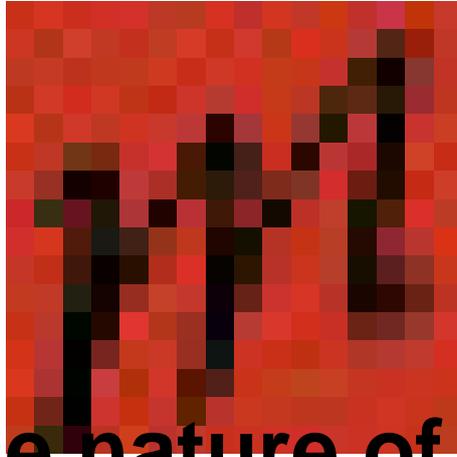


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II.1 On the nature of the three different governments

- The Spirit of Law - Book II. On laws which derive directly from the nature of the government -

Date de mise en ligne : lundi 20 août 2018

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II.1 On the nature of the three different governments

There are three species of governments : REPUBLICAN, MONARCHICAL, and DESPOTIC. To identify their nature, we need no more than the notion the least educated of men have of them. I posit three definitions, or rather three givens : first, that *the republican government is one in which the people as a whole, or only a portion of the people, holds the sovereign authority ; the monarchical government, one in which one man alone governs, but by fixed and established laws ; whereas in the despotic government one man alone, with no law nor rule, prevails in all things by his will and his fancies.*

This is what I mean by the nature of each government. We must now see what laws follow directly from this nature, and are consequently the first fundamental laws.