

A Praxeology of Coercion

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THE LIBERTARIAN'S CLAIM

Libertarians claim they know something others don't.

Society is structured in an unfair or unjust way, and this is because people are coerced into unwanted social arrangements.

Many people don't want to pay for the projects of others, but they have no choice. If they don't pay their taxes, they will have to go to jail.

Many people don't want particular social policies enacted in their names, but they are coerced into doing so. As involuntary members of the nation-state, they are legally bound to all the actions undertaken by that state.

The fundamental idea of coerced social arrangements strikes libertarians as inherently flawed. So Libertarians have developed various theories in the attempt to show the sense in which coerced social arrangements are wrong. The totality of such theories may be understood as "the theory of

libertarianism”, as distinct from the theories, for example, of democracy or of socialism.

The theory of libertarianism, though compelling, falls short of a praxeology. Though it conveys the negative effects of social coercion discursively, the reasoning employed falls short of demonstrating strict necessity of the type demonstrable for example, in economics.

As far as is known, there are no necessary consequences to social acts, aside from those described by the established laws of economics. No necessary negative consequence will befall one who coerces another, as far contemporary social science can gather. There are no cause and effect “laws” in the social realm, aside from the established laws of economic social activity.

SOCIAL COERCION

Though the theory of libertarianism falls short of a praxeology; falls short of a demonstration of necessary cause and effect, it does succeed in focussing libertarian intellectual effort on the defining characteristic of contemporary society: coerced social relationships, or simply “social coercion”.

Thus the theory of libertarianism is to some degree the theory of social coercion. What the theory of libertarianism finds harmful and tries to explain, is primarily social coercion.

A provisional definition of social coercion according to libertarianism, is coercion directed by society or society's representatives (i.e., "government") toward an individual or individuals who have done nothing wrong in the plain sense. Social coercion is when some in society choose to pursue their ends by compelling (coercing, forcing, etc.) others to cooperate in or pay for the pursuit of those ends, not as punishment for any crime committed, but rather because the coercing of individuals in service of those ends is viewed as acceptable social behavior.

If someone has done nothing wrong, has harmed no one, common sense justice conceives that one should not be subject to a penalty. But what is wrong with society according to libertarians, is that society, influenced by faulty social theories, has devised a complicated system of "criminalizing" essentially non-criminal behavior. Contemporary society is not interested in punishing "crime" per se. Rather it is interested in punishing disobedience to its laws, and "crime" is only a part of what contemporary laws address. In contemporary society, crime is only *one* of the things one may receive punishment for.

THE LEGITIMACY OF SOCIAL COERCION

All of contemporary society, whether one designates ours as a time of democracy, of socialism or of statism, is based on the legitimacy of social coercion. It is based on the idea that the coercive powers of the state, are properly used not only to punish harmful social acts (however those may be defined), but also to create new things; to create a “business plan” as it were, and then utilize the coercive powers of the state, to bring this plan into reality, without any regard to crime or criminal punishment.

What unifies all contemporary societies in a certain range of “socialistic sameness”, what continually drives the evolution of each society towards the same structure, and what prevents new societies from emerging, is the ideology, held by almost every citizen of the world, that social coercion is a legitimate function of government, and thus a legitimate form of social behavior generally.

From a libertarian perspective, virtually all of societies ills can be attributed to social coercion, since it is social coercion that prevents each group desiring to arrange their society differently from doing so. For according to the ideology of social coercion, choosing not to be a member of its society is cause for punishment. That is, the act of choosing different rules to

live under is, according to the theory of social coercion, a criminal act. Since societies (social arrangements) that may be able to solve social ills are illegal according to the ideology of social coercion, then naturally it follows, that to the theory of social coercion may be attributed many social ills, since this theory “criminalizes” possible solutions to many of societies problems. At least this is how things appear from the point of view of libertarianism.

There are many possible ways one may attempt to describe discursively the intuitive basis for the libertarian notion of legitimate government. Regarding the most fundamental categories of crime; those of assault, murder, robbery and fraud, it is virtually universal that everyone seeks to avoid being the recipient of these social acts. And this fact comprises the libertarian beginning point in conceiving the legitimate purpose of some type of “protection services”, i.e., “government”.

