A DISCOURSE UPON THE ORIGIN AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE INEQUALITY AMONG MANKIND

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Translated by Ian Johnston

Rows Collection

Translator's Note

In this text, the explanatory notes which appear at the end of the document are provided by the translator. The presence of such notes is indicated by an asterisk in the text which links to the relevant note. Rousseau's notes — indicated by an Arabic numeral in brackets in the text — also appear at the conclusion of the main text. The numerals link directly to the appropriate note. Editorial insertions into the text by the translator are indicated by square brackets, e.g., [inserted comment]. Some of Rousseau's longer paragraphs have been divided up into shorter units.

Where Rousseau has provided a Latin quotation, this text has the English translation, with a link to the original Latin in the footnote.

Historical Note

Jean–Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), the very famous French philosopher and writer, prepared his Discourse on Inequality (also called the Second Discourse) as an entry in a competition organized by the Academy of Dijon in 1754. He had won first prize in a previous competition (in 1750) with his Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts (the First Discourse), a victory which had helped to make him famous. The Second Discourse did not fare so well in the contest.

When the Second Discourse was published again in 1782, Rousseau inserted a few short minor additions into the text. These are included here but are not indicated.

Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men

by

Jean–Jacques Rousseau
Citizen of Geneva

We ought to think about what is natural not in
things which are corrupt
but in things which are well ordered by nature.[*]
Aristotle, Politics, I, 5.

* The Latin epigraph reads: "Non in depravatis, sed in his quae bene secundum naturam se habent, considerandum est quid sit naturale."

To the Republic of Geneva

Magnificent, most honorable, and sovereign lords

Convinced that only the virtuous citizen may justifiably give his native land honours which it can accept, I have been working for thirty years to become worthy of offering you public homage; and since this happy occasion supplements in part what my efforts have not been able to accomplish, I believed that I would be permitted here to follow the zeal which animates me rather than the right which ought to act as my authorization. Having had the good fortune to be born among you, how could I reflect on the equality which nature has set among men and on the inequality which they have instituted, without thinking about the profound wisdom with which both of these, happily combined in this State, work together in a manner most closely approaching natural law and most favourable to society to maintain public order and the happiness of individuals? As I was conducting research into the best maxims which good sense could set down concerning the constitution of a government, I was so struck by seeing them all at work in yours that, even if I had not been born within your walls, I do not believe I would have been able to forego offering this picture of human society to those who, among all peoples, seem to me to possess society's greatest advantages and to have best avoided its abuses.

If I had had to choose the place where I was born, I would have selected a society whose size was limited by the extent of human faculties, that is, by the possibility of being well governed, and where each man was competent in his job, so that no one would be compelled to delegate to others the functions to which he was assigned, a state where, because all the individuals knew each other, the obscure maneuvers of vice and the modesty of virtue would not be able to conceal themselves from the view and judgment of the public, and where this sweet habit of seeing and knowing each other made love of one's native land love of the citizens rather than love of the soil.

I would have wanted to be born in a country where the sovereign and the people could have only one and the same interest, so that all the movements of the machine would never tend to do anything except for the general happiness, and since that would not be possible to do unless the

people and the sovereign were the same person, it follows that I would have wished to be born under a democratic government, wisely tempered.

I would have wanted to live and die free, that is, sufficiently subject to laws so that neither I nor anyone else would be able to shake off their honorable yoke, that beneficial and mild yoke, which the proudest heads carry all the more obediently because they are made to carry no other.

Thus, I would have wished that no one in the state could assert that he was above the law and that no one outside would be able to impose any law that the state was obliged to recognize. For no matter what the constitution of a government may be, if there is a single man who is not subject to the law, all the others are necessarily at his discretion (1), and if there is a national leader and another foreign leader, no matter how they may divide up the authority between them, it is impossible for both of them to be properly obeyed and for the state to be well governed.

I would not have wanted to live in a newly instituted republic, no matter how good the laws it might have, for fear that, since the government might perhaps be set up in a way different from what would be necessary at the time and would not be suitable for the new citizens or the citizens for the new government, the state would be subject to being undermined and destroyed almost from the moment of its birth. For with liberty, it is like those solid and delicious foods or those robust wines which are appropriate to nourish and strengthen healthy temperaments which are used to them but which overwhelm, ruin, and intoxicate the weak and delicate who are not made for them. Once peoples have grown accustomed to masters, they are no longer in a condition where they can do without them. If they attempt to shake off the yoke, they distance themselves even further from freedom, because they confuse liberty with an unbridled license which is its opposite, and so their revolutions almost always deliver them over to seducers who merely make their chains worse. Even the Roman population, that model of all free people, was not in a condition to govern itself when it came out from under the oppression of the Tarquins.* Debased by the slavery and the ignominious work which had been imposed on the people, at first they were only a stupid rabble, which had to be organized and governed with the greatest wisdom, so that, as they gradually grew accustomed to breathe the healthy air of liberty,

these souls, enervated or, rather, brutalized under tyranny, by degrees acquired that strictness of morality and that pride in their courage which finally made them the most respectable of all peoples. Hence, I would have sought out for my native land a happy and peaceful republic whose antiquity was in a way lost in the night of time, which had gone through only those problems suitable for demonstrating and affirming among its inhabitants courage and love of country, and where the citizens, accustomed for a long time to a wise independence, were not only free but worthy of being free.

* Tarquins: In Rome's very early history the citizens were ruled by an Etruscan clan called the Tarquins.

I would have wanted to choose for myself a native land diverted by a happy lack of power from the ferocious love of conquests and guaranteed by a location even more fortunate from the fear of itself becoming the conquest of another state, a free city situated among several people, none of whom had an interest in invading it and each of them keen to prevent others from doing so themselves, a republic, in short, which did not tempt the ambition of its neighbours and which could reasonably count on their assistance in times of need. In such a happy situation it follows that it would have had nothing to fear except itself, and that if its citizens were trained in using weapons, this would be to maintain among them that warrior spirit and that pride in courage which are so well suited to liberty and which nourish the taste for it, rather than from the need to provide their own defense.

I would have searched for a country where the legislative right was common to all citizens. For who can understand better than they can the conditions under which it is appropriate for them to live together in the same society? But I would not have approved of plebiscites like those of the Romans, where the chiefs of state and those most interested in its preservation were excluded from the deliberations on which its security frequently depended and where, by an absurd inconsistency, the magistrates were deprived of rights which simple citizens enjoyed.

On the contrary, I would have desired that, in order to stop self-interested and badly conceived projects and the dangerous innovations which finally ruined the Athenians, no single man had the power to

propose new laws according to his fantasy, that this right belonged only to the magistrates, that even they made use of it with such circumspection and the people, for their part, were so reluctant about giving their consent to these laws, that the promulgation of such laws could be carried out only with much solemnity, so that before the constitution was undermined they would have had the time to be convinced that it was above all the great antiquity of the laws which rendered them sacred and venerable, that people soon distrusted laws which they saw changing every day, and that, by growing used to neglecting ancient customs under the pretext of making things better, one often introduces great evils in order to correct lesser ones.

Above all, on the ground that it was necessarily ill governed, I would have run away from a republic where the people, believing they could dispense with their magistrates or give them merely a precarious authority, would have imprudently kept control of the administration of civil matters and the execution of their own laws. Something like that must have been the rudimentary constitution of the first governments which emerged immediately from the state of nature and something like that was, once again, one of the vices which ruined the republic of Athens.

But I would have chosen one where the individuals, contenting themselves with giving their sanction to the laws and deciding as a collective body and upon the motion of the leaders the most important public issues, would establish respected tribunals, distinguish with care their various departments, elect year by year the most capable of their fellow citizens with the most integrity to administer justice and govern the state, and where the virtue of the magistrates in this way bore witness to the wisdom of the people, so that they both mutually honoured each other. Thus, if ever some fatal misunderstandings came to trouble public harmony, even these times of blindness and errors would be characterized by evidence of moderation, reciprocal esteem, and a common respect for the laws, harbingers and guarantees of a sincere and permanent reconciliation.

These are, MAGNIFICENT, MOST HONOURABLE, AND SOVEREIGN LORDS, the sort of advantages which I would have looked for in the native land which I would have chosen for myself. And if

providence had added to these a charming location, a temperate climate, a fertile countryside, and the most delightful appearance under heaven, I would have desired only to have my fill of happiness by enjoying all these benefits in the bosom of this happy native land, living peacefully in a sweet society with my fellow citizens, practising towards them, following their own example, humanity, friendship, and all the virtues, and leaving after me the honourable memory of a good man, a decent and virtuous patriot.

If, less happy or wise too late, I had seen myself reduced to end an infirm and languishing career in other climates, vainly regretting the peace and quiet which my imprudent youth took away from me, I would have at least nourished in my soul these same feelings which I could not put to use in my country, and filled with a tender and disinterested affection for my distant fellow citizens, I would have delivered to them from the bottom of my heart something close to the following discourse.

My dear fellow citizens, or rather my brothers, since the ties of blood as well as of the laws unite almost all of us, it is pleasant for me not to be able to think of you without at the same time thinking about all the benefits which you enjoy and whose value none of you perhaps feels more than I, who have lost them. The more I think about your political and civil situation, the less I can imagine that the nature of human affairs could include anything better. In all other governments, when it is a question of securing the greatest benefit for the state, everything is always limited to imaginary projects, at most to mere possibilities. For you, your well being is completely established. You do not need to do anything but enjoy it, and you have no further need to become perfectly happy other than to know how you can be content with being so. Your sovereignty, acquired or recovered by the point of a sword and preserved for two centuries by the power of your merit and wisdom, is finally recognized fully and universally. Honourable treaties determine your boundaries, assure your rights, and strengthen your peace. Your constitution is excellent, set down by most sublime reason and guaranteed by friendly and respected powers. Your state is tranquil; you have neither wars nor conquerors to fear. You have no masters, other than the wise laws you have made, administered by magistrates with integrity whom you have chosen. You are neither rich enough to be enervated by soft living and with vain delights to lose the

taste of true happiness and solid virtues, nor so poor that you need more help from foreigners than your own industry procures for you. And this precious liberty, which in great nations is maintained only with exorbitant taxation, costs you almost nothing to preserve.

May a republic so wisely and so happily constituted last eternally for the happiness of its citizens and as an example to people! This is the only wish which remains for you to make and the only precaution left for you to take. From now on it is up to you alone, not to make your own happiness, for your ancestors have spared you the trouble of that, but to make it endure by the wisdom of using it well. Your preservation depends on your perpetual union, your obedience to the laws, and your respect for their ministers. If there remains among you the least germ of bitterness or defiance, hurry up and destroy it as a deadly leavening agent which sooner or later would result in your unhappiness and the ruin of the state. I beg you all to go deep into your hearts and consult the secret voice of your conscience. Does anyone among you recognize in the universe a body more honourable, more enlightened, and more respectable than that of your public administration? Do not all its members offer you examples of moderation, simplicity of morals, respect for the laws, and the most sincere reconciliation? So render to such wise leaders without reserve that healthy confidence which reason owes to virtue. Bear in mind that they are your choice, that they justify that choice, and that the honours due to those whom you have dignified necessarily reflect back on you yourselves. None of you is so unenlightened that you do not know that where the vigour of the laws and the authority of their defenders cease there can be neither security nor liberty for anyone. Then what is of concern among you other than to carry out with a good heart and a just confidence what you would always be obliged to do by genuine interest, by duty, and by reason? Let no culpable and fatal indifference to the maintenance of the constitution ever make you neglect, in case of need, the wise counsels of the most enlightened and the most zealous among you. But may equity, moderation, and the most respectful firmness continue to regulate every step you take and to manifest in you to all the universe the example of a proud and modest people, as jealous of its glory as of its liberty. Take care above all — and this will be my last piece of advice — never to listen to sinister interpretations and poisonous discourses, whose secret motives are often

more dangerous than the actions which they are promoting. An entire house wakes up and responds with alarm to the first cries of a good and faithful guardian who barks only at the approach of thieves, but we hate the importunity of those animals which bark and never stop disturbing the public peace and whose constant and inappropriate warnings are not heard, even at the moment when they are necessary.

And you MAGNIFICENT AND MOST HONOURABLE LORDS, you worthy and respectable magistrates of a free people, permit me to offer my homage and my respects especially to you. If there is in the world a rank suited to ennobling those who hold it, it is undoubtedly the one which talents and virtue confer, the one of which you have made yourselves worthy and to which your fellow citizens have raised you. Their own merit adds to your own still a new brightness. Selected by men capable of governing others so that they are governed themselves, I find you as superior to other magistrates as a free people, above all the one you have the honour of leading, is superior to the population of other states, thanks to its wisdom and its reason.

May I be permitted to cite an example for which better records should have remained and which will always be present in my heart. I cannot recall without the sweetest emotion the memory of that virtuous citizen to whom I owe my being and who in my infancy often spoke about the respect which was due to you. I see him still living from the work of his hands and feeding his soul with the most sublime truths. In front of him I see Tacitus, Plutarch, and Grotius, mixed in with the instruments of his trade.* I see at his side a beloved son receiving with too little fruit the tender instruction of the best of fathers. But if the errors of a foolish youth made me forget for a while such wise lessons, I have the happiness of feeling at last that, no matter what tendency one has towards vice, it is difficult for an education in which the heart is involved to remain lost forever.

* Tacitus was a great Roman historian, Plutarch a very famous Greek biographer (of great men), and Grotius (1583–1645) an influential Dutch writer on law.

Such are, magnificent and most honourable lords, the citizens and even the simple inhabitants born in the state which you govern; such are

these educated and sensible men, about whom, under the name of workers and the people, men in other nations have such low and false ideas. My father, I affirm with joy, was not distinguished among his fellow citizens; he was only what they all are, and given the kind of man he was, there is no country where his society would not have been sought out and cultivated among the most respectable people, even for their own benefit.

It is not appropriate for me and, thanks to heaven, it is not necessary to speak to you about the respect which can be expected from you for men of that quality, your equals in education as well as by the rights of nature and of birth, your inferiors by their own will, by the preference which they owe to your merit and which they have accorded it, something for which you, in your turn, owe them some sort of acknowledgement. I learn with a lively satisfaction about how, with much gentleness and condescension, you temper for them the solemnity which befits ministers of law, how much you repay them with your esteem and attention for what they owe you in obedience and respect, behaviour full of justice and wisdom, appropriate for distancing more and more the memory of unfortunate events which it is necessary to forget in order that they are never seen again, conduct all the more judicious since this equitable and generous people makes a pleasure of its duty and naturally loves to honour you, and since those keenest to maintain their rights are the ones most inclined to respect yours.*

* This phrase "unfortunate events," like the earlier "fatal misunderstanding" Rousseau talks about, refers to an ongoing conflict between the leading magistrates and the legislative body in Geneva at various times throughout the eighteenth century. These had been apparently resolved by the time Rousseau was writing, but disputes flared up again in the 1760's and 1780's.

It should not be astonishing that the leaders of a civil society love its glory and its happiness. But it is too much for the peace and quiet of men that those who think of themselves as magistrates, or rather as the masters of a holier and more sublime country, manifest some love for the earthly fatherland which nourishes them. How sweet it is for me to be able to make such a rare exception in our favour and to place in the rank of our best citizens these zealous men, trustees of sacred dogmas authorized by the laws, these venerable ministers to the soul, whose life and sweet eloquence carry the gospel maxims into the heart all the better because

they always start by practising them themselves! The whole world knows how successfully the great art of the pulpit is cultivated in Geneva. But, too accustomed to seeing things said one way and done another, few people know just how far the spirit of Christianity, the sanctity of morals, the severity toward themselves, and the gentleness for others rule in the body of our ministers. Perhaps it is up to the city of Geneva alone to demonstrate the edifying example of such a perfect union between a society of theologians and men of letters. I base my hope for the permanent tranquilly of the state in large part on their wisdom, their acknowledged moderation, and their zeal for its prosperity, and I observe with a pleasure mingled with astonishment and respect how much they are horrified by the dreadful maxims of those holy and barbaric men of whom history provides more than one example, who, to maintain the so-called rights of God, that is to say, their own interests, were all the less prepared not to shed human blood because they flattered themselves that theirs would be always respected.

Could I forget that precious half of the republic which creates the happiness of the other and whose sweetness and wisdom sustain peace and good morals within it? Amiable and virtuous female citizens, the lot of your sex will always be to rule ours. What happiness when your chaste power, practised only within the conjugal union, is exercised simply for the glory of the state and for the public good. That is how women used to govern in Sparta, and that is how you deserve to govern in Geneva. What barbarous man could resist the voice of honour and reason in the mouth of a tender wife, and who would not despise vain luxury at the sight of your simple and modest finery which, through the brilliance it acquires from you, seems to be most favourable to beauty? It is up to you always to maintain by your amiable and innocent empire and by your insinuating spirit the love of the laws in the state and the harmony among its citizens, to reunite divided families by happy marriages, and above all to correct by the persuasive sweetness of your lessons and by the modest graces of your conversation the mistakes which our young people pick up from other countries, where, in place of so many useful things from which they could profit, they bring back, with a puerile tone and ridiculous airs acquired among lost women, nothing but an admiration for I know not what of would-be grandeur, frivolous compensation for their servitude, which will

never have the value of noble liberty. So always be what you are, chaste guardians of morals and the mild restraints of peace, and continue to put to good use on every occasion the rights of the heart and of nature for the benefit of duty and virtue.

I flatter myself that, in basing my hope for the general happiness of the citizens and for the glory of the republic on such guarantees, I will not be proved wrong by events. I confess that with all these advantages, it will not shine with the brilliance which dazzles most eyes, whose childish and lethal taste is the most deadly enemy of happiness and liberty. Let the dissolute young seek elsewhere easy pleasures and long repentance. Let the so-called people with taste admire in other places the grandeur of palaces, the beauty of carriages, the superb furnishings, the pomp of spectacles, and all the refinements of soft living and luxury. In Geneva, one will find nothing but men, but such a sight has a real value of its own, and those who search it out are well worth the admirers of the rest.

MAGNIFICENT, MOST HONOURABLE and SOVEREIGN LORDS, may you all deign to receive with the same kindness the respectful testimonies of the interest which I take in your general prosperity. If in this lively effusion of my heart I have been so unfortunate as to be guilty of some indiscreet outbursts, I beg you to excuse that as the tender affection of a true patriot and the ardent and legitimate zeal of a man who considers that there is no greater happiness for him than to see all of you happy.

I am, with the most profound respect,

MAGNIFICENT, MOST HONOURABLE, AND SOVEREIGN LORDS,

your very humble and very obedient servant and fellow citizen

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU Chambery, 12 June 1754.

Preface

The most useful and the least advanced of all human areas of knowledge seems to me to be the knowledge of man (2), and I venture to say that the only inscription on the temple at Delphi contained a precept more important and more difficult than all the fat books of the moralists.* Thus, I consider the subject of this Discourse one of the most interesting questions which philosophy could propose, and, unfortunately for us, one of the thorniest for philosophers to resolve. For how can we know the source of inequality among men, if we do not begin by understanding men themselves? And how will man succeed in seeing himself the way nature made him, through all the changes which the succession of time and events must have produced in his original constitution, and in disentangling what man retains of his own origins from the things which circumstances and his progress have added to or changed in his primitive condition? Just like the statue of Glaucus, which time, the sea, and tempests have so disfigured that it looks less like a god than a ferocious animal, the human soul, altered in the bosom of society by a thousand causes constantly renewed, by the acquisition of a multitude of knowledge and mistakes, by the changes which have taken place in the constitution of the body, and by the constant shock of the passions, has, so to speak, changed its appearance to the point where it is almost impossible to recognize. And in the place of a being always acting according to certain and invariable principles, in the place of this divine and majestic simplicity which its Author impressed upon it, we no longer find there anything but a delirious understanding and the twisted contrast of passion which believes it is reasoning.

What is even more cruel is that all the progress in the human species constantly takes it further away from its primitive state. The more we accumulate new knowledge, the more we deprive ourselves of the means of acquiring the most important knowledge of all, and, in a sense, it is thanks to the study of man that we are now in a position where we are beyond the stage where he can know him.

It is easy to see that it is in the successive changes in the human constitution that we must look for the first origin of those differences which separate men, who, by general opinion, are naturally as equal among themselves as were the animals of each species before various physical causes introduced into some of them the varieties we notice there. In fact, it is inconceivable that these first changes, however they came about, altered all at once and in the same way all the individuals of the species. But while some of them, perfected or deteriorated, acquired various good or bad qualities which were not inherent in their nature, others remained for a longer period in their original state. And something like that was the first source of inequality among men, a fact which is more easily demonstrated in general this way than precisely assigned its real causes.

Let my readers not imagine therefore that I dare to flatter myself with having seen something which appears to me so difficult to see. I have started some rational lines of enquiry and hazarded some assumptions, less in the hope of resolving the question than with the intention of illuminating it and reducing it to its true condition. Other people will be easily able to go further on along the same route, although it will not be easy for anyone to reach the end. For it is no light undertaking to disentangle what is original from what is artificial in the real nature of man and to understand well a condition which no longer exists, which perhaps did not exist, which probably never will exist, and concerning which it is nevertheless necessary to have some accurate notions in order to assess well our present condition. Someone who would endeavour to determine exactly the precautions to take in order to make some reliable observations on this subject would require more philosophy than one can imagine, and a good solution to the following problem would seem to me not unworthy of the Aristotles and Plinys of our age: What experiments would be necessary to reach an understanding of natural man, and what are the ways of making these experiments in the bosom of society? Far from attempting to resolve this problem, I believe I have meditated sufficiently on the subject in order to venture to respond in advance that the greatest philosophers will not be too good to direct these experiments nor the most powerful sovereigns to make them: it is hardly reasonable to expect such cooperation, above all with the perseverance or rather the

succession of enlightenment and good will necessary on both sides to reach success.

