COERCION AND THE VARIETIES OF FREE ACTION

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Abstract:
Are we free? What does "freedom" mean here? In the following, I shall only focus with freedom of action. My main thesis is that there is not just one basic type of free action but more. Philosophers, however, tend to assume that there is just one way to act freely. Hence, a more detailed analysis of free action is being called for. I will distinguish between different kinds of free action and discuss the relations between them. The analysis of different types of coercion will lead to a different view on freedom –a view which stresses the many faces of free action–.
Keywords: coercion, exploitation, freedom of action, freedom of will, interference, offers, threats.

Resumen: *La coerción y las variedades de la acción libre*
¿Somos libres? ¿Qué significa "libertad" en este caso? En el siguiente artículo, me enfocaré solamente en la libertad de acción. Mi tesis principal es que no hay sólo un tipo de acción libre, sino varios. Los filósofos, sin embargo, tienden a asumir que sólo hay una manera de actuar libremente. Por lo tanto, es preciso realizar un análisis más detallado de la acción libre. Distinguiré tipos diferentes de acciones libres y discutiré las relaciones entre ellos. El análisis de tipos diferentes de coerción, conducirá a una visión diferente de la libertad –una visión que resalta las variadas facetas de la acción libre–.
Palabras claves: coerción, explotación, libertad de acción, libertad de voluntad, interferencia, ofrecimiento, amenaza.

Are we free? This question is very important but also quite broad and vague: What does "freedom" mean here? It is useful to distinguish two main types of freedom: freedom of action and freedom of the will. Here is an explanation of this traditional distinction by a more recent writer, Harry Frankfurt:

> [...] freedom of action is (roughly, at least) the freedom to do what one wants to do. Analogously, then, the statement that a person enjoys freedom of the will means [...] that he is free to will what he wants to will, or to have the will he wants. (Frankfurt 1988c: 20)[1]

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[1] The expression "free will" is often also used for what Frankfurt calls "free action". Here, I will follow Frankfurt's terminology.

If we replace the over-generalized question whether we are free by more specific ones we have better chances to find interesting and useful answers. Hence, let us ask instead: Do we enjoy free will? What does it mean to have a "free will"? Are we capable of free action? What makes an action a free action? In the following, I shall deal with the last question only (hence, not with freedom of the will in the above sense). My main thesis is that there is not just one basic type of free action but more. Philosophers, however, tend to assume that there is just one way to act freely. According to G.E. Moore, for instance, an act of mine is free if I could have done otherwise (*cf.* Moore 1958: 122ff). Much of the ensuing discussion about free action has focussed on this "conditional" aspect,[2] –assuming that there is just one sense in which my act can be called "free"–. I do not intend to go into the post-Moorean discussion about conditional freedom here. I rather want to show why one should assume that there is more than one basic type of free action. A more detailed analysis of free action is being called for.

A good starting point is Aristotle. According to him, there are two conditions for free actions: First, the person is aware of what she is doing, and second, she does not suffer from external coercion (*cf.* NE 1109b-30ff). Since intentional action is action which is intentional under a description known by the actor we can skip the first condition (*cf.* Ascombe 1958: 69ff). The Aristotelian conception then boils down to this: Free action is uncoerced action. It appears very plausible to say that the absence of coercion is, at least, a necessary, if not a sufficient condition of free action. Hence, if Aristotle is right, the analysis of coercion is, at the same time, an *ex-negativo*-analysis of free action. I will argue that there are three different basic types of coercion and that to each type of coercion corresponds a different basic kind of free action. I will begin with the analysis of the different types of coercion (1-3) and then draw the implications for any adequate conception of free action (4-5).

1. Types of Coercion: Interactive and Non-Interactive Coercion

Consider the following cases:

(1) An earthquake throws person P down to earth;

(2) A boxing champion knocks P out and sends him down to earth;

(3) Facing a heavy storm the sailors throw their load overboard;[3]

(4) Pirates threaten the sailors and thus make them throw their load overboard.

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[2] *Cf.* Austin 1979: 205ff; Lehrer 1980: 187ff; Frankfurt 1988a: 1ff; Dennett 1984: 131ff.

[3] This is, of course, Aristotle's example: *cf.* NE 1110a ff. *Cf.* also Hobbes 1839a: 69; 1839b: 197.

