

# Liberty as a Social Environmental Condition

Often I see liberty defined more as a personal freedom. It may be defined something like this:

*Liberty: The freedom to do as one pleases so long as it does not interfere with the same freedom of others.*

If liberty is seen as an individual personal freedom, it must contain a proviso that properly constrains it from interfering with the personal freedom of others. Now let us consider defining liberty as a social environmental condition in the following way:

*Liberty: A condition in which every man's will regarding his own person and property is unopposed by any other will.*

By this definition there is no such thing as “my” liberty being in conflict with “your” liberty. Liberty is raised to a ubiquitous condition in the social, political, and physical environment. My will and your will may be separate and independent but not our shared liberty. Under this definition, our separate and independent wills become properly constrained by liberty.

Liberty is thus never identified as the cause of harm by others or to others. Only people and their personal decisions can be seen as causing such. Nor could liberty, unfettered, ever be seen as the source of chaos in a society. Individual wills, unconstrained, may cause chaos, but not liberty. Defined as such, societies may seek to maximize liberty.