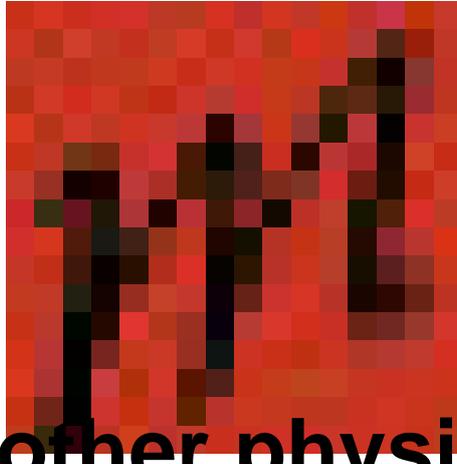


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XVII.6 Another physical cause of the servitude of Asia and the liberty of Europe

- The Spirit of Law - Book XVII. How the laws of political servitude are related to the nature of the climate -

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XVII.6 Another physical cause of the servitude of Asia and the liberty of Europe

In Asia there have always been great empires ; in Europe they have never managed to survive. That is because the Asia we know has vaster plains ; it is cut into larger sections by the mountains and seas ; and since it is more southerly, the streams more readily go dry, the mountains are covered by less snow, and the rivers, less swollen, [1] constitute less formidable barriers.

Authority must therefore always be despotic in Asia. For if servitude there were not extreme, a division would quickly take place which the nature of the country cannot allow.

In Europe, natural division forms several states of moderate size, in which the government of laws is not incompatible with the maintenance of the state ; on the contrary, it is so favorable that without them that state falls into decline and becomes inferior to all the others.

That is what has formed a genius of liberty that makes every part highly resistant to subjugation and subjection to a foreign force other than by the laws and the usefulness of its commerce.

On the contrary, what prevails in Asia is a spirit of servitude that has never left it ; and in all the histories of that land it is not possible to find a single trait that marks a free soul ; only the heroism of servitude will ever be found there.

[1] The waters are lost or evaporate before collecting, or after collecting.