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# XIII.1 On the revenues of the state

- The Spirit of Law - Book XIII. On the relations which the levying of tributes and the magnitude of public revenues have with liberty -

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### **XIII.1 On the revenues of the state**

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The revenues of the state are a portion of what each citizen gives of his own in order to have security for the rest, or to enjoy it agreeably.

In order to set Revenues properly, attention must be paid both to the necessities of the state and the necessities of the citizens. One must not take from the real needs of the people for imaginary needs of the state.

Imaginary needs are what is demanded by the passions and weaknesses of those who govern : the attraction of an extraordinary project, the sick craving for vainglory, and a certain impotence of mind against fantasies. Often those who, with a restless spirit, were under the prince in charge of business, have thought that the needs of the state were the needs of their petty minds.

There is nothing that wisdom and prudence need more to determine than the portion that is taken and the portion left to the subjects.

It is not by what the people can give that public revenues should be measured, but by what they must give ; and if they are measured by what the people can give, it should at least be by what they can always give.