Things are different with respect to the “business plan” which society seeks to implement via government action. There is no universally acknowledged stand on whether or not one wants to be the “recipient” of a proposed new dam. Those who believe they would benefit from the construction of the dam, are pre-disposed to favor its construction. Those who believe they would be harmed by it, are pre-disposed to reject it.

Since (virtually) everyone seeks to avoid fundamental crime, everyone is in some sense “self compelled” to expend some effort, some “cost”, in order to attempt not to be the recipient of it. To libertarians, this means that no coercion is ultimately necessary to make people pay for or implement “protection services”, since everyone is seeking such services themselves, in one form or another. By contrast, not everyone will be self compelled to seek construction of the dam. In fact, some will be adamantly opposed. If they are not coerced into paying for the dam, there is no human tendency operant which will tend over time to lead them to pay for the dam. And this ultimately becomes the reason why it is illegal, according to the theory of social coercion, to not be a member of its society. This is the reason why it is illegal to form alternative societies: the knowledge of the lack of any human tendency toward, the lack of a universal human need for, its projects.

However that may be, that the use of government coercion to undertake such projects is legitimate, is the fundamental and implicit claim of the theory of social coercion. The guiding ideal of the theory of social coercion is not primarily the prevention or punishment of the universally acknowledged criminal categories. Rather, its guiding ideal is shaped by and results from the fact that it doesn’t stigmatize, and sees no moral or ethical problems with, social coercion. As the theory of social coercion sees things, voluntary market transactions

and demand, which would lead to the formation of protection services, and social coercion used in realizing contemporary government projects, are ethically equivalent. What is this but just a simple restatement of the fact that the theory of social coercion sees social coercion as legitimate?

UNIVERSAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN STRIVING

The primary fact of human existence is human striving. Everyone is engaged in attempting to attain some future state of affairs. This “attempting to attain”, this “trying to”, this “wanting” something, is a striving for some thing, or some state.

Concomitant to striving is attainment. Everyone possesses an idea of what they believe is “attained” for them. They believe they are living in a certain city, they believe they own a set of glasses, they believe their health tomorrow will be the same as today. All these comprise what is “attained” or believed attained for each of us.

Thus it is that all social interaction, all behavior in regard to another person B, can be conceived in terms of striving and attainment. All social interaction can be conceived in terms of what I, person A, am striving to attain, and what I believe I

have attained, and what person B is striving to attain, and what he believes he has attained.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF COERCION

Coercion is a recurring phenomenon of social interaction. When coercion is used, when coercion “happens” or is present, always the same thing is happening. When I coerce someone, I make something (or believe I make something) someone thought was attained for them, into something they are now striving to attain. Then I offer this thing back to them, in exchange for that which I want from them.

The classic exemplification of coercion is when I point a gun at person B and say: “give me your money”. When I do this, I make (or try to make) that which B thought was attained for him (his safety, well being, etc.) into something he now strives to attain. Then I offer to give B that which he now strives to attain (his safety, well being, etc.) in exchange for the money I want from him.

This is the essence of the recurring phenomenon of coercion. (force, compulsion, etc.)

COERCION AND LIBERTARIAN SOCIAL THEORY

Thus when libertarian social theory complains about how force is unjustly applied in contemporary society, it has in mind this general notion of coercion. In civil society, the part of society comprised of voluntary transactions, people by and large offer to one another, that which the other is striving for. But in coercive, non-civil society, that part of society comprised of coercive transactions, people offer to one another that which they believe the other person had already attained. Since it is generally ineffectual to offer someone for exchange, that which the other person already has, the coercive exchange consists in arranging for something someone already has, to become something they are now striving to attain, and then offering that same thing back to them for exchange.

In coercive exchange then, the one who coerces, seeks to attain that which he *currently strives for*, by offering in exchange, that which the other person *already has or had attained*. One person is getting that which he wants next, the next thing on his “list” so to speak. But the other person is only getting something he already had. He isn’t getting the next thing on *his* list.

