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XI.3 What freedom is

- The Spirit of Law - Book XI. On the laws that constitute political freedom in their relation to the constitution -

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XI.3 What freedom is

It is true that in democracies people appear to do what they want, but political freedom does not consist in doing what you want. In a state, that is to say in a society where there are laws, freedom can consist only in being able to do what you should want, and in not being forced to do what you ought not to want.

We must have clearly in mind what independence is, and what freedom is. Freedom is the right to do whatever the laws allow ; and if a citizen could do what they forbid, he would no longer have any freedom, because others would have that same power.