One might be tempted to say that in all four cases somebody is forced or coerced: in the very broad sense that the person has to accept something she does not want (or: has to accept something no matter what she wants). There are, however, some important differences. First, in cases (2) and (4) it is another person which intentionally exerts coercion; in cases (1) and (3) it is not a person but "natural" events and conditions of action instead. Second, in cases (1) and (2) something happens to the person without her being able to influence the events by her own acting whereas in cases (3) and (4) it is crucial that the coerced person acts (he chooses between the options of keeping the load or throwing it overboard). Assuming that only persons can be coerced,[4] it seems that we get four types of coercion, depending on whether the source of coercion is another person or not and depending on whether the coerced person acts or cannot act:[5]

	The coerced person	
	does not act	does act
The source of coercion		
- is no person	(1)	(3)
- is a person	(2)	(4)

It is obvious that it makes a big difference whether the coerced person can or cannot act. Furthermore, this makes a big difference as to the kind of coercion and involuntariness involved (as we shall see).[6] But does the other distinction make sense? Can a person be coerced by something that is not a person, e.g., by storms or earthquakes, *cf.* (1) and (3)?

Sure, we say that rocks on the street "force" me to turn around and change my direction. This is involuntary in the sense that I would have preferred to keep on going into the original direction. Without the rocks on the street we would not talk about coercion here. But why not? Couldn't I argue as well that the shape of the landscape (all those mountains) "forces" me to take this "detour" instead of "directly" approaching the top of the other mountain (as birds can do)? Couldn't I argue as well that "nature" forces me to stay close to the surface of the earth most of the time because it has not given me wings? There is no fundamental difference between the case of the rocks on the street and the case of me not having wings to fly. In both cases I might wish the facts were different and in both cases the facts are contingent ones. In

[4] I cannot argue for this thesis here and must rely on its plausibility.

[5] For simplicity's sake, I leave cases of overdetermination (seastorm with pirates, etc.) aside.

[6] *Cf.* Bayles 1972: 17; Feinberg 1973: 7, 1984: 190ff; Frankfurt 1988b: 26f, 36f; Gold 1988-9: 115f; Gunderson 1979: 249ff; McCloskey 1980: 336; Wertheimer, 1981: 8ff.

other words, there are always contingent conditions of action which the actor cannot change and which are unwelcome to the actor. It is an essential trait of action that there always are such conditions. An actor who could choose the conditions of action at will could also simply choose that her goals are realized without acting but then acting would lose its point. If all this is true, then there is no condition of action which could not, in principle, be regarded as a constraint or a "coercing" factor in the above sense. There could be no action that is not coerced in some respect, and all this for conceptual reasons. However, a concept that is true of everything it can be meaningfully applied to is of little use. Our concept of coercion is such that we can truly apply it only to some but not to all kinds of action. Hence, coercion must be something different from the constraint of conditions of action. Strictly speaking, rocks on the street (or storms or earthquakes) do not coerce anybody. It is only persons that can exert coercion. Putting this together with what I have said above -that only persons can be coerced- we can say that coercion is something done by a person (or many persons) to another person (or other persons). The cases (1) and (3) above are not really cases of coercion.[7]

So, coercion requires that one person does something that is unwelcome to another person. But this is not enough. Suppose a car driver parks his car in front of a driveway without noticing the driveway. He thus does something that is unwelcome to another person who wants to leave the driveway. However, he does not coerce the other person to stay on the driveway. Many actions have side effects unwelcome to other persons and not noticed by the actor. It would, again (see above), not make much sense to consider such actions to be coercive. To get back to our example: Coercion also requires that the car driver intentionally blocks the driveway for other drivers or, at least, notices that he blocks it. Coercion requires not only that one person acts in a way that is unwelcome to another person but also that the first person does so intentionally or is, at least, aware of the effects which are unwelcome to the other person.[8]

All this leaves us with two kinds of cases: cases of type (2) and cases of type (4). Let us first consider cases like

(2) A boxing champion knocks P out and sends him down to earth.

Let us suppose that P does not want to go down. The champion then intentionally coerces P into going down to earth. Furthermore, no action of P is part of the coercive events. To be sure, P is still an actor -he

[7] *Cf.* similar: Feinberg 1973: 8f; Nozick 1974: 262ff, 1981: 49, 309, 520. Cf. however Frankfurt 1988b: 45f. Also Kant 1902: AA XX, 91ff who holds that infringements by other persons are worse than other kinds of limitations of a person's freedom.

[8] These remarks are not intended as a definition of the concept of coercion in general but rather as a rough explanation -which is enough for my purposes here-.

can, e.g., insult the champion– but whatever P does has no relevant effect on the coercive events. The coercive events "happen" to P; in the relevant respects, P does not count as an actor. This makes a big difference to cases like

(4) Pirates threaten the sailors and make them throw their load overboard.