This research is so difficult to carry out, and we have thought about it so little up to this point, but it is nonetheless the only means left to us of removing a multitude of difficulties which hide from us a knowledge of the real basis for human society. It is this ignorance about the nature of man which throws so much uncertainty and obscurity onto the true definition of natural right: for the idea of rights, says Mr. Burlamaqui,* and even more the idea of natural rights, are manifestly related to the nature of man. Hence, it is this very nature of man, he continues, his constitution and his condition, from which it is necessary to deduce the principles of this science.

It is not without surprise and scandal that one notices how little agreement there is on this important matter among the various authors who have dealt with it. Among the most serious writers we hardly find two who agree on this point. Without mentioning the ancient philosophers, who seem to have gone to great trouble to contradict each other on the most basic principles, the Roman jurists subject man and all the other animals indiscriminately to the same natural law, because under this name they consider the law which nature imposes on itself rather than the one which it prescribes, or rather because of the particular sense in which these jurists understood the word law, which on this occasion they seem to have accepted only as the expression of general relationships established by nature among all animated beings for their common preservation. The moderns, understanding under the term law only a rule prescribed to a moral being, that is, someone intelligent, free, and deliberate in his relationships with other beings, consequently limit the jurisdiction of natural law to the single animal endowed with reason, in other words, to man; but since each of them defines this law in his own way, they all establish it on such metaphysical principles that there are, even among us, very few people in a position to understand these principles, let alone able to find them by themselves. As a result, all the definitions of these scholarly men, in other respects constantly contradicting each other, agree only on this point, that it is impossible to understand the law of nature, and hence to obey it, without being a very great reasoner and a profound

metaphysician. And that indicates precisely that for the establishment of society men must have employed an enlightened understanding which develops only with a great deal of effort and in very few people, even within the bosom of society.

Having such a small understanding of nature and with so little agreement about the meaning of the word law, it would be very difficult to agree on a good definition of natural law. Thus, all those which we find in books, apart from the problem that they are not the same, have an additional fault of being derived from several kinds of knowledge which men do not possess by nature and from advantages of which they could conceive no idea until after they had left the state of nature. These writers begin by investigating the rules about which, for the sake of general utility, it would be appropriate for men to agree on amongst themselves, and then they assign the name of natural law to the collection of these rules, without any other proof apart from the benefit which they find would result from their universal practice. That is surely a very convenient way to compose definitions and to explain the nature of things by almost arbitrary conventions.

But so long as we do not know natural man, it is useless to want to determine the law he has received or the one which best fits his constitution. All that we can see very clearly on the subject of this law is that, in order for it to be a law, not only is it necessary that the will of the man with an obligation to it is capable of submitting to it knowingly, but also that, for the law to be natural, it must speak directly with nature's voice.

So setting aside all those scholarly books which teach us only to see men the way they have made themselves and thinking about the first and simplest operations of the human soul, I believe I can discern two principles prior to reason: one makes us passionately interested in our well being and in the preservation of ourselves, and the other inspires in us a natural repugnance at seeing any sensitive being perish or suffer — and, in particular, beings like ourselves. From the cooperation and combination our mind is able to create of these two principles, without it being necessary to bring in the principle of sociability, follow, it seems to me, all the rules of natural right, rules which reason is later forced to re-establish

on other foundations, when through its successive developments it has ended up successfully suffocating nature.

In this way, we do not have to turn man into a philosopher before we make him a man. His obligations towards others are not dictated to him exclusively by belated lessons in wisdom, and so long as he does not resist the internal impulse of compassion, he will never do harm to another man, nor even to any other sentient being, except in the legitimate case where, because his preservation is involved, he is obliged to give preference to himself. With this we also end the ancient disputes concerning the participation of animals in natural law. For it is clear that, lacking enlightenment and liberty, they cannot recognize this law. But because in some things they share our nature through the sensitivity with which they are endowed, we judge that they should also share in natural right and that man is subject to some kind of duties towards them. It seems, in fact, that if I am obliged not to do any harm to my fellow man, that is not so much because he is a reasonable being but because he is a sentient creature, a quality which, being common to animals and man, should at least confer on one the right not be mistreated for no purpose by the other.

This same study of original man and his true needs and the principal foundations of his obligations is also the only good method we can use to remove those crowds of difficulties which present themselves concerning the origin of moral inequality, the genuine grounding of the body politic, the reciprocal rights of its members, and a thousand other similar questions, as important as they have been poorly explained.

When we think about human society with calm and disinterested eyes, at first it seems to reveal only the violence of powerful men and the oppression of the weak. The mind is revolted by the harshness of one group, and we are induced to deplore the blindness of the others. And since nothing is less stable among men than these external relationships, which chance produces more often than wisdom and which are called weakness or power, wealth or poverty, human institutions appear at first glance to be founded on piles of shifting sand. It is not until we look at them close up, it is only after we have removed the dust and sand which surrounds the structure, that we perceive the unshakeable base on which it has been raised and learn to respect its foundations. Now, without the

serious study of man, his natural faculties, and their successive developments, we will never succeed in making those distinctions and, given the present constitution of things, in separating what Divine Will has created from what human art has claimed to make. Political and moral enquiries which have arisen from the important question which I am examining are thus useful in all sorts of ways, and the hypothetical history of governments is for men an instructive lesson in every respect. By considering what we might have become, if we were left to ourselves, we should learn to bless Him whose beneficent hand, correcting our institutions and giving them an immoveable basis, has prevented the disorder which they would have otherwise produced and made our happiness emerge from methods which seemed as if they should fill us with misery.

Learn the person God has commanded you to be,
And in which part of human affairs you have been placed.[*]

Question
proposed by the Academy of Dijon

What is the origin of inequality among men; and is it authorized by natural law?

Notice on the Notes

I have added some notes to this work in accordance with my lazy habit of working on this and that. These notes wander sometimes so far from the subject that it is not good to read them with the text. So I have deposited them at the end of the Discourse, in which I have tried to follow as best I can the most direct route. Those who have the courage to start again will be able to entertain themselves a second time by beating the bushes and striving to move through the notes. There will be little harm done for those others who do not read them at all.

DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGIN AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF INEQUALITY AMONG MEN

I am to speak about man, and the question which I am examining shows me that I am going to be speaking to men; for one does not propose questions like this when one is afraid of honouring the truth. Therefore, I will defend with confidence the cause of humanity in front of the wise men who invite me to do that, and I will not be personally unhappy if I acquit myself in a manner worthy of the subject and my judges.

In the human species I see two forms of inequality: one I call natural or physical, because it is established by nature and consists of the differences in age, health, bodily strength, and qualities of the mind or soul, and the other one can be called moral or political inequality, because it depends on some kind of convention and because it is established or at least authorized by the consent of men. This latter inequality consists of different privileges which some men enjoy to the detriment of others, like being more rich, more honoured, or more powerful than they are, or even that they can make the others obey them.

We cannot ask what the source of natural inequality is, because the answer is announced in the simple definition of the word. One can even less seek whether there might be some essential link between the two inequalities, for that would amount to asking, in other terms, if those who command are necessarily worth more than those who obey and if the powers of the body or the mind, wisdom, or virtue are always found in the same individuals in proportion to power or wealth, a good question perhaps to discuss among slaves while their masters are listening, but not one suitable for reasonable and free men who are seeking the truth.

So what precisely is the issue here in this Discourse? It is to mark in the progress of things the moment where, once right had taken over from violence, nature was subjected to law, and to explain by what sequence of miracles the strong could resolve to serve the weak and the people to purchase imaginary repose at the expense of actual happiness.

The philosophers who have examined the foundations of society have all sensed the necessity of going right back to the state of nature, but none of them has arrived there. Some have not hesitated to attribute to man in

this state the idea of just and unjust, without taking the trouble to demonstrate that he had to have this idea or even that it was useful to him. Others have talked about the natural right which each man has to keep what belongs to him, without explaining what they mean by belong. Others, assigning at first to the strongest the authority over the weakest, have immediately had governments born, without thinking of the time which must have elapsed before the meaning of the words authority and government could have existed among men. Finally, all of them, talking endlessly about need, greed, oppression, desires, and pride, have brought into the state of nature ideas which they have derived in society. They have spoken about savage man, and they have given a portrait of social man. It has not even entered the mind of most of our writers to doubt whether the state of nature existed, although it is evident from a reading of the Sacred Books that the first man, once he had received his understanding and precepts directly from God, was not himself in this state and that, once we accord the writing of Moses the faith which every Christian philosopher owes them, we must deny that, even before the flood, men ever found themselves in the pure state of nature, unless they fell back into it by some extraordinary event. This paradox is very embarrassing to defend and completely impossible to prove.

So let us begin by dispensing with the facts, for they are not relevant to the question. We must not take the investigations which one could enter into concerning this subject for historical truths, but only for hypothetical and conditional reasons, more suitable for illuminating the nature of things than for showing the true origin, similar to those made everyday by our physicists concerning the formation of the earth. Religion orders us to believe that God Himself took men out of the state of nature immediately after the creation and that they are unequal because He wanted them to be. But religion does not forbid us from forming conjectures drawn only from the nature of man and the beings surrounding him concerning what the human race could have become if it had been left to itself. That is what I have been asked and what I propose to examine in this Discourse. Since my subject deals with man in general, I will try to use a language suitable to all nations; or rather, forgetting times and places so that I think only about the men to whom I am speaking, I will assume that I am in the

school of Athens, repeating the lessons of my masters, with Platos and Xenocrateses for judges, and the human race as my audience.*

O man, no matter what country you come from, no matter what your opinions, listen. Here is your history the way I have believed it to read, not in the books written by men like you, who are liars, but in nature, which never lies. Everything from nature will be true. There will be nothing false except what I will mix in of my own without wishing to do so. The times of which I am going to speak are far distant. How much you have changed from what you were! It is, so to speak, the life of your species which I am going to describe with reference to the qualities which you have received, which your education and your habits have been able to corrupt, but which they have not been able to destroy. There is, I sense, an age at which the individual man would wish to stop; you will be seeking the age at which you would wish your species had stopped. Unhappy with your present condition, for reasons which announce to your unfortunate descendants even greater discontents, perhaps you would wish you could go back, and this feeling should generate praise for your first ancestors, a critique of your contemporaries, and terror for those who will have the misfortune to live after you.

First Part

However important it may be, to judge well the natural state of man, to consider him from the time of his origin, and to examine him, so to speak, in the first embryo of the species, I shall not follow his organic structure through its successive developments. I will not stop to inquire what he could have been at the start within the animal system in order to become what he is; I will not examine if, as Aristotle thinks, his long nails were not at first hooked claws, if he was not as hairy as a bear, and if moving on four feet with his gaze directed at the earth and being limited to a horizon of a few paces did not delineate simultaneously his character and the extent of his ideas (3). On this subject I would be able to form nothing but vague, almost imaginary, conjectures. Comparative anatomy has up to now made too little progress, and the observations of naturalists are still too uncertain for one to be able to establish the basis of reliable reasoning on

such foundations. Thus, without having recourse to the supernatural knowledge we have in this matter or taking into account the changes which must have occurred in the human structure, inside just as much as outside, to the extent that he applied his limbs to new tasks and nourished himself on new foods, I will assume that he was structured at all times as I see him today, walking on two feet, using his hands as we use ours, looking around at all of nature, and measuring with his eyes the vast expanse of the sky.

By removing from this being, thus formed, all supernatural gifts which he could have received and all the artificial faculties which he could have got only by long progress, by considering him, in a word, just as he must have come from the hands of nature, I see an animal less strong than some, less agile than others, but, taking everything into account, with the most advantageous organic structure of them all. I see him eating his fill under an oak tree, quenching his thirst at the first stream, discovering his bed at the foot of the same tree which provided his meal, and with that his needs are taken care of.

The earth, left to its natural fertility and covered with immense forests never mutilated by an axe, offers at every step storehouses and shelters for animals of all species (4). The men scattered among them observe, imitate their work, and thus raise themselves to the level of animal instinct, with the advantage that each species has only its appropriate instinct and man, since he perhaps does not have one which belongs to him, appropriates them all, feeds himself just as well with most of the various nourishments which the other animals share, and as a result finds his sustenance more easily than any of them can (5).

Accustomed from infancy to the intemperate nature of the weather and the rigour of the seasons, experienced in dealing with fatigue and forced, naked and without weapons, to defend their lives and their prey against other ferocious beasts or to escape them by running off, men develop in themselves a robust and almost unchangeable temperament. The children, bringing into the world the excellent constitution of their parents and strengthening it through the same exercises which created it, in this manner acquire all the vigour of which the human species is capable. Nature deals with them exactly as the law of Sparta did with the citizens' children: it makes strong and robust those who are well formed

and kills off all the others — something different from our societies, where the state, by making children burdensome to fathers, kills them indiscriminately before their birth.

Since the savage man's body is the only instrument he knows, he employs it for various uses which, through lack of exercise, our bodies are incapable of. It is our industry which has taken away from us the force and agility which necessity obliges him to acquire. If he had had an axe, would his wrist have broken off such strong branches? If he had had a sling, would his hand have thrown a stone so forcefully? If he had had a ladder, would he have climbed so nimbly up a tree? If he had had a horse, would he have run so quickly? Leave civilized man the time to collect all his machines around him, and there is no doubt he would easily overcome savage man. But if you want to see an even more unequal combat, set them naked and without weapons one against the other, and you will soon recognize the advantage of constantly having all one's forces at one's disposal, of always being ready for any event, and of bearing oneself, so to speak, always as a complete totality with oneself (6).

Hobbes maintains that man is naturally intrepid and seeks only to attack and fight. An illustrious philosopher thinks the opposite, and Cumberland and Pufendorf also affirm that nothing is as timid as man in a state of nature and that he is always trembling, ready to run off at the slightest noise which strikes him, at the least movement he perceives.* That may be the case for objects he is ignorant about, and I have no doubt that he is frightened by all new sights which present themselves to him every time he cannot sort out the physical good and bad he should expect from them or compare his strength with the dangers which he must run, unusual circumstances in the state of nature, where everything proceeds in such a uniform manner and where the face of the earth is not subject to sudden and constant changes caused by the passions and fickleness of people in groups.

But savage man, living scattered among the animals and finding himself early on in a position to measure himself against them, soon makes a comparison and, sensing that he surpasses them in dexterity more than they surpass him in strength, he learns not to fear them any more. Set a bear or a wolf to go against a robust savage, agile, courageous, as they all

are, armed with stones and a good stick, and you will observe that the danger will at the very least be reciprocal, and that after several experiences like that, the wild beasts, who do not like to attack each other, will have little desire to attack man, whom they will have discovered is just as ferocious as they are. As for animals which really do have more power than he has dexterity, where they are concerned he is in the position of other weaker species, who nonetheless continue to survive. But man does have an advantage — being no less able than they are at running and finding an almost guaranteed refuge up in the trees, it is always up to him whether he accepts or leaves the encounter, the choice of flight or combat. Let us add that it does not seem that any animal naturally wars against man, except in cases of its own defence or extreme hunger, nor does it manifest those violent antipathies which appear to announce that one species is destined by nature to serve as food for another.

These are undoubtedly the reasons why Negroes and savages are so little concerned about the fierce beasts they may meet in the forests. In this respect the Caribs of Venezuela, among others, live in the most profound security and without the slightest inconvenience. Although they go around almost naked, says Francisco Coreal,* they expose themselves boldly in the forest, armed only with bow and arrow, but nobody has every heard that any one of them was eaten by animals.

Other more formidable enemies against whom man does not have the same means to defend himself are the natural infirmities — infancy, old age, and all kinds of illnesses, sad indications of our frailty, of which the first two are common to all the animals and the last belongs principally to man living in society. On the subject of infancy, I even notice that the mother, always carrying her child with her, finds feeding the child a great deal easier than do the females of several animals, who are forced to come and go continuously and really exhaust themselves, moving in one direction to seek out food and in another direction to suckle or nourish their young. It is true that if the female happens to die, the young run a great risk of perishing with her. But this danger is common to hundreds of other species whose young are for a long time not in any condition to go and look for their nourishment themselves. And if infancy is longer among us, so is life as well. Everything is still roughly equal in this matter (7),

although with the length of infancy and the number of the young there are other rules which are not part of my subject (8). With the old, who move around and perspire little, the need for food diminishes with the ability to provide it, and since savage life spares them gout and rheumatism and since old age is of all the evils the one which human help can least relieve, they eventually die without people's noticing that they cease to be and almost without noticing it themselves.

As far as illnesses are concerned, I will not repeat the vain and false rants which the majority of people in good health deliver against medicine. But I will ask if there is some reliable observation from which one could conclude that in the countries where this art is most neglected the average life of man is shorter than in those where it is cultivated with the greatest care. How could that be the case if we give ourselves more ills than medicine can provide remedies for? The extreme inequality in the manner of living, the excessive idleness among some people, excessive labour for others, the ease with which we stimulate and satisfy our appetites and our sensuality, rich people's overly sophisticated food, poor people's bad diets, which most of the time they even have to go without, a lack which leads them to over-cram their stomachs greedily when they have an opportunity, staying up all night, every sort of excess, immoderate transports of all the passions, times of fatigue, mental exhaustion, depressions, and the numberless sorrows which people feel in all levels of society and which constantly wear away their souls — there you have the fatal proofs that most of our troubles are our own work and that we would have avoided almost all of them if we had kept to the simple, uniform, and solitary way of life which nature had prescribed for us. If she destined us to be healthy, I almost venture to affirm that the state of reflection is a condition contrary to nature and that the man who meditates is a depraved animal. When one thinks about the good constitution of savages, at least of those whom we have not ruined with our strong liquors, when one realizes that they know hardly any sicknesses other than wounds and old age, one is very much led to believe that one could easily produce the history of human illnesses by following the history of civil societies. That, at least, is the advice of Plato, who states, on the basis of certain remedies used or approved by Podaleirus and Machaon at the siege of Troy, that several illnesses which these remedies should have made flare up were not then

known among men. And Celsus states that diet, something essential nowadays, was invented by Hippocrates.*

With so few sources of ill, man in a state of nature thus has hardly any need for remedies, even less for doctors. In this respect, the human species is in a condition no worse than all the others, and it is easy to find out from hunters if, during their hunt, they find many sick animals. They do find several that have received major wounds which have healed very well or that have had bones, even limbs, broken and reset without any surgeon other than time, without any regimen except their ordinary life, and that are no less perfectly cured for not having been tormented with incisions, poisoned by drugs, or worn out with fasting. Finally, however useful well-administered medicine can be among us, it is always certain that if the sick savage left to his own has nothing to hope for except from nature, he has, by way of compensation, nothing to fear except from his sickness, a fact which often renders his situation preferable to ours.

So let us be careful not to confuse savage man with the men whom we have before our eyes. Nature treats all the animals left to her with a partiality which appears to demonstrate just how much she is jealous of this right. The horse, cat, bull, and even the donkey for the most part have a greater height, a more robust constitution, more energy, strength, and courage in the forests than in our houses. They lose half of these advantages by being domesticated, and one could say that all our care in treating these animals well and feeding them only ends up degrading them. The same is true of man himself: by becoming sociable and enslaved, he becomes weak, fearful, groveling, and his soft and effeminate way of life finishes up by enervating his power and his courage, both at the same time. Let us add that between the conditions of savage and domestic, the difference between man and man must be still greater than the one between beast and beast. For if animal and man have been treated equally by nature, all the commodities which man gives himself — more than he does to the animals he tames — are so many particular causes which make him degenerate more appreciably.

Thus, nudity, the lack of habitation, and going without all of those useless things which we believe are so necessary are not such a great misfortune for these first men or, above all, such a great obstacle to their

preservation. If they do not have hairy skins, they have no need of them in hot countries, and they well understand, in cold countries, how to take the skins of beasts which they have overcome. If they have only two feet for running, they have two arms to look after their defence and their needs. Their children perhaps walk at a late age and with difficulty, but their mothers carry them easily, an advantage missing in other species, where the mother, if she is chased, finds herself compelled to abandon her young or to regulate her pace to theirs. There could be a few exceptions to this, for instance, the animal from the province of Nicaragua which looks like a fox and which has feet like a man's hand, and, according Coreal, has a pouch under its belly in which the mother puts her young when she is forced to flee. This is undoubtedly the same animal as the one called tlaquatzin in Mexico. Laët says the female of this species has a similar pouch for the same purpose.* Finally, unless we assume those unusual and fortuitous combinations of circumstances which I will mention in what follows and which could very well never happen, it is clear in any event that the first man who made clothing or a lodging for himself in doing so was providing himself some things for which he had little need, because he had gone without them up to that point and because one does not see why, as a grown man, he could not have put up with a style of life which he had endured since he was an infant.

