AN IMPROVED DEFINITION OF COERCION
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Andrew J. Galambos defined "coercion" as "any attempted, intentional interference with property." I believe that this definition can be improved, and I offer a proposed improvement here.

This paper is primarily meant to be read by people who have considerable knowledge of volitional science. But unless you regularly spend time thinking about what Galambos taught, the details might be a little (or a lot) fuzzy. Therefore, some of them will be reproduced here to provide context and refresh memories.

To set the stage I'll offer some excerpts from the first few minutes of his 1967-68 delivery of Course V-50, which was transcribed, edited, and released in 1999 as *Sic Itur Ad Astra* (SIAA). I urge even those who are already very familiar with these words to read them again.

> First of all, the Course is on freedom. That's a very frightful term to use and sometimes I almost shudder to mention it. I have occasionally given this Course without mentioning that it's about freedom until it becomes obvious, because the word freedom is so trite, so cheap, so commonplace and everybody uses the term. Therefore, it loses its luster simply from overuse by people who don't know what it means. Now let me ask you, how many of you are for freedom? And how many of you are against freedom? See, that's what I mean. All of you are for freedom and none of you is against freedom, which is, of course, exactly what I expected…

> The point is that freedom is a cheap term on the surface because everybody is, ostensibly, for it… Talk is cheap. Freedom is not cheap. True freedom is an absolute concept. It is the same for all people. It is not subject to reinterpretation, misinterpretation, abuse, and transference of meaning from paragraph to paragraph, from person to person, from day to day, from year to year. Freedom is an absolute, permanent concept. Now, the problem is, what is freedom? Where do you find such a definition? Before this evening is over, that's one of the things you will have — a definition of freedom that will be universal, absolute and permanent and which will not be injurious to anyone.

> Let's start defining the term freedom — let's start the ball rolling. At the moment, I cannot yet directly define freedom because there is another word that is used in the definition of freedom, which also requires a definition. This is similar to physics in that you can't define velocity or acceleration unless you first define length and time. Unfortunately, length

and time are not definable very easily because they are the fundamental units out of which all physical units are built. There is only one way to handle a definition of something like length or time in physics. It's called an operational definition. Actually, operational definitions are the strongest definitions of all. An operational definition is one that distinguishes the thing that is being defined from everything else, by specifying the procedure whereby you determine what it is. To define length, you specify how you measure it. To define time, the only way you can do it in physics is to specify the technique of measuring it. So, I should define a term before I define freedom, and that term is called property. Freedom requires a definition of property because it depends on it.

If Galambos did nothing else for his students, he sensitized them to the importance of having precise definitions, and taught them which type of definition is best. He followed his own advice, and in his lectures used a precisely-defined, internally-consistent vocabulary to describe familiar concepts so that all could understand what he meant when he used words such as "freedom."

The goal was the attainment of his vision of freedom, and he believed that it could only be reached if property was treated properly. He defined property for the students in this class by reading out loud his 1963 essay, "Thrust for Freedom No. 2," commenting on it as he went. The essay gives us the first formulation of his definition of property.

Property is individual man's life and all non-procreative derivatives of his life.[1]

He said, "…this definition will be used throughout this Course. The entire theory of Volitional Science depends on it. This is an operational definition. 'Property' in Volitional Science is just as fundamental as 'mass' is in physics, and the definition is operational."[2]

Alvin Lowi, Jr., Galambos' close associate in the early 1960's, says that he was present at the formulation of this definition, and is responsible for the important phrase, "non-procreative," which means that children are not property.

Galambos identified three types of property and gave them names.
- Life (Primordial property)
- Thoughts, ideas and actions (Primary property)
- Tangibles (Secondary property)

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[1] The definition was later refined to: Property is a volitional being's life and all non-procreative derivatives thereof. In this essay, the original wording has been retained.

[2] The quoted text is from the tape recording of V-50, Session One, Part A, beginning at time 1:16:16. It appears on page 21 of SIAA, but without the two descriptions of the definition as "operational," which the editor chose not to include.

In my opinion, the property definition is excellent, and Volitional Science rests on a strong foundation. Based on Galambos' explanation of operational definitions, I believe that his definition of property satisfies the requirement of making a clear distinction between property and "everything else" and thus is workable. (Note: This is not a claim that there can be no better definition.)

With a definition of property in hand, Galambos could then define "freedom."

> Freedom is the societal condition wherein every individual has full (100%) control of their own property. [3]

Galambos believed that the application of his ideas for the treatment of property would bring about freedom, with the resultant benefits of eliminating most violence and poverty and ensuring a just and durable society, to include the survival of our species. He promoted his ideas as scientific, calling them "Volitional Science," and believed that he had done something of monumental significance, as evidenced by this quote from Session 2 of V-50:

> What I call the integration of a science is accomplished by identifying a set of initial propositions which are called postulates. They are also called axioms, but I prefer postulates. If you can find a set of postulates from which everything else in that entire science can be derived, then that subject is called an integrated science. In this Course, there is an integration of Volitional Science *comparable to* and intellectually derivable from and dependent upon Isaac Newton's integration of physical science, which is why the Newtonian work is of importance to what we're doing here. [Italics added.]

