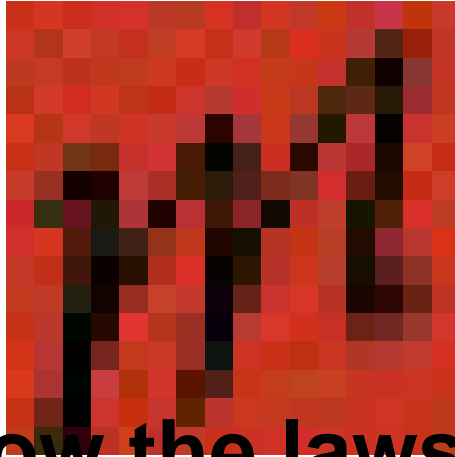


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# V.6 How the laws must maintain frugality in a democracy

- The Spirit of Law - Book V. That the laws made by the legislator must be relative to the principle of the government -

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## V.6 How the laws must maintain frugality in a democracy

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It is not sufficient in a good democracy for portions of land to be equal ; they must be small, as among the Romans. "God forbid," Curius would say to his soldiers, "that a citizen should deem very small a piece of land sufficient to feed a man." [1]

As equality of fortunes sustains frugality, frugality maintains the equality of fortunes. These things, although different, are such that they cannot subsist without each other ; each of them is cause and effect ; if one of them disappears from a democracy, the other always follows.

It is true that when democracy is founded on commerce, it can very well happen that individuals possess great wealth without their morals being corrupted. That is because the spirit of commerce brings with it the spirit of frugality, economy, moderation, work, temperance, tranquility, order and rule. Thus, while that spirit survives, the wealth it produces has no adverse effect. The damage occurs when excess wealth destroys that spirit of commerce ; all of a sudden disorders of inequality arise which had not previously been noticeable.

To maintain the spirit of commerce, it is essential that the principal citizens themselves to practice it ; that this spirit itself alone reign, and not be impeded by another ; that all the laws should favor it ; that those same laws, through their provisions, dividing fortunes as commerce increases them, make every poor citizen prosperous enough so he can work like the others, and each wealthy citizen in a sufficiently modest situation that he needs his work in order to preserve or acquire.

It is a very good law in a commercial republic that gives all children an equal portion of the fathers' estate. In that way, whatever fortune the father has made, his children, always less rich than he, have reason to flee luxury and work as he did. I am speaking only of commercial republics ; for as for republics which are not, the legislator has many other statutes to make. [2]

In Greece there were two sorts of republics. Some were military, like Lacedæmon ; others were commercial, like Athens. The first wanted citizens to be idle ; the others tried to give them a love for work. Solon made idleness a crime, and wanted every citizen to account for his means of earning a living. Indeed, in a good democracy, where one should spend only for what is necessary, each citizen must have it : for from whom could he receive it ?

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[1] They were asking for a larger portion of the conquered land (Plutarch, *Moralia*, lives of the ancient kings and captains).

[2] Women's dowries must be greatly limited there.