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Persuasion as a Political Concept

PETER BURNELL AND ANDREW REEVE*

I. INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the notion of 'persuasion' applied to a political method. It proceeds by comparing and contrasting 'persuasion' with concepts within the 'power' family. There are two sorts of justification for such an exploration of 'persuasion', the first positive and the second negative.

The positive justification is that persuasion is widely held to name a distinct political process, a way of getting things done. This distinctiveness is usually applied to the special moral status of persuasion by comparison with other ways of achieving objectives. For example, peaceful persuasion by pickets is held to be unobjectionable, while threatening behaviour or intimidation is condemned. Again, most of us are outraged if we discover that we have been manipulated, but do not object to efforts to persuade us. Some of the discussion of the activities of doorstep salespersons is concerned with drawing a distinction between the two. This raises the problem, of course, of how we should characterize persuasion, and in particular of how we should characterize it to capture the positive or at least neutral moral evaluation which it habitually enjoys.¹ Sometimes the positive evaluation of persuasion links the character of the process with its effectiveness, as in the following quotation from Mao Zedong: 'Persuasion, not compulsion, is the only way to convince them. Compulsion will never result in convincing them. To try to make them submit by force simply won't do'.² This is, of course, the sort of claim often put forward by proponents of Western democracy.

The negative justification is that despite this special status little attention has been given to 'persuasion' as a political method.³ This is partly because

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¹ The widespread belief that 'rational persuasion' has a special moral standing is referred to by R. Dahl, in his *Modern Political Analysis*, 3rd edn (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976) at pp. 95-6, and William E. Connolly, *Terms of Political Discourse* (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1974), p. 95. Felix Oppenheim rejects definitions which rely on normative assumptions. See *Political Concepts* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), pp. 156-7.

² Mao Zedong, *Selected Works*, Vol. 5 (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1977), pp. 432-3.

³ R. Bell's compendium of twenty-seven articles on power and influence, *Political Power: a Reader in Theory and Research* (New York: Free Press, 1969) has no separate account of persuasion. More generally, the situation is little different, more than a decade on. One bright exception is S. Benn, 'Freedom and Persuasion', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, XLV (1967), 257-75. As an example of undifferentiated usage, we have Neustadt's famous (but astonishing) remark that presidential power is barely more than the power to persuade. Richard E. Neustadt,

'persuasion' is left as a residual category when power concepts are discussed.⁴ Partly, no doubt, it is because 'coercion', 'authority', 'manipulation' and so on seem more important in a violent and disorderly world. Perhaps, too, it reflects the self-perpetuating selection of concepts for analysis. Nevertheless, we are entitled to be suspicious of residual categories, the more so if they are positively evaluated and subject to ideological use. In particular, 'democracy' which many people imagine they presently enjoy, is based, in both classical and modern political mythology, on 'persuasion'. In Dahl's polyarchies, for example, political leaders 'rely more on persuasion and less on coercion' than they do in 'hegemonies'.⁵ For such an ardent and self-proclaimed defender of politics as Bernard Crick, politics itself is the use of persuasion rather than coercion or force, the last two being excluded.⁶

Our approach in this article is to explore the extent to which persuasion can be successfully distinguished from concepts in the power family. Since the distinctiveness of persuasion as a political method, and its moral status, depend on successful distinction between it and power concepts, it is appropriate to begin by using the framework which has been developed for the discussion of power and to apply it to 'persuasion' to develop some contrasts. This preliminary exploration of intention and success applied to persuasion and power will bring out some differences between the two, which will be refined in subsequent sections of the paper. These sections deal with persuasion by contrast with particular forms of power, namely bargaining (Section III), indoctrination (Section IV), and manipulation (Section V), from which, at first sight, it is both necessary and difficult to separate persuasion. Our conclusion (Section VI) summarizes our findings and draws attention to some implications of our analysis.

II. PERSUASION AND SUCCESS

Our initial proposal for an account of persuasion is that, in a case of persuasion,

A gets *B* to do or believe or accept or reject something which he would not otherwise

Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership (New York: Wiley, 1960). As John Hart points out in 'Presidential Power Revisited', *Political Studies*, xxv (1977), 48–61 at p. 54. 'The linguistic differences between persuasion, influence and bargaining are not relevant here, for the terms are used interchangeably.'

⁴ Broadly speaking, studies begin with power (or manipulation) and then state a position on whether persuasion is part of power. Yes, according to Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, pp. 38, 156, 180. No, according to Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, pp. 94–5. Yes and No according to Steven Lukes, *Power – A Radical Review* (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 32–3.

⁵ Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*, p. 83.

⁶ B. Crick, *In Defence of Politics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962). This does of course go against the account of politics given by members of the 'other' Chicago school (such as G. Catlin, for whom politics is the science of power and all politics is by its nature power politics, see *Systematic Politics* (Toronto: Allen and Unwin, 1962)).

do or believe or accept or reject, by exhibiting reasons or by exhibiting consequences of alternatives confronting *B*.⁷

The structure of this formulation is modelled on Dahl's notion of power, according to which *A* has power to the extent that he gets *B* to do something he would not otherwise have done. Dahl's definition is famous (in part) because of the difficulties it raises about the relevance of *A*'s intention. The chief difficulty is to determine whether *A* has power when he simply gets *B* to do something he would not otherwise have done, or whether 'power' should be restricted to those cases where what *B* does is what *A* intended him to do. Russell asserted the latter in his equally well-known view that power is the production of intended effects'.⁸ The problem here is notorious: is it necessary both that *B* be diverted from what he would otherwise have done *and* that he be successfully diverted in a direction desired by *A*?

