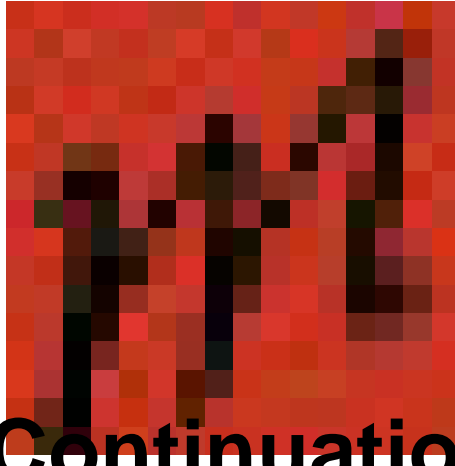


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XXIX.7 Continuation of the same subject. The necessity of composing laws well

- The Spirit of Law - Book XXIX. On the manner of composing laws -

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XXIX.7 Continuation of the same subject. The necessity of composing laws well

The law of ostracism was established in Athens, in Argos, [1] and in Syracuse. It harmed Syracuse in a thousand ways, because it was made without prudence. The principal citizens would banish each other by placing a fig leaf in their hand, [2] so that those who had some merit withdrew from activity. In Athens, where the legislator had felt the extension and the limits he needed to give his law, ostracism was a wonderful thing : only a single person was ever subjected to it,[[[The last person ostracized was Hyperbolos, in 417 B.C.E.] and it took so many votes that it was unlikely anyone would be exiled unless his absence was necessary.

They could banish only every five years ; indeed, once ostracism could be invoked only against one great personage who struck fear in his compatriots, it was not to be an everyday matter.

[1] Aristotle, *Republic*, book V, ch. iii.

[2] Plutarch, *Life of Dionysius*. [The names of those to be expelled were written on olive leaves.]