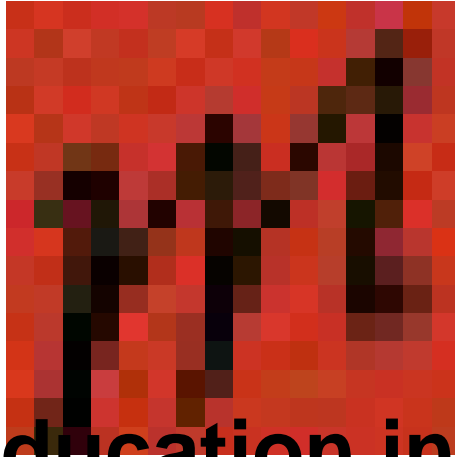


<http://montesquieu.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article2606>



## IV.3 On education in despotic government

- The Spirit of Law - Book IV. That laws of education must relate to the principles of the government -

Date de mise en ligne : mardi 21 août 2018

---

Copyright © Montesquieu - Tous droits réservés

---

### IV.3 On education in despotic government

---

As education in monarchies aims only at uplifting the heart, in despotic states it seeks only to demoralize it. There education must be servile ; it will be a good thing even in a position of command to have had such a one, since no one is a tyrant without being at the same time a slave.

Extreme obedience assumes ignorance in him who obeys ; it assumes ignorance even in him who commands : he has no need to deliberate, to doubt, or to reason, he has only to will.

In despotic states, every household is a separate empire. The education that consists principally in getting along with others is therefore quite limited ; it comes down to putting fear into the heart and familiarizing the mind with a few principles of very simple religion. Learning will be dangerous, emulation fatal ; and as for virtues, Aristotle cannot believe that there is one proper to slaves, [1] which would certainly limit education in this government.

Thus education there is in some sense empty : everything must be removed in order to put something in, and you must first make a poor subject to make a good slave.

So why should education strive to form a good citizen who would care about public misfortune ? If he loved the state, he would be tempted to disable the government's resources ; if he did not succeed, he would doom himself ; if he succeeded, he would run the risk of dooming himself, the prince, and the empire.

---

[1] *Politics*, book I.