

# Review of: "Duality, Liberty, and Realism in Entangled Political Economy"

José Luis Escalona Victoria<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

Review of: Duality, Liberty, and Realism in Entangled Political Economy, Giampaolo Garzarelli, Lyndal Keeton, Aldo A. Siteo. Qeios, March 23, 2023.

José Luis Escalona Victoria (Center for Research and Graduate Studies in Social Anthropology, Mexico).

I just want to be clear that I am reading this collaboration from my area of expertise, that is mostly anthropological one. First, I would like to say that I found the article a well summary of a wider discussion about the relationship between coercion and liberty, viewed here from a realist perspective implicit in an entangled political economy viewpoint. The analysis drives us to transcend dichotomic dualism in prevalent analysis of these duple. Thus, one of the main conclusions in this collaboration, as soon as I could understand it, is that coercion and liberty could be rethought as being in a mutually dependent entangled relation. We are then able to consider that coercion and liberty could be directly increased at the same time, to a certain point in which coercion would not be "degenerated" (to act against protecting liberty). Against dual interpretations of liberty and coercion as opposed poles, it is possible to take them both as mutually dependent variables. Besides, a realist view recognizes that it is not possible the reduction of coercion or liberty to zero. To maximize liberty, we need public autonomous coercion up to a certain point. The discussion also refers to practical problems concerning levels of coercion and liberty in real polity.

The analysis could be translated into practical questions about institutional remodeling, in order to reduce coercion to a minimum. Consequently, it drives us to think of molding or founding institutions, which act as rules of the game, a frame for real and potential action, exchange and competence. Secondly, as liberty and core parts of action would be consistently mingled, institutions remodeling could be thought as an endless task, and institutions could be conceived as being always imperfect artefacts or apparatus. using Hobbes's terms. Thirdly, and most importantly I could say, is that we are talking about liberty in two ways: it is (like peace or security) a negative concept (it is absence of coercion); however, it is also something positive, that was just mentioned in the texts: we reduce coercion in order to release people's "productive energies". That is, in some way, a positive definition that act in analysis (and graphics).

I found the article very productive in different areas of anthropological debates (politics, state, economy, power, body). I just want to point here one discussion concerning the idea of liberty as a productive energy, that could be interesting for the debate well put forward here. The question is at which point coercion and liberty are entangled to be mutually dependent, when coercion has developed in a variety of forms vis a vis liberty, as Michael Foucault has shown to us.

There are forms of punishment, surveillance, reclusion, and torture that have been used for long time in all kinds of polity; however, investing on them have been wasting amounts of energy that do not improve in energy plus liberty (productive energies). On the other side, it has been a history of forms coercion that seem to fit more to a proactive and productive action (though it is no meaning liberty in Foucault's perspective). Could we think then not just on levels of coercion but also in forms or types of coercion in polity that are mutually connected to levels of liberty, even in abstract modeling?. Is it possible? And finally, "liberty", or maybe a sense of liberty in polity, as releasing productive energies could fit well with forms of rules of the game that act as well as frames for restriction and regulation (another form of coercion). I am thinking of social networks, which propel social communication and mobilization worldwide, increasing the sense of liberty, and at the same time form and model (coerce) action and productive forces, and produce metadata to be used in other forms of modeling and framing desires and actions. What I am trying to say is that liberty and coercion could be more entangled and dependent on each other than we thought, particularly in the era of security and biopolitics, in the way that Foucault has analyzed the contemporary social power.

Foucault, Michael, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977--1978* (Michel Foucault Lectures at the Collège de France. Picador; First Edition (2009).