Because of the formal similarity between Dahl's account of power and the formulation of persuasion offered above, it might be expected that the stated problem about intention and success will be confronted in a discussion of persuasion. This is indeed the case, but there are additional difficulties with respect to persuasion which are best explored by looking at the sense of 'unsuccessful persuasion'. If persuasion does require success, measured in terms of the intention of the persuader, then 'unsuccessful persuasion' would be a nonsense. If, on the other hand, persuasion can apply to a process independently of the outcome, then it would not be a nonsense.

B is the executive of a trade union which has decided to call its members out on strike. *A* is a government minister who presents *B* with a set of reasons suggesting that the decision should be reversed before it is implemented. *B*, however, is already aware of all the arguments given. The executive does not acquire any new reasons, and so has no cause to change its decision. Thus the strike goes ahead. On the formulation of persuasion given earlier, this example would not be treated as persuasion, because *B* has not been deflected by *A*.

In such a case, we do seem to require success before we are willing to say that '*A* persuaded *B*'. We would not describe these circumstances by saying '*A* persuaded *B* to call off the strike, but *B* nevertheless authorized it to go ahead'. Such a description would imply that *A* had been initially successful, but that further causes intervened (*B* called off the strike, but was repudiated by the membership; *B* again changed its views later etc.). We should say, instead, that '*A* tried to persuade *B* to call off the strike'. This implies either that *A* was not successful or that as yet *B*'s behaviour has not been monitored and it is not known whether *A* was successful or not. In this example, then, where *A* has a clear intention, we have an unsuccessful attempt at persuasion.

⁷ The strengthening or weakening of *B*'s attachment to an existing position is included in this definition. Belief and behaviour do not have to coincide. More on this on p. 397.

⁸ B. Russell, *Power* (London: Unwin, 1975, first published in 1938), p. 25.

This explication is parallel to some treatments of 'power'. Some analysts have felt unhappy treating an unsuccessful attempt to bring about a desired outcome as evidence of the possession of power. They have felt instead that such attempts provide evidence for the lack of power.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between persuasion, power, and coercion with respect to intention and success in common usage. The difference is that 'coercion' is more fully dependent upon success than persuasion seems to be. That is to say persuasion can be an appropriate name for a certain sort of process even if it is unsuccessful. The counterfactual clause, that *B* does something he would not otherwise have done, is usually used in discussions of power to demonstrate *A*'s control over the other actor, and this seems to require success. If the counterfactual does not hold, the case unquestionably falls outside the usual conceptions of power and coercion. In the case of persuasion, however, the characterization of the process seems less dependent upon the precise nature of the outcome, and indeed the word persuasion is sometimes used even to refer merely to the giving of reasons, with no further specification at all. Such a treatment ignores the outcome altogether and focuses entirely on the process. In a similar vein, the terms 'resistance' and 'to resist' connote 'striving against' and do not necessarily imply successfully stopping or preventing what is resisted.

Although this point might be a little elusive, it can be brought out by considering the following. Torture is a means used to get *B* to do something he would not otherwise do. It is the deliberate infliction of pain to ensure that *B* confesses, provides information (and so on). But torture, in the sense of deliberate infliction of pain, is torture irrespective of whether or not *A* succeeds in his intention, whether or not *B* confesses (etc.). Coercion, at the other extreme 'fails to be' coercion if it is unsuccessful (again, in terms of *A*'s intention). In the case of persuasion, the process element and the outcome element seem at times to place it between these two extremes. Hence it would neither be unusual nor confusing to hear it said that '*B* found *A* very persuasive, but none the less went ahead with his original decision and related course of action', when '*A* was very coercive, but *B* was not coerced to change his behaviour' seems wrong, because coercion depends upon success. '*A* tortured *B* horribly, but *B* maintained his silence', on the other hand, seems sensible enough, because torture names a process independently of the result.

In the example of the government minister and the union executive used earlier, *B* had no new reasons for belief or action, and *B*'s action did not change. *A* has not persuaded *B*, nor has *B* been persuaded. This is because *B* has not been deflected in any way. *B* may nevertheless have considered *A* to be persuasive. Now there are some interesting cases for comparison with this example, namely those in which *B* is deflected, but in which there is no intention on the part of *A* to bring about this deflection, and those in which *B* is deflected but not in the direction intended by *A*. We come to such cases shortly.

Persuasion, then, involves a process of interaction and an outcome, just as

(say) coercion does. To say *A* is persuasive may attribute skill in the process of presenting arguments, recognize an accomplished performance and even acknowledge a certain plausibility within the limits of the arguments that *A* is attempting to deploy, but it does not entail that *B* changed his mind or his conduct. Attributing persuasiveness, therefore, is compatible with non-fulfilment of the counterfactual. This is not true of any instance of coerciveness. '*A* tried to persuade *B* to call off the strike, but it was nevertheless authorized' is parallel to '*A* tried to coerce *B* to prevent the strike but it went ahead': both imply failure. Such statements suggest that 'persuasion' and 'coercion' require a mesh between *A*'s intention and the observed outcome which is not, in these examples, present.