It is important to see that this kind of coercion presupposes that the coerced persons act. The sailors have the choice: they can hand over their load or keep it (and suffer the consequences). The pirates expect the sailors to make their decision and act accordingly –given, of course, certain limitations of time, knowledge and other resources–. We can call cases like (2) cases of "non-interactive coercion" and cases like (4) cases of "interactive coercion". Aristotle held that non-interactive coercion is the paradigm case of coercion (*cf.* NE 1109b, 35ff; EE 1224b, 13ff).[9] The following remarks shall also make plausible that interactive coercion is as much a basic kind of coercion as non-interactive coercion. Apart from that, we shall see that there are two types of interactive coercion: threats and offers (of a certain kind). In other words, we will see that there are three basic types of coercion:

I. non-interactive coercion

II. interactive coercion: threats

III. interactive coercion: coercive offers

It does not seem very hard to give an explanation of the first type of coercion: If P non-interactively coerces A into Xing then

(a) A's Xing is unwelcome to A (or, at least, A Xes no matter whether it is welcome to A or not),

(b) A's Xing does not imply any action by A,

(c) P makes A X, knowing that (a) and (b) are the case.[10]

It seems harder to give an explanation of the other two types of coercion. Before we can pursue the question of what exactly makes cases I-III coercive ones, we need a closer analysis of cases II and III, that is, of interactive coercion. Let us begin with threats and take a closer look at their nature.

2. Threats and Offers

Threats are cases of conditional announcements of intention (verbalized or rather implicit). Here is an example:

If you don't hand over your load we'll make your ship sink!

This is only a threat if the sailors have reason to assume that the

[9] Aristotle takes cases like (4) as borderline cases of coercion (*cf.* NE 1110a, 4ff), –with the exception of more extreme threats *cf.* EE 1224a, 10ff–.

[10] We do not need (and probably cannot have) a complete reductive definition of "non-interactive coercion" here.

pirates will not damage their ship if they hand over the load (*ceteris paribus*). Hence, the backwards conditional also belongs to the threat (even though it is usually more implicit):

If you hand over your load we won't make your ship sink!

In other words, threats have the form of a biconditonal (*cf.* Frankfurt 1988b: 27f):

$p \leftrightarrow q$,

where "p" stands for a possible action of the threatened person and "q" for a possible action of the threatening person.[11] The whole biconditional is not a descriptive statement about the future (like a prediction or a warning) but an announcement of an intention.

Threats are more than just announcements of intentions. They are themselves intentional actions. If a person makes a threat, then he does so with the intention that the announcement motivates the other person to behave in a certain way. Take the above example:

Iff you don't hand over your load we'll make your ship sink!

The pirates make this announcement with the intention to motivate the sailors to hand over their load (instead of risking a fight). Usually, the threatened person knows from the context which of the alternatives (handing over the load or risking a fight) the threatening person prefers. And usually, the threatening person knows which of the alternatives the threatened person prefers, –at least if the threat is successful–. Hence, all this is common knowledge among the parties even though it usually is not made explicit. To comply with a threat means to choose the same alternative that the threatening person prefers. P's threat can only be successful if both sides prefer the same alternative. In the example above the threat is only succesful if both pirates and sailors prefer the handing over of the load to the sinking of the ship.

In other words, normal and successful threats initiate a three-stage interaction:

1) P threatens A ("If you hand over your load, we won't sink your ship!");

2) A complies with the threat by making true the *antecedens* of the relevant conditional (hands over the load)

3) P sticks to his declared intention by making the *consequens* of the relevant conditional (does not sink the ship) true.

If step 2) does not happen and A does not comply with the threat, P has two options: either to make or not to make the *consequens* of the relevant conditional (to sink the ship) true. In the last case, P could either give up threatening A or try a new (usually more severe) threat. If step 3) does not happen and P does not behave as

[11] The biconditional is only meant to hold given certain normality conditions. If, for example, a heavy sea storm arrives on the scene, the initial threat might lose its force because it was not meant for such extraordinary cases in the first place.

"promised"[12] (takes the load *and* sinks the ship), the initial threat is somehow "defeated". A normal threat presupposes that P, from beginning to end, does, in fact, have the intention to do what he announces.

