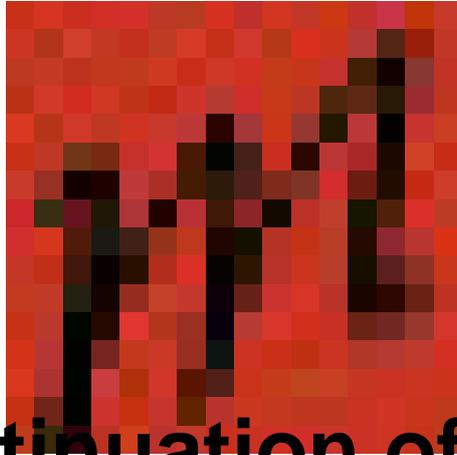


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VIII.7 Continuation of the same subject

- The Spirit of Law - Book VIII. On the corruption of the principles of the three governments -

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VIII.7 Continuation of the same subject

The principle of monarchy becomes corrupt when the greatest dignities are marks of the greatest servitude, and when the grandees are divested of the peoples' respect and are made into the vile instruments of arbitrary power.

It becomes even more corrupt when honor has been placed in contradiction with honors, and a person can be covered with infamy and dignities at the same time. [1]

It becomes corrupt when the prince turns his justice into severity, when like the Roman emperors he places a Medusa's head on his chest, [2] when he assumes the threatening and frightful air that Commodus specified for his statues. [3]

The principle of monarchy becomes corrupt when singularly cowardly souls derive vanity from the greatness which their servitude could have, and believe that insofar as everything is owed to the prince, nothing is owed to one's homeland.

But if it is true (as has been seen in all times) that as the monarch's power becomes immense, his security proportionately decreases, is not the corruption of that power to the point of making it change its nature a crime of lese-majesty against him ?

[1] Under the reign of Tiberius, statues were raised and triumphal ornaments were given to informers, which so debased those honors that those who had merited them spurned them (fragment of Dio, book XVIII, taken from the *Extracts of Virtues and Vices of Constantine Porphyrogenitus* [p. 668]). See in Tacitus how Nero, upon the discovery and punishment of a supposed conspiracy, gave triumphal ornaments to Petronius, Turpilianus, Nerva, and Tigellinus (*Annals*, book XIV). See also how the generals did not condescend to wage war because they disdained its honors, *pervulgatis triumphi insignibus* ['the insignia of triumph had been vulgarized'] (Tacitus, *Annals*, book XIII).

[2] In that state, the prince knew well what the principle of his government was.

[3] Herodianus.