There is nevertheless a difference within this parallel. There are two ways in which *A*'s success can be evaluated in cases of persuasion. The first is a matter of *A*'s getting *B* to accept the reasons which *A* advances as good reasons. The second concerns *A*'s getting *B* to act on those reasons in the way *A* intended.⁹ It is obviously possible for *A* to be successful (to persuade) in the first sense, and at the same time to fail in the second. *B* does not regard the reasons as sufficient for him to change his behaviour; we might say that he did not regard them as 'compelling'. Whilst a mesh between *A*'s intention and *B*'s action is a condition of '*A* coerced *B*', it is not a condition of '*A* persuaded *B*' if *B* has accepted *A*'s reasons but has not acted on them. However persuasion can clearly affect belief without affecting behaviour.¹⁰ Equally, persuasion could affect behaviour without affecting beliefs. For example, *A* persuaded *B* to do *x*, and, incidentally, to believe that he ought to do *x*, even though his original views on *x* (for example, on the immorality of it) remain the same. This is the sort of situation which is referred to when we say conventionally that someone was persuaded to do something (but) 'against his better judgement'.

Let us turn to a second example, in which there is no question of an intention on *A*'s part to bring about a particular result. In as much as persuasion is concerned with giving reasons, 'to be persuaded' is often used to describe situations where a person has been given, or comes to have, reasons for a particular belief or action, regardless of whether these were intended to be conveyed by any other person. 'To be persuaded' can refer to the fact that one comes to have reasons, or that one is in the process of detecting, or being given, reasons. Are cases in which *B* claims to have been persuaded, even though *A* had no relevant intention and may even be unaware of *B*,

⁹ A person's beliefs or behaviour may be the object of another's persuasive endeavour. It is assumed that a way of life or a character or personality represent some combination of belief and behaviour.

¹⁰ Indeed, A. Greenwald found empirically that persuasion quite often produces a change in belief without a corresponding change in behaviour, in 'Effects of Prior Commitment on Behaviour Change After Persuasive Communication', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, xxix (1965-6), 595-601.

misleadingly loose descriptions? Or are they revealing applications of the notion of persuasion?

Suppose *B* is the chairman of the National Coal Board (NCB) who has observed that the chairman of British Leyland (BL) forestalled an all-out confrontation with his total work-force, while 'rationalizing plant' by his tactic of implementing only incremental plant closures, instead of shutting several plants simultaneously. The NCB chairman decides to emulate the BL chairman, adopting a similar tactic in the closure of the NCB's many 'uneconomic' pits. No one need quarrel with the idea that the second chairman had been *influenced* by the experience of the first in his choice of course of action. Does it seem reasonable to say that he was persuaded by the former's example? The relevant point to establish here is whether anything more specific is suggested by the use of 'persuasion' rather than 'influence'. The case again turns on having reasons. In the present example, for the NCB chairman to 'be persuaded' does connote a more specific suggestion than does to 'be influenced'. The greater specificity is that 'influence' can occur without any ratiocination on *B*'s part. This is not the case with persuasion. The use of persuasion in the present example requires that the NCB chairman thought that the tactic of the BL chairman contributed to his success in avoiding an all-out strike, and that if he followed suit he would be similarly successful. These beliefs may be either true or false, but they are open to discussion – and someone else may persuade the NCB chairman that he is wrong in his evaluation of the experience at BL. For instance it might be claimed that the absence of a co-ordinated and militant union response was due solely to the heavy financial commitments of the workers, some of whose jobs were in any case certain to be safe.

Thus the boundary between persuasion and influence is marked out by 'having reasons'. I may be unknowingly influenced by advertising but I cannot be unknowingly persuaded by it. Any further stretching of the meaning of persuasion, beyond, that is, coming to have reasons, would lose its distinctiveness. So, in cases where there is no intention on the part of *A* to affect *B* in any way, 'persuasion' is a more specific denotation than 'influence', if *B* comes to have reasons which, in the absence of a persuasive example, he would not have.

A third example may be used to cover the case in which *A* brings about a very different consequence by his efforts to persuade than the one that he intended. In this example *A* is again a government minister, intent on dissuading water workers from striking, by persuading them that a strike would not be constitutional according to their own union's rules.¹¹ He claims

¹¹ We can see no point to Talcott Parsons's restriction of persuasion to instances where *A* expressed reasons why it would be a good thing for *B* to adopt his advice, and exclusion from persuasion of all instances where *A* suggests reasons why it would be a bad thing for *B* to *not* adopt *A*'s advice. See T. Parsons, 'On the Concept of Political Power', *American Philosophical Society Proceedings*, CVII (1963), 232–62 and 'On the Concept of Influence', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, xxvii (1963), 37–62.

that only 64 per cent of the union's members voted for a strike, although 66 per cent is required for strike action to be duly authorized. *B* is in this example a union member who was hitherto uncertain about whether to join the strike. He is so impressed by the figures which indicate a clear majority of support for such action that he joins it. Clearly it would be misleading to say that *B* had been persuaded by *A* to strike; but it would be quite proper to claim that *B* was persuaded by the figures that *A* had put forward.

There is a distinction, it appears, between the active and passive voices, or more correctly, between the connotations of the active voice and the passive voice. This distinction relates to that between success and process. To persuade involves providing reasons for belief, action etc. A paradigm case of 'A persuaded B' would arise if *A* gave *B* reasons for a course of action *A* wished *B* to pursue; *B* had not previously thought of these arguments, but having heard them, he sees the force of them, accepts them and has no objection to acting on them. In such a case, the reasons would become shared reasons. Persuasion here would be a success concept – *B* comes to share the reasons advanced by *A*. But of course there is still the other way of treating persuasion, namely to suppose that the process of persuasion is simply that of advancing reasons; that to persuade is to give reasons; to be persuaded is to have new (or perhaps just reinforced) reasons for a belief or course of action. The contrast is, then, between a concept relying on a successful outcome and one which stresses the nature of the process. To stress successful outcome makes persuasion closer to power and authority than it would be if process alone were stressed.