What has been said so far about threats is also true about offers. If I offer you $100 for your old car, then I make the conditional announcement of my intention to give you $100 if you give me your old car. Offers, too, have the form of a biconditional: If you do not give me your old car I will not give you $100 (*ceteris paribus*). The person who makes an offer does so with the intention that her announcement motivates the other person to behave in the expected way (hands over the car instead of keeping it). If an offer is successful both parties prefer the same alternative (buy and sell a car). As in the case of threats, offers, if successful, are part of a three-stage sequence (see above). So, what is the difference between threats and offers?

Some believe that threats but not offers are coercive.[13] If this should turn out to be true, we would still have to find the relevant difference between threats and offers in order to find out what the coercion of threats consists in. If -as I will argue- offers, too, can be coercive,[14] then one might expect coercion by threats to be different from coercion by offers. In this case, too, it is necessary to know the relevant difference between threats and offers. So, what is it? Finding an answer will also tell us more about the essential characteristics of threats and offers and, more generally, about coercion and free action.

Let us call both threats and offers "proposals". Whether a proposal by P is a threat or an offer obivously depends on whether the adressee A would be better off without the making of the proposal.[15] To be more precise, we need to consider four possible cases, all but one (the actual one) being counterfactual cases:

a) A accepts the proposal and P acts according to his announcement,

b) A rejects the proposal and P acts according to his announcement,

c) P gives up his proposal at some stage of the interaction, or

d) P has not made any proposals

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[12] *Cf.* Schelling 1960: 36ff, who holds that the threatening person "commits" herself to do what she announces. Since there is no reason to think there is a normative element involved here, this is, strictly speaking, not true.

[13] *Cf.* Airaksinen 1988; Bayles 1974: 139f; Gorr 1986: 392-5; McCloskey 1980: 339f.; Nozick 1969: 447ff; Wertheimer 1981: 202, 211, 222ff.

[14] *Cf.* also: Benditt 1977: 383f; Carr 1988: 63ff; Feinberg 1984: 229ff; Gold 1988-9: 119; Haksar 1976: 67ff; Held 1972: 49ff; Lyons 1975: 425ff, 1982: 393ff; Stevens 1988: 83, 92ff; VanDe Veer 1977: 374-8; Zimmerman 1981: 121ff; Double 1991: 109ff.

[15] *Cf.* Nozick 1969: 447 and Frankfurt 1988b: 31f. Nozick's explanation of "coercion" contains a normative element. The explanation given here avoids such

Now, in the case of an offer the following is true (supposing that A is a rational chooser):[16] A is better off in case a) than in case d) and not worse off in cases b) and c) than in case d). If you trade your old car for $100 because this is a good deal for you, then you are better off (with money and without car) than you would have been without the proposal (with your car and without my money). If you reject my proposal or I change my mind and give up my proposal, then you are not worse off than you would have been without the proposal (in both cases you have your car and I have my money). Hence, my proposal "$100 for your old car" is an offer. In the case of a threat, however, something different is true (again supposing that A is a rational chooser): A is worse off in cases a) and b) than in case d) and neither worse nor better off in case c) in case d). The sailors are worse off if they hand over their load than they would have been without the proposal (if they could have kept their load). If (case b) the sailors resist the threat, then they are worse off than they would have been without the proposal (if their ship would have been safe form attacks). If, finally, the pirates give up (e.g., because they lose self-confidence), then the sailors are neither worse nor better off than they would have been without the proposal.[17] Hence, the pirates' proposal "Your load or your ship!" is a threat. Shortly: In the case of offers, A is not worse off with the proposal than without the proposal (if not better off); in the case of threats, A is not better off with the proposal than without the proposal (if not worse off).[18] Focussing on the paradigm case a), we could say that in the case of offers A is typically better off with the proposal than without the proposal whereas in the case of threats A is typically worse off with the proposal than without the proposal. This explains why threats usually are not welcome to A (whereas offers usually are).[19] So much about the difference between threats and offers. Given all these explanations, we are now prepared for taking a closer look at the varieties of coercion.

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normative elements. *Cf.* the critique of Nozick in Baumann 2000a ch. 6.5. As to Frankfurt, *cf.* Baumann 2000b.

[16] I will assume here, for the sake of making the distinction between threats and offers, that A's choices are rational. The distinction of threats and offers is explained in terms of what a rational person would do. This does, of course, not mean that only rational persons can be addressees of threats or offers.

[17] *Cf.* Airaksinen1988: 53ff. For the sake of simplicity, I do not take eventual *Schadenfreude* or similar factors into account. Nothing essential hinges on this omission.

[18] *Cf.* for similar explanations: Airaksinen 1988: 31, 47f; Bayles 1974: 139f; Thalberg 1983: 102f; VanDe Veer 1977: 375; Zimmerman 1981: 124.

