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III.8 That honor is not the principle of despotic states

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

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III.8 That honor is not the principle of despotic states

It is not *honor* which is the principle of despotic states, where, all men being equal, one cannot prefer oneself to others ; men there all being slaves, one cannot prefer oneself to anything.

Besides, as honor has its laws and its rules, and is unable to bend, as it indeed depends on its own whim, and not on anyone else's, it is only to be found in states that have fixed constitutions and laws that are set.

How could it be suffered by a *despot* ? It glories in its contempt for life, and the despot's only strength is that he can take it away. How could it suffer a despot ? It has rigid rules and sustained impulses ; the despot knows no rule, and his impulses destroy all the others.

Honor, unknown in despotic states, which often lack even a word for expressing it, [\[1\]](#) reigns in monarchies, where it gives life to the whole body politic, even the laws and virtues.

[\[1\]](#) See [John] Perry, p. 447