

33. *Against Parties and Factions*

To Thomas Jefferson

Quincy, 9 July, 1813

. . . "The same political parties, which now agitate the United States, have existed through all time." Precisely; and this is precisely the complaint in the preface to the first volume of my Defence. While all other sciences have advanced, that of government is at a stand; little better understood, little better practised now than three or four thousand years ago. What is the reason? I say, parties and factions will not suffer improvements to be made. As soon as one man hints at an improvement, his rival opposes it. No sooner has one party discovered or invented any amelioration of the condition of man, or the order of society than the opposite party belies it, misconstrues it, misrepresents it, ridicules it, insults it, and persecutes it. Records are destroyed. Histories are annihilated or interpolated or prohibited; sometimes by Popes, sometimes by Emperors, sometimes by aristocratical, and sometimes by democratical assemblies, and sometimes by mobs. . . .

I recollect, near thirty years ago, to have said carelessly to you, that I wished I could find time and means to write something upon aristocracy. You seized upon the idea, and encouraged me to do it with all that friendly warmth that is natural and habitual to you. I soon began, and have been writing upon that subject ever since. I have been so unfortunate as never to be able to make myself understood. Your *ἀριστοί* are the most difficult animals to manage of any thing in the whole theory and practice of government. . . .