Solitary, idle, and always close to danger, savage man must like to sleep and have a light sleep, like animals which, not thinking very much, sleep, so to speak, all the time when they are not thinking. Since his own preservation is almost his only concern, the faculties he exercises most must be those whose purpose is mainly attack and defence, whether to overcome his prey or to save himself from being the prey of another animal; by contrast, the organs which do not perfect themselves except by softness and sensuality must remain in a crude state, something which keeps him away from any kind of refinement. With his senses finding themselves divided in this way, he will have an extremely rudimentary sense of touch and taste, but the greatest subtlety in his senses of sight, hearing, and smell. Such is the condition of animals generally, and, according to what travelers report, it is the same with the majority of savage people. So one must not be astonished that the Hottentots of the Cape of Good Hope discern with their naked eyes ships on the high seas at

the same distance the Dutch see them with telescopes, or that the American savages smell the Spaniards on the trail, just as the best dogs would have been able to do, or that all these barbaric nations endure without trouble their nudity, spice up their taste with hot peppers, and drink European liquor like water.

Up to this point I have considered only physical man. Let us now attempt to see him from the metaphysical and moral side.

In any animal I see only an ingenious machine to which nature has given senses to restore itself and to protect it, up to a certain point, from everything which tends to destroy or to disturb it. I see precisely the same things in the human machine, with this difference, that nature alone causes all the operations in an animal, whereas man helps to brings his about, in his capacity as a free agent. One chooses or refuses by instinct and the other by an act of liberty. This means that the animal cannot deviate from the rule which is prescribed for it, even when it would be advantageous to do so, and that man can deviate from the rule, often to his own prejudice. That is why a pigeon would die of hunger next to a bowl filled with the best meats, and a cat on piles of fruit or grain, although both of them could nourish themselves very well on the food they reject, if they were of a mind to try it. For this reason, dissolute men abandon themselves to excesses which bring them fever and death, because the mind corrupts the sense and the will still speaks when nature is silent.

Every animal has ideas, because it has senses; it even combines its ideas up to a certain point, and man is no different from animals in this respect except in degree. Some philosophers have even proposed that there is more difference between two given men than between a given man and a given animal. Hence, it is not so much the understanding which creates the specific distinction between animals and man as it is his quality as a free agent. Nature commands every animal, and the beast obeys. Man experiences the same sensation, but he recognizes that he is free to obey or to resist, and it is above all in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul reveals itself. For physics explains in some manner the mechanical working of the senses and the formation of ideas, but in the power to will or rather to choose and in the feeling of this power one

finds only purely spiritual acts, about which nothing is explained by the laws of mechanics.

But if the difficulties which surround all these questions leave some room for contesting this difference between man and animal, there is another very particular quality which distinguishes them and about which there can be no dispute — that is the faculty of self-perfecting, a faculty which, with the help of circumstances, develops all the others in succession, and which resides among us, as much in the species as in the individual, whereas an animal is, at the end of several months, what it will be all its life, and its species at the end of a thousand years will be what it was during the first year of this millennium. Why is man the only one subject to becoming a dotard? Is it not because that is when he returns to his primitive condition and that, while the beast, which has acquired nothing and has in addition nothing to lose, always remains with his instinct, when man loses by old age or other accidents everything which his perfectibility has led him to acquire, he falls back in this way even lower than a beast?

It would be sad for us to be forced to concur that this distinctive faculty, which is almost boundless, is the source of all the misfortunes of man, that it is what pulls him by the power of time out of this original condition in which he would flow through quiet and innocent days, that with the passage of centuries it is what hatches his enlightenment and his errors, his vices and his virtues, and makes him at length a tyrant over himself and nature (9). It would be dreadful to be obliged to praise as a beneficial being the man who was the first to suggest to the inhabitant on the banks of the Orinoco the practice of binding onto the temples of children those strips of wood which at least assures them a portion of their imbecility and their original happiness.

Savage man, left by nature merely to his instincts or rather compensated for what he perhaps lacks by faculties capable of replacing it at first and raising him later far above it, will thus begin with purely animal functions (10): seeing and feeling will be his first condition, which will be common to him and all the animals. Willing and not willing, desiring and fearing, these will be the first and almost the only operations of his soul, until new circumstances cause new developments in it.

Whatever moralists may say about the subject, the human understanding owes a great deal to the passions which, by common agreement, also owe a great deal to it. It is through their activity that our reason is perfected. We only seek to understand because we desire to find enjoyment, and it is not possible to conceive why someone who has neither desires nor fears would take the trouble of reasoning. The passions, in their turn, derive their origin from our needs, and their progress from our knowledge. For one cannot desire or fear things except through the ideas one can have about them or by simple natural impulse. And savage man, deprived of every kind of enlightenment, experiences only the passions of the latter sort: his desires do not go beyond his physical needs (11). The only goods he knows in the universe are his food, a female, and rest. The only bad things he fears are pain and hunger. I say hunger and not death. For an animal will never know what it is to die, and knowledge of death and its terrors is one of the first acquisitions which man made in moving away from his animal condition.

It would be easy for me, if I had to, to support this opinion with facts and to demonstrate that with all the nations of the world, the progress of the mind has been exactly proportional to the needs people have received from nature or to those which circumstances have subjected them to, and as a result to the passions which encouraged them to supply those needs. I would show the arts being born in Egypt and expanding with the flooding of the Nile; I would follow their progress among the Greeks, where we see them germinating, growing, and raising themselves up to the heavens among the sands and rocks of Attica, without being able to take root on the fertile banks of the Eurotas.* I would observe that in general the people of the North are more industrious than those of the South, because they can less afford not to be, as if nature wanted in this way to equal things by giving to their minds the fertility which she refuses to give to their land.

But without relying on the uncertain witnesses of history, who does not see that everything seems to remove from savage man the temptation and the means to cease to be a savage? His imagination cannot picture anything for him; his heart demands nothing of him. His modest needs are so easily found at hand, and he is so far from the degree of knowledge

necessary for him to desire to get greater knowledge, that he cannot have either foresight or curiosity.

The spectacle of nature becomes indifferent to him by becoming familiar to him. There is always the same order, always the same successive changes. He has not the mind to be astonished at the greatest marvels, and it is not in him that we must look for the philosophy man needs in order to know how to observe once what he has been looking at all his days. His soul, which nothing excites, is given over to the single feeling of his present existence, without any idea of the future, no matter how close it may be, and his projects, as limited as his views, hardly reach to the end of the day. Even today the degree of foresight in the Carib is like that: in the morning he sells his bed of cotton, and in the evening he comes crying to buy it back again, for lack of anticipating that he would need it for the next night.

The more one thinks about this subject, the greater the distance from pure sense experience to the simplest knowledge grows before our eyes, and it is impossible to conceive how a man could have, through his own power alone, without the aid of communication and without necessity's goad, gotten through such a great time span. How many centuries might perhaps have passed before men were inclined to see some fire other than the fire in the sky? How many different risks did they have to face to learn the most common uses of that element? How many times did they let it go out, before having acquired the art of reproducing it? And how many times perhaps did each of these secrets die with the man who discovered it? What will we say about agriculture, an art which requires so much work and foresight, which depends on other arts, which is very clearly practical only in a society that has at least been started, and which serves us, not so much to pull from the earth foodstuffs which it would provide well enough without agriculture, as to force from it those preferences which are most to our taste?

But let us suppose that men had multiplied to such an extent that natural productions were insufficient to nourish them, an assumption which, incidentally, would show that for the human species there was a great advantage in this way of life. Let us assume that, without forges and without workshops, tools had fallen from heaven into the hands of

savages, that these men had overcome the mortal hatred they all had for continuous labour, that they had learned to anticipate their needs so far ahead of time, that they had guessed how one must cultivate the earth, sow seeds, and plant trees, that they had found the art of grinding wheat and setting grapes to ferment — all things they would have had to be made to learn by the gods, since it is inconceivable how they would have learned them on their own. Beyond that, what man would be so insane as to torment himself with the cultivation of a field which will be stripped by the first one who arrives, either man or beast, for whom this harvest is appropriate? And how will each man be able to resolve to spend his life in painful work the reward for which, the more essential it becomes for him, the more uncertain he will be of realizing it. In a word, how will this situation be able to incline men to cultivate the earth, so long as it has not been divided up among them, that is, so long as the state of nature has not been destroyed?

If we wished to assume that savage man is as skilful in the art of thinking as our philosophers present him to us, if we turn him, following their example, into a philosopher himself, discovering on his own the most sublime truths, creating for himself, by sequences of very abstract reasoning, maxims of justice and reasons derived from love of order in general or from the known will of his Creator — briefly put, if we assume in him a mind with as much intelligence and enlightenment as the dullness and stupidity which he must have and which, in fact, we do find in him, what use would the species derive from all this metaphysics which could not be communicated and which would die with the individual who had invented it? What progress could the human race have made scattered through the woods among the animals? And up to what point could men have perfected themselves and mutually have enlightened each other, men who, not having any fixed domicile or any need for one another, would scarcely meet perhaps twice in their lives, without knowing or talking to each other?

Let us imagine how many ideas we owe to the use of speech, how much grammar trains and facilitates the operations of the mind, and let us think about the inconceivable difficulties and the infinite time which the first invention of language must have cost. Let us link these reflections to

the preceding ones, and we will judge how many thousands of centuries it must have required for the sequential development in the human mind of the operations it is capable of.

Let me be permitted to consider for a moment the awkward question of the origin of languages. I could content myself with citing or repeating here the investigations which the Abbé de Condillac has made into this matter — they all fully confirm my opinion and perhaps gave me the original idea about it.* But because the way in which this philosopher resolves the difficulties which he makes for himself concerning the origin of agreed upon signs shows that he has assumed what I am putting into question — that is, a sort of society already established among the inventors of language — I believe that in referring to his reflections I ought to add my own to lay out these same difficulties in a manner appropriate to my subject. The first which presents itself is to imagine how languages could have become necessary. For since men had no connections with each other, nor any need for them, one cannot conceive why this invention was necessary or possible, unless it was indispensable.

I could well say, as do many others, that languages are born in the domestic interactions among fathers, mothers, and children. But apart from the fact that this would not resolve the objections, it would be committing the fault of those who, in reasoning about the state of nature, bring into it ideas taken from society and always see the family gathered together in the same dwelling with its members maintaining among themselves a union as intimate and permanent as among us, where so many common interests keep them together; whereas, in this primitive condition, having neither house, nor hut, nor any kind of property, each man found his own lodging randomly and often only for one night. The males and females came together fortuitously, according to chance encounters, opportunity, and desire, without speech being very necessary to interpret the things they had to say to each other. They separated with the same ease (12). At first the mother suckled her children to satisfy her own need; then, once the habit made them dear to her, she later nourished them for their need. As soon as they had the strength to seek out their own food, they did not delay in leaving the mother herself, and since there was hardly any way of finding each other again other than to remain within

sight, they were soon at the stage where they did not even recognize one another.

Notice as well that since the child has all his needs to explain and consequently more things to say to the mother than the mother has to say to the child, it is the child who has to make the greatest efforts of invention and that the language which it uses must be in large part its own work. That multiplies the number of languages by as many individuals as there are to speak them. Contributing more to this was a wandering and vagabond life which does not give any idiom the time to acquire consistency. For to say that the mother teaches her child the words which it has to use to ask her for something or other shows well how one teaches languages which are already formed but does not instruct us how they are formed.

Suppose we have overcome this first difficulty: let us for a moment move across the immense space which must have existed between the pure state of nature and the need for languages, and, assuming that they are necessary (13), let us look for how they could have started to get established. Here is a new difficulty, even worse than the previous one. For if men needed speech in order to learn how to think, they had a much greater need still to know how to think in order to discover the art of speech. And even if we understood how vocal sounds were accepted as the conventional spoken form of our ideas, there would always remain the need to find out what could have been the spoken forms in this convention for those ideas which, having no sensible object, could be indicated either by a gesture or a voice, so that one can hardly form tenable conjectures about the birth of this art of communicating one's thoughts and establishing an interaction between minds: a sublime art which is already so distant from its origin, but which the philosopher still sees at such a prodigious distance from its perfection that there is no man sufficiently bold to affirm that it will ever reach that point, even if the changes which time necessarily brings on should be suspended in its favour, if the prejudices were to leave the academies or remain silent before them, and if they could keep themselves occupied with this thorny issue for entire centuries without interruption.

Man's first language, the most universal language, the most energetic, and the only one he needed before it was necessary for him to persuade men in groups, is the cry of nature. Since this cry was elicited only by a kind of instinct in urgent situations to beg for assistance amid great dangers or for relief from violent ills, it was not widely used in the ordinary course of life, where more moderate feelings ruled. When men's ideas began to expand and multiply and when closer communication was established between them, they looked for more numerous signs and a more extensive language. They multiplied their vocal inflections and joined gestures to these, which by their nature are more expressive and whose sense depends less on a previous determination. Thus, they expressed visible and mobile objects by gestures and those which strike the ear by imitative sounds.

But since a gesture indicates almost nothing other than present objects, or those easy to describe, and visible actions, since it is not universally applicable, for darkness or the interposition of a body makes it useless, and since it requires rather than stimulates attention, people finally got the idea of substituting for gestures vocal articulations, which, without having the same relationship to certain ideas, are more appropriate to represent them all as instituted signs, a substitution which could not be made except with a common agreement and in a manner difficult enough to practise for men whose rudimentary vocal organs had not yet had any exercise, and still more difficult to conceive in itself, since this unanimous accord must have had a motive and speech appears to have been extremely necessary for its use to be established.

One must infer that since the first words which men made use of had in their minds a much more extensive meaning than those which we use in languages already formed and that, since men knew nothing about the division of discourse into its constitutive parts, at first they gave to each word the sense of an entire proposition. When they began to distinguish the subject from the attribute and the verb from the noun, something which was no mean effort of genius, the substantives at first were nothing more than so many proper names, the present infinitive was the only tense of the verbs, and as far as adjectives are concerned, the idea of them must have developed only with great difficulty, because every adjective is an

abstract word and abstractions are difficult and not very natural operations.

Every object at first received a particular name, without regard to genus and species, something which those first founders were not in a position to distinguish, and all the individuals presented themselves to their minds as isolated instances, as they are in the spectacle of nature. If one oak tree was called A, another oak tree was called B. For the first idea one derives from two objects is that they are not the same, and often a good deal of time is necessary to observe what they have in common. Hence, the more limited their knowledge, the more extensive their dictionary. The inconvenience of all this nomenclature could not have been easily removed, for to arrange beings under common and generic denominations, they had to know their properties and their differences; they required observations and definitions, that is, natural history and metaphysics, a great deal more than the men of those times could have had.

In addition, general ideas cannot be introduced into the mind except with the help of words, and the understanding does not grasp them except by propositions. That is one of the reasons why animals cannot form such ideas or ever acquire the perfectibility which depends on them. When a monkey goes without hesitation from one nut to another, do we think it has a general idea of this sort of fruit and that it compares its archetype to these two individual nuts? Undoubtedly not. But the sight of one of these nuts recalls to his memory sensations which he received from the other, and his eyes, modified in a certain way, announce to his taste the modification he has just received. Every general idea is purely intellectual. Once the imagination gets involved in the slightest, the idea immediately becomes particular. Try to draw for yourself the image of a tree in general. You will never succeed. In spite of you, it must be seen as small or large, sparse or leafy, light or dark, and if you were able to see there only what is found in every tree, the image would no longer resemble a tree. Purely abstract beings are seen in the same manner or are conceived only through discourse. The mere definition of the triangle gives you the true idea of this. As soon as you draw one in your mind, it is such and such a triangle and not another, and you cannot avoid making its lines perceptible or its

plane coloured. Therefore, one has to articulate propositions, and thus to speak, in order to have general ideas. For as soon as the imagination stops, the mind moves no further without the help of discourse. Hence, if the first inventors could give names only to ideas which they had already, it follows that these first substantives could never have been anything but proper names.

But when, by means which I do not understand, our new grammarians began to extend their ideas and to generalize their words, the ignorance of the inventors must have subjected this method to very narrow limitations, and since they had at the beginning excessively multiplied the names of individuals because they did not know about genera and species, they then created too few species and genera, for lack of having considered beings by all their differences. To push these divisions far enough would have required more experience and enlightenment than they could have had, along with more research and work than they would want to spend on it. Now, if, even at the present time, we are discovering every day new species which up to now have escaped all our observations, one should think about how many must have been hidden from men who did not evaluate things except at first sight! As for primitive classes and the most general notions, it is superfluous to add that these must have escaped them as well. How, for example, would they have imagined or understood the words matter, mind, substance, mode, figure, movement, given that our philosophers, who have made use of them for such a long time, themselves have real difficulty understanding them and that, since ideas which people attach to these words are purely metaphysical, they do not find any model of them in nature?

I stop with these first steps, and I beg my judges to suspend their reading here, in order to consider, in this matter of the invention of physical substantives alone, that is, of the part of language easiest to discover, how far language has to journey to express all men's thoughts, to take on a constant form, to be able to be spoken in public, and to influence society. I urge them to reflect on the time and knowledge which it must have required to discover numbers (14), abstract words, aorists, and all the verb tenses, particles, and syntax, to connect propositions and chains of reasoning, and to form the logic of discourse. As for me, scared off by the

multiplying difficulties and convinced of the almost proven impossibility that languages could have been born and established themselves by purely human means, I leave the discussion of the following difficult problem to whoever wishes to undertake it: Which was the most necessary — that society be already in place for the institution of languages or that languages be already invented for the establishment of society?

Whatever these origins may be, at least we see, from the little care which nature took to bring men together through their mutual needs and to facilitate the use of speech for them, how little she prepared them for social interaction, and how little she contributed to everything they have done to establishing social bonds among themselves. In fact, it is impossible to imagine why, in this primitive state, one man would have more need of another man than a monkey or a wolf would need a creature like itself, nor, assuming this need, what motive could engage the other man to provide it, or even, in this last case, how the two of them could agree among themselves on the conditions.

I know that people constantly repeat to us that nothing could have been as miserable as man in this condition, and if it is true, as I believe I have proved, that man could not have had the desire and the opportunity to leave this state until after several centuries, that would be an indictment against nature and not against what she had constituted in this way. But, if I understand this term miserable well, it is a word which has no meaning or which signifies only a painful lack and physical or spiritual suffering. Now, I really would like someone to explain to me what could be the type of misery for a free being whose heart is at peace and whose body is healthy. I ask the following: Which of the two — civil or natural life — is most subject to becoming insupportable for those who go through it? Around us we see hardly any people who do not complain about their existence and several who even take away their own lives, to the extent they are capable of that, and the combination of divine and human laws is scarcely sufficient to stop this mess. I ask if anyone has ever heard it said that a savage at liberty has even dreamed of complaining about life and of committing suicide. So people should judge with less pride on which side true misery lies.

By contrast, nothing would have been so miserable as savage man dazzled by enlightenment, tormented by passions, and reasoning about a condition different from his own. It was by a very wise providence that the untapped faculties he had were to develop only with opportunities to practise them, so that they were neither superfluous nor a bother to him before then, nor belated and useless in a time of need. He had in instinct alone everything he needed to live in a state of nature. With a cultivated reasoning, he only has what he needs to live in society.

At first it seems that since men in this state did not have any sort of moral relations among themselves or any known duties, they could not have been either good or bad or have had either vices or virtues, unless, by taking these words in a physical sense, one calls vices in the individual the qualities which can injure his own preservation and virtues those which can contribute to it, in which case, it would be necessary to call the most virtuous men those who least resisted the basic natural impulses. But without moving away from the ordinary meaning, it is relevant to suspend the judgment we could bring to bear on such a situation and to resist our prejudices until, with balance in hand, we have examined if there are more virtues than vices among civilized men, or if their virtues are more advantageous than their vices are fatal, or if the progress of their knowledge is a sufficient compensation for the evils they inflict on one another, as they learn about the good they ought to do, or if, taking everything into account, they would not be in a happier situation if they did not have anything bad to fear or good to hope for from anyone, rather than being subjected to universal dependency and obliged to receive everything from those who do not feel obliged to give them anything.