This is the essence of libertarianism’s intuitive insight that social justice centers around the phenomenon of force (coercion), and the way it is used or practiced in society.

SOCIETAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ECONOMIC SOCIAL LAWS

Everyone knows that social theory and social science are controversial. Unlike mathematics, the exemplification of “objective” science, social science is still relatively subjective. Almost all assertions of social science are disputed and/or controversial to some degree.

But though this is undoubtedly the case, a small but growing number assertions made by social science have achieved “law-like” status, even though the sense in which these assertions can be considered social “laws” may be disputed in academic circles. That is, though the exact nature of these social laws may not be understood, the fact that these laws have been formulated by social science, and the fact that certain of these laws are now heeded by society and society’s representatives, confers implicitly law-like status on them, whether or not these law’s epistemological status has been clarified by social science.

Economics tells us that an increase in the supply of money, must necessarily cause a decrease in its value (inflation). Economics tells us that increasing the minimum wage rate above the market wage rate, must necessarily cause unemployment. And these are two economic (or social) laws, that whatever their status in academia, have for all practical purposes, achieved in the minds of contemporary society, the status of real social laws.

The large majority of social problems could be solved, or at least ameliorated, were the government to print the extra money needed to give all those who have urgent needs, enough to pay for their procurement. Many social problems could be solved or ameliorated by increasing the minimum wage to a high enough level, that wage earners could afford to purchase all urgently wanted goods and services. What prevents these good deeds from being done is not the unwillingness to do good, and not the failure to recognize that people have urgent needs that extra money could help them procure. What prevents these good deeds from being done is the knowledge of the necessary effects of doing them, which those who could do them, are eager to avoid. What prevents these good deeds from being done, is the knowledge of the social law that social science has discovered.

The social law states that if one wants to avoid causing inflation, one should not increase the money supply. And the social law states that if one wants to avoid causing unemployment, one should not increase the minimum wage rate above the market wage rate. The fact that money is not printed in large enough quantities to solve the urgent problems of most in society, and the fact that the minimum wage rate is not increased enough to achieve the same end, is implicit proof that society generally does acknowledge these laws. Society acknowledges the massive inflation and unemployment that would result, were the (at least partially) good ideas of increasing the money supply and minimum wage rates to be implemented.

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL LAW

It is the nature of these kinds of social laws that they provide an objective demonstration of the necessary effects of specific types of social action or social behavior. So that therefore, in the sphere of contentious political conflict, these laws can provide “ammunition” for one side or the other engaged in political debate. But an important and perhaps overlooked service that social laws provide, is that they provide a means by which those sincerely wanting to avoid certain consequences, but who did not know of the law’s existence, can do so. That is, we tend to think of social laws in the context of a political

debate, where some are eager to disprove the existence of such laws, because the existence of social laws is perceived as limiting the sphere of their consequence-free behavior. In short, they don't want the law to exist, because they do want to increase the money supply and the minimum wage rate, but don't want to believe or don't want it to be known, that they caused inflation or unemployment. But we should not forget, that aside from the political struggle implied in that scenario, there are others who may *sincerely want to avoid* the necessary, and to them negative consequences of particular social behavior, but who not knowing of any social law operant in the area in question, are for this reason, *unable to avoid* these negative consequences.

If one doesn't know of the existence of a particular social law, as was apparently the case in regard to the great inflations in the early twentieth century, then one cannot intentionally prevent the necessary consequence of specific social behavior by utilizing the knowledge the law imparts. Stated plainly, one cannot intentionally prevent inflation due to increases in the money supply, if one knows no connection between inflation and increases in the money supply. One wanting to prevent inflation, but not knowing any necessary connection between inflation and increases in the money supply, would look for other causes of inflation, seeking its causes elsewhere, while

continuing the (believed) benign activity of increasing the supply of money.