[19] *Cf.* Nozick 1969: 460ff; Airaksinen 1988: 33f; Bayles 1974: 141; Stevens 1988: 85. Sometimes a threat might be welcome and an offer unwelcome. The bank employee might welcome the gangster's threats because it gives him the opportunity

3. Varieties of Coercion

Consider this example by Harry Frankfurt (Frankfurt 1988b: 32ff). A butcher raises his prices; he aks for more money than before. Under these circumstances we would say that he still makes an offer, –just a worse one than before–. Offers can be better or worse. But what if we assume that the butcher has a monopoly on meat, raises his prices enormously and that his poor client A would have to starve could he not afford to buy any meat from him? Given the above explanation, the butcher's proposal would still be an offer, albeit a very bad one. Some authors say it rather is a threat (*cf. Ibd.*). But would we, for example, ask the butcher "Do you want to make a threat?"? I do not think so. The butcher's proposal still is an offer. But there is a reason why some authors are inclined to see the butcher's proposal as a threat: The butcher coerces his clients into paying much more than usual. His offer is a coercive one. It is true that all threats are coercive (see below) but this does not exclude that some (but not all) offers are coercive, too. Coercion comes in different varieties. So, what does the coercion of such offers consist in?

Take the example of the butcher: He exploits the dependency of his clients on meat (*cf.* Haksar 1976: 69). We can say: A coercive offer is an offer which exploits a dependency of the other person. But consider the following two variations of the butcher-example. In the first case the butcher raises his prices because he wants to make as much money as possible. In the second case it is the raising prices of his suppliers,[20] and not greed which motivates his price politics. If he would not raise his prices or not to the same degree, then he would ruin his own business. In the first but not in the second case the butcher makes a coercive offer. What is the difference? Well, in the first case he could afford to ask for a price which is much better for his clients. In the second case it would be irrational if he would offer his meat for lower prices, –he would ruin himself–. In the first case, in contrast, it would not be irrational (if not even rational) to offer the meat for lower prices, –the butcher would just make less money–. All this presupposes, of course, that a person is not irrational because she does not (or does not try to) maximize her expected subjective utility (cf. Slote 1989: 7ff). We can thus say:

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to proof his courage. The teenager might not welcome his parents' offer to bring him to the party because he wants to keep his "cool" image. In such cases, it is not the nature of the proposal as such which explains its being welcome or unwelcome but rather "additional" factors external to the very nature of the proposal. Hence, we can disregard such cases here. *Cf.* Lyons 1975: 425ff; Airaksinen 1988: 87ff.

[20] Who themselves may or may not exert coercion on the butcher.

A coercive offer (of P to A) is an offer such that

a) P (intentionally) exploits the dependency of A on the offered goods[21] and

b) it would not have been irrational of P to make an offer which is better for A.[22]

One could now think of an analogue explanation of the coercive character of threats:

Threats are coercive insofar as

a) P (intentionally) exploits some dependency of A and

b) it would not have been irrational of P to make a proposal which is better for A (a less severe threat).

P might threaten A to hand over all his cash if he does not want to get his house burned down. A depends on keeping his house and P could have made a less severe threat without thereby being irrational ("Give me 10% of your cash or I'll step on your toes!"). Hence, P's initial threat is coercive.

However, in the case of threats I do not want to stress this aspect of coercion too much because not all threats are coercive in this way.[23] On the other hand threats are always coercive (*Cf.* Carr 1988: 60). Hence, there is another aspect of coercion which is special to threats and even fundamental for them. What is it?

Think of the essential characteristics of threats. A is not better off and typically worse off with the proposal than without the proposal. This points to the kind of coercion which is essential to all threats. In the paradigm case, P makes A worse off and he does so against A's will (or no matter what A wants). In other words,

Threats are coercive insofar as P's proposal typically makes A worse off (against A's will, of course), –no matter what A chooses to do–.

To resume: We have distinguished three ways to coerce another person: non-interactive coercion, coercive offers, and threats. What does all this tell us about voluntariness and free action?

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[21] A good is anything that can be offered to somebody. Hence, a good need not be a material thing.

[22] Since dependency and exploitation allow for degrees, the coerciveness of an offer, too, comes in degrees. This does not mean that *any* degree of dependency and exploitation makes an offer coercive (then almost every offer would be coercive). There are, rather, certain thresholds above which the degree of dependency and exploitation is high enough to make the offer a coercive one. Furthermore, a high degree of dependency cannot "compensate" for a low degree of exploitation (and *vice versa*); both factors must be strong enough (in the example above: The client must be quite dependent and the exploitation quite severe).