Above all, let us not conclude, with Hobbes, that, since man has not the slightest idea of goodness, he is naturally evil, that he is vicious because he does not know virtue, that he always denies his fellow men services which he does not believe he owes them, nor that, by virtue of the right which he reasonably attributes to himself to things which he needs, he foolishly imagines that he is the sole proprietor of the entire universe. Hobbes saw very well the defect of all the modern definitions of natural right, but the conclusions he draws from his own definition show that he took it in a sense which is no less erroneous. In reasoning from the

principles which he sets down, this author should have said that since the state of nature is the one in which care for our own preservation is the least prejudicial to the preservation of others, this state is consequently the most appropriate to peace and the most acceptable for the human race. He says precisely the opposite, because he made the mistake of allowing into savage man's care for his own preservation the need to satisfy a multitude of passions which are the work of society and which have made laws necessary. The evil man, he says, is a robust child. It remains to be seen whether savage man is a robust child. If we granted him this point, what would he conclude from it? That if, when he is robust this man was just as dependent on others as when he is weak, there is no kind of excess to which he would not be carried, that he would strike his mother when she was too late giving him her breast, that he would strangle one of his young brothers when he annoyed him, that he would bite someone else's leg when it kicked or bothered him? But being robust and being dependent in the state of nature are two contradictory assumptions. Man is weak when he is dependent, and he is free before he is robust. Hobbes did not see that the same cause which prevents savages from using their reason, as our legal advisors assert, prevents them at the same time from abusing their faculties, as he himself maintains, so that we could say that savages are not evil precisely because they do not know what it is to be good. For it is neither the development of enlightenment nor the restraint of law which prevents them from doing evil, but the tranquility of their passions and their ignorance of vice: That's how much ignorance of vices has been more profitable to those men, than a knowledge of virtue has to these ones.*

There is in addition another principle, which Hobbes did not notice, and which, having been given to man to soften, in certain circumstances, the ferocity of his self-love [amour propre] or, before the birth of this love, the desire to preserve himself (15), tempers the ardour he has for his well being by an innate repugnance to seeing a creature like himself suffer. I do not think I have to fear any contradiction by ascribing to man the only natural virtue which the most extravagant detractor of human virtues has been forced to recognize. I am speaking about pity, a disposition appropriate to such weak beings and subject to as many evils as we are, a virtue all the more universal and all the more useful to man because in him it comes before he uses any reflection, and is so natural that even animals

sometimes provide some perceptible signs of it. Without talking of the tenderness of mothers towards their young and the dangers they face to keep them safe, we see every day the repugnance horses have at stepping on a living body. An animal never goes past a dead animal of its own species without unease. There are even some who give them a kind of sepulcher, and the sad lowing of cattle as they go into a slaughterhouse indicates the impression they get of the horrible spectacle which strikes them. With pleasure we see the author of the Fable of the Bees, compelled to recognize man as a compassionate and sensitive being, departing from his cold and subtle style in the example he gives of that, in order to offer us the moving image of a man in prison who notices outside a wild beast ripping a child from its mother's breast, crushing its weak limbs in its murderous teeth, and with its claws ripping out this child's quivering entrails. What horrific agitation must be felt by this witness to an event in which he has no personal interest?* What anxieties does he not suffer from the sight, being incapable of bringing any help to the fainting mother or the dying child?

That is what the pure movement of nature is like, before all reflection. Such is the force of natural pity, which the most depraved morals still have trouble destroying, since we see every day in our theatres a man being moved and weeping at the misfortunes of some unfortunate person, a spectator who, if he were in a tyrant's position, would increase even more his enemy's torments, like bloodthirsty Sulla, who was so sensitive to the evils he had not caused, or like Alexander of Pherae, who did not dare attend the performance of any tragedy in case he was seen weeping with Andromache and Priam, and who nonetheless listened without feeling anything to the cries of so many citizens who were slaughtered on his orders every day: By giving tears, nature reveals that she gave the human race the softest hearts: By giving tears, nature reveals that she gave the human race the softest hearts.*

Mandeville well perceived that with all their morality human beings would never be anything but monsters, if nature had not given them pity to assist their reason. But he did not see that from this quality alone follow all the social virtues which he wants to deny to men. In fact, what are generosity, clemency, and humanity, if not pity applied to the weak, the

culpable, or to the human species in general? Even benevolence and friendship are, properly understood, products of a constant pity fixed on a particular object. For desiring that someone does not suffer, what is that other than desiring that he is happy? Even if it were true that commiseration was only a feeling which places us in the position of the person suffering, an obscure and lively sentiment in savage man and developed but weak in civil man, how would this idea matter for the truth of what I am saying, unless to reinforce it? In fact, commiseration will be all the more energetic as the animal looking on identifies intimately with the suffering animal.

Now, it is evident that this identification must have been infinitely closer in the state of nature than in the state of reasoning. It is reason which gives rise to self-love [amour propre], and it is reflection which strengthens it. That is what turns man back within himself — an action which separates him from everything which upsets and afflicts him: it is philosophy which isolates him. Through philosophy he says in secret at the sight of a man suffering: Perish if you wish; I am safe. Nothing troubles the calm sleep of the philosopher and drags him from his bed any more, other than dangers to all of society. One can slit the throat of his fellow man under his window with impunity; he only has to put his hands over his ears and argue with himself for a little while in order to prevent nature, which rebels within him, from identifying with the one being assassinated. Savage man does not have this admirable talent and, for lack of wisdom and reason, is always observed surrendering to the first feeling of humanity, without thinking about it. In riots and street quarrels, the populace collects together, the prudent man moves away. It is the rabble, the women of the market, who separate the fighters and prevent decent folk from killing each other.

Hence, it is certain that pity is a natural feeling which, by moderating in each individual the activities of his love of himself [amour de soi-même] contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. It is pity which inclines us to help those we see suffering, without reflecting about it, and which, in the state of nature, takes the place of laws, morals, and virtue, with this advantage — no one is tempted to disobey its soft voice. It is pity which will make every robust savage turn away from robbing a weak

child or an infirm old man of the sustenance he has acquired with difficulty, if he himself has hopes of being able to find his own somewhere else. It is pity which, in the place of this sublime maxim of rational justice — Do to others what you wish others to do to you — inspires in all men this other maxim of natural goodness, much less perfect than the preceding one, but perhaps more useful: Do what is good for you with the least possible harm to others. Briefly put, it is in natural feeling rather than in subtle arguments, that we must seek out the cause of the repugnance which all men would experience at doing wrong, even independently of all the maxims of education. Although it could be appropriate for Socrates and minds of his calibre to acquire virtue through reason, the human race would have ceased to be a long time ago, if its preservation had depended solely on the reasoning of those who constitute the race.

With passions so rarely active and a healthy restraint, men more wild than evil and more attentive to keeping themselves from the harm they could receive than tempted to commit harm to others were not subject to very dangerous quarrels. Since they had no type of commerce with each other and, as a result, had no knowledge of vanity or consideration or esteem or contempt, since they did not have the least notion of yours and mine, or any true idea of justice, since they looked upon the violence which they could run into as a bad thing easy to fix and not as an injury which they must punish, and since they did not even dream of vengeance, except perhaps as an immediate mechanical reflex, like a dog which bites a stone someone throws at it, their disputes would rarely have had any bloody consequences, if they had no issue more sensitive than food. But I see a more dangerous matter which remains for me to speak about.

Among the passions which agitate man's heart, there is one which is ardent and impetuous, which makes one sex necessary to the other, a terrible passion which endures all dangers, overturns all obstacles, and in its fury seems likely to destroy the human race which it is destined to preserve. What would become of men in the grip of this frantic and brutal rage, without shame, without restraint, and arguing every day about their loves at the expense of their blood?

First, we must concede that the more violent the passions are, the more laws are necessary to contain them. But other than the fact that those

disorders and crimes which the passions cause every day among us sufficiently demonstrate the inadequacy of the laws in this matter, it would still be good to examine if these disorders were not born with the laws themselves. For then, even if they were capable of repressing these disorders, the least we should demand of laws would be that they stop an evil which would not exist without them.

Let us begin by distinguishing the moral from the physical in the feeling of love. The physical is that general desire which inclines one sex to unite with the other; the moral is what determines this desire and fixes it on a single object exclusively or which at least provides it with a greater degree of energy for that preferred object. Now, it is easy to see that the moral aspect of love is an artificial feeling, born from social habits and celebrated by women with a great deal of skill and care, in order to establish their empire and to make dominant the sex which should obey. Since this feeling is founded on certain notions of merit or beauty which a savage is not in a condition to have and on comparisons he is not in a position to make, it must be almost nothing for him. For since his mind cannot form abstract ideas of regularity and proportion, his heart is no more susceptible to feelings of admiration and love which, even without being noticed, are born from the application of these ideas. He listens exclusively to the temperament he has received from nature and not to the taste he has not been able to acquire, and any woman is fine with him.

Limited solely to physical love and happy enough to be ignorant of those preferences which stimulate the feeling and increase the difficulties it causes, men must feel the ardours of their temperaments less frequently and less vividly, so that the disputes with each other must be more rare and less cruel. The imagination, which wreaks so much havoc among us, does not speak to savage hearts. Each man waits peacefully for the natural impulse, surrenders to it without choosing and with more pleasure than fury, and once the need is satisfied, all desire is extinguished.

It is thus an incontestable point that love itself, like all the other passions, only acquires in society that impetuous ardour which makes it so often fatal to men, and it is all the more ridiculous to picture savages as continually killing each other in order to satisfy their brutality, since this view is directly contrary to experience, and since the Caribs, of all existing

people the ones who, up to this point, have strayed the least from the state of nature, are precisely the most peaceful in their love and the least subject to jealousy, although they live in a burning climate, which always seems to generate greater activity in these passions.

With respect to the conclusions one could draw in several species of animals from the fighting of the males, who in every season bloody our poultry yards or make our forests in springtime echo with their cries as they quarrel over the female, it is necessary to begin by excluding all species where nature has manifestly established in the relative power of the sexes relationships different from those among us. Thus, cockfights do not provide a conclusion for the human species. In species where the proportion is better observed, these fights can be caused only by the scarcity of females with respect to the number of males or by the exclusive periods of time during which the female constantly refuses the male's approach, a factor which goes back to the first cause. For if each female tolerates the male only for two months of the year, that is, in this matter, as if the number of females were reduced by five sixths. Now, neither of these two cases applies to the human species, where the number of females generally surpasses the number of males and where no one has ever observed that, even among savages, the females have times of heat and exclusion like those in other species. Moreover, among several of these animals, since the entire species goes into heat at the same time, there comes a terrible moment of common passion, tumult, disorder, and combat, a time which has no place among the human species, where love is never periodic. So one cannot conclude from the fights among certain animals for the possession of the female that the same thing would happen to man in the state of nature. And even if one could draw this conclusion, since these dissentions do not destroy other species, we must at least grant that they would not be more fatal to ours, and it is very apparent that they would cause even less havoc in that state than they do in society, above all in the countries where, since the traditional customs still count for something, lovers' jealousy and husbands' vengeance every day cause duels, murders, and still worse, where the duty for eternal fidelity serves only to produce adultery and where even the laws dealing with continence and honour necessarily foster debauchery and multiply abortions.

Let us conclude that wandering in the forests without industry, without speech, without a home, without war, and without relationships, with no need for his fellow men, and similarly with no desire to harm them, perhaps even without ever recognizing any of them individually, savage man, subject to few passions and self-sufficient, would only have had feelings and enlightenment appropriate to that condition, felt nothing but his true needs, looked only at what he thought he had an interest in seeing, with an intelligence which had not progressed any more than his vanity. If by chance he made some discovery, he could no more communicate it than he could recognize even his own children. Art died with the inventor. There was neither education nor progress. The generations multiplied with no purpose in view, and, since each one always set out from the same point, the centuries flowed past in all the crudity of the first ages. The species was already old, and man remained still a child.

If I have been dwelling for such a long time on the hypothesis of this primitive condition, the reason is that, having ancient errors and inveterate prejudices to destroy, I thought I should dig down right to the root and, in a picture of the true state of nature, show how far inequality, even natural inequality, is from being as real and having as large an influence as our writers claim.

In fact, it is easy to see that among the differences which distinguish men, several pass for natural which are exclusively the work of habit and the various ways of life which men adopt in society. So a robust or delicate temperament, and the strength or weakness which depend on that, often come more from the hard or effeminate manner in which people have been raised than from the original constitution of the body. It is the same with the forces of the mind, and education not only establishes a difference between cultivated minds and those which are not, but it increases the difference among the former group in proportion to their culture. For if a giant and a dwarf march along the same route, each pace the two of them take will give a new advantage to the giant. Now, if we compare the prodigious diversity in the forms of education and ways of life which govern the different orders of the civil state with the simplicity and uniformity of animal and savage life, where everyone feeds on the same

nourishment, lives in the same manner, and does exactly the same things, we will understand how the difference between man and man must be less in the state of nature than in society and how much natural inequality must increase in the human species as a result of institutionalized inequality.

But if nature, in the distribution of her gifts, were to have demonstrated as much preference as people claim, what advantage would the most favoured have derived from that to the detriment of others in a state of things which does not admit of hardly any sort of relation between them? Where there is no love, what use will beauty serve? What is the use of wit for people who do not speak, and deception for those who have no interactions with others? I always hear it repeated that the strongest will oppress the weak. But let someone explain to me what they mean by this word oppression. Some will dominate with violence; the others will groan, enslaved to all their whims: that is precisely what I observe among us, but I do not see how that could be said of savage men, to whom people would have great difficulty even explaining what servitude and domination are. A man will be readily able to get a hold of fruits which someone else has gathered, of the game he has killed, of the cave which serves as his refuge. But how will he ever succeed in making others obey him, and what could be the chains of dependence among men who do not possess anything? If someone chases me away from a tree, I will leave to go to another. If someone annoys me in one place, who will stop me from moving on to somewhere else? Is a man to be found whose strength is sufficiently superior to mine and, in addition, who is sufficiently depraved, sufficiently lazy, and sufficiently ferocious to compel me to provide his sustenance while he remains idle? He would have to resolve not to let me out of his sight for a single instant and to keep me bound with very great care while he was asleep, for fear that I would escape or that I would kill him. In other words, he is obliged to expose himself voluntarily to a great deal more trouble than he wishes to avoid and than he gives me. After all that, does he relax his vigilance momentarily? Does an unexpected noise make him turn his head? I take twenty paces into the forest, my chains are broken, and he does not see me again in his lifetime.

Without prolonging these details to no purpose, each man should see that, since the bonds of servitude were not formed except from the mutual dependence of men and the reciprocal needs which unite them, it is impossible to enslave a man without previously having put him in the position of being unable to do without someone else. Since this situation does not exist in the state of nature, it leaves each man free of the yoke and makes the law of the strongest ineffective.

Having proved that inequality is hardly perceptible in the state of nature and that its influence there is almost nothing, it remains for me to show its origin and its progress in the successive developments of the human mind. After having shown that perfectibility, the social virtues, and the other faculties which natural man received in a potential form could never develop on their own, that for that to happen they needed the fortuitous combination of several foreign causes which might never have emerged and without which he would have lived for ever in his primitive condition, I still have to consider and bring forward the different accidents which could have perfected human reason while damaging the species, made a being evil while making him sociable, and from such a distant beginning finally lead man and the world to the point where we see them.

I confess that since the events which I have to describe could have come about in several ways, I am not able to choose except by conjecture. But apart from the fact that these conjectures become reasons when they are the most probable which can be derived from the nature of things and are the only means we have for discovering the truth, the conclusions I wish to deduce from mine will not, for that reason, be speculation, because on the principles which I have just established, one could not form any other system which does not furnish me the same results and from which I could not draw the same conclusions.

This will spare me expanding my reflections about the way in which the lapse of time compensates for the small probability of the events, concerning the surprising power of very slight causes when they act without stopping, about the impossibility, on the one hand, of destroying certain hypotheses, although, on the other hand, one finds oneself not in a position to give them the degree of certainty of facts, about how, when two facts, given as real, are to be linked by a sequence of intermediate facts

which are unknown or regarded as such, it is up to history, when one has access to it, to present the facts which link them and, when the history is lacking, it is up to philosophy to determine similar facts which could link them, and finally, about how, where the events are concerned, the similarity reduces the facts to a much smaller number of different classes than one might imagine. It is sufficient for me to offer these objects to the consideration of my judges; it is sufficient for me to have done it in such a way that ordinary readers would have no need to consider them.

Second Part

The first man who, having enclosed off a piece of land, got the idea of saying “This is mine” and found people simple enough to believe him was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, what wars, what murders, what miseries and horrors would someone have spared the human race who, pulling out the stakes or filling in the ditch, had cried out to his fellows, “Stop listening to this imposter. You are lost if you forget that the fruits belong to everyone and the earth belongs to no one.” It seems very likely that by that time things had already come to the point where they could no longer continue as they had been. For this idea of property, which depends on many previous ideas which could only have arisen in succession, was not formed in the human mind all of a sudden. A good deal of progress had to take place — acquiring significant industry and enlightenment, transmitting and increasing them from one age to the next — before arriving at this last stage in the state of nature. So let us resume these matters further back in time and try to gather under a single point of view this slow succession of events and knowledge, in their most natural order.

Man’s first sensation was that of his own existence, his first care his own preservation. The productions of the earth provided him all the necessary help; instinct prompted him to make use of them. Hunger and other appetites made him try in turn various ways of life. One appetite invited him to perpetuate his species, and this blind inclination, lacking all heart-felt feeling, produced only a purely animal act. Their needs satisfied,

the two sexes no longer recognized each other, and even the child was nothing to the mother as soon as it could do without her.

Such was the condition of emerging man; such was the life of an animal limited at first to pure sensations and profiting with difficulty from the gifts which nature offered him, far from dreaming of extracting anything from her. But soon difficulties presented themselves which he had to learn to overcome — the height of trees which prevented him from reaching their fruits, the competition with animals who were seeking to eat these fruits, the ferocity of those who wanted to take his life — all obliged him to apply himself to exercising his body. He had to make himself agile, a fast runner, and vigorous in combat. Natural weapons, which are tree branches and stones, were soon found at hand. He learned to overcome natural obstacles, to fight the other animals when necessary, to struggle for his sustenance even with men, or to make up for what he had to surrender to the stronger.

To the extent that the human race spread out, the difficulties multiplied with the men. Differences in soil, climate, and seasons could force them to establish differences in their ways of life. Some barren years, long harsh winters, and burning summers which consume everything demanded from them a new industry. Along the sea and rivers, they invented line and hook and became fishermen and fish-eaters. In the forests they created bows and arrows and became hunters and warriors. In cold countries, they covered themselves with the hides of beasts which they had killed. The lightning, a volcano, or some fortunate accident gave them knowledge of fire, a new resource against the rigour of winter. They learned to preserve this element, then to reproduce it, and finally to prepare meat with it which before they had devoured raw.

This repeated application of various beings to himself and of some beings to others must have naturally engendered in the human mind perceptions of certain connections. Those relationships which we express by the words large, small, strong, weak, fast, slow, fearful, bold, and other similar ideas, which he compared when necessary and almost without thinking, finally produced in him some sort of reflection or rather a mechanical prudence which indicated to him the precautions most essential to his safety.

The new enlightenment which resulted from this development increased his superiority over the other animals by making him aware of it. He practised setting traps for them, he fooled them in a thousand ways, and although several of those animals which could serve or harm him surpassed him in their fighting power or in speed at running, over time he became the master of some and the scourge of others. That's why the first time he glanced at himself produced in him the first movement of pride, and why, when he still could hardly distinguish ranks and looked at himself as preeminent thanks to his species, he was preparing from a long way away to claim that rank as an individual.

Although his fellow men were not for him what they are for us and he had hardly more interaction with them than with the other animals, they were not forgotten in his observations. The conformities which time could make him notice among them, his female, and himself made him judge those which he did not perceive, and seeing that they all behaved as he would have done in similar circumstances, he concluded that their way of thinking and feeling conformed entirely with his, and this important truth, firmly established in his mind, made him follow by a premonition as certain and more rapid than dialectic the best rules of conduct which were appropriate to follow for his advantage and safety with them.

Taught by experience that love of well being is the only motive of human actions, he found himself in a condition to distinguish the rare occasions when common interest should make him count on the assistance of his fellow men and the even rarer times when competition should make him distrust them. In the first case, he combined with them into a herd or at most into some sort of free association which laid no obligations on anyone and lasted only as long as the temporary need which had created it. In the second case, each man sought to secure his own advantage, whether by overt force if he believed he could, or by skill and subtlety if he felt himself the weakest.

That is how men could imperceptibly acquire some crude idea of mutual commitments and the advantage of fulfilling them, but only to the extent that present and perceptible interest could demand it. For looking ahead was nothing to them, and, far from concerning themselves with a distant future, they did not even dream about tomorrow. If it was a matter

of catching a deer, each man well understood that in that case he should keep his position faithfully. But if a hare happened to go past within reach of one of them, undoubtedly he went after it without scruple and, having caught his prey, worried very little about making his companions lose theirs.

It is easy to understand that this sort of interaction did not demand a language much more sophisticated than the language of crows or monkeys, who gather in groups in almost the same manner. Some inarticulate cries, lots of gestures, and some imitative noises must have made up the universal language for a long time. Since in each country some articulated and agreed upon signs were added to this, the institution of which, as I have already said, is not very easy to explain, there were particular languages, but crude and imperfect, almost like those various savage nations still have today. Under the pressure of time passing, the abundance of things I have to say, and the almost imperceptible progress of the beginnings, I am racing through multitudes of centuries all at once, for the more slowly the events came one after the other, the more quickly they can be described.

Eventually these first advances made man capable of making more rapid ones. The more the mind was enlightened, the more industry perfected itself. Soon he ceased to sleep under the first tree or to withdraw into caverns and found some sorts of hatchets made of hard, sharp stones that would serve to cut wood, dig the earth, and make huts out of branches, which they later decided to coat with clay and mud. This was the age of a first revolution which led to the establishment and differentiation of families, which introduced a form of property, and from which perhaps arose many quarrels and fights. However, as the strongest were probably the first to make themselves lodgings they felt capable of defending, it is plausible that the weak ones found it quicker and safer to imitate them rather than to try to dislodge them. And as for those who already had huts, each one must have rarely sought to take over his neighbour's, less because it did not belong to him than because it was useless to him and he could not have seized it without exposing himself to a lively fight with the family who occupied it.

