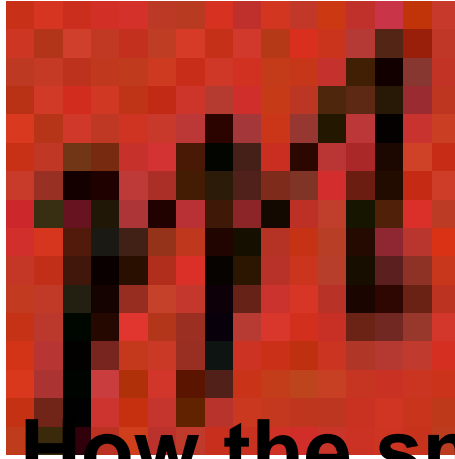


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# VIII.14 How the smallest change in the constitution entails the ruin of principles

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

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Aristotle speaks to us of the republic of Carthage as a very well-ordered republic. Polybius [1] tells us that Carthage in the second Punic War faced the problem that the senate had lost almost all its authority. Livy informs us that when Hannibal returned to Carthage, he found that the magistrates and the principal citizens were diverting the public revenues to their profit and abusing their power. The virtue of the magistrates thus fell with the authority of the senate ; it all flowed from the same principle.

The wonders of censorship among the Romans are well known. There was a time when it became oppressive ; but it was maintained because there was more luxury than corruption. Claudius weakened it, [2] and through this weakening, corruption became even greater than luxury, and censorship abolished itself. [3]

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[1] About a hundred years later. [*Historiæ*, book III ; *Les cinq premiers livres*, p. 83.]

[2] See below, book XI, ch. xii.

[3] The tribunes prevented them from making the *cens*, and opposed their election. See Cicero to Atticus, book IV, letters x and xv.