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V.2 What virtue means in the political state

- 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.2 What virtue means in the political state

Virtue in a republic is a very simple thing : it is love of the republic ; it is a sentiment, and not a series of things that are known ; the last man in the state can have this sentiment like the first. Once the common people have good maxims, they hold to them longer than what are called solid citizens. It is rare that corruption begins with them ; often they have derived from their modest lights a stronger attachment for what is established.

Love of the homeland leads to good conduct, and good conduct leads to love of the homeland. The less we can satisfy our individual passions, the more we commit ourselves to shared ones. Why do monks so love their order ? Precisely for the same reasons they find it unbearable. Their rule deprives them of all the things which ordinary passions depend on ; what remains is therefore a passion for the very rule that afflicts them. The more austere it is, in other words the more of their penchants it suppresses, the more force it gives to those that remain.