The first developments of the heart were the result of a new situation which united husbands and wives, fathers and children in one common habitation. The habit of living together gave rise to the sweetest feelings known to men, conjugal and paternal love. Each family became a small society, all the more united since reciprocal attachment and freedom were its only bonds. And it was then that the first difference was established in the ways of life of the two sexes, which up to this point had had only one. The women became more sedentary and grew accustomed to looking after the hut and the children, while the man went off to search for their common sustenance. In this way, through a slightly softer life, the two sexes began to lose something of their ferocity and vigour. But if each one separately became less ready to fight against savage beasts, on the other hand it was easier to gather together to resist them in common.

In this new condition, with a simple and solitary life, very limited needs, and the implements which they had invented to provide for those needs, men enjoyed a great deal of leisure and used it to gather several types of commodities unknown to their fathers. And that was the first yoke they unwittingly imposed on themselves and the first source of the evils they were preparing for their descendants. For, apart from the fact that in this manner they continued to weaken their bodies and minds, since these commodities, through habit, lost almost all their charm and, at the same time, degenerated into real needs, the lack of them became much crueler than the sweetness of possessing them, and people were unhappy to lose them without being happy to own them.

Here one glimpses a little better how the use of speech was established or was imperceptibly perfected within the bosom of each family, and it is possible to conjecture again how various particular causes could extend language and accelerate its progress by making it more necessary. Some large floods or earthquakes surrounded some inhabited regions with water or precipices. Revolutions in the earth detached portions of the continent and split them up into islands. It is conceivable that among men brought together in this way and forced to live together, there must have formed a common idiom, more so than among those who wandered freely in the forests on the mainland. Thus, it is very possible that after their first attempts at navigation, some islanders brought among

us the use of speech. And it is at least very probable that society and languages derive their origin from the islands and were perfected there before being known on the continent.

Everything began to change how it looked. Men who have up to this point wandered in the woods, once they take up a more fixed situation, slowly come together and are united in various bands and finally form in each country a particular nation, unified in their customary morals and characters, not by regulations and laws but by the same way of life and diet, and by the common influence of the climate. Having permanent neighbourhood life cannot fail to engender eventually some intercourse among the various families. The young people of different sexes live in neighbouring huts, and the casual interaction demanded by nature soon leads, through time spent in each other's company, to another no less sweet and more permanent companionship. People grow accustomed to considering different objects and making comparisons: they acquire imperceptibly ideas of merit and beauty, which produce feelings of preference. By dint of seeing one another, they can no longer go without seeing each other again. A tender and sweet feeling insinuates itself in the soul and at the least opposition turns into an impetuous rage. Jealousy awakens with love, discord triumphs, and the softest of passions receives sacrifices of human blood.

To the extent that ideas and feelings follow on each other, the mind and heart are trained, the human race continues to become domesticated, relationships expand, and bonds are tightened. People got used to assembling in front of the huts or around a large tree: singing and dancing, true children of love and leisure, became the amusement or rather the occupation of idle men and women gathered together. Each one began to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value. The one who sang or danced the best, the handsomest, the strongest, the most skilful, or the most eloquent became the most highly thought of, and that was the first step towards inequality and, at the same time, toward vice. For from these first preferences were born, on the one hand, vanity and scorn and, on the other, shame and envy, and the fermentation caused by these new leavening agents eventually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.

As soon as men had started mutually to appreciate one another and the idea of respect was formed in their minds, each one claimed a right to it, and it was no longer possible to fail to respect anyone with impunity. From that emerged the first obligations for civility, even among savages, and from that all voluntary wrong became an outrage, because as well as the harm resulting from the injury, the offended party often considered the contempt for his person more insupportable than the harm itself. And so, because each man punished the contempt which had been shown to him in a manner proportional to his own self-esteem, acts of vengeance became terrible, and men grew bloody and cruel. That is precisely the stage reached by the majority of savage people known to us. And because they have not sufficiently distinguished among ideas and observed how distant these savage people already were from the first state of nature, several men have rushed to conclude that man is naturally cruel and needs civilization to moderate him, whereas nothing is as sweet as he is in his primitive condition, when, placed by nature at equal distances from the stupidity of animals and the lethal enlightenment of civil man and equally limited by instinct and reason to protecting himself from the harm which threatens him, he is restrained by natural pity from doing harm to anyone himself, since nothing gives him an inclination to do so, not even after he has been harmed. For, according the axiom of the wise Locke, where there is no property there is no sense of injury.*

But it is necessary to remark that society, once started, and the relationships already established among men demanded in them different qualities from those which they held from their primitive constitution. With morality beginning to introduce itself into human actions and, before there were laws, each man being the sole judge and avenger of the offences he had received, the kindness suitable in the pure state of nature was no longer something appropriate to emerging society. It was necessary that punishments became more severe to the extent that opportunities to offend became more frequent, and the terror of vengeance had to take the place of the restraining power of laws. Thus, although men had developed less endurance and natural pity had already suffered some change, because this period in the development of human faculties held a clear middle position between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our self-love [amour propre], it must have been the

happiest and most durable epoch. The more one reflects on this, the more one finds that this state was the least subject to revolutions and the best for man (16) and that he must have emerged from it by some fatal chance which for the common good ought never to have happened. The example of savages, which people have almost all found alike on this point, confirms that the human race was made to rest in this state forever, that it is the true youth of the world, and that all later progress has apparently been so many steps towards the perfection of the individual but has, in fact, been towards the decrepitude of the species.

As long as men were content with rustic huts, as long as they limited themselves to stitching their clothes of skin with thorns or fish bones, to deck themselves out with feathers and shells, to paint their bodies various colours, to perfect or embellish their bows and arrows, to cut with sharp stones some fishing canoes or some crude musical instruments — in a word, as long as they did not occupy themselves except with tasks which one man could do by himself and to arts which did not require the coordination of several hands, they lived free, healthy, good, and happy lives, as much as their nature enabled them to do so, and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent interaction. But from the moment a man had need of someone else's help, from the time they noticed that it was useful for one man alone to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, work became necessary, and the vast forests were changed into smiling fields, which had to be watered with men's sweat and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow along with the crops.

Metallurgy and agriculture were the two arts whose invention produced this great revolution. For the poet what has civilized men and ruined the human race is gold and silver, but for the philosopher it is iron and wheat. Thus, both of these were unknown to the savages of America, who therefore have always remained savage. Other people even seem to have stayed barbarians as long as they practised one of these arts without the other. And perhaps one of the best reasons why Europe has been, if not earlier, at least more constantly and better civilized than the other parts of the world, is that it has been, at one and the same time, the most abundantly supplied with iron and the most fertile in wheat.

It is very difficult to conjecture how men came to know and use iron. For it is not credible that they got the idea on their own of extracting the raw material from the mine and giving it the necessary preparations to get it to fuse, before they knew how it would turn out. On the other hand, one can even less attribute this discovery to some accidental fire, since mines are established only in dry places stripped of trees and plants, so that one could say that nature had taken precautions to conceal this fatal secret from us. So the only thing left is that an extraordinary event with some volcano which, by ejecting metallic materials in fusion, could have given the observers the idea of imitating this natural operation. Even so, it is necessary to assume they had plenty of courage and foresight to undertake such a difficult task and to see from a considerable distance the advantages which they could derive from it, something which is hardly appropriate to minds already more trained that theirs must have been.

As for agriculture, its principle was known long before its practice was established, and it is scarcely possible that men who were constantly busy taking their sustenance from trees and plants did not relatively soon get an idea of the ways nature uses to grow plants. But their industry probably did not turn in this direction until a great deal later, either because the trees, which, along with hunting and fishing, provided their nourishment, did not need their care, or because they did not know the use of wheat or lacked the tools to cultivate it, or for lack of foresight for future needs, or finally because they lacked the means to prevent others from taking away the fruits of their labour. Once they became more industrious, it is credible that they began by using sharp stones and pointed sticks to cultivate some vegetables or roots around their huts long before they knew how to prepare wheat and had the tools necessary for large-scale cultivation. To say nothing of the fact that, in order to devote oneself to this occupation and seed the earth, one has to resolve at first to give up something in order gain a great deal later on, a precaution far removed from the mind of savage man who, as I have said, has considerable trouble thinking in the morning about his evening needs.

The invention of other arts was thus necessary to force the human race to apply itself to the art of agriculture. As soon as men were needed to melt and forge iron, other men had to feed them. The more the number of

workers increased, the less the number of hands used to provide their common sustenance, without there being fewer mouths to consume it. And since some of them had to have foodstuffs in exchange for their iron, the others finally discovered the secret of using iron to increase the supply of staple goods. From that was born, on the one hand, farming and agriculture and, on the other, the art of working with metal and multiplying its uses.

From the cultivation of the land necessarily followed its division, and from property, once it became recognized, the first rules of justice. For in order to give each man what is his, it is necessary that each man can have something. In addition, men began to direct their gaze into the future and, since all of them saw that they had some goods to lose, there was no one who did not have to fear personal retaliation for the wrongs which he could do to someone else. This origin is all the more natural since it is impossible to conceive of the idea of property emerging from anything other than manual labour. For one cannot see what man can add over and above his own work in order to appropriate things which he has not made.* It is labour alone which, by giving the farmer the right to the productions of the earth which he has worked on, gives him as a consequence a right to what produced them, at least until the harvest, and thus from year to year. Since that constitutes a continual possession, it is easily transformed into property. When the ancients, says Grotius, gave Ceres the epithet of legislator and the name Thesmophories to a festival celebrated in her name, they made it clear, by this action, that the division of the earth produced a new sort of right, that is, the right of property distinguished from the right which results from natural law.*

Once things were in this state, they could have remained equal, if the talents had been equal, and if, for instance, the use of iron and the consumption of foodstuffs had always remained in a precise balance. But the proportion, which nothing maintained, was soon broken. The strongest man did more of the work. The most skillful was better at turning his work to his own advantage. The most ingenious found ways to shorten his labour. The farmer had a greater need for iron or the iron-worker for wheat, and, while both worked equally, one earned a great deal while the other hardly had enough to live. In this way, natural inequality

manifests itself imperceptibly with inequality arising out of social groups, and the differences among men, developed out of differences in circumstances, became more perceptible and more permanent in their effects and began to influence the lot of individuals in the same proportion.

Once things had reached this point, it is easy to imagine the rest. I will not pause to describe the successive inventions of the other arts, the progress of languages, the testing and use of talents, the inequality of fortunes, the use and abuse of riches, or all those details which follow these and which everyone can easily provide. I will limit myself only to casting a glance on the human race situated in this new order of things.

There we are with all our faculties developed, memory and imagination at work, self-love [amour propre] acting out of selfish interests, reason activated, and the mind almost having attained the limit of the perfection of which it is capable. There we have all the natural qualities set into action, the rank and lot of each man established, not only on the basis of the quality of goods and the power of helping or harming, but on the basis of the mind, beauty, strength or skill, and merit or talents. Since these qualities were the only ones which could attract respect, it was soon necessary to have them or to pretend to have them and, for one's own advantage, to show oneself as different from what one, in fact, was. Being and appearing became two entirely different things, and from this distinction emerged impressive ostentation, deceitful cunning, and all the vices which come in their wake

On the other hand, no matter how free and independent man had been previously, there he was now, because of a multitude of new needs, subject, as it were, to all of nature and, above all, to his fellow men, to whom he has, in a sense, become a slave, even in becoming their master: if rich, he needs their services; if poor, he needs their help, and being between the two does not enable him to do without them. Thus, he must seek without pause to interest them in his lot and to make them discover a real or apparent profit for themselves in working for his. This makes him deceitful and artificial with some men, imperious and harsh with others, and requires him to abuse all those whom he needs, when he cannot make them afraid of him and does not find it in his interests to serve them

usefully. Finally, consuming ambition, the desire to raise the relative size of one's fortune, less from a real need than to set oneself above others, inspires in all men a dark tendency to inflict mutual injuries on each other, a secret jealousy all the more dangerous because, in order to strike a blow in greater safety, it often assumes a mask of good will: in a word, competition and rivalry, on the one hand, and opposing interests on the other and the constant hidden desire to make one's profit at the expense of others — all these evils are the first effects of property and the inseparable procession accompanying emerging inequality.

Before people invented the signs which represent riches, wealth could scarcely have consisted of anything other than lands and animals, the only real goods men could possess. Now, when inheritances had increased in number and extent to the point of covering all the land and of creating boundaries for everyone, some could no longer grow except at the expense of others, and the superfluous ones left over, whom weakness or idleness had prevented from acquiring an inheritance in their turn, became poor without having lost anything, because, with everything changing around them, they alone had not changed and so were obliged to receive or steal their sustenance from the hands of the rich. From that began to emerge, according to the diverse characters of the rich and poor, dominion and servitude, or violence and plunder. The rich, for their part, had hardly learned about the pleasure of dominating than they soon disdained all other pleasures, and, making use of their old slaves to conquer new ones, dreamed only of subjugating and enslaving their neighbours, like those starving wolves who, having once tasted human flesh, reject all other food and no longer want to eat anything but men.

In this way, the most powerful or the most miserable used their force or their needs to create a sort of right to the goods of others, equivalent, according to them, to the right of property. Once equality was fractured, the most horrific disorder followed. In this way, the usurpations of the rich, the thievery of the poor, and the frantic passions of all snuffed out natural pity and the still feeble voice of justice and made men avaricious, ambitious, and evil. There arose a perpetual conflict between the right of the strongest and the right of the first occupant, something which ended only in fights and murders (17). The emerging society gave way to the most

horrible state of war; the human race, debased and desolate, unable to retrace its steps or renounce the unfortunate acquisitions it had made, and working only for its shame by abusing the faculties which honour it, brought itself to the verge of its own ruin.

Dismayed by newness of the evils, both rich man and poor man desire to flee from wealth, and he hates what he once prayed for.*

It is not possible that men should not finally have reflected about a situation as miserable as this and about the calamities devastating them. The rich, above all, must soon have felt how much a perpetual war was disadvantageous to them, one in which they alone paid all the costs and where the risks to life were common to all, while the risk to goods was an individual matter. Moreover, however they might have been able to colour their usurpations, they knew well enough that they were established only on a precarious and abusive right and that, since their acquisitions had been attained by force, force could take them away from them without their having a reason to complain. Even those who had been enriched by their industry alone could hardly base their property on better claims. They could well say, “I’m the one who built this wall. I won this land through my labour.” “Who has given you its dimensions,” people could reply to them, “and by virtue of what right do you claim to be paid at our expense for labour which we did not impose on you? Do you not know that a multitude of your brothers are dying or suffering from a need for what you have in excess and that you had to have express and unanimous consent of the human race in order to arrogate to yourself from the common sustenance everything over and above your own needs?” Lacking valid reasons to justify himself and sufficient force to defend himself; easily crushing an individual, but himself crushed by gangs of bandits; alone against everyone and, because of mutual jealousy, unable to join with his equals against an enemy united by a common hope of pillage, the rich man, hard pressed by necessity, eventually conceived the most well-considered project which ever entered the human mind. That was to use in his favour the very forces of those who were attacking him, to turn his enemies into his defenders, to inspire them with other maxims, and to give them other institutions which were as advantageous to him as natural right was against him.

With this in mind, after having shown his neighbours the horror of a situation which armed them all against each other, which made their possessions as onerous as their needs, and in which no one found his security either in poverty or in wealth, he easily came up with specious reasons for leading them to his goal. “Let us unite,” he said to them, “to protect the weak from oppression, to restrain the ambitious, and to assure to each man the possession of what belongs to him. Let us set up rules of justice and peace to which everyone has a duty to conform, which do not exempt anyone, and which in some way make up for the whims of fortune by subjecting the powerful and the weak equally to mutual obligations. In a word, instead of turning our strengths against ourselves, let us collect them into one supreme power which governs us by wise laws, and which protects and defends all the members of the association, repels common enemies, and keeps us in an eternal harmony.”

He required much less than the equivalent of this speech to convince crude and easily seduced men, who, in addition, had too many disputes to disentangle among themselves to be able to go without arbitrators and too much avarice and ambition to be able to do without masters for any length of time. They all ran to get into their chains, believing they were assuring their liberty. For although they had sufficient reason to sense the advantages of a political establishment, they did not have sufficient experience to anticipate its dangers. The most capable of sensing the abuses in advance were precisely the ones who counted on profiting from them, and even the wise ones saw that they had to resolve themselves to sacrifice a part of their liberty in order to preserve the other part, just as a wounded man has his arm cut off to save the rest of his body.

Such was, or must have been, the origin of society and laws, something which provided new obstacles for the weak and new power to the rich (18), destroyed natural liberty irretrievably, established forever the law of property and inequality, turned a clever usurpation into an irrevocable right, and for the profit of a few ambitious men from that time on subjected all the human race to labour, servitude, and misery. It is easy to see how the establishment of one society made the establishment of all the others indispensable and how, to made headway against united forces, people had to unite in their turn.

Societies multiplied or extended themselves rapidly and soon covered the entire surface of the earth. It was no longer possible to find a single corner of the universe where one could free oneself from the yoke and duck out from under the often badly wielded sword which each man saw permanently suspended above his own head. Since civil right thus became the common rule for citizens, the law of nature had no place except among the various societies, where, under the name of the law of nations, it was tempered with a few tacit conventions to make commerce possible and to take the place of natural commiseration, which by losing all the power between one society and another which it had had between man and man, no longer resides anywhere other than in some great cosmopolitan souls, who transcend the imaginary barriers separating peoples and who, following the example of the Sovereign Being who created them, embrace all the human race in their benevolence.

Since the political bodies in this way remained in a state of nature among themselves, they soon felt the inconveniences which had forced individuals to leave it, and this state became even more lethal among these great bodies than it had ever been before among the individuals of whom they were composed. From that emerged national wars, battles, murders, reprisals which make nature tremble and shock reason, and all those horrible prejudices which place the honour of shedding human blood in the ranks of virtue. The most decent people learned to reckon among their duties the slaughter of their fellow men. Finally, men were seen massacring each other by the thousands without knowing why. And more murders were committed in a single day of fighting and more horrors in the capture of a single town than had been committed in the state of nature during entire centuries over the whole face of the earth. Such are the first effects one glimpses of the division of the human race into different societies. Let us go back to their founding.

I know that several people have provided other origins for political societies, like conquests by the more powerful or the union of the weak, and the choice among these causes is irrelevant to what I want to establish. However, the one I have just laid out seems to me the most natural for the following reasons: 1. In the first case, since the right of conquest is not a right, it could not have founded any other rights. The conqueror and the

vanquished people would constantly remain in a state of mutual warfare, unless the nation regained its full liberty and voluntarily chose its conqueror as its leader. Up to that point, whatever capitulations had been made, since they were not founded on anything but violence and consequently rendered null and void, there cannot be with this hypothesis either a true society or a political body, or any law other than that of the strongest. 2. These words strong and weak are ambiguous in the second case. In the interval occurring between the establishment of the rights of property or of the first occupant and that of political governments, the meaning of these terms is better rendered by the words poor and rich, because, in fact, before the laws, a man did not have any way to subjugate his equals other than by attacking their goods or giving them some portion of his own. 3. Since the poor had nothing to lose but their freedom, it would have been very foolish for them voluntarily to give away the one benefit remaining to them without gaining anything in return. By contrast, since the rich were, so to speak, sensitive about all aspects of their goods, it was much easier to harm them, and thus they had to take more precautions to protect themselves. Finally it is reasonable to believe that something was invented by those to whom it is useful rather than by those it harms.

The newly emerging government did not have a constant and regular form. The lack of philosophy and experience enabled men to see only the present inconveniences, and they did not think of remedying others except to the extent that they arose. In spite of all the work of the wisest legislators, the political state always remained imperfect, because it was almost a work of chance and because, since it began badly, time revealed faults in it and suggested remedies but could never repair the vices in the constitution. People constantly repaired it, whereas what was required was to begin by clearing the air and rejecting all the old materials, as Lycurgus did at Sparta,[*] in order to raise a good edifice later. At first, society consisted only of some general conventions which all the individuals agreed to observe, and the community pledged itself to guarantee these for each individual. Experience necessarily revealed how weak such a constitution was and how easy it was for those who broke these conventions to avoid conviction or punishment for faults for which the public alone was to be the witness and judge. The law must have been

evaded in a thousand ways, and the inconveniences and disorders must have continually multiplied, in order for people eventually to think of conferring on particular individuals the dangerous trust of public authority and for them to commit to magistrates the care of enforcing the deliberations of the people. For to say that leaders were chosen before the confederation was created and that ministers of law existed before the laws themselves is a hypothesis which does not admit of serious debate.