Thus, social law does more than bolster the case of those engaged in political debate. It provides a means for those sincerely wanting to avoid harmful consequences, but who previously had no means for avoiding them, to do so. In this sense, the laws of social science, just as the laws of natural science, advance social welfare.

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF SOCIAL LAW

What grants “law-like” character to social law, is a phenomenon whereby single, unitary changes or events, when conceived according to a conservation-like law or principle, can be seen from two points of view, which are not identical. An original “change”, is accompanied (not followed) by a “counter-change”, which is the same change, but seen from a different point of view.

Tangible examples of this phenomenon are: A glass of water moved towards the east, is always a glass of water moved away from the west. And, an automobile made more aerodynamic is always an automobile made harder to bring to a stop.

What imparts the law-like quality, the “necessity” to these change scenarios, is that one change can be seen in two ways, which are not identical in some sense. The fact that the change is one change, that the event is one event, is what ensures that the “other” way of seeing this change, the accompaniment, will always be present in the same way. (the necessity) The fact that the change can be seen in two ways, is what provides the “two-ness” to the change scenario, and what allows the apparent reality of two “events” to be “connected” to one another by means of a “law”. The fact that the change can be seen in two ways, is what provides the basis for our common sense notions of causality, of cause and effect, and is what tempts us to speak of this change as two events in succession, and in terms of the necessity “between” two events.

What makes the law of practical use, is the fact that one may intend to effect some particular change (take some action), but not necessarily intend for the necessary consequence to occur. One can intend to move a glass of water towards the east, and not really care whether or not it is moved (not “intend to” move it) away from the west. Similarly, one may have reasons for making an automobile more aerodynamic, and may never consider whether one can do so without making the car harder to bring to a stop. The car’s being harder to stop is not thought about, and is in this sense, not intended.

This fact of the non-intended accompaniment to the originally intended change, comprises the sense in which the two (the change and its accompaniment) are not identical. The separation of the original change from its necessary accompaniment **is** the form of non-identity between the two. The separation *comprises* the non-identity.

ECONOMIC SOCIAL LAW

Economic social law partakes of this same general form of law. Historically, economic science treats economic goods and their money prices. The economic goods themselves are observed to be more or less, scarce or abundant. The prices of these goods are observed to increase or decrease. Since stipulatively, all increases can be expressed in terms of a decrease, (an increase is a decrease from another point of view) and since both the relative abundance of economic goods and the prices of these goods are expressible in terms of “increase” or “decrease”, then it follows that any increase or decrease posited, with regard to the abundance of or prices of these goods, should be also expressible in terms of some corresponding decrease or increase. And thus a social law, of the type described, should in principle be formulable.

This is how the economic social law, establishing a necessary connection between the increased supply of and decreased

value of money, should be understood. The decrease in value of the money, is the unintended but necessary accompaniment to the intended increase in the supply of money. It is helpful in seeing this more clearly if we state that the intention of increasing the supply of money, is to have more money. The unintended accompaniment of having more money, is the decrease in the value of the money. Conversely, if one's intention was the devaluation of the stock of, for example, someone else's money or goods, one could in principle achieve this, by increasing the supply of those things. Then, the unintended accompaniment would be, that someone would "have" (would own) more of those things. The intention is the devaluation of the stock of goods, and the "necessary consequence" or "necessary accompaniment", by social law, is the increase in "having" or increase in "ownership" of those same goods.

In regard to minimum wage, the economic social law is essentially of the same character. Wages are the price to be paid for the good "labor services". The higher the price of some good, with the intention of getting more money for it, the less of the good that can be purchased, the unintended accompaniment. Unemployment is thus, the amount of the good "labor services" that cannot now be purchased, because the price has increased. Conversely, were one intending to decrease employment, by raising the minimum wage (the price

paid for labor services), the unintended accompaniment would be an increase in the “having” of more money for labor services.

