THE INSTITUTE FOR ANACYCLOSIS

EXCERPT FROM
ALL MEN WOULD BE TYRANTS IF THEY COULD.
BY JOHN ADAMS

1763 A.D.

Note: This text, comprising the last paragraph of an unpublished essay written by John Adams in 1763 (then 28 years old), reflects a core Polybian belief that unchecked simple constitutional forms quickly degenerate into their perverted forms. The sequence of degeneration and change is laid out according to the classic Polybian sequence of Anacyclosis and anticipates that tyranny and oligarchy are the most persistent states of political society. These points can be reconciled with the observed historical fact that a sustained state of popular rule – whether styled democracy, ochlocracy, demagarchy, or anarchy – has been historically rare and fleeting. This observation is, in turn, consistent with The Institute's revised version of Anacyclosis and related doctrines. The supplemental note further below, made by John Adams in 1807 (then 72 years old, and after his term as second President of the United States) reflects his continuing endorsement of essential Greek ideas which early influenced his political philosophy and which The Institute is committed to promoting.

…

No simple Form of Government, can possibly secure Men against the Violences of Power. Simple Monarchy will soon mould itself into Despotism, Aristocracy will soon commence an Oligarchy, and Democracy, will soon degenerate into an Anarchy, such an Anarchy that every Man will do what is right in his own Eyes, and no Mans life or Property or Reputation or Liberty will be secure and every one of these will soon mould itself into a system of subordination of all the moral Virtues, and Intellectual Abilities, all the Powers of Wealth, Beauty, Wit, and Science, to the wanton Pleasures, the capricious Will, and the execrable Cruelty of one or a very few.

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[JOHN ADAMS' COMMENT IN 1807 IN REFERENCE TO THE ABOVE PARAGRAPH]

This last Paragraph has been the Creed of my whole Life and is now March 27 1807 as much approved as it was when it was written by John Adams.

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