

## **What Should You be Allowed to Force Me to Do or not Do?**

Before you start making your list too long, remember this. The question will then be reversed to, "What should I be allowed to force *you* to do (or not do)? And the answer to both questions must be the same! Otherwise there will be much contention or even violence.

When the question is turned around like this, your first answer might be: "Nothing". In other words, there is nothing I (you) should be able to force you (me) to do or not do. However, if I decide to beat up on you or steal your possessions, then if "Nothing" is the correct answer, you'll just have to put up with it.

Perhaps instead of "Nothing", the correct answer is more like, "Leave me alone". That is, the only thing we should *force* each other to do is to "Leave each other alone" if that becomes a problem. Basically, this means the only reason we should use force on others is for self defense (or perhaps to aid someone who is at a great disadvantage in their self defense). This is what we mean by freedom. You can do anything that's peaceful so long as you do not use force, fraud, or predation on others. (For a good discussion, see Leonard Read's book, "Anything That's Peaceful", available through [www.fee.org](http://www.fee.org))

Am I saying everyone's attitudes, decisions, and actions are equally desirable or correct? Of course not. What I am saying is that my 'diploma' which says that I am an adult of legal age is no bigger or more important than your 'diploma' saying you are an adult of legal age. (What is being discussed applies to 'legal adults', not children.) Therefore, we must not try to *force* our attitudes, decisions, and actions upon each other. To do so will only result in severe conflict, even up to the point of war.

The point of freedom to make your own decisions is not that they will all, or even mostly, be correct but that they will affect you and you have a vested interest in the results. Under freedom, you may not stick someone else with the results of your bad decisions, and others may not stick you with the results of theirs. This 'others' may be one person, several persons, or the majority of the country. You must be free to be silly, arrogant, stingy, perverse, and wrong, with the law (use of force or threat of force by government) only discouraging you from or punishing you for harming others. If such freedom is the law and viewpoint of the land, you will also be free to be kind, fair, honest, helpful, and correct. And the same for other folks. If you are not free to make mistakes and poor decisions for yourself, then there is a good chance someone else ("the government" or "the people") will be making silly, arrogant, stingy, perverse, and wrong decisions for you.

The problem with deciding rightness and desirability of attitudes, decisions, and actions with the goal of *enforcing* the 'correct' decisions on everyone (others) is: *Who* will decide 'rightness' and by what criteria? There is *no* way to be *certain* what is correct. Some of us are smarter, kinder, or more moral than others and will make good decisions more often than others of us, but none of us is God. Freedom of thought and action (so long as not harming others) puts the blessings and drawbacks of decisions and actions on the deciders and actors, frequently resulting in better decisions and actions in the future.