It would be no more reasonable to believe that people were at the start thrown into the arms of an absolute master, unconditionally and irrevocably, and that that the first way of providing communal security which proud and untamed men could have imagined was to hurl themselves into slavery. In fact, why did they give themselves superiors, unless it was to defend them against oppression and to protect their goods, their liberty, and their lives, which are, so to speak, the constituent elements of their being? Now, in the relationships between man and man, since the worst which could happen to one is to see himself at the discretion of another, would it not have been against good sense to begin by handing over to the hands of a leader the only things for whose preservation he required his help? What equivalent could he have offered them for conceding such a fine right? If he dared to demand it under the pretext of defending them, would he not have immediately received the response of the old story: What more will the enemy do to us? It is thus incontestable and the fundamental maxim of all political right that the people gave themselves leaders to defend their liberty and not to enslave them. If we have a prince, said Pliny to Trajan, it is so that he may preserve us from having a master.*

Our political writers produce the same sophisms about the love of liberty which our philosophers produce about the state of nature. On the basis of things they see, they judge very different matters which they have not seen, and they attribute to men a natural inclination to servitude because of the patience with which the men they see before their eyes support theirs, without thinking that it is the same with liberty as with innocence and virtue, whose price one does not feel except to the extent that one enjoys them oneself and the taste for which is lost as soon as they are lost. “I know the delights of your country,” said Brasidas to a satrap

who was comparing the life of Sparta with that of Persepolis, “but you cannot know the delights of mine.”*

Just as an untamed stallion bristles his mane, strikes the earth with his hoof, and struggles impetuously at the very approach of a bit, while a trained horse patiently endures the whip and the spur, barbarous man does not bend his head under the yoke which civilized man carries without a murmur, and he prefers the most stormy liberty to a quiet subjugation. Thus, we must not judge the natural disposition of man for or against servitude by the degradation of enslaved people but by the wonderful things all free people have done to protect themselves against oppression. I know that oppressed people do nothing but boast without pause about the peace and repose they enjoy in their chains, and that they call the most miserable slavery peace,* but when I see the others sacrificing pleasures, repose, riches, power, and life itself to the preservation of the only good so disdained by those who have lost it, when I see animals born free and abhorring captivity smashing their heads against the bars of their prison, when I see multitudes of entirely naked savages despising European pleasures and enduring hunger, fire, sword, and death merely to preserve their independence, I feel that it is not appropriate for slaves to reason about freedom.

As for paternal authority, from which several people have derived absolute government and all of society, without going back over the proofs to the contrary by Locke and Sidney,* it is enough to observe that nothing in the world is further from the ferocious spirit of despotism than the softness of this authority, which considers more the advantage of the one who obeys than the utility of the one who commands, that by the law of nature the father is not the master of the child except for the time the father’s help is necessary to him, that once beyond this term they become equals, and that then the son, perfectly independent of his father, owes him only respect and not obedience. For gratitude is surely a duty which must be rendered, but not a right which can be demanded.

Instead of saying that civil society derives from paternal power, one should say the reverse, that it is from society that this power draws its main strength: an individual was not recognized as the father of several children until they remained gathered around him. The father’s goods, of

which he is truly the master, are the bonds which keep his children dependent on him, and he is able to give them a part of his estate only in proportion to the extent that they have well deserved it by a constant deference to his wishes. Now, far from being able to look forward to a similar favour from their despot, the subjects belong to him as a personal possession, both they and all they own, or at least that is what he claims, so they are reduced to receiving as a favour what he leaves them of their own goods. He carries out justice when he robs them; he does them a favour when he lets them live.

In continuing to examine things in this way by focusing on rights, we would find no more solidity than truth in the voluntary establishment of a tyranny, and it would be difficult to show the validity of a contract which would be binding on only one of the parties, in which everything would be placed on one side and nothing on the other, and which would turn out only to the prejudice of the man who committed himself. Even today this odious system is very far from being that of wise and good monarchs, and above all the kings of France, as we can see in various parts of their edicts and in particular in the following passage from a celebrated writing, published in 1667, in the name of and by the orders of Louis XIV: Let no one say, therefore, that the sovereign is not subject to the laws of his state, since the contrary proposition is a truth of the law of nations, which flattery has sometimes attacked, but which good princes have always defended as a divinity protecting their states. How much more legitimate is it to say with the wise Plato that the perfect happiness of a kingdom is that a prince is obeyed by his subjects, that a prince obeys the law, and that the law is right and always aiming at the public good.

I shall not stop to explore whether, since liberty is the most noble of man's faculties, it is not degrading his nature, putting him on the level of animals enslaved by instinct, and offending even the Author of his being to renounce unreservedly the most precious of all His gifts, and to submit to committing all the crimes which He has forbidden to us in order to please a ferocious or insane master, and whether this Divine Workman must be more irritated to see his most beautiful work destroyed than to see it dishonoured. I will pass over, if you wish, the authority of Barbeyrac,[*] who states clearly, following Locke, that no one can sell his liberty to the extent

of submitting himself to an arbitrary power which treats him as it fancies: "For," he adds, "that would be selling his own life of which he not the master." I will only ask by what right those who have not been afraid to debase themselves to such a degree could have subjected their posterity to the same ignominy and to renounce on their behalf goods which do not depend on their liberality and without which life itself is onerous to all those worthy of it.

Pufendorf says that just as one transfers one's goods to someone else by conventions and contracts, one can also strip oneself of one's own liberty in favour of someone else.* It seems to me that that is extremely poor reasoning. For, first of all, the goods which I alienate become something totally foreign to me, and their abuse is indifferent to me. But it is important that someone does not abuse my liberty, and I cannot, without making myself culpable of bad things which I will be forced to do, risk becoming an instrument for crime. In addition, given that the right of property is only a convention and a human institution, any man can dispose of what he possesses as he wishes, but it is not the same with the essential gifts of nature, such as life and liberty, which each man is permitted to enjoy and concerning which it is at least doubtful that one has the right to strip oneself of them. In giving away one, people degrade their being; in giving away the other they destroy their being as much as they can. And since no temporal goods can make up for one or the other, it would offend nature and reason at the same time to renounce them no matter what the cost. But if one could alienate his freedom just as he can his goods, the difference would be very great for the children who enjoy their father's goods only by transmission of his right, whereas, since liberty is a gift which they hold from nature in their capacity as men, their parents have not had any right to take it away from them, so that just as it was necessary to treat nature with violence in order to establish slavery, it was necessary to change nature to perpetuate this right. And the jurists who gravely pronounced that the child of a slave was born a slave have decided in different terms that man is not born a man.

Hence, it appears certain to me that not only did governments not begin through arbitrary power, which is only their corruption and extreme limit and which leads them back finally to the single law of the strongest,

for which they were initially the remedy, but also that, even if that is the way they did start, this power, being by its nature illegitimate, could not have served as the foundation for the rights of society and, as result, for institutional inequality.

Without entering today into investigations which remain to be made on the nature of the fundamental compact of all governments, I am limiting myself by following common opinion in considering here the establishment of the political body a real contract between the people and the leaders which it chooses for itself, a contract through which the two parties oblige themselves to observe laws which are stipulated in it and which form the bonds of their union. Since the people have, so far as social relations are concerned, all united their wills into a single will, all the articles on which this will is explicitly clear become so many fundamental laws which oblige all members of the state without exception. One of them rules on the selection and power of the magistrates charged with looking after the execution of the others. This power extends to everything which can maintain the constitution, without going to the point of changing it. To this are added honours which make the laws and their ministers respectable, and for the latter some prerogatives which compensate them for the onerous work which a good administration demands. The magistrate, for his part, commits himself to using the power entrusted to him only according to the intention of the constituents in order to keep each man in the peaceful enjoyment of what belongs to him and to prefer on every occasion public utility over his own interest.

Before experience had demonstrated or knowledge of the human heart had provided a preview of the inevitable abuses of such a constitution, it must have appeared all the better because those who were charged with keeping watch over its preservation were themselves the most interested in that. For since the magistracy and its rights were established only on fundamental laws, as soon as the latter were destroyed, the magistrates would cease to be legitimate, the people would no longer be bound to obey them, and, since it was not the magistrate but the law which constituted the essence of the state, each man would by right return to his natural liberty.

The slightest attentive reflection on this matter would confirm this with new reasons, and through the nature of the contract one would see that it could not be irrevocable. For if there were no superior power which could guarantee the fidelity of the contracting parties or force them to fulfill their reciprocal commitments, the parties would remain the only judges in their own case, and each of them would always have the right of renouncing the contract, as soon as they found that another party infringed on the conditions or that they ceased to find it agreeable. It is on this principle that it seems the right to abdicate could be founded. Now, to consider, as we are doing, only the human institution: if the magistrate who has all the power in his hands and who appropriates all the advantages of the contract for himself, nevertheless had the right to renounce his authority, there is all the stronger reason that the people who pay for all the faults of their leaders, should have the right to renounce their dependency.

But the horrible dissentions and the infinite disorders which this dangerous power would necessarily bring with it show more than anything else how much human governments needed a more solid basis than reason alone and how much it was necessary to the public peace that Divine Will intervene to give sovereign authority a sacred and inviolable character which removes from the subjects the fatal right of disposing of it. If religion had achieved only this benefit for men, that would have been enough to require them to cherish and adopt it, even with its abuses, because it spares even more blood than fanaticism causes men to shed. But let us follow the thread of our hypothesis.

The various forms of government derive their origin from the greater or lesser differences which existed among the individuals at the moment of its institution. Was one man eminent in power, virtue, riches, or credit? He was elected the only magistrate, and the state became a monarchy. If several men, more or less equal among themselves, prevailed over all the others, they were elected jointly, and people had an aristocracy. Those whose fortune or talents were less disproportionate and who were the least removed from the state of nature kept the supreme administration communal and formed a democracy. Time verified which of these forms was the most advantageous for men. Some remained solely subjected to

the laws; others soon obeyed masters. Citizens wanted to preserve their freedom; subjects thought of nothing but taking that away from their neighbours, since they were incapable of enduring that others were enjoying benefits which they no longer enjoyed themselves. In a word, on one side were riches and conquests, on the other happiness and virtue.

In these various governments, all the magistrates at first were elected, and if wealth did not win out, the preference was given to merit, which gives a natural ascendancy, and to age, which provides experience in business and composure in deliberations. The Hebrew elders, the Gerontes in Sparta, the Senate in Rome, and even the etymology of our word Seigneur* show how much old age was respected in earlier times. The more elections fell to men of advanced age, the more frequent they were, and the more difficulties made themselves felt. Intrigues were introduced, factions formed, parties grew embittered, civil wars flared up, and finally the blood of citizens was sacrificed for the alleged happiness of the state, and people were on the verge of falling back into the anarchy of earlier times. The ambition of the principals profited from these circumstances in order to perpetuate their official positions within their families; the people, already accustomed to dependency, to repose, to the commodities of life, and already beyond the state of breaking their chains, agreed to allow their servitude to increase in order to reinforce their tranquility, and that is how the leaders became hereditary and grew accustomed to looking on their magistrate's office as a family benefit, to considering themselves as the owners of the state, in which at first they were only officials, to calling their fellow citizens their slaves, to counting them like cattle among the number of things which belonged to them, and to calling themselves equal to the gods and kings of kings.

If we follow the progress of inequality in these different revolutions, we will find that the establishment of law and of the right of property was its first stage, the institution of the magistracy the second, and that the third and last was the change of legitimate power into arbitrary power, so that the condition of the rich and poor was authorized by the first age, that of the powerful and the weak by the second, and that of master and slave by the third, which is the final degree of inequality and the limit to which

all the others eventually lead, until new revolutions dissolve the government entirely or move it closer to a legitimate institution.

To understand the necessity of this progress we must consider, not so much the motives for the establishment of the political body, as the form which it takes as it is set up and the inconveniences which it brings with it. For the vices which make social institutions necessary are the same which make its abuse inevitable. And since, with the sole exception of Sparta, where the law watched principally over the education of the children and where Lycurgus established customs, which meant he could almost dispense with adding laws to them, laws in general, which are not as strong as passions, contain men without changing them, it would be easy to prove that every government which, without being corrupted or altered, always marched according to the purpose for which it was set up would have been instituted unnecessarily, and that a country where no one evaded the laws and abused the magistracy would have no need either of magistrates or of laws.

Political distinctions necessarily lead to civil distinctions. Inequality, growing between the people and their leaders, soon made itself felt among individuals and was modified in a thousand ways according to passions, talents, and events. The magistrate could not usurp illegitimate power without creating some followers to whom he was forced to concede part of it. In addition, since the citizens do not let themselves be oppressed except to the extent that they are led on by blind ambition and since they look more below than above themselves, dominion becomes dearer to them than independence, and they consent to carry chains in order to be able to give them out in their turn. It is very difficult to reduce to obedience someone who does not seek to command, and the most adroit politician would not succeed in subjecting men who wished only to be free. But inequality extends itself without difficulty among ambitious and cowardly souls, who are always ready to run the risks of fortune and to dominate or serve almost indifferently, according to whether it is favourable or unfavourable to them.

This is why there had to come a time when the eyes of the people were so spellbound that their leaders only had to say to the smallest man: be great, you and all your race. Immediately he appeared great to everyone as

well as in his own eyes, and his descendants were raised even more, in proportion to their distance from him. The more remote and uncertain the cause, the more the effect grew. The more lazy members one could count in one family, the more illustrious it became.

If this were the place here to go into details, I would easily explain how, even without government getting involved, inequality in prestige and authority becomes inevitable among individuals (19) as soon as they are united into the same society and are forced to make comparisons among themselves and to take into account the differences which they find in the continual use they have to make of one another. These differences are of several types, but, in general, since riches, nobility or rank, power and personal merit are the principal distinctions by which people measure themselves in society, I would prove that the harmony or the conflict of these various forces is the most certain indication of whether a state is well or badly constituted. I would reveal that among these four types of inequality, since personal qualities are the origin of all the others, wealth is the last to which they are finally reduced, because, since it is the most immediately useful for well being and the easiest to communicate, one readily makes use of it to purchase all the rest — an observation which enables one to judge fairly precisely the extent to which each people is removed from its primitive institution and how far along the road it has traveled towards the final limit of corruption. I would point out how much this universal desire for reputation, honours, and preferment, which devours us all, trains and compares talents and strengths, how much it excites and multiplies the passions, and, by turning all men into competitors, rivals, or rather enemies, and by making so many entrants run the same course, how much it causes setbacks, successes, and catastrophes of all kinds every day. I would show that it is to this passionate desire to have people talk about oneself, to this furor to distinguish oneself which keeps us almost always outside ourselves, we owe what is best and worst among men, our virtues and our vices, our sciences and our mistakes, our conquerors and our philosophers, that is, a multitude of bad things against a small number of good ones. Finally, I would prove that if one sees a handful of powerful and rich men at the pinnacle of their greatness and fortune, while the crowd grovels in obscurity and misery, it is because the former value the things which they

enjoy only to the extent that others are deprived of them and because, without changing their social position, they would cease to be happy if the people ceased to be miserable.

But these details alone would be material for a considerable work in which one weighed the advantages and the inconvenience of all governments, relative to the rights of the state of nature, and where one would unmask all the different faces behind which inequality has shown itself up to the present time and will be able to show itself in centuries to come, according to the nature of those governments and the revolutions which time will necessarily bring about in them. One would see the multitude oppressed from inside as a result of the very precautions which it had taken against what menaced it from outside. One would see oppression constantly growing without the oppressed ever being able to know what limits it would have or what legitimate means they had left to stop it. One would see the rights of citizens and national liberties extinguished little by little, and the complaints of the weak treated as seditious murmurs. One would see politics restrict the honour of defending the common cause to a mercenary section of the population. From that one would see emerge the need for taxes, the discouraged farmer leaving his fields even during peace time and abandoning the plough to gird on a sword. One would see born lethal rules and bizarre points of honour. One would see the defenders of the homeland sooner or later becoming its enemies, constantly holding a raised dagger over their fellow citizens, and there would come a time when one would hear them saying to the oppressor of their country:

If you order me to plunge a sword into my brother's chest or into my parent's throat or into the womb of my pregnant wife, I will do all that, even though my right hand is unwilling.*

From the extreme inequality in conditions and fortunes, from the diversity of passions and talents, from useless arts, from pernicious arts, and from frivolous sciences emerge mobs of prejudices, equally contrary to reason, happiness, and virtue. One would see the leaders fomenting everything which could make men in groups weak and disunite them, everything which could give a society an air of apparent harmony and sow in it a seed of real division, everything which could inspire in the different

orders a mutual defiance and hatred through their opposing rights and interests, and thus fortify the power which contains them all.

From the bosom of this disorder and of these revolutions despotism, lifting by degrees its hideous head and devouring everything which it had perceived as good and healthy in all sections of the state, finally would come to the point of riding roughshod over the laws and the people and establishing itself on the ruins of the republic. The time preceding this last change would be a period of troubles and calamities, but by the end everything would be swallowed up by the monster, and the people would no longer have leaders and laws, but only tyrants. From this moment on, it would also cease to be a question of morals and virtue, for wherever despotism reigns, in which there is no hope from honesty,* it suffers no other master. As soon as it speaks, one can consult neither probity nor duty, and the blindest obedience is the only virtue which remains for slaves.

This is the final stage of inequality and the extreme point which closes the circle and touches the point where we set out. Here all individuals become equal again because they are nothing, and since the subjects have no law other than the will of the master, and the master has no other rule than his passions, the notions of good and the principles of justice vanish once more. Here everything is led back to the single law of the strongest and, as a result, to a new state of nature different from the one with which we began, for the first one was a state of nature in its purity, and the last one is the fruit of an excess of corruption. Moreover, there is so little difference between these two states, and the contract with the government is dissolved by despotism in such a manner that the despot is master only as long as he is the strongest and that, as soon as he can be expelled, he has nothing he can invoke against the violence. The uprising which ends by strangling or dethroning a sultan is an act every bit as lawful as those by which the previous day he disposed of the lives and the goods of his subjects. Force alone preserved him, and force alone overturns him. Thus, everything occurs according to natural order, and whatever the outcome of these short and frequent revolutions may be, no one can complain of injustice from anyone, but only of his own imprudence or misfortune.

By thus discovering and following the forgotten and lost routes which must have led man from the natural state to the civil state, and by re-establishing, along with the intermediate stages which I have just noted, those which the pressures of time have made me suppress or which my imagination has not suggested to me, every attentive reader cannot but be struck by the immense gap which separates these two conditions. In this slow succession of things he will see the solution to an infinite number of problems of morality and politics which philosophers cannot resolve. He will sense that since the human race of one age is not the human race of another age, the reason Diogenes did not find an [honest] man was that he was looking among his contemporaries for someone from a time which was no longer there.[*] Cato, he will say, perished with Rome and liberty, because he was displaced in his century, and the greatest of men merely astonished the world which he would have governed five hundred years earlier.

Briefly put, he will explain how the human soul and passions, imperceptibly altering, change their nature, as it were, why our needs and our pleasures change their object in the long term, why, as the original man disappears by degrees, society does not offer to the eyes of a wise man anything other than an assembly of artificial men and manufactured passions, which are the work of all these new relationships and have no real basis in nature. What reflection teaches us in this matter, observation confirms perfectly. Savage man and civilized man differ so much in the depths of their hearts and their inclinations that what constitutes supreme happiness for one would reduce the other to despair. The first man breathes nothing but peace and liberty; he wishes only to live and remain idle — even the ataraxia of the Stoic does not come close to his profound indifference for all other objects. By contrast, the active citizen sweats, gets agitated, and worries all the time about finding even more laborious occupations. He works himself to death; he even runs to it in order to put himself in a position to live, or he gives up his life to acquire immortality. He courts the great, whom he hates and the wealthy, whom he despises. He spares nothing to obtain the honour of serving them. He boasts proudly of his low position and of their protection and, proud of being enslaved, he speaks with disdain of those who do not have the honour of sharing it.

What a spectacle these harsh and envied labours of a European minister are for a Carib! How many cruel deaths would this indolent savage not prefer to the horror of such a life, which is not even mitigated by the pleasure of doing good? But to witness the purpose of so many cares, his mind would have to have a sense of the words power and reputation, he would have to learn that there is a type of man who counts the estimation of the rest of the universe as something and who knows how to be happy and content with himself on the basis of what other people say rather than on his own testimony. Such is, in fact, the real cause of all these differences: the savage lives in himself; social man, always outside himself, can live only in the opinions of others, and it is, so to speak, only from their judgment that he derives the feeling of his own existence. It not my relevant to my subject to show how from such a disposition emerges such a great indifference to good and evil, together with such fine discourses on morality, how, with everything reducing itself to appearances, it all becomes artificial and false — honour, friendship, virtue and often even vices, which we finally discover the secret of boasting about; how, in a word, by always asking others what we are and never daring to ask ourselves that question, in the middle of so much philosophy, humanity, politeness, and sublime maxims, we have only a deceptive and frivolous exterior, honour without virtue, reason without wisdom, and pleasure without happiness. It is sufficient for me to have proved that this is not man's original condition and that it is only the spirit of society and the inequality which it gives rise to which change and alter in this way all our natural inclinations.

I have tried to expose the origin and the progress of inequality, the establishment and the abuse of political societies, as much as these matters can be deduced from the nature of man by the light of reason alone and independently of sacred dogmas which give to sovereign authority the sanction of divine right. It follows from this account that inequality, which is almost non-existent in a state of nature, derives its strength and growth from the development of our faculties and from the progress of the human mind and finally becomes stable and legitimate through the establishment of property and laws. It follows further that moral inequality, authorized only by positive right, is contrary to natural right, whenever it is not combined in the same proportion with physical

inequality, a distinction which determines sufficiently what we should think in this regard of the sort of inequality which reigns among all civilized peoples, since it is manifestly against natural law, no matter how it is defined, that a child gives orders to an old man, that an imbecile leads a wise man, and that a handful of men stuff themselves with superfluities while the starving crowds lack necessities.

