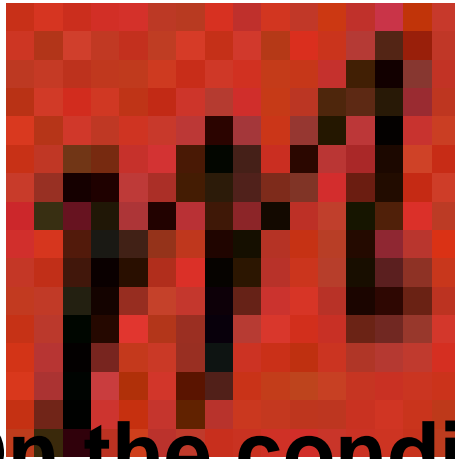


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VII.9 On the condition of women under the various governments

- The Spirit of Law - Book VII. Consequences of the different principles of the three governments with respect to sumptuary laws, to luxury, and to the condition of women -

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VII.9 On the condition of women under the various governments

Women show little discretion in monarchies because, the distinction of ranks calling them to the court, they go there and adopt the spirit of freedom which is the only one allowed. Everyone uses their charms and passions to advance his fortune ; and as their weakness allows them not pride but vanity, luxury always reigns there with them.

In despotic states women do not introduce luxury, but are themselves a luxury item. They must be extremely enslaved. Everyone follows the spirit of the government, and brings home with him what he sees established elsewhere. As the laws are severe, and are swiftly executed, there is fear lest the freedom of women cause trouble. Their squabbles, their indiscretions, their antipathies, penchants, jealousies, piques, and the art of petty souls for entangling great ones, cannot be without consequence.

Moreover, as in these states the princes make sport of humankind, they have several wives, and a thousand considerations oblige them to lock them up.

In republics, women are free by law, and captivated by morality ; luxury is banned, and with it corruption and vice.

In the Greek cities, which did not live under the religion that establishes that even for men moral purity is part of virtue ; in the Greek cities, where a blind vice ran wild, where love had only one form which one dare not name while friendship only had taken sanctuary in marriage, [1] the virtue, simplicity, and chastity of women were such that there has hardly ever been a people which was more regular in this regard. [2]

[1] "As for true love," says Plutarch, "women have no part in it." (*Moralia, Amatorius*, p. 600.)

[2] In Athens there was a particular magistrate to oversee the conduct of women.