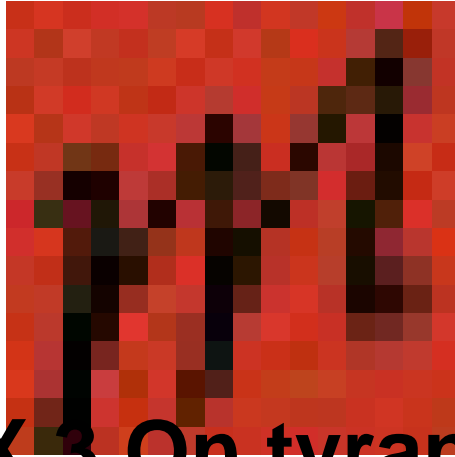


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XIX.3 On tyranny

- The Spirit of Law - Book XIX. On the laws in the relation they have to the principles that constitute the general spirit, the ethos, and the manners of a nation -

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XIX.3 On tyranny

There are two sorts of tyranny : one real, consisting in government violence ; and one of opinion, which is felt when those who govern establish things that offend a nation's manner of thinking.

Dio says that Augustus wanted to be called Romulus ; but after learning that the people feared he wanted to become king, he changed his mind. The early Romans did not want a king, because they could not suffer his authority ; the Romans of that time did not want a king so as not to put up with his manners. For although Cæsar, the triumvirs, and Augustus were authentic kings, they had retained all the semblances of equality, and their private lives entailed a kind of opposition to the splendor of the kings of that time ; and when the Romans wanted no king, that meant that they wanted to keep their manners, and not adopt the manners of African and Oriental peoples.

Dio tells us that the Roman people were incensed at Augustus over certain unnecessarily harsh laws he had made ; but that as soon as he had brought back the actor Pylades, whom the factions had driven from the city, the discontent ceased. [1] Such a people was more sensitive to tyranny when an entertainer was expelled than when all its laws were suppressed.

[1] Book LIV, p. 532.