Rousseau's Notes

(1) Herodotus tells the story that after the murder of the false Smerdis, when the seven liberators of Persia had assembled to discuss the form of government which they would give the state, Otanes firmly declared his preference for a republic, a recommendation all the more extraordinary from the mouth of a satrap since, in addition to the claim which he could make to the empire, aristocrats fear more than death a form of government which requires them to respect men. Ontanes, we can well believe, was not listened to at all and, seeing that they were going to proceed to the election of a monarch and not wishing to obey or to command, willingly gave up his right to the crown to the other contestants, requesting as his total compensation that he and his posterity could be free and independent, a condition which the others granted him. If Herodotus did not tell us of the restriction which was set on this privilege, it would be necessary to assume it. Otherwise, Otanes, not recognizing any sort of law and not having to account to anyone, would have been all-powerful in the state and stronger than the king himself. But there was hardly any indication that a man capable of remaining content with such a privilege in a case like this was capable of abusing it. In fact, we do not see that this right ever caused the least trouble in the kingdom, either on the part of the wise Otanes or of any of his descendants.

(2) From the start I have been relying with confidence on one of those authorities respected by philosophers because they come from firm and sublime reasoning, which only philosophers know how to find and appreciate: "Whatever interest we have in understanding ourselves, I do not know whether we have a better understanding of everything which is not us. Provided by nature with organs uniquely destined for our preservation, we use them only to receive impressions from elsewhere; we seek only to spread out into the beyond, to exist outside ourselves; too busy with multiplying the functions of our senses and increasing the exterior range of our being, we rarely make use of that interior sense which reduces us to our true dimensions and which separates us from everything which is not in us. However, if we wish to know ourselves, this is the sense we need to employ. It is the only one with which we might be able to judge ourselves. But how do we make this sense active and give it its full range? How do we free the soul in which it resides of all the illusions of the mind? We have lost the habit of using it. It has lived without exercise in the middle of the tumult of our bodily sensations; it has been withered by the fire of our passions: the heart, the mind, the senses — they all have worked against it. Natural History.* Vol. 4, p. 151, Concerning the Nature of Man.

(3) The changes which a long practice of moving on two feet could have produced on the structure of man, the relationships one still observes between his arms and the anterior limbs of quadrupeds, and the conclusion derived from their way of moving could have given birth to doubts about the style which must have been most natural for us. All children begin by moving on four limbs and

require our example and lessons from us to learn to stand upright. There are even some savage nations, like the Hottentots, who neglect their children considerably and leave them to move along on their hands for such a long time that later they have plenty of trouble getting them to straighten up; the children of the Caribs in the Antilles do the same. There are several examples of human quadrupeds, and I could, among others, refer to that child who was found in 1344 near Hesse, where he had been nourished by wolves and who used to say later at the court of Prince Henry that, if he had been the only one involved, he would have preferred to return among them rather than live among men. He had acquired the habit of moving like these animals to such an extent that it was necessary to attach pieces of wood to him which kept forcing him to stand upright and balanced on his two feet. It was the same with the child who was found in 1694 in the forests of Lithuania and who lived among the bears. He did not show, says M. de Condillac, any indication of reason, moved on his hands and feet, had no language, and formed sounds which were nothing like those of a man. The little savage of Hanover who was led some years ago to the English court, had all the difficulty in the world forcing himself to walk on two feet, and in 1719 two other savages were found in the Pyrenees, who ran through the mountains in the manner of quadrupeds. With respect to the objection one could make that this takes away from us the use of our hands, from which we derive so many advantages, apart from the fact that the example of monkeys demonstrates that the hands can be used very effectively for both tasks, that would only prove that man can give his limbs a more convenient purpose than that of nature, and not that nature has destined man to move differently from what it teaches him to do.

But there are, it seems to me, much better reasons to put forward in order to maintain that man is a biped. First of all, even if it is shown that at first he could have been structured differently from how we see him and nonetheless could become what he is, that would not be sufficient to conclude that that is how it was done. For, after having shown the possibility of these changes, it would still be necessary, before we accept them, at least to demonstrate their probability. In addition, the fact that the arms of a man appear to have been able to serve him as limbs when necessary is the only observation in support of that system, in the face of a large number of others which oppose it. The main ones are as follows: the way in which the human head is attached to the body, instead of directing his gaze horizontally, as in all the other animals and as he himself does when moving upright, would have, as he went on four legs, kept his eyes directly fixed towards the earth, a situation which has very little advantage for the preservation of the individual; the tail, which he lacks and which he does not need when moving on two feet, is useful for quadrupeds, and none of them lacks one; a woman’s bosom, very well placed for a biped who is holding her child in her arms, is so badly situated for a quadruped that none of them has it positioned in this way; given that the hindquarters are of an excessive height in proportion to the front limbs — a feature which causes us when moving on all fours to crawl on our knees — the whole thing would have created a poorly proportioned animal which could not move easily; if as well as his hand he had set down his feet flat, he

would have had in the posterior limb one less joint than the other animals, that is, the one which joins the cannon bone to the tibia, and by placing only the tip of his foot on the ground — as he would have undoubtedly been forced to do — the tarsus, not to mention the many bones which make it up, seems too large to replace the cannon, and its articulations with the metatarsus and the tibia too compressed to give the human limb in this arrangement the same flexibility as in other quadrupeds.

The example of children taken at an age where the natural forces have not yet developed and the limbs not yet grown strong, proves nothing at all, and I could just as well claim that dogs are not destined to walk because they do nothing but crawl for a few weeks after their birth. In addition, isolated facts have little force against the universal practice of men, even of nations who, having had no communication with others, have not been able to imitate them in anything. A child abandoned in a forest before being able to walk and nourished by some beast will have followed the example of his nurse by practising how to walk like her. Habit will be capable of giving him facility in something which he did not have naturally; and just as people lacking arms succeed by dint of exercise in doing with their feet all the things we do with our hands, he will eventually manage to use his hands as feet.

(4) If there exists among my readers a scientist bad enough to make difficulties for me concerning this assumption of the natural fertility of the earth, I am going to reply to him with the following passage:

"Since plants take for their nourishment much more material from air and water than they derive from the earth, it comes about that by rotting they return to the earth more than they have taken from it. Moreover, a forest holds rainwater by stopping vaporizing. Thus, in a wood which has been preserved a very long time without being touched, the layer of earth which provides vegetation would increase considerably. But animals return less to the earth than they take from it, and, since men consume enormous amounts of wood and plants for fire and other uses, it follows that the layer of vegetative earth in an inhabited land must always grow smaller and become finally like the terrain of Arabia Petraea [northern Arabia], and like that of so many other provinces of the East, which is, in fact the climate with the most ancient inhabitations, where one finds only salt and sand, for the fixed salt of plants and animals remains, while all the other parts disappear into the air." M. de Buffon, Hist. Nat.

One can add to this the established fact of the number of trees and plants of every species which fill almost all the deserted islands which have been discovered in the last centuries and what history teaches us about the immense forests which had to be felled all over the earth as it was inhabited and civilized. On this point I will make three additional remarks, as follows. First, if there is a sort of plant which could make up for the loss of vegetative material created by the animals, according to the reasoning of M. de Buffon, that is, more than anything, the trees whose tops and leaves gather and absorb more water and vapour than the other plants. Second, the destruction of the soil, that is, the loss

of material appropriate to vegetation, has to accelerate proportionately as the earth is more cultivated and the more industrious inhabitants consume every sort of plant species in greater abundance. My third and most important comment is that the fruits of trees provide animals with nourishment more abundantly than can other plants, an experiment I made myself by comparing the products of two plots of land equal in size and quality, one covered with chestnut trees and the other sown with wheat.

(5) Among quadrupeds, the two most universal distinctions of the voracious species are derived from the shape of the teeth and the structure of the intestines. The animals which live only on plants all have flat teeth, like the horse, the cow, the sheep, and the hare, but voracious animals have pointed teeth, like the cat, the dog, the wolf, and the fox. As for the intestines, the frugivorous animals have some, like the colon, not found in voracious animals. It seems therefore that man, having teeth and intestines like frugivorous animals, should naturally have been placed in this class. This opinion is confirmed not merely by anatomical observations. The great works of antiquity also strongly favour it. "Dicearchus," states St. Jerome, "tells us in his Books of Greek Antiquities that under the reign of Saturn, when the earth was still fertile by itself, no man ate meat, but they all lived on fruit and vegetables which grew naturally" (Book 2, Adv. Jovinian [Against Jovinianus]). This view is also supported by what several modern travelers have reported. Francois Coreal, among others, states that most of the inhabitants of the Lucayes taken by the Spaniards to the islands of Cuba, Santo Domingo, and elsewhere, died from eating flesh. One can see from this that I am overlooking a number of useful points which I could put to good use. For since the prey is almost the only unique subject of combat among carnivorous animals and since the frugivores live amongst each other in a continual peace, if the human species was in the latter group, it is clear that it would have found it very much easier to subsist in the state of nature and much less need and occasion to leave it.

(6) All forms of knowledge which require reflection, all those which are acquired only by linking ideas and which are perfected only in stages, seem to be completely beyond the grasp of savage man, for lack of communication with those like him, that is to say, for lack of the instrument which serves for this communication and of the needs which make it necessary. His knowledge and industry are limited to jumping, running, fighting, stone throwing, and tree climbing. But if, on the one hand, these are the only things he does, on the other hand, he does them much better than we do, who do not have the same need as he does. And since these activities depend only on physical exercise and are not affected by any communication or any progress from one individual to another, the first man could have been just as adept at them as his last descendants.

The accounts of travelers are full of examples of the power and the vigour of men among the barbaric and savage nations. These reports give no less praise to their dexterity and agility. And since the only things necessary to observe these matters are eyes, nothing prevents us from accepting in good faith what visual

witnesses certify in this matter. I draw at random some examples from the first books which come to hand.

"The Hottentots," says Kolben, "have a better understanding of fishing than do the Europeans of the Cape.* They are equally adept with nets, hooks, and spears, in coves as well as in rivers. With no less ease they catch fish in their hands. Their skill in swimming is incomparable. The way they swim is somewhat surprising and entirely appropriate to them. They swim with their bodies upright and their hands stretched out of the water, so that they look as if they are walking on land. In the most severe disturbance of the sea, when the waves are formed like so many mountains, they somehow dance on the back of the waves, rising and falling like a piece of cork."

"The Hottentots," the same author goes on to say, "are surprisingly skilful at hunting, and the nimbleness of their running is beyond imagination." He is astonished that they do not put their agility more often to bad use, although that does happen with them sometimes, as we can judge by the example he gives of that: "A Dutch sailor who was disembarking at the Cape," he says, "assigned a Hottentot the duty of following him to town with a roll of tobacco weighing about twenty pounds. When they were both some distance from the crew, the Hottentot asked the sailor if he knew how to run. 'Run,' replied the Dutchman, 'yes, really well.' 'Let's see,' replied the African, and racing off with the tobacco he disappeared almost immediately. The sailor, amazed at this marvelous speed, did not think of chasing after him and never saw his tobacco or his porter again.

"They have such acute vision and such a sure hand that the Europeans don't even come close to them. In throwing rocks, they can hit a target the size of a halfpenny from a hundred paces, and what is more amazing is that instead of fixing their eyes on the target, the way we do, they make movements and constant contortions. It seems as if their stone is carried by an invisible hand."

In discussing the savages of the Antilles, Father du Tertre says almost the same things which we have just read on the Hottentots from the Cape of Good Hope.* He praises above all their accuracy with arrows in shooting down birds in flight and swimming fish, which they then catch by diving. The savages of North America are no less celebrated for their power and skill, and here is an example which will enable one to judge these attributes in the Indians of South America.

In the year 1746, an Indian from Buenos Aires, having been condemned to the galleys in Cadiz, proposed to the governor that he buy back his freedom by risking his life in a public festival. He promised that he would attack the most ferocious bull all by himself without any weapon in his hand other than a rope, that he would bring it down, seize it with his rope in whatever part people pointed to, saddle it, put a bridle on it, mount it, and, so mounted, would fight against two more of the fiercest bulls which they let out of the Torillo, that he would kill them all one after the other the instant he was ordered to without anyone's help. His offer was accepted. The Indian kept his word and succeeded in everything he had promised. For information on the way in which he did that and

on all the details of the fight, one can consult the first volume of Observations on Natural History by M. Gautier (in12°), page 262, the source of this fact.

(7) "The life span of horses," says M. de Buffon, "is, as with all the other species of animals, proportional to the length of time they spend growing. Man, who takes fourteen years to grow, can live six or seven times as long, that is, ninety or one hundred years; the horse, whose growth is complete in four years, can live six or seven times as long, that is, twenty-five or thirty years. The examples which could go against this rule are so rare that we should not look upon them as exceptions from which we can derive any conclusions, and just as big horses complete their growing in less time than delicate horses, so they do not live as long and are old at the age of fifteen years."

(8) I believe I see another difference between carnivorous and frugivorous animals, one even more general than the one I mentioned in the note to page 163 [note 5 above] since this one includes birds. The difference consists in the number of the young, which never exceed two in each litter for the species which live only on plants but which is usually greater for voracious animals. It is easy to recognize nature's purpose in this matter by the number of teats, which is only two in each female of the first group, like the mare, cow, doe, ewe, and so on, but which is always six or eight in the other females, like the bitch, cat, wolf, tigress, and so on. Also the hen, goose, and duck, which are all voracious birds, as well as the eagle, sparrow-hawk, and owl, lay and hatch a large number of eggs, something which never happens with the pigeon, turtle dove, or birds which eat absolutely nothing but grain — these hardly ever lay and hatch more than two eggs at a time. The reason we can ascribe to this difference is that the animals which live only on grasses and plants spend almost the whole day feeding, and, being forced to spend so long nourishing themselves, could not have enough time to suckle several young, whereas the voracious animals, eating their meals almost instantaneously, can more easily and more frequently return to their young and to the hunt and make up for the loss of such a large quantity of milk. One could make a great many particular observations and reflections about these matters, but this is not the place for that, and it is sufficient for my purposes to have shown in this section the most general system of nature, a system which provides a new reason for taking man out of the class of carnivorous animals and setting him among the frugivorous species.

(9) A famous author, weighing the good and bad things of human life and comparing the two amounts, has found that the latter far surpassed the former and that, all things considered, life was a rather poor gift for man. I am not surprised at his conclusion. He drew all his arguments from the constitution of civil man: if he had gone back to natural man, we can judge that he would have found very different results and would have noticed that man has hardly any ills other than those which he has given himself and that nature would have been justified. It is not without effort that we have succeeded in making ourselves so unhappy. When, on the one hand, one considers the immense labours of man, so many sciences gone into in depth, so many arts invented, so many forces used,

chasms filled in, mountains flattened, rocks smashed, rivers made navigable, lands opened up, lakes excavated, marshes drained, enormous buildings raised on the earth, the sea covered with ships and sailors, and then, on the other, one investigates with a little meditation the true advantages which have resulted from all that for the happiness of the human species, one cannot help being struck by the astonishing disproportion which reigns in these matters and to deplore the blindness of man, which, to nourish his idiotic pride and I don't know what vain admiration for himself, makes him run eagerly after all the miseries he is susceptible to, which beneficial nature had taken care to keep from him.

Men are evil — melancholy and continuous experience removes the need for proof. However, man is naturally good. I believe I have demonstrated that. So what is it that could have corrupted him to this point, if not the changes which have arisen in his constitution, the progress which he has made, and the knowledge he has acquired? Let us admire human society as much as we wish; it will be no less true that it necessarily leads men to hate each other to the extent their interests clash, to carry out for each other apparently mutual services and, in fact, to do all imaginable bad things to each other. What can one think of an interaction where every individual man's reason dictates to him maxims directly contrary to those which public reason preaches to the social body and where each man finds his profit in the unhappiness of other people? There is perhaps not a single well-off man whose death his greedy heirs and often his own children do not secretly hope for, not a single ship at sea whose wreck would not be good news for some merchant, not a single firm which a debtor would not wish to see burned along with all the papers it contains, no people who do not rejoice at the disasters of their neighbours. In this way we find our advantage in the damage done to those like us, and someone's loss almost always makes someone else prosperous. But what is still more dangerous is that a multitude of individuals expect and hope for public disasters. Some want sicknesses, others death, others war, others famine. I have seen despicable men crying in sadness when a bountiful year comes along, and the great and fatal fire of London, which cost the lives or the goods of so many unfortunate people, perhaps made a fortune for more than ten thousand others. I know that Montaigne blames the Athenian Demades for having had a worker punished who, by selling coffins for a very high price, earned a great deal from the death of the citizens. But given that the excuse Montaigne offers is that it would be necessary to punish everyone, his view clearly confirms my own. Let us therefore reach through our frivolous demonstrations of kindness to what happens in the depths of our hearts, and let us reflect on what the condition of things must be where all men are forced to caress and destroy each other mutually and where they are born enemies by duty and deceitful by self-interest. If people answer me that society is so constituted that each man gains by serving others, I will answer that that would be really nice if he did not gain even more by injuring them. There is no profit, however legitimate, which is not surpassed by what one can do illegitimately, and the wrong done to one's neighbour is always more lucrative than helping. So it is merely a matter of finding ways to assure oneself of getting away with it, and to achieve that the powerful use all their force and the weak all their tricks.

When savage man has eaten, he is at peace with all nature and the friend of all those like him. What if it's sometimes a matter of a quarrel over a meal? He never comes to blows over it without having previously compared the difficulty of prevailing with that of finding his subsistence somewhere else and, since his pride is not involved in the fight, it is finished with a few punches. The winner eats, the loser goes to seek his fortune, and everything is peaceful. But with man in society, there are plenty of other issues. It is primarily a matter of providing what is necessary and then what is superfluous. Then come the delicacies, then immense riches, then subjects, then slaves. He does not have a moment's rest. What is most remarkable is that the less natural and urgent his needs, the more his passions increase, and, what is worse, the power to satisfy them increases as well, so that after long periods of prosperity, after having squandered many treasures and effectively ruined many men, my hero will end up slaughtering everything until he is the sole master of the universe. Such is, in brief, the moral picture, if not of human life, at least of the secret pretensions in the heart of every civilized man.

Compare, without bias, the state of civil man with that of savage man, and investigate, if you can, how many new doors the former has opened to pain and death — apart from his maliciousness, his needs, and his miseries. If you consider the mental afflictions which consume us, the violent passions which wear us out and depress us, the excessive labour with which the poor are overburdened, the even more dangerous soft life which the rich abandon themselves to, things which make some men die from their needs and others from their excesses, if you think of the grotesque mixtures of food, their pernicious seasonings, corrupt provisions, counterfeit drugs, the thievery of those who sell them, the mistakes of those who administer them, the poisoned containers in which they are prepared, if you pay attention to the epidemic illnesses engendered by the bad air among the hordes of people gathered in one place and to the sicknesses created by the delicacy of our way of life, the alternating to and fro from the interior of our houses into the open air, the use of clothing put on or taken off with too little precaution, and all the cares which our excessive sensuality has turned into necessary habits whose neglect or lack then costs us our life or health, if you take into account the fires and earthquakes which, swallowing up or overturning entire cities and killing off their inhabitants by the thousands, in a word, if you combine the dangers which all these causes continually gather above our heads, you will sense how dearly nature makes us pay for the contempt we have shown for her lessons.

I will not repeat here what I have said elsewhere on war, but I wish that informed people wanted or dared for once to give to the public details of the horrors which are committed in armies by the contractors for supplies and for hospitals. One would see that their tactics, which are not very secret and thanks to which the most brilliant armies dissolve away into less than nothing, cause more soldiers to die than are cut down by enemy fire. It is no less astonishing to figure out the number of men which the sea swallows up every year, whether by hunger, or scurvy, or pirates, or fire, or shipwreck. It is clear that we must also

credit established property, and therefore society, with the assassinations, poisonings, highway robberies, and even the punishments for these crimes, necessary punishments to prevent even greater evils, but which, because they cost the life of two or more men for the murder of one man, in effect really double the loss for the human species.

How many disgraceful ways are there to prevent the birth of men and to mislead nature? Whether by those brutal and depraved tastes which insult her most charming work, tastes which neither savages nor animals ever know and which are born in civilized countries only from a corrupt imagination, or by those secret abortions, fruits worthy of debauchery and vicious honour, or by the exposure or slaughter of a multitude of children, victims of their parents' misery or their mothers' barbarous shame, or, finally, by the mutilation of those unfortunates for whom a part of their existence and all of their posterity are sacrificed to vain songs or, what is even worse, the brutal jealousy of a few men, a mutilation which in this latter case is a double outrage to nature — both for the treatment received by those who suffer and for the use to which they are destined.*

But are there not a thousand more frequent and even more dangerous cases where paternal rights overtly offend humanity? How many talents are buried and tendencies forced by fathers' imprudent constraints! How many men would have distinguished themselves in an appropriate social position who die miserable and dishonoured in another position for which they have no taste! How many happy but unequal marriages have been fractured or upset, and how many chaste wives disgraced by this arrangement of conditions which permanently contradicts nature! How many other bizarre unions formed by interest and disavowed by love and reason! How many couples, even honest and virtuous ones, bring each other torment because they are badly matched! How many young and unhappy victims of their parents' greed hurl themselves into vice or spend their wretched days in tears and groan in the indissoluble chains which the heart rejects and which have been made by gold alone! Happy sometimes are those women whose courage and even virtue rip them from life before a barbaric violence drives them into crime or despair. Forgive me, my forever deplorable father and mother: I regret making your suffering worse, but may your sorrows serve as an eternal and terrible example to whoever ventures, in the name of nature, to violate the most sacred of its rights.