Is it true that Galambos' achievement is comparable to that of Newton? Is it even true that it is an achievement at all? Time will tell whether the two postulates he identified, and the conclusions he drew from them, will produce the results he claimed they would. Anecdotal evidence, some scientific evidence, and my personal experience and thought experiments lead me to be optimistic.

We can begin by ensuring that his definitions stand up under close examination. So, let's look at the subject of this paper, "coercion."

The stated goal of Galambos' proposed property-based social system was to produce freedom, a condition where owners have total control of their property. The word "control" was defined as "the ability to make volitional decisions concerning the disposition of property."

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[3] Galambos likened freedom to the 100% thermodynamic efficiency of the ideal Carnot engine, both of which can be approached asymptotically. SIAA, p. 451.

Galambos identified the greatest threat to freedom as coercion, which he defined as "any attempted, intentional interference with property."

Unfortunately, he did not precisely define "intentional," and did not define "interference" at all. These things will be done here.

First, the word "intentional" has been met by some with skepticism. They ask how we can know whether an act was intentional when even so-called "lie detector machines" are not reliable. And without being able to determine intent, a definition that uses the word cannot be an operational definition. This is a legitimate concern. However, in Session 12 of V-50, which he called "the justice lecture," Galambos defined intent in a way that makes it determinable and establishes its place in the system of market justice.

In contrast to his standard practice of offering precise definitions of words, he did not do that for "intent." In this case his approach was to say that there are two kinds of intent, "psychological intent" and "operational intent." To demonstrate this he gave hypothetical examples in which property was damaged, calling them "operational clarification." From those examples, I extracted the operations by which intent is measured.

Suppose that someone damages someone else's property. If that was his goal, then he had *psychological intent* and he has committed a crime. On the other hand, the damage may have been accidental. In that case there was no *psychological intent* and no crime was committed. In both cases property was damaged and restitution is required.

The problem facing a justice system is that only the person who caused the damage knows whether that was the outcome he sought. The solution lies in his subsequent actions, which will demonstrate his *operational intent*.

If he makes restitution then he has not committed a crime. Even if his original *psychological intent* was to cause damage, according to Galambos the act of making restitution "erases" that *psychological intent* and replaces it with non-criminal *operational intent.*[4]

For the person who lacked *psychological intent* but accidentally caused damage, willful failure to make restitution will establish criminal *operational intent.*

Operational intent is measurable in terms of actions taken, allowing it to be used in the system of market justice that Galambos proposed.

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[4] Although Galambos didn't mention it, other members of society would surely take this behavior into account when deciding whether to contract with this person in the future.

Now we come to "interference." Despite the seeming criticality to his definition, Galambos did not define either "interfere" or "interference." Perhaps he decided that a special definition was not needed for his theory. After all, everyone seems to understand what it means to interfere with someone or something. Commonly used synonyms are: prevent, impede, obstruct, hinder, inhibit, restrict, and constrain. But as he taught, precise definitions are *always* needed in scientific endeavors.

To set the stage for a definition of interference, it is helpful to note something about freedom as Galambos defined it. We must recognize that freedom is not about the quantity or value of property owned by someone. Freedom is about the *control* of that property. Freedom requires that owners of property have full (100%) control of it.

And what is "ownership?" In the Galambos vocabulary it is "the total, permanent, and moral control of property."

The opposite of freedom would be for an owner to have no (0%) control of his property. The word Galambos chose for this is the familiar word, "slavery," which he defined as "the control of property without the permission of the owner." [5]

It is my view that the original Galambos definition of coercion has caused us to look at the wrong thing. Because both freedom and ownership are defined in terms of *control* of property, even though property is the central element of society, it is the *control* of property rather than the property itself that should be our focus when defining interference. To do that, I propose this definition of interference.

Interference: Any reduction in an owner's control of his property without his permission." [6]

With an understanding of what "intent" and "interference" mean, and realizing that it is *control* of property that matters, we have a basis for modifying Galambos' definition of coercion.

Original definition: Any attempted, intentional interference with property.

Revised definition: Any attempted, operationally intentional, reduction of an owner's control of his property without his permission. [7]

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[5] Galambos noted that zero percent control (total slavery) is impossible if the slave eats, because his digestive organs will then control the food. V-50 Session 5, SIAA p. 157.

[6] Damage to property is included in reduction of control.

[7] In this definition, the words "reduction of an owner's control of his property without his permission" could be replaced by the single word, "interference" as it has been defined. However, I prefer the longer version used above because it explicitly mentions both control and permission, making it more precise.

There are at least three reasons why this is a good definition of coercion.

1. It is an operational definition.
2. It makes the amount of coercion measurable.
3. It is based on control, consistent with the fundamental importance of control in Galambos' definition of freedom.

Here's how the three most important words in Volitional Science look together when my suggestions are included. The result, I believe, is precise and unambiguous.

Property is an individual's life and all non-procreative derivatives thereof.
Freedom is the societal condition wherein individuals have full (100%) control of their property.
Coercion is any attempted, operationally intended, reduction of an owner's control of his property without his permission.