Of course, persuasion would still be distinct from authority. In some versions, respect for authority is itself the reason for conforming to whatever authority indicates and authority does not require either coercion or persuasion to be accepted.¹² This is not, however, to say that the holders of authority would be unable to give reasons, and good reasons, if called upon to do so. Nor do we deny a special sense of authority in which an authority exists precisely because of the expertise and reasoning ability of its holder (his *authoritativeness*). But even if a person who has authority does give reasons, the authority, for those who accept it, gives an additional and separate weight to the reasons advanced, just as we might attach additional weight to the persuasion of a friend whom we know to have our interests at heart. But this weight is still separate and distinct from the content of the persuasion. The notion of *persuasiveness* may be applied both to the content of persuasion, the reasons, and to qualities of the person involved. Hence, as we have argued, to attribute *persuasiveness* need not imply successful persuasion, just as to attribute *authoritativeness* does not always mark the presence of authority.

¹² This contrast between authority and both coercion and persuasion was made by H. Arendt in *On Violence* (London: Penguin, 1970, first published in 1969), p. 45.

To make a distinction between the connotations of the active and the passive uses of the verb 'to persuade' is to recognize that, as in the cases of 'power' and 'influence', the issue of whose view is adopted can be crucial. In the three examples we have looked at so far our willingness to characterize what has happened as persuasion depends upon whether the verb is used actively or passively. In the first example, *A* did not deflect *B*, nor was *B* given new reasons of any kind. The counterfactual condition is not met, and we would not say that *B* had been persuaded, although we could say that persuasion had failed. In the third case (that of the water workers), the counterfactual condition is met but *B* was not moved in the direction intended by *A*. Here *B* comes to have new reasons; and it would be acceptable to say that *B* was persuaded. But in this example it would not be acceptable to say that *A* persuaded *B*, although we might want to judge that *A*'s intervention had persuaded *B*. The active voice aligns with a point of view which *A* advocates, for which success is important. It is worth retaining the passive use – to be persuaded – recognizing that it does not entail attributing success to *A*, because it marks a different process from mere influence. A purely emotional response by *B*, which did not involve *B*'s reasoning at all, would however mean only that *A*'s intervention had been influential – it would not entitle us to say that *B* had been persuaded. The union member who joined the strike simply because he was upset by the minister's tone would have been influenced, not persuaded, just as a minister who employed only symbolic appeals and offered no reasons to the workers would not be attempting to persuade.

The process of persuasion entails 'coming to have reasons'. These reasons need now to be discussed further, for the characterization of persuasion so far does not sufficiently distinguish it from bargaining, indoctrination or manipulation. These share boundaries with persuasion which are perhaps more obscure than the boundaries between persuasion, authority and coercion.

III. PERSUASION AND BARGAINING

The account of persuasion so far, which has placed emphasis on the reasons *B* comes to have for beliefs, actions and so on, requires us to explore the relation between persuasion and bargaining. For bargaining, it might be thought, also involves *A* providing *B* with reasons. These reasons take the form of making offers, promising rewards, or threatening sanctions. Neither the outcome of bargaining nor the effect of persuasion need conform to what was originally envisaged or expected by the parties. 'To persuade' may connote an effect, either success or just deflection, in a way that 'to bargain' can never do, for bargaining only issues in an outcome when a bargain has been struck. Moreover, both parties to the relationship will acknowledge and accept, if only reluctantly and as a temporary measure, the terms of what they individually interpret to be the bargain they have struck, whereas in the case of persuasion it cannot be assumed that both parties are agreeable to or would

want to own the result of actual persuasion. Nevertheless, upon the definition of persuasion advanced so far, bargaining would have to be considered as a part of persuasion or as overlapping with it. This conclusion may be consonant with the language of gangster films, but that is an ironical language, and the irony rests precisely upon our desire and ability to separate persuasion from bargaining. The definition of persuasion given must now be refined to exclude bargaining, but we must recognize that persuasion may exist within bargaining.

There are two features of bargaining which are not reproduced in persuasion. These are first, that in bargaining some of the consequences of *B*'s actions are under *A*'s control, and secondly, that bargaining necessarily engages the interests of at least one of the parties. When a factory owner tells the union leader that a threatened strike will lead to the permanent closure of the factory, effected out of hostility or just plain spite, the consequence of *B*'s action which is exhibited is one over which *A* himself has control. Typically inducements are made by the person who is in a position to bring about whatever is the substance of the inducement, be it a 'reward' or a 'sanction'. This is not the case with persuasion.¹³ If my friend tries to persuade me to stop smoking, he is not threatening to visit me with disease or poverty – he is reporting what the risks and costs of my habit are thought to be. If he did connect my actions with a consequence under his control, then he would not so much be exhibiting the natural consequences of my behaviour as making an offer or a threat. If I value his friendship and he threatens to withdraw it unless I stop smoking, he has ceased to attempt to achieve his ends by means of persuasion.¹⁴ Certainly I will have new reasons for abstinence, and it is this which connects persuasion with bargaining. But, usually, persuasion can be distinguished (in spite of this common feature) by the fact that, in bargaining, *A* deliberately associates himself with (or at least is implicated in) the results for *B* of adopting or rejecting *A*'s proposals.

It is crucial in political contexts to know whether or not the consequence of *B*'s behaviour which is being exhibited is something over which *A* has control, and therefore whether the interaction is properly described as bargaining

¹³ The limited use-value of lexical definitions can be illustrated here. For the *Oxford English Dictionary* persuasion includes 'the presenting of inducements or winning arguments'. An 'inducement' is 'any ground or reason which leads or inclines one to a belief or course of action'; 'a moving cause'; 'an incentive'; 'something that leads to a result'.