[23] Suppose you are lost in the desert and about to die of thirst. Your last chance arises when another lonely voyager accidentally passes by. He has got lots of water but he is not willing to share. It would be rational of you to threaten the other voyager (e.g., with your gun) and make him hand over some water. It would be irrational to be less "harsh".

4. Varieties of Voluntariness

Let us begin with a puzzle. Threats and offers are "interactive" forms of coercion. That is, P presents an alternative to A: "Either you do X and then I'll do Y or you don't do X and then I won't do Y! You've got the choice!". It depends on what A wants (and not on P's wants) which of the alternatives will be realized (to X or not to X). A is free to choose the alternative he prefers most. The further events depend on what A wants. In choosing one of the alternatives A can act as he wants to act. The ensuing events would have been different if A would have chosen differently. In other words, A enjoys freedom of action (*cf.* the explanation at the beginning). Threats and offers do not only not exclude but presuppose voluntariness on the side of the coerced person.[24]

But isn't this simply inconsistent? Take the case of threats. The following seems obvious:

1) Threats are coercive;

2) Coercion implies involuntariness on the side of A.

This seems to exclude what I have just said:

3) Threats presuppose A's free choice

Since (1) and (2) are almost trivially true, it seems that we better skip (3) It appears obvious that there is an inconsistency here.[25]

But not so. Not that the word "free" is ambigous here. There are, rather, different respects in which somebody can do something voluntarily. Hence, it can be the case that he does something voluntarily in one respect and involuntarily in another respect. Take the case of threats. A freely chooses among the alternatives presented; he acts as he wants to. But that he has to make this kind of choice –that there has been a threat in the first place– has not been freely chosen by A. He would rather prefer the absence of any threat because he typically will be worse off with a threat than without a threat). Hence, insofar as A cannot help but making this kind of choice, he is not free but coerced by P. In other words, given the situation A finds himself in, he chooses and acts freely but A's being in this kind of situation is involuntary

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[24] Aristotle, NE 1110a, 4ff. has already dealed with the relation between freedom, voluntariness and coercion. *Cf.* also Airaksinen 1988: 45; Bayles 1972: 18; 1968: 39ff; Feinberg 1984: 191ff; Steiner 1974-5: 43; Mills 1991: 18ff, 58f; Rosenbaum 1986: 107ff. *Cf.* however also Frankfurt 1988b: 36-8f; 1988a: 2ff; 1988d: 48f. It might go unnoticed that A chooses freely because it often is obvious from the beginning which alternative A will choose. Even if it is overwhelmingly rational to choose a given option, the choice is still free. The rational person need not be a person who is unfree to be irrational.

[25] *Cf.* Dworkin 1970: 367ff, also Slote 1980: 137f; Stampe/Gibson 1992:1ff; Williams 1986: 1ff.

and coerced (*cf.* Frankfurt 1988d: 47ff).[26] Similar things are true of coercive offers: They, too, presuppose that A chooses and acts freely but at the same time A is coerced into accepting the offer insofar as he is dependent on doing so. Only non-interactive coercion does not presuppose that A chooses and acts freely.

The upshot of all this is that voluntariness as well as coercion have more faces than it might seem at first hand. Hence, the relation between freedom and coercion is also more complex than one might *prima facie* think (*cf.* Gert 1972: 30ff). A person might be doing something voluntarily in this respect and at the same time be coerced in another respect. Coercion is a heterogenuous phenomenon. Hence, voluntariness or free action is a heterogenuous phenomenon, too. Corresponding to the above three types of limitation of freedom by coercion we find the following three types of voluntariness and free action, each one fulfilling one particular condition on free action:

I. *Freedom as the Ability to Act / The Action Condition:* The person's ability to act according to her wants and preferences is not diminuished by another person's intentional behavior (the absence of non-interactive coercion);

II. *Freedom as the Absence of Threats / The No-Threat Condition:* The person does not have to choose among alternatives proposed by another person such that all of those alternatives (typically) make her worse off than she would have been without the proposal (the absence of threats);

III. *Freedom as Non-Exploitation / The No-Exploitation Condition:* The person does not have to choose among alternatives proposed by another person P such that P exploits some dependency of her (the absence of coercive offers).

Are there more aspects of or conditions on free action? If a) Aristotle is right in holding that free action is uncoerced action (*cf.* NE 1109b, 30ff) and if b) coercion essentially is an interpersonal relationship and our three types of coercion exhaust the basic cases (see above), then c) free action is action fulfilling the above three conditions I-III. This conclusion implies that freedom of action is essentially social: I am free to the degree that no other person acts in a certain way (diminuishes my ability to act, threatens or exploits me).