NON-ECONOMIC SOCIAL LAW

What unifies the events which are moving a glass of water, improving the aerodynamic efficiency of a car, increasing the supply of money, or increasing the minimum wage, is that each event appears to be conceptualizable in terms of what we may call an “objectively observable” change. That is, by and large, the two law-connected events, or the one event with necessary accompaniment, are conceived by contemporary thought to be “public” events. The eight phenomena which are: 1. Glass moved to the east, 2. Glass moved to the west, 3. Car more aerodynamic, 4. Car harder to stop, 5. Increase in supply of money, 6. Decrease in value of money, 7. Increase in minimum wage, 8. Decrease in employment,—are considered to be, or conceived as, “publicly verifiable” type phenomenon. They are not considered to be or conceived as “personal opinion” or merely someone’s “beliefs”. In the terminology of philosophical realism, these eight phenomena are conceived of as “really existing” events or changes.

Because these events are conceived “objectively”, therefore in principle, some type of measurement or objective verifiability

are possible in regard to the increases or decreases specified by the laws in question. This does not mean necessarily that an objective measurement or process of verification can in fact verify the law. It only means that the phenomena described by the law exist as, or are conceived to be, things that are measurable or verifiable, in principle. Thus, regardless of whether the objective measurability of these events, is then used in turn in an attempt to validate or invalidate the particular law's claim to universality and necessity, overall scientific intellectual opinion, both pro and con, views this sense of the objectivity of the events, views the conceiving of the phenomena in this way, as a pre-condition for a scientific treatment of them.

The problem with this approach is that a wide range of social phenomena lay outside the realm of what can currently be expressed in terms of increase and decrease. A wide range of social phenomena lay outside the realm of what is considered "objective" according to contemporary scientific conceptual schemes. Thus in so far as social law to date, seems to require expression in such terms, in order to be "law-formulable", then it follows that there may be no laws of social action formulable, aside from economic laws addressing goods and their money prices. This seems to follow, if a pre-condition for the scientific treatment of social phenomena, is the conceptual objectification of these phenomena, as described.

A NON-OBJECTIVE SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Coercion, like economic social phenomena, is a recurring social phenomenon. Coercion, like economic phenomena, always appears as a recognizable and identifiable social phenomenon, and like economic phenomena, is a social act on the part of some person A, aiming at some intended consequence. The person A who coerces, is striving to attain some particular thing utilizing coercive means, just as those who want more money, or who want higher labor prices, aim at an increase in the money supply, or an increase in the minimum wage.

Similar to economic social acts, coercion is a social act that in society and in the political arena, gives rise to political struggle. In society, and in the political arena, some attempt to attain that which they are seeking via social coercion, and others oppose them due to what they expect will be negative consequences, or harm, to themselves.

But what separates coercion from economic social phenomena, is that we do not conceive it as something existing objectively. We do not conceive it as a publicly measurable or verifiable phenomenon. And thus, we do not consider coercion as a proper subject of scientific treatment. We do not consider the social act of coercion as law-formulable.

To consider coercion as a law-formulable social act, we would seek to conceive coercion as some event or change, such that in addition to the consequence intended by one who coerces, there would always exist a necessary accompanying consequence, which was simply the original event or change, seen from another point of view.

What prevents us from conceiving coercion in such a way, is that since coercion does not exist as an objectified thing, since it is not conceived as a “really existing” thing, such as a glass of water or someone unemployed, then there is no way to express increases or decreases in this thing, resulting from some change or event, that would then necessarily have to entail corresponding decreases or increases.

To be accurate, we can't say that nothing objective occurs in regard to the event which is coercion. Of course there may be chemical changes in the people involved, when one coerces another. However, when coercion is objectified in this way, what we have is then a biological act, subject to biological laws, and not a social act subject to social laws. The path toward an objectification of coercion via physics and chemistry, will not provide the type of laws we are looking for: social laws expressible in terms of the intended consequence and necessary unintended consequence.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE NON-OBJECTIFICATION OF COERCION

The result of the non-objectification of coercion and other like social phenomena, is that, while economic social phenomena have gradually become more and more law-formulable, non-economic social phenomena have not. Thus, no necessary consequences have been established as accompanying social acts, aside from economic social acts.