¹⁴ This is to take issue with John Stuart Mill's account, in *On Liberty* (1859), of how one person might properly behave towards another with respect to that other's so-called self-regarding sphere of behaviour. Mill argues that the withdrawal of company would be a 'natural' consequence of the other's alleged self-regarding faults. For Mill it would thus be an acceptable case of an attempt to persuade. See *On Liberty* (London: Dent, 1962) especially pp. 132–40. Mill's account is considered further in P. Burnell, 'On Opinion in "On Liberty"', *Mill News Letter*, xviii (1983), 2–11, especially p. 9. G. Miller, who allows persuasion to be 'indirectly coercive', by allusions to threats as well as promises goes even further than Mill. M. Roloff and G. Miller, eds, *Persuasion: New Directions in Theory and Research* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1980), Chap. 1.

(usually threatening) or as attempted persuasion. The potential scope for disagreement in particular cases can be easily illustrated. Suppose a government minister states that if a strike gives rise to a pay increase in a particular industry there will be redundancies in it; the industry in question is a nationalized industry. The minister may claim this is attempted persuasion, because the redundancy is a 'natural consequence' of the increase in the pay bill. The statement may well be perceived as a threat, however, because the redundancy will follow only if the government does not increase its subsidy to the industry, something which it has the capacity to do. The extent to which *A*'s intentional agency is implicated in the consequences of *B*'s possible action, and therefore the extent to which *A*'s exhibiting those consequences is bargaining rather than persuasion, may therefore be strongly contested.

The second difference between persuasion and bargaining stated earlier is that persuasion, unlike bargaining, does not necessarily involve reference to the interests of either *A* or *B*. It may do so: my friend may persuade me that it is in my interest to stop smoking; or the fact that some action is in my friend's interest may be a good reason (in his persuasion of me) for me to do it – for instance he might have taken bets on the likelihood of being successful in his attempt at persuasion. Persuasion may be directed at the means *B* should adopt to achieve his own ends, and this may well concern the pursuit of his interests. But persuasion can also be directed at a person's values and moral position, where there is no assumption that either party's interests are engaged. For example, one conventional forum for attempts to persuade is the debating society. None of the participants necessarily has a personal stake in the issues put up for debate (although of course it might be that they have an interest in winning the debate).

Of course, persuasion may well play a part in the bargaining process. For example, a successful threat relies on a number of conditions, amongst which are *B*'s belief in *A*'s intention and capacity to carry out the threat. *A* or *B*'s friend *C* both might give *B* reasons for supposing that *A* does actually have the expressed intention and the requisite capacity. Although *A* is involved in bargaining with *B*, the reasons he gives might be identical to those *C* gives. *A* is persuading *B* to take the threat seriously within the larger activity of bargaining with him. (If *A* tells *B* a pack of lies, we might want to say that *B* was being manipulated rather than persuaded. This is something to which we return later.) Hence we may want to say that *A* induced *B* to do *x* by persuading him that his threat was a real one, but deny that this entails that *A* persuaded *B* to do *x*.

The definition of persuasion given earlier may now be refined to exclude bargaining:

A persuades *B* when *A* gets *B* to do or believe (etc.) something which *B* would not otherwise do or believe (etc.) by exhibiting reasons or consequences of the possibilities *B* confronts. *A* does not implicate his intentional agency in producing these consequences by making threats, offers or inducements.

A can certainly be implicated in the consequences; but he cannot associate his intentional agency in the consequences for *B*. For example, 'If you do not give me water, I shall die' is an attempt at persuasion, even though *A* implicates himself in the consequences of *B*'s activity; but he is not implicating his intentional agency, unlike the factory owner who threatens to close his factory permanently in retaliation for a strike. Furthermore, as we have seen, the extent to which a statement may be considered as a threat or alternatively as an attempt at persuasion will depend upon how the parties perceive *A*'s implication of intentional agency; and these perceptions may not be uniform.

IV. PERSUASION AND INDOCTRINATION

The original or core meaning of indoctrination, which refers to instruction in a doctrine, and the sense of 'to be indoctrinated' as simply 'to be taught', are quite anodyne. The terms have however become overlaid in modern parlance with negative connotations. Precisely what combination of intention, content and method characterizes indoctrination has been disputed by philosophers of education,¹⁵ but even apart from these aspects, a major part of the modern negative evaluation of indoctrination arises from a concern with the results of the process. Indoctrination is often identified by the way in which *B* maintains the beliefs or ideas inculcated by *A* as well as by the manner in which he acquired them. This way of holding beliefs may be either unreflective, or, if reflective, impervious to counter-argument, no matter how good, and in some way fixed or dogmatic. Whilst there is certainly no necessary incompatibility between persuasion and indoctrination in the original sense of 'teaching a doctrine', the more recent connotations of indoctrination do distinguish it from persuasion. We might summarize these connotations by suggesting that what is often of most concern about indoctrination is that it places the person subject to it beyond the reach of persuasion.

Two of the aspects mentioned, namely the content of what is taught and the methods employed, are clearly related to the central reservation about putting someone 'beyond the reach of persuasion'. In so far as *content* is concerned, the complaint often refers to the closed character of the system of ideas conveyed. Explanations are adduced within the system for the behaviour of those who do not accept it. The indoctrinated person comes to be armed with arguments internal to the system of ideas which either suggest reprehensible motives in those who do not share it, or which provide the doctrinal answer to counter arguments ready-made. This connects to *B*'s unreflectiveness, as does the systematic inculcation of beliefs by such methods as repetition.

