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III.2 On the principle of the various governments

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

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I have said that the nature of republican government is that the people as a whole, or certain families, hold the sovereign authority ; the nature of monarchical government, that the prince holds the sovereign authority, but wields it according to established laws ; the nature of despotic government, that one man governs alone according to his desires and fancies. I need no more in order to identify their three principles ; they derive from them naturally. I shall begin with the republican government, and speak first of the democratic one.