This means that in the political arena, no party to any debate over social acts such as coercion, is able to advance a scientific reason why coercion should or should not be considered an appropriate means for attaining some goal. Those for and those against can only offer their “opinions” regarding any expected unintended consequence accompanying the use of coercion. In addition, those sincerely wanting to avoid the necessary consequences of the use of coercion, are unable to intentionally do so. Because there is no social law in regard to coercion, then there is no necessary consequence, no necessary counter-change to the original act or event which is coercing. As there exists no social law, there exists no means for intentionally avoiding the unintended consequence of coercion, as is the case with moving the glass of water, changing the shape of the automobile, increasing the money supply and raising the minimum wage.

Therefore, those who wish to utilize social coercion as a means toward their ends, are not restricted in their behavior by any social law. As far as what has been established by scientific demonstration, and as far as what is known by public opinion informed by social science, the social act of coercion is “consequence free”. There are no necessary accompaniments to its utilization, akin to the decreasing value of money, or unemployment, as demonstrated by economic social law.

The result of this is that while economic social acts have increasingly come under the sway of generally accepted social laws, and while this has greatly restricted society’s sphere of economic consequence-free behavior, no corresponding progress has been achieved with regard to social, non-economic behavior. And thus, while the “rate of acceleration” of economic acts entailing harmful consequences has slowed considerably, the rate of acceleration of non-economic social acts entailing harmful consequences has proceeded apace.

And thus man-made laws, the means by which each tries to attain what he wants through social coercion, continue to proliferate rapidly in contemporary society. It is a direct result or consequence of the fact, that social coercion has eluded description in law-formulable terms.

PRAXEOLOGY

The social science that attempts to express all important social phenomena in law-formulable terms is called “praxeology”. Praxeology is the science of social necessity.

Cognizant of the fact that non-economic social phenomena are to date, not expressible in law-formulable terms, nonetheless, it is the aim of praxeology to bring all social phenomena of import to society, under the umbrella of social-scientific laws of cause and effect.

Praxeology attempts to explain in law-like terms, not only economic phenomena, those expressible as quantities of goods and their money prices, but also non-economic phenomena, those not so expressible. Thus, praxeology is the social science that subsumes both economic and non-economic social phenomena, ultimately comprehending all important social phenomena, and attempting to describe them in scientific, law-like form.

WHAT IS AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL PHENOMENON ?

Popular belief holds that some scientific subjects are pursued because of the scientist’s “curiosity”, while other scientific subjects are pursued because of the more or less immanent

harm to human welfare that is occurring in the field in question. Great scientists and thinkers of the past are described as having had a “burning and ceaseless curiosity” which was the cause of their greatness. Meanwhile, other scientists are perceived as motivated by the more practical desire to prevent diseases for example, or in social science, to prevent various types of social harm.

From the point of view of praxeology, this is seen in a somewhat different light. For praxeology, one who is curious, is one who would be “dissatisfied” in not knowing. And as dissatisfaction is a type of unhappiness or “uneasiness”, then one who seeks to sate his curiosity, is one who seeks to “remove uneasiness”. And thus in this sense, one who pursues science out of curiosity, is conceived as doing so with the intention of avoiding or overcoming harm (unhappiness, uneasiness, etc.) to himself.

Praxeology is concerned with the “universal” in human conduct, with that which recurs. And praxeology is not concerned with the particular, that which may or may not happen to be. It may happen to be that some people are more or less happy, and pursue their goals in a world of happy thoughts. And it may happen to be that others are engaged in nasty partisan disputes, each day involving various levels of conflict and stress. For praxeology, only that which is common

to both is of potential importance. Only that which must be true for both groups is what praxeology tries to say something about.

Praxeology conceives of “harm” in the broad, universal sense, as that “negative” aspect of things one is always trying to diminish or avoid, regardless of what particular thing each person may actually regard as negative. (as with the scientist trying to overcome his deficiency of knowledge) For praxeology, what is of note, is that this striving to avoid harm, this striving to “remove uneasiness as much as possible”, is universal to human conduct.