The onesidedness of what is taught, identified with the doctrinaire, can be said to pertain to manipulation as well as to indoctrination. It is a defining

¹⁵ For philosophical essays on indoctrination see I. Snook, ed., *Concepts of Indoctrination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

feature of manipulation that *B* is not wholly in the picture, because he lacks information either about *A* or about the alternatives which he himself is facing. We feel that indoctrination too denies *B* the whole story. For not only are the arguments and reasons that are presented partial and one-sided, but also, and more importantly, *B* is not aware of this. The general feeling that indoctrination is one of the more insidious forms of *A*'s treatment of *B* seems to arise in this way. He is convinced of the arguments' correctness and conclusiveness, and closes his mind to alternatives. This may well put him beyond the reach of persuasion.

Three aspects of the openness of persuasion which appear to distinguish persuasion from indoctrination can be tentatively proposed. First, persuasion requires what might be called 'good faith', something that is unnecessary to indoctrination. In persuading someone, we share, or are trying to share, reasons with him. This is why persuasion employs *B*'s ratiocination. *A* may have a specific object in view, for example that *B* should join the strike, and want to achieve that object through *B*'s reasoning capacity, and on the basis of reasons which he takes to be good reasons, even though the adequacy of those reasons might of course be rejected by a third party. If the reasons presented are based on information which *A* knows to be false, he ceases to be involved in persuasion; depending upon other conditions, he may be attempting either manipulation or indoctrination. This is even more obvious if he takes advantage of an opportunity to distort the information that *B* receives.

To regard a reason as a good reason in this sense does not entail that *A* should actually act upon it. Even less should we suppose that the test of the goodness of the reason is whether *A* does act on it. *A*, a smoker, may present *B*, another smoker, with reasons which *A* accepts, but does not act upon (he has a weak will) or which are countervailed in his case (he is old) but not in *B*'s (he is young). This feature, that *A* is not required to act upon the reasons he advances, but merely to regard them as good reasons which someone in *B*'s position should take into account, follows easily enough from the fact that persuasion can be directed at *B*'s understanding of his own interests. *A* might persuade *B* to vote for the Conservative candidate, even though *A* is a Labour voter, by referring to sound reasons which distinguish their class positions. Indoctrination, by contrast, is concerned to ensure that *B* accepts something as true; it is not necessarily concerned with sharing reasons. It is not necessary to indoctrination that the indoctrinator accept the truth of the doctrine.

A second aspect of the openness of persuasion is the requirement we advance that a persuader be in principle prepared to respond to doubts and uncertainties, and in principle be prepared to share any doubts about the strength of his own case which he may hold. This does not entail that he should in fact have doubts or that he should laboriously specify them. But if he does refuse to reveal any doubts that he has, or to reveal the information or arguments upon which they are based, then the process edges (depending on other conditions) towards manipulation or indoctrination. One particular

problem might be the advocacy of a position in which *A* does not himself believe. Friends sometimes play the devil's advocate and barristers are not always convinced of the merits of their clients' cases. The solution to this lies in a condition that persuasion requires the good faith of the persuader, a condition which is further explored in Section v.

A third aspect of the distinction concerns the attempt to achieve, in indoctrination, a permanent state of belief. Someone engaged in persuasion is sharing reasons, but he has to accept the possibility that his own position could change even though he might not think that such change is at all likely. Since it is not necessary that an indoctrinator believe in the truth of the doctrine inculcated, his own receptiveness is irrelevant to that process.

To conclude: indoctrination is aimed at the production of a state of belief and corresponding behaviour and so is persuasion. But indoctrination need not work through *B*'s ratiocination, whereas persuasion must; indoctrination is aimed at a permanent state of belief, but persuasion does not insist on this; indoctrination does not require any good faith in the persuader. Finally two important aspects of that good faith are a willingness to share doubts (eventually) and *A*'s recognition that his own position could change.

V. PERSUASION AND MANIPULATION

The concept of manipulation has by and large not received the same amount of attention as most other members of the power 'family' have. One of the clearest and most concise accounts is that provided by Ware.¹⁶ His formulation has not gone without criticism in the literature but nevertheless it provides the most useful starting point for the present discussion.

Ware identifies four jointly-necessary conditions of manipulation, and of course he intends that these conditions exclude persuasion. We shall argue that the conditions Ware proposes do not in fact jointly exclude cases which we would want to treat as persuasion. This is because of the way in which moral responsibility figures in Ware's analysis. The first two conditions stated by Ware are:

- (1) *B*'s tastes, lifestyle, values, the goods he chooses in specific circumstances, the reasons he has for the choices he makes, or the strength of his adherence to these choices are different from what they would have been, had *A* not intervened;
- (2) *A* restricts the alternatives that *B* may choose or adopt, or structures the alternatives in such a way so as to increase the probability that he will choose particular alternatives or reduce the probability that he will choose others.

The purpose of the first condition, of course, is simply to identify the results of the process which is later to be narrowed by the other conditions. It is

¹⁶ A. Ware, 'The Concept of Manipulation: Its Relation to Democracy and Power', *British Journal of Political Science*, xi (1981), 163–81.

therefore wide enough to include a whole range of interventions, including persuasion. As we have seen, persuasion deflects *B*, and this deflection may be aimed at *B*'s means to a given end, at his choice of ends, or at his moral values. It may be, but is not necessarily, directed at his action. We have also stressed the importance of the counterfactual. We accepted that the truth of the counterfactual and *A*'s success were conditions of the truth of '*A* persuades *B*', but that only the truth of the counterfactual was a condition of the truth of '*B* was persuaded'. The significance of this will become clear shortly. Our stress throughout has been on the reasons *B* comes to have, which also feature in Ware's first condition.

