.

14. The advocacy of coerced actions on moral grounds is quite common among philosophers. For example, the following give but a minute sample of the articles available: Lord Patrick Devlin, "Morals and the Criminal Law," in *Ethics and Public Policy*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1975), pp. 246–48; Burton M. Leiser, *Liberty, Justice, and Morals* (New York, 1973), chap. 12; Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," in *World Hunger and Moral Obligation*, ed. William Aiken and Hugh La Follette (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1977), pp. 22ff; Jan Narveson, "Aesthetics, Charity, Utility and Distributive Justice," *Monist* 56 (1972): 527–51; J. Brenton Stearns, "Ecology and the Indefinite Unborn," *ibid.*, pp. 612–25; and B. J. Diggs, "The Common Good as Reason for Political Action," *Ethics* 83 (1973): 283–93. Most of the arguments put forth by these authors are stated in

impersonal terms—that is, they recommend that certain actions be taken by the state or the government. But since the state is run by individuals, the implications of their arguments are clear: those who contribute to the coercively enforced actions advocated by these authors should consider their acts to be of positive moral worth.

15. Needless to say, the argument above does not apply to retaliatory coercion, but rather to the initiatory use. I shall ignore those cases where the two sorts of coercion are mixed (e.g., when people are conscripted to defend themselves).

16. I could reference many such arguments, but one of the most recent defenses along these lines is given by Tibor R. Machan, *Human Rights and Human Liberties* (Chicago, 1973).

17. I refer the reader again to n. 9.