But (3) is not quite right. There are cases of unfree action which are not cases of coercion (at least, not in the sense proposed above).[27] Put differently, there are still other conditions for freedom of action than the ones just indicated. Big rocks lying in my way to the mountain top

[26] Why can't A leave the threat-situation? Because P coerces him to stay in the situation, -either by non-interactive coercion (locking the door so that A cannot leave) or by another threat ("If you try to leave I'll shoot!")-. I cannot (and need not) go into these complicatons here.

[27] For the idea that freedom is the absence of coercion *cf.* Schlick 1930: 105ff.

do not coerce me to turn around (see above) but they make me unfree to move as I want to move (straight ahead to the mountain top). In other words, premise (1) seems clearly false if we read "coercion" in the sense proposed above.[28] There are thus other cases of unfree (or free) action. What is the nature of these cases?

Think, again, of the examples given at the beginning:

(1) An earthquake throws person P down to earth;

(2) A boxing champion knocks P out and sends him down to earth;

(3) Facing a heavy storm the sailors throw their load overboard;

(4) Pirates threaten the sailors and thus make them throw their load overboard.

We can classify these cases as we did before:

	The unfree person	
	does not act	does act
The source of unfreedom		
- is no person	(1)	(3)
- is a person	(2)	(4)

The 'freedom as non-coercion' analysis only covers cases (2) and (4) but not cases (1) and (3) which also are cases of lacking freedom of action. In cases like (1) the person is unfree not to X (which is no action of her own) insofar as

(a) her Xing is unwelcome to her (or, at least, she Xes no matter whether it is welcome to her or not),

(b) her Xing does not imply any action by her, and

(c) it is not the case that another person intentionally makes the person X, knowing that (a) and (b) are the case.[29]

To put it the other way around, there is thus another type of freedom and a second "action condition" on free action:

IV. *Freedom as the Ability to Act without the "Interference of Nature" / The Action Condition (2):* The person's ability to act according to her wants and preferences is not diminuished by some natural circumstances.

Now, what about cases like (3)? In such cases, the person is not free insofar as

(a) even though the person can act according to her wants and preferences some natural circumstances make the person worse off than she would have been without those circumstances (e.g., with no storm), –no matter how she chooses to act (e.g., whether she throws the load over board or keeps it)–;

(b) these circumstances take place against the person's will (or irrespective of the person's will);

[28] This does not imply that Aristotle is wrong: He has a different concept of coercion.

[29] Notice the parallels to the analysis onf non-interactive coercion above.

(c) it is not the case that another person intentionally produces those circumstances, knowing that (a) and (b) are the case.[30]

To put it the other way around, we get a further type of free action as well as a further condition on free action:

V. *Freedom as the Absence of "Unpleasant Circumstances" / The Circumstance Condition:* The person does not have to act under unwelcome natural circumstances of action.

This completes the analysis of and the distinction between the different types of free action. There are social (I-III) as well as non-social (IV-V) kinds of free action: some having to do with other person's behavior and some not. The main focus of this paper is the relation between freedom and coercion: to show that there is one and to indicate what it is. This contributes to a more differentiated view of free action. Very often, philosophers tend to focus on just one aspect of free action and to neglect the other ones. Many compatibilists, for example, think of freedom as freedom of type IV (or I). Hobbes is a good example: "Liberty, or freedom, signifieth, properly, the absence of opposition; by opposition, I mean external impediments to motion [...]" (Hobbes 1839b: 196). One need, of course, not be an incompatibilist to allow for more and different types of freedom. And one should –whether compatibilist or not– allow for more. Otherwise, one's conception of freedom is deficient.

5. Full Freedom, Restricted Freedom, and Overall Freedom

I conclude with some remarks on the relations between the different aspects or types of free action. In a strict and full sense, no action is free if not all of the five conditions above are fulfilled. Insofar, the meeting of each of the five conditions is a necessary condition of free action. Since there is no reason to assume that our analysis is incomplete, we can add that it also is sufficient for freedom of action:

Full Freedom: An action is free (in the strict sense) iff conditions I-V are fulfilled.