As harm, some orientation toward harm, is a universal aspect of human conduct, then what are important social phenomena to praxeology are simply those that are harmful. Praxeology is guided in what it attempts to describe, by that which is considered most harmful in society.

HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS

Praxeology conceives that with regard to human striving, what social science has referred to as “human action”, there are two fundamental categories. There is that which one is “striving to attain”, and there is that which one has attained, or believes one has attained. We stipulate that all social phenomena of

importance to praxeology as social science, can ultimately be reduced or translated to one of these two categories.

In social behavior, in human striving, we at all times are striving to attain some state of affairs or thing, and we at all times believe that certain states of affairs or things are “already” attained.

Changes in human happiness and unhappiness, are then all describable and conceivable as changes in the status of things, as they change from “attained” to “striven after”, or as they change from “striven after” to “attained”.

When some thing changes from striven after to attained for person A, this comprises “happiness” for A. When some thing changes from attained to striven after for A, this comprises “unhappiness”.

It is important to realize that the praxeological categories of happiness and unhappiness are to be viewed as “formal concepts”. That is, they are formal conceptions, similar in nature to “X” and “Y” in mathematics, that designate the universal (as opposed to particular) aspect of the fundamental duality of happiness-unhappiness.

In praxeology, “happiness” means with regard to human striving, that which is the “positive” development, that which is beneficial, pleasing, good, fortuitous, amusing, etc.. And “unhappiness” in praxeology refers to the “negative” development, that which is detrimental, displeasing, bad, unlucky, repulsive, etc.. Thus, any development, event, or change for A that is on the “plus” side, praxeology conceives of as comprising “happiness” for A. And any development, event, or change for A that is on the “minus” side, praxeology conceives as unhappiness for A.

The positive development which is happiness, is then always conceived as an event or change, whereby a striven after want changes to an attained want. And the negative development which is unhappiness, is always conceived as an event or change, whereby an attained want changes to a striven after want.

COERCION AND UNHAPPINESS

As described previously, coercion is a social phenomenon, whereby person A seeks to attain that which he wants, by making something person B had already attained, into something B is now striving to attain, and then offering that thing back to B, in exchange for what A wants.

As the change “attained thing” to “striven for thing” is unhappiness as conceived by praxeology, then when A strives to change an attained thing to a striven for thing for person B, it follows that A strives for the “unhappiness” of person B.

Thus, all instances of coercion can be conceived of as the social phenomenon: A striving for the unhappiness of B.

THE CENTRAL PROBLEM OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCE

Thus it is that the central problem of contemporary social science is the question whether or not any necessary unintended consequence can be conceived as accompanying the phenomenon of coercion.

In economic social behavior, it is possible to demonstrate that specific social acts, events initiated as means towards some goal, necessitate accompanying “counter-events”, which are the same event seen from another point of view, but which were not the intention of social actor A. So the question is whether or not the same thing can be conceived in regard to the universal phenomenon of coercion? Can coercion be conceived somehow as an event initiated as a means towards some goal, necessitating an accompanying counter-event, which is the same event seen from another point of view, but

which was not the intention of social actor A? If not, then why not? Or if so, then how so?

This is the central problem of contemporary social science.

SUBJECTIVITY AND OBJECTIVITY IN THE STRIVING WORLD

What characterizes the objective world of “really existing” things is measurability and verifiability. Glasses of water that change locations, shapes of automobiles that change contours, quantities of money that increase, and people who gain or lose employment; all these are publicly measurable and verifiable things. By contrast, what characterizes the subjective world of “opinions” and “feelings” is precisely its non-measurability and non-verifiability. Where there are objective things, there are no opinions, and vice versa.

It is not merely that “opinions” and “feelings” are absent from the objective world, but in fact the entire complex of striving phenomena is absent from the objective world. Not only feelings and opinions, but also striving, happiness and unhappiness are absent from the objective world. Where there are objective things, there is no happiness and no unhappiness, and vice versa.

It follows from this, that when person A strives for the unhappiness of person B, that A strives for something that is non-objective in nature. That is, A strives for something subjective.