Despite this apparent convergence, the role of reasons in persuasion is different from the inspecific role of reasons in the statement of results given by Ware. The possible effects on *B* are listed by him as alternatives: tastes, lifestyle, values, chosen goods, *or* reasons are different from what they would otherwise have been. In our formulation of persuasion, *B*'s lifestyle (etc.) is different *because of* the reasons *B* has come to have; or his reasons have changed even if he does not act upon them.

The second condition of manipulation is more problematic. The second part of it – *A* structures the alternatives in such a way as to either increase the probability that *B* will choose particular alternatives or reduce the probability that he will choose others – divorces process from success. The condition characterizes what is going on, whether or not *B* comes to choose that which *A* would most like him to choose. Increasing the probability that *B* will choose *x* does not, of course, guarantee that he will choose it. Probability does not entail certainty. It follows that one can talk of unsuccessful manipulation by reference to the characteristics of the process, when outcome is not a success in terms of *A*'s intention. We saw in Section II of this paper that in the case of persuasion, once the process has reached the point where an outcome can be established, persuasion in the active sense does require success, and that unsuccessful persuasion implies the failure to deflect *B*. For Ware, unsuccessful manipulation refers to deflection in an unintended (or at the least, not most-preferred) way.

The first part of the second condition of manipulation stipulates the restriction of alternatives. How does persuasion differ here? Persuasion works at two levels. It may suggest the range of alternatives that is open to *B*, or it may direct *B*'s attention towards one particular alternative. Ware appears to run these two levels together in his account of manipulation; that is to say *A* gets results in terms of *B*'s actual choices by narrowing *B*'s perception of his range of choices. Our formulation for persuasion talks of 'exhibiting the consequences of alternatives'. It is not assumed that *B* is either facing a choice or that he is aware of alternatives. Hence persuasion can work to increase *B*'s awareness of the alternatives. This is one of the respects in which persuasion differs from manipulation, and it makes Ware's clause about probabilities (condition 2) irrelevant here to persuasion.

But when we turn from reducing alternatives to the structuring of alterna-

tives, that clause is not irrelevant. Obviously, many attempts at persuasion aim at either increasing or diminishing the probabilities that *B* will believe or do something in particular. It would indeed be strange if this was not the case. So although we can point to features of persuasion which help to isolate it from the first two conditions proposed by Ware for manipulation, we conclude that neither individually nor together do the first two conditions distinguish persuasion from manipulation. It is therefore necessary to examine the third and fourth conditions.

- (3) *B* either has no knowledge of, or does not understand, the ways in which *A* affects his choices.

This condition is central. It can be agreed immediately that *B* cannot be persuaded by *A* if he is unaware of either *A*'s existence or the fact that *A* affects his choices. The main point of interest, here, then, is the interpretation of *B*'s understanding of the 'ways in which *A* affects his choices'. We suggest that this condition does not exclude all cases of persuasion, and since condition (4) does not either, then the four conditions jointly have not successfully discriminated between manipulation and persuasion. We have already argued that neither (1) nor (2) excludes persuasion; we shall argue that relationships which we would want to consider as examples of persuasion are, on Ware's analysis, still included in manipulation even after the application of his condition (3); and they are not excluded by his condition (4).

Let us consider four examples. (a) The smoker's friend *A* accurately reports a television lecture by the President of the Royal College of Surgeons on the dangers of cigarette smoking. The smoker *B* is so impressed by the arguments that he gives up smoking. (b) *A* misremembers the figures, which in consequence he exaggerates, and *B* gives up, although he would not have done if he had received an accurate report. (c) *A* deliberately distorts the figures because of his real concern for *B*, whom he wants to give up. (d) *A* provides an accurate report, *B* mishears or misconstrues the figures, and gives up smoking, although he would not have done if he had heard and construed the figures correctly.

We maintain that (a) is a case of persuasion, while (c) is a case of manipulation. But the reason we treat (a) as persuasion and (c) as manipulation is the absence of good faith shown by the deliberate distortion of figures attached to an otherwise authoritative source. The further application of the 'good faith' notion would suggest that (b) and (d) are cases of persuasion too.¹⁷ If we apply the condition (3) proposed by Ware, however, it is not clear

¹⁷ Benn also invokes 'good faith' to separate manipulation from persuasion. Such a notion makes analysts uncomfortable, because it is difficult to know how to identify good faith, and therefore to accurately describe the observed interaction. But if we wish to mark the difference that actors themselves have in mind, this seems to be the best one. *B*'s reaction to finding out about *A*'s mistake or intention is crucial. See Benn, 'Freedom and Persuasion', p. 266n. Robert E. Goodin, *Manipulatory Politics* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1980) treats manipulation as 'deceptive influence', which implies that persuasion involves good faith.

that there is any relevant difference in *B*'s understanding of the way in which *A* affects his choice, as between (b), (c) and (d). Since at least (c) is manipulation, it follows that Ware's condition (4) would have to do the work of discrimination. However we shall now argue that condition (4) does not help.

Condition (4) is concerned with moral responsibility. It holds that a defining condition of manipulation is that a moral agent in *A*'s position would normally be held morally responsible for all the results of structuring the alternatives facing *B*.

There is a general problem concerned with the use of arguments about moral responsibility with respect to power concepts which has been discussed elsewhere.¹⁸ Briefly, we might need to know whether we are dealing with a case of manipulation or persuasion *before* we set about attributing moral responsibility. Ware's account, in contrast to this, relies upon the prior location of moral responsibility to help decide whether the case under investigation is an instance of manipulation. The purchase of the good faith condition is that it refers to the *way* in which *A* intends to affect *B*. It refers to the sort of process that *A* plans to employ, a process which does not allow consistent and defensive concealment of information or the wilful denial of partiality.