Conditions II, III and V determine whether some given action is done freely or unfreely. The two sailor's examples from the beginning ((3) and (4)) are examples of actions (throwing away the load) done unfreely. Conditions I and IV (the "action conditions"), in contrast, determine whether a person is free or unfree to do some particular action –that is, whether a person is able to perform some particular action if she wants to and to refrain from some particular action if she does not want to perform it–. The two falling-down examples from the beginning

[30] This case not only parallels case (4) above but also the case of threats in particular. There seems to be no parallel, however, to the case of offers. I cannot go into the reasons here why this is so.

((1) and (2)) are cases of not being free to do some particular action (to remain standing on one's own feet). There is thus an important difference between acting freely and being free to act. Both are part of what I call "free action" here. So, one should carefully distinguish between free action, acting freely and being free to act.

What are the relations between acting freely and being free to act? If somebody is performing some action freely, then necessarily he is free to perform that action. If I freely raise my arm, my raising the arm is an action of mine which is neither motivated by a threat nor by a coercive offer nor by nasty circumstances. It is motivated and caused by my desire to raise the arm and if I would not have desired to do that I would not have done it. If my arm would have gone up whatever my motivational states (e.g., because of some nervous reflex or somebody else pushing my arm), the raising of my arm would not have been an action of mine. Intentional action as such presupposes that the person is free to perform the action; otherwise the person's behavior would not constitute an action of hers at all.[31] Hence, acting at all and, *a fortiori*, acting freely presupposes being free to act.

The reverse is not true: Somebody might be free to perform some action which he does not do freely (in the sense of conditions II, III and V). The sailors in the examples above are free to throw away the load but if they throw it away they do not do it freely. Acting freely presupposes being free to act but being free to act (unfortunately) does not presuppose acting freely. Hence, the action conditions of free actions are the fundamental ones. Being free to act is the basic component of free action; acting freely is less fundamental.[32]

All this implies that a person might enjoy some aspects of freedom of action but not all of them. In a less strict and more restricted sense, a person can be free in some respect (conditions I and IV are fulfilled) but not in all respects (not all of the conditions II, III and V are fulfilled). The person might be free to perform some action but she might be doing it under the impact of some threat, of some coercive offer, of some nasty circumstance or of any combination of

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[31] If somebody else raises my arm against my will, the raising of my arm is not an action of mine but an act of the other person. If the raising of my arm is not against my will but still does not happen because I want it but rather because some other person wants it, the raising of my arm is also not an action of mine but rather an act of the other person. Even if my arm would have also gone up without the other person's intervention –because I wanted it to go up–, the raising of my arm is not an action of mine but still an act of the other person. Hence, we can disregard all these cases here. Apart from that, I cannot go into the details of action theory here. *Cf.* as an example for the kind of causal theory of action that I use here: Davidson 1980: 63ff.

[32] This does, of course, not mean that acting freely can be reduced to being free to act.

these. This explains how one can solve the puzzle from the beginning of this section. It makes sense to call these cases cases of "restricted freedom":

Restricted Freedom: An action is free (in a less strict sense) iff conditions I and IV are fulfilled but not all of the conditions II, III and V, –that is, if the person is free to do the action but is not doing it freely–.

Hence, full freedom and restricted freedom exclude each other. A free action is either free in the full sense or in the restricted sense.

Finally, one should not forget that we are talking about particular action tokens here. Since a person performs many different actions, she might be free with regard to one action and not free with regard to another action. It is unrealistic to assume that a person could be free with regard to all of her actions. My raising of my arm might be free in the strict sense but not my paying the taxes. Hence, it is of some interest to see which of our actions are free or unfree and in what sense. Furthermore, we surely have good reasons to care in particular about the freedom of our more important actions. It is thus useful to have a concept of "overall freedom":

Overall Freedom: A person enjoys more overall freedom if more rather than less of her actions are free; a person enjoys more overall freedom if she is free with regard to the actions important to her rather than to the actions not important to her.[33]

Overall freedom characterizes persons with respect to their actions and not their actions. And, obviously, it comes in degrees.

So much about the varieties of free action.[34] I wanted to distinguish between different kinds of free action and get a bit clearer about the relations between them. This is of some importance because many philosophers tend to assume that there is just one single and homogenuous kind of freedom called "freedom of action". The analysis of different types of coercion led to a different view on freedom –a view which stresses the many faces of free action–.[35]

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[33] There are many problems with the idea of counting actions as well with measuring importance. Apart from that, it is hard to see how one should weigh quantity and importance against each other. Fortunately, I do not have to go into these intricate problems for I only want to present a rough idea of overall freedom here. For more details, *cf.* Swanton, 1979: 337ff.

[34] As I said in the beginning: I am only dealing here with the freedom of action, not with freedom of the will. What has been said here must be taken with this restriction.

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