MARKET PHENOMENA AS OBJECTIVE

The prototypical example of non-coercive social interaction is the voluntary market exchange of goods or services. In a typical market exchange, buyer A receives the next thing on his list, the want he is striving to attain, which is the good or service in question. He does this by offering to B, that which B is striving to attain, which is (for example) the money price of that good, some increment of money.

However, it is more accurate to realize that the prototypical example of a voluntary market exchange, is also one where A purchases some good or service, the thing he currently strives to attain, by paying some price which is viewed objectively, as a “cost” of obtaining the thing in question, without regard to another person B.

That is, there are many market transactions where A attains the goods he seeks, by paying a price for them, without regard to the fact that for some possible other person B, the increment of

money A pays, could be conceived as the want B is striving to attain.

To the extent that when A transacts in such a market, such things as the “striving”, “happiness” and “unhappiness” of person B are absent from such transactions, is the extent to which these transactions are “objectified”. That is, to the extent that the transactions are conducted without regard to any “subjective” presence (the “feelings” or “opinions” of person B, or his “happiness” or “unhappiness”), to this extent are the transactions conducted according to an objective view of things. Person A in this case views the price of the good or service as an objective thing he relinquishes, but not as something that a possible person B, as a subjective being with feelings, is “receiving”.

This is the nature of, for example, most purchases in a large department store or large chain store.

COERCION AS SUBJECTIVE EXCHANGE

The prototypical example of coercion, which virtually every society considers “illegal” and thus codifies in its body of man-made laws, is simple robbery. In simple robbery, person A points a gun at person B and says: “give me your money or I’ll shoot”.

As conceived by praxeology, in simple coercion, A strives to change an attained want to a striven after want for B. In contrast to the prototypical example of a voluntary market exchange, in a prototypical coercive exchange, it is precisely the presence of a subjective B, which is necessary in order to characterize the exchange as coercive. For a prototypical coercive exchange to occur, A must understand there to be present a subjective presence, person B, for whom A is attempting to effect a change in want status. (from attained to striven after).

Thus, whereas in the prototypical “voluntary” exchange, A strives after an “objectified” want (a good or service devoid of “feelings or “opinions”), in the prototypical “coercive” exchange, A strives after a “subjective” want. (a non-measurable, non-verifiable change in want status for B, from “attained” to “striven after”)

It follows from this, that in voluntary social action or behavior, A strives for something measurable and verifiable, and in coercive social action or behavior, A strives for something non-verifiable and non-measurable.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE SUBJECTIVE NATURE OF COERCION

From this, it follows that an inherent feature of coercion, is that it is necessarily subjective and non-verifiable. The meaning of this is that in a coercive exchange, person A strives to attain some “want”, the next “thing” on his list. This want or thing sought after by A, is [a change in some thing’s want status for B], from attained to striven after. (by virtue of what coercion is) This thing sought after is necessarily a subjective thing. And thus it is in principle impossible for A to verify whether or not he has attained this thing objectively.

And this is the necessary negative feature, the unintended consequence of the utilization of the means “coercion” by A.

VOLUNTARY VERSUS COERCIVE SOCIAL ACTION

It follows that since A can in principle verify the attainment of wants in voluntary social action (since voluntary action is objective action, and objective action is verifiable action), therefore A can “attain” happiness. Since happiness is simply the attainment of wants, the changing of a want from striven after to attained.

It follows also that since A cannot in principle verify the attainment of wants in coercive action (since coercive action is

subjective action, and subjective action is non-verifiable), therefore A cannot “attain” happiness. Happiness is the attainment of wants, the changing of a want from striven after to attained. In coercive action, A cannot in principle know, whether or not his want [change in want: attained to striven after for B] has been attained. That is because this want change for B is not and cannot be objective for A. This means that in the objective sense, A cannot know whether or not he has attained the want which is the unhappiness of B, and cannot therefore attain happiness via the attainment of this want.

Therefore, happiness cannot be attained through the use of coercion.