Of course, just as *A* and *B* might have different views of what are good reasons for *B*, so they might differ in their ideas about what information is relevant. In consequence, *A* might not reveal everything that *B* would want to hear, without violating the condition of good faith. Observers may disagree about *A*'s intention, just as they may disagree about *A*'s implication of his intentional agency in distinguishing bargaining from persuasion. The circumstance of good faith is quite compatible with *A* having a particular intention with respect to *B*, such as to persuade him to renounce smoking. It is also compatible with knowingly structuring the alternatives in a way that increases the probability that *B* will take a particular decision. ('If you stopped smoking, you could run five-minute miles and afford to buy that new edition of Hobbes which you were talking about.') In the cases of both manipulation and persuasion there is an intention to secure a particular outcome. The distinction between them rests in part on *A*'s attitude towards the process.

Now the problem for condition (4) of manipulation, which introduces moral responsibility, is that *A*'s having a definite intention (in terms of results) is apparently a sufficient condition of his moral responsibility for that outcome. This is mistaken. Condition (4) reads:

- (4) A moral agent in *A*'s position would normally be held morally responsible for all the results of structuring the alternatives facing *B*. *A* is not morally responsible when any of the following conditions are met: (a) he is not a

¹⁸ A. Reeve, 'Power Without Responsibility', *Political Studies*, xxx (1982), pp. 77–86.

moral agent; (b) *B* is negligent; (c) *B* can still choose at least one alternative that does not impose costs on anyone, including himself; (d) *A* does not intend to structure the alternatives, or does not knowingly do so, or, in *A*'s role, a reasonable person would not be expected to know that these results could emanate from the structuring.

This condition (4) is complex; the relevant part for the present argument about persuasion is the combination of the general condition and exception (d). The exclusion of *A*'s moral responsibility from instances where he does not intend to structure the alternatives need not, of course, entail that *A* is morally responsible when he *does intend* to structure the alternatives. Unfortunately this transference of moral responsibility is at least implicit in Ware's condition, and it is quite explicit in its elucidation.¹⁹ A negative moral evaluation of the *process* has become entangled with an imputation of moral responsibility for the *result*. This is an unacceptable elision in Ware's account, since we do not normally think of persuasion as infringing upon *B*'s autonomy, his self-determination, even if *A* has an intention to bring about a particular result. *B*'s decision remains his own; his capacity for choosing and his ability to act upon his choices are not reduced. Manipulation, in contrast, does violate *B*'s autonomy. *B* could be expected to react differently to any discovery that *A* had lied to him about the figures, on the one side, or simply misremembered them, on the other.

Thus the formulation for manipulation provided by Ware has the drawback of translating an intention with respect to *outcome* into moral responsibility for it. What is needed in order to distinguish persuasion from manipulation is a condition in terms of *process*. It is true that if *A* persuades *B* there is no transfer of responsibility for *B*'s choice to *A*; in the case of manipulation there is. But *independently* of blameworthiness for the consequences of the choice, there is moral responsibility for engaging in a certain sort of process. If *A* unsuccessfully manipulates *B*, we still blame *A* for embarking upon manipulation. That is why 'good faith' is used here as a condition of persuasion.

VI. CONCLUSION

We may briefly summarize these findings in the following way. Our central notion of persuasion is that *A* gets *B* to do/believe/accept/reject something which he would not otherwise do/believe/accept/reject, by exhibiting reasons or consequences of alternatives confronting *B*.

A's success, which is measured in relation to his intention to get *B* to accept reasons as good reasons, is not a necessary condition of '*B* was persuaded', but it is a necessary condition of '*A* persuaded *B*'. To persuade is to give reasons. But it is not necessary for persuasion that the reasons be acted upon

¹⁹ Ware, 'The Concept of Manipulation', p. 173.

either by *A* or by *B*. Authority is distinguished by the additional weight attached to any reasons given, in recognition of that authority.

To distinguish persuasion from influence, we add that *B*'s ratiocination is essential to persuasion.

To distinguish persuasion from bargaining, we add that 'A does not implicate his intentional agency in producing the consequences facing *B* to which he is drawing attention'.

To distinguish persuasion from indoctrination, we add that 'A must regard the reasons advanced as good reasons for someone in *B*'s position to adopt'. The goal of indoctrination is that *B* come to accept something as true, while the goal of persuasion may be only that *B* come to accept *A*'s reasons as good reasons.

To distinguish persuasion from manipulation, we need to add that in the former case *B*'s actions, values or beliefs are affected through his reasoning and that *A* acts in good faith. As a consequence, persuasion does not transfer responsibility for the outcome (i.e. *B*'s altered position).

These conclusions invoke a condition of good faith to separate persuasion from manipulation, which is of course difficult to specify and to observe. Nevertheless, it is the presence or absence of this good faith which is of particular concern to actors, and to the moral status of persuasion. It is also true that we have not succeeded in providing entirely exclusive characterizations of indoctrination and persuasion even though many cases will be successfully separated by the conditions proposed. This may be because our characterizations are under-specified, or perhaps because the history of 'indoctrination' militates against a sharp separation. We have entered a caution against the supposition that differentiating persuasion from other political methods is a simple procedure, either conceptually or empirically. But we hope to have gone some way to suggest the conditions of persuasion if it is to be regarded as a separate and morally superior political method.