If I have spoken only about those badly made relationships which result from our civil order, should one think that those relationships where love and sympathy have presided are without their disadvantages? What would happen if I undertook to show the human species attacked at its very source and in the most sacred of all bonds, where one no longer dares to listen to nature until after he has consulted fortune and where, with civil order confusing virtues and vices, continence becomes a criminal precaution and the refusal to give life to one's fellow man a humanitarian act? But without tearing aside the veil covering so many horrors, let us rest content indicating the evil for which others must supply the remedy.

Let us add to all this that quantity of unhealthy trades which shorten men's days or destroy their temperament — like working in the mines, the various ways of preparing metals and minerals, above all, lead, copper, mercury, cobalt, arsenic, and realgar [arsenic sulfide], and those other perilous occupations which every day cost the lives of a number of working men, some roofers, others carpenters, others masons, others quarry workers — let us combine, I say, all these things, and we will be able to see in the establishment and perfection of societies the reasons for the diminution of the species observed by more than one philosopher.

Luxury, which is impossible to guard against among men greedy for their own commodities and for the esteem of others, soon completes the evil which societies have started, and under the pretext of keeping the poor alive, which it was not necessary to do, it impoverishes all the rest and sooner or later depopulates the state.

Luxury is a remedy much worse than the evil it claims to cure, or rather, it is itself the worst of all evils in whatever state, large or small, it happens to exist and, in order to feed the hordes of lackeys and miserable men it has created, overwhelms and ruins the labourer and the citizen. It is like those burning winds in the south which, covering the grass and greenery with devouring insects, remove the sustenance of useful animals and carries famine and death into all the places where they make themselves felt.

From society and the luxury it engenders are born the liberal and mechanical arts, business, literature, and all those useless things which make industry flourish, but enrich and destroy states. The reason for this decay is very simple. It is easy to see that by its nature agriculture must be the least lucrative of all the arts, because, since its produce is the most indispensably useful to all men, the price for it must be proportional to the abilities of the poorest people. From the same principle we can derive this rule, that in general the arts are lucrative in an inverse proportion to their utility and that the most necessary must finally become the most neglected. From that one sees what one must think of the true advantages of industry and the real effects resulting from its progress.

Such are the perceptible causes of all the miseries into which opulence finally hurls the most admired nations. To the extent that industry and the arts expand and flourish, the farmer, scorned, charged with taxes necessary for the maintenance of luxury, and condemned to spend his life between work and hunger, abandons his fields to go into the cities to seek the bread which he ought to carry there. The more the stupid eyes of people are struck with admiration by our capital cities, the more we will have to groan at the sight of abandoned fields, uncultivated land, and the major highways crammed with unfortunate citizens who have become beggars or thieves and are destined one day to end their misery on the rack or on a dung heap. This is how the state, by enriching itself on the one hand, weakens and depopulates itself on the other, and how the most powerful monarchies, after a good deal of work to make themselves rich and deserted, end by becoming the prey of poor nations who succumb to the

fatal temptation to invade them, and which then, in their turn, make themselves wealthy and weak, until they are invaded themselves and destroyed by others.

For once let someone deign to explain to us what could have produced those swarms of barbarians who inundated Europe, Asia, and Africa for so many centuries. Did they owe this immense population to the industry of their arts, the wisdom of their laws, or the excellence of their civil security? Let our knowledgeable men be so good as to tell us why, far from multiplying up to that point, these ferocious and brutal men, without enlightenment, without restraint, without education did not all go for each other's throats at every moment in quarrels over their food or hunting? Let them explain how these miserable men even had the audacity to look directly at such clever people as we were, with such a well-disciplined army, such fine conventions, and such wise laws? Finally, why, since society has perfected itself in the countries of the north and people have taken so much trouble to teach men their mutual duties and the art of living agreeably and peacefully together, do we no longer see coming from them anything like these multitudes of men which it used to produce previously? I am truly afraid that someone may finally get the idea of answering me that all these great things — knowledge of the arts, sciences, and laws — have been very wisely invented by men as a beneficial plague to check the excessive multiplication of the species, out of fear that this world, which is intended for us, might finally become too small for its inhabitants.

What then? Is it necessary to destroy societies, eliminate what's yours and mine, and return to live in the forests with the bears? A conclusion in the manner of my adversaries, which I prefer to anticipate rather than leave them the shame of deriving. Oh you, to whom the heavenly voice has not manifested itself and who do not recognize for your species any destination other than to conclude this short life in peace, you who in the midst of cities can leave your fatal acquisitions, your restless minds, your corrupt hearts, and your frenetic desires, since it depends on you, take back your ancient and first innocence. Go into the woods to lose the sight and memory of the crimes of your contemporaries and do not be afraid to demean your species by renouncing its enlightenment in order to renounce its vices. As for men like me, whose passions have for ever destroyed the original simplicity, who cannot nourish themselves any more on vegetation and acorns or do without laws and chiefs, those who were honoured by the supernatural instruction received by their First Father,* those who will see in the intention of giving to human actions from the very beginning a morality which they would not have acquired for a long time the reason for a precept indifferent in itself and inexplicable in any other system, those people, in a word, who are convinced that the divine voice has called all the human race to the enlightenment and happiness of the celestial intelligences, all these will try, through the exercise of the virtues which they oblige themselves to practise as they learn to know them, to merit the eternal prize which they ought to expect from them. They will respect the sacred bonds of the societies of which they are members; they will love their fellow-men and will serve them with all their power; they will obey scrupulously the laws and the men who are their authors

and ministers. Above all, they will honour the good and wise princes who will know how to prevent, cure, or palliate this host of abuses and evils always ready to overwhelm us. They will inspire the zeal of these worthy leaders by showing them without fear and without flattery the greatness of their task and the strictness of their duty. But they will no less despise a constitution which cannot maintain itself except with the help of so many respectable people, who are more often desired than found, and from which, despite all their care, are always born more actual calamities than apparent advantages.

(10) Among the men we know, either ourselves personally or from historians or from travelers, some are black, others white, others red; some have long hair; others have only woolly curls; some are almost all hairy; others do not even have a beard; there used to be, and perhaps still are, nations of men of gigantic height, and setting aside the fable of the pygmies, which could be nothing but an exaggeration, we know that the Laplanders and especially the people in Greenland are far above man's average height. The claim is even made that there are entire peoples who have tails like quadrupeds, and without putting a blind faith in the stories of Herodotus and Ctesias,* we can at least derive from them this very probable point, that if one could have made good observations in those ancient times when various peoples followed ways of life more different from each other than they do today, in them one would have noticed much more striking varieties in their body shapes and habits. All these facts, for which it is easy to provide incontestable proofs, can surprise only those who are accustomed to look at nothing but the objects which surround them and who are ignorant of the powerful effect of the diversity in climates, air, nourishment, way of life, general habits, and above all, the astonishing force of these very causes when they operate continually over long successions of generations. Today when trade, voyages, and conquests increasingly unite different people and when their ways of life continuously get closer and closer together through frequent communication, we notice that certain national differences have diminished and, for example, everyone can observe that the French today are no longer those large white and blond-haired bodies described by Latin historians, although time, along with the mixing of Franks and Normans, who were themselves white and with blond hair, should have re-established what interaction with the Romans could have taken away from the influence of climate on the natural constitution and colour of the inhabitants. All these observations on the varieties which a thousand causes could produce and have, in fact, produced in the human species make me question whether several animals similar to men, taken by travelers for animals without much examination, either because of some differences which they observed in the external shape or only because these animals did not speak, could not have been, in fact, real savage men, whose race, scattered throughout antiquity in forests, had no opportunity to develop any potential faculties, did not acquire any degree of perfection, and is still found in the primitive state of nature. Let us give an example of what I mean:

"One finds," says the translator of L'Histoire des Voyages, "in the kingdom of the Congo a number of those large animals people in the East Indies call orangutan,

creatures which are located in something like the middle between the human species and the baboons. Battel says that in the forest of Mayomba, in the Kingdom of Loango, one sees two kinds of monster, the larger of which are called pongos and the others enjocos. The former have an exact resemblance to man, but they are much stouter and really tall. With a human face, they have very deep-set eyes. Their hands, cheeks, and ears have no hair, except for their eyebrows, which are extremely long. Although the rest of their body is hairy enough, the hair is not particularly thick, and its colour is brown. Finally the only part which makes them different from men is their leg which lacks a calf. They walk upright, with their hands gripping themselves by the hair on their necks. They take refuge in the woods, sleep in the trees, and make there a kind of roof which keeps them covered from the rain. Their foods are fruit or wild nuts. They never eat meat. Negroes who move through the forest habitually light fires there during the night. They notice that in the morning, when they depart, the pongos take their place around the fire and do not leave until it is out. For with all their skill, they do not have sufficient sense to maintain the fire by bringing wood to it."

"Sometimes they move in groups and kill the Negroes moving through the forests. They even fall upon elephants who come to graze in the places where they live and make them so uncomfortable with punches or blows with sticks that they force them to run away screaming. People never capture pongoes alive, because they are so strong that ten men would not be enough to stop them. But the Negroes capture a number of young ones after killing the mother, to whose body the young is strongly attached. When one of these animals dies, the others cover its corpse with a pile of branches or leaves. Purchass adds that in conversations which he has had with Battel,* he learned from him that a pongo had taken from him a small Negro who spent a complete month in the society of these animals. For they don't do any harm to the men who take them by surprise, at least when the men pay them no attention, as the small Negro noticed. Battel did not describe the second species of monster."

"Dapper confirms that the kingdom of the Congo is full of those animals which in the Indies are called orangutans, that is, dwellers in the woods, and which the Africans call quojas morros. This animal, he says, is so like man, that some travelers have had the idea that it could have come from a woman and a monkey, a chimera which the Negroes themselves reject. One of these animals was taken from the Congo to Holland and presented to the Prince of Orange Frederick Henry. It was as tall as a child at three months and moderately built, but square and well proportioned, extremely agile, and very lively. Its legs were thick and strong, and its entire body bare in front but covered with black hair on the back. At first glance, its face looked like a man's, but it had a flat and curved nose; its ears were also those of the human species; its bosom, for it was a female, was chubby, its navel deep set, its shoulders very well jointed, its hands divided into fingers and thumbs, its calves and heels fat and fleshy. It often moved upright on its limbs and was capable of lifting and carrying fairly heavy loads. When it wanted to drink, it would take lid of a pot in one hand and the

base in the other. Then it would gracefully wipe its lips. It lay down to sleep, with its head on a cushion, covering itself with such dexterity that one would have taken it for a man in bed. The Negroes make up strange stories about this animal. They claim not only that it takes women and young girls by force but that it dares to attack armed men. In a word, it seems readily apparent that it is the satyr of the ancients. Merolla is perhaps talking only about these animals when he recounts that the Negroes sometimes capture savage men and women in their hunts."*

These species of anthropomorphic animals are discussed again in the third volume of the same Histoire des voyages under the name beggos and madrills. But to confine ourselves to the preceding accounts, we find in the description of these alleged monsters some striking correspondences with the human species and fewer differences than those one could establish between one man and another. We do not see in these passages the reasons on which the authors base their refusal to give the animals in question the name savage men, but it is easy to guess that it is because of their stupidity and also because they do not speak, weak reasons for those who know that, although the organ for speech is natural to man, speech itself is nonetheless not natural to him, and who knows to just what point his perfectibility could have raised civil man above his original state.

The small number of lines which contain these descriptions enables us to judge how poorly these animals were observed and with what prejudices they were viewed. For example, they are classified as monsters and yet it is agreed they reproduce. In one place Battel says that the pongos kill the Negroes who cross through the forests; in another Purchass adds that they do not do them any harm, even when they take them by surprise, at least when the Negroes make no attempt to look at them. The pongos gather around the fires lit by the Negroes when the latter move away, and go off in their turn when the fire has gone out. There you have the fact. Now here is the observer's comment: For with all their skill, they do not have sufficient sense to maintain the fire by bringing wood to it. I would like to guess how Battel or his compiler Purchass could have known that the withdrawal of the pongos was an effect of their stupidity rather than of their will. In a climate like Loango's, fire is not something very necessary to animals, and if the Negroes light them, it is less to fight the cold than to scare off wild animals. It is thus a very simple matter that, after having enjoyed the flames for some time or growing quite warm, the pongos were tired of staying constantly in the same spot and went off to graze, an activity which requires more time than if they ate flesh. Moreover, it is known that the majority of animals, without excepting man, are naturally lazy, and that they refuse all sorts of care for themselves which is not absolutely necessary. Finally, it appears extremely strange that the pongos whose dexterity and power people praise, the pongos who know how to bury their dead and to make themselves roofs out of branches, do not understand how to push wood into the fire. I remember having seen a monkey carry out this same maneuver which people want the pongos to be incapable of making. It is true that since my ideas were not at that time focused on this subject, I myself committed the mistake for which I am

reproaching our travelers, and I neglected to examine if the monkey's intention was in fact to maintain the fire or simply, as I believe, to imitate the action of a man. Whatever the case, it has been well demonstrated that the monkey is not a variety of man, not only because it lacks the capacity to speak, but above all because it is certain that its species does not have the ability to perfect itself, which is the particular characteristic of the human species.

Experiments do not seem to have been made on the pongo and the orangutan with sufficient care for us to be able to draw the same conclusion in their case. Nonetheless, there would have been a way by which, if the orangutan or others were in the human species, even the crudest observers would have been able to assure themselves with a demonstration; but apart from the fact that a single generation would not be sufficient for this experiment, such a test must be considered impractical, because what is only a hypothesis would have had to have been shown to be true, before the test which would confirm the fact could have been impartially attempted.

Judgments which are precipitous and are not the fruit of clear reasoning are prone to produce excess. Without ceremony our travelers set under the names pongos, mandrills, and orangutans, the same creatures which the ancients made gods under the name of satyrs, fauns, and sylvans. Perhaps after some more precise investigations we will find that they are not beasts or gods, but men. Meanwhile, it seems to me that in this matter there are just as many reasons to rely on Merolla, an educated monk and a visual witness, who, for all his naïveté, was an intelligent man compared to Battel, Dapper, Purchass, and other compilers.

What judgment do people think observers like them would have made on the child found in 1694, whom I have already spoken about above and who did not give any sign of reason, walked on this hands and legs, had no language, and formed sounds which bore no resemblance to those of a man? It took a long time, continues the same philosopher who provided me with this fact, before he was capable of producing a few words, and he still did that in a barbarous manner. As soon as he could speak, he was interrogated on his first state, but he remembered no more than we do about what happened to us in the cradle. If by some misfortune for him, this child had fallen into the hands of our travelers, we cannot doubt that, after noticing his silence and stupidity, they would have been in favour of sending him back into the forests or shutting him up in a menagerie, after which they would have talked about him very wisely in their fine reports as a really strange animal which looked quite like a man.

During the three or four hundred years the inhabitants of Europe have been flooding other parts of the world and constantly publishing new accounts of voyages and reports, I am convinced that the only men we know are Europeans. And from the ridiculous prejudices which have still not been extinguished, not even among men of letters, it seems that each man, under the pompous name of the study of man, does hardly anything but study the men of his own country. Individuals may well come and go; it appears that philosophy does not travel.

Moreover the philosophy of one people is little suited to another. The cause of this is obvious, at least for countries far away: there are scarcely more than four sorts of men who undertake lengthy voyages — sailors, merchants, soldiers, and missionaries. Now, one should hardly expect that the first three groups will provide good observers, and as far as the members of the fourth are concerned, busy with the sublime vocation which calls them, even if they would not be subject to social prejudices like all the others, we must believe that they would not willingly give themselves up to research projects which appear purely curious and which would divert them from the more important tasks for which they are destined. In addition, in order to preach the gospel effectively, nothing is required except zeal, and God provides the rest. But to study men it is necessary to have talents which God does not promise to anyone and which are not always given to saints.

One does not open a travel book where one does find descriptions of characters and customs, but one is completely amazed to see there that these people who have described so many things have only said what everyone knew already, that at the other end of the world they have known how to perceive nothing except what was there for them to observe without leaving their streets, and that the true characteristics which distinguish nations and which strike eyes made to see have almost always escaped theirs. That's the origin of that fine moral saying, so tossed around by the philosophical rabble, that men are the same everywhere, and because they have the same passions and vices all over the place, it is quite useless to seek to characterize the different peoples, a line of reasoning about as good as if one said that we do not know how to distinguish Peter and James because both of them have a nose, mouth, and eyes.

Will we never see reborn those happy times when people did not get mixed up with philosophizing but when a Plato, Thales, and Pythagoras, smitten with a burning desire to know, undertook the greatest voyages solely for the purpose of instructing themselves and went far away to shake off the yoke of national prejudices, to learn to understand men by their similarities and their differences, and to acquire universal knowledge, which is not knowledge of one century or of one country exclusively, but which, being of all times and all places, is, as it were, the common science of the wise?

We admire the munificence of some curious people who have made or commissioned at great expense voyages to the Orient with scholars and painters, so that they could make pictures of hovels and decipher or copy inscriptions, but I have difficulty conceiving how in an age when people like to boast how fine their knowledge is, we cannot find two closely linked affluent men — one financially rich and the other rich in genius, both with a love of fame and a desire for immortality, one of whom would sacrifice twenty thousand crowns of his wealth and the other ten years of his life for a famous voyage around the world, in order to study, not always the rocks and plants, but for once the men and customs, and who, after so many centuries taken up with measuring and assessing the house, finally got the idea of wanting to know the inhabitants.

When academics have traveled through the northern parts of Europe and the southern regions of America, the purpose of the trip has been more for geometers than philosophers. However, since La Condamine and Maupertuis were both of these at once, we cannot consider the regions which they saw and described as completely unknown. The jeweler Chardin, who traveled like Plato, left nothing to be said about Persia. China appears to have been well observed by the Jesuits. Kempfer provides a passable idea of the little he saw in Japan.* But apart from these reports, we do not know the people of the East Indies, who have been visited solely by Europeans more curious about filling their wallets than their heads. All of Africa and its numerous inhabitants, as remarkable for their character as for their colour, remain to be studied. The entire earth is covered with nations of whom we know only their names, and we are meddling with judging the human race! Suppose a Montesquieu, a Buffon, a Diderot, a Duclos, a d'Alembert, a Condillac, or men of this stamp, traveling to instruct their compatriots, observed and described, in the way they know how to, Turkey, Egypt, Barbary, the empire of Morocco, Guinea, the country of the Bantus, the interior of Africa and its eastern coast, the Malabars, the Mogul, the banks of the Ganges, the kingdoms of Siam, Pegu and Ava, China, Tartary, and especially Japan; then in another hemisphere, Mexico, Peru, Chile, the straits of Magellan, without overlooking Patagonias, true or false, Tucuman, if possible Paraguay, Brazil, finally the Caribbean Islands, Florida, and all the savage countries, the most important voyage of all and one which would have to be undertaken with the greatest care.

Suppose that these new Herculeses, having returned from these memorable journeys, then at their leisure created a natural history, both moral and political, of what they had seen, we would ourselves see a new world emerge from under their pens, and we would thus learn to understand our own. I say that when observers like these affirm that such and such an animal is a man and that another is a beast, we will have to believe what they say. But it would be extremely simplistic in this business to rely on cursory travelers, about whom one is tempted sometimes to pose the same question which they dabble at resolving concerning other animals.

(11) That appears to me to be absolutely evident, and I am unable to understand where our philosophers could derive all the passions which they ascribe to natural man. With the sole exception of physical necessity, which nature itself demands, all our other needs are what they are only from our habits, before which they were not needs, or from our desires, and one does not desire what one is not in a condition to understand. From this it follows that since savage man desires only things which he knows and knows only things which he is capable of possessing or which are easy to acquire, nothing should be as tranquil as his soul and nothing as limited as his mind. [Back to text]

(12) In Locke's On Civil Government I find an objection which appears to me too specious for me to be allowed to keep it hidden.

Since the goal of the social interaction between male and female," says this philosopher, "is not simply to procreate but to continue the species, this interaction must last, even after procreation, at least as long as is necessary for the nourishment and the survival of the offspring, that is, until they are capable of supplying their own needs themselves. We see that the creatures inferior to man constantly and strictly observe this rule which the infinite wisdom of the Creator has established for the works of His hands. In those animals which live on vegetation, the interaction between the male and female lasts only as long as each act of copulation, because the mother's teats are sufficient to nourish the young until the point where they are capable of grazing on the vegetation, and so the male is content with begetting, and does not associate after that with the mother or the young, to whose subsistence he cannot contribute anything.

But where beasts of prey are concerned, the interactions last longer, because with the mother unable to provide well for her own subsistence and nourish her young at the same time by means of prey alone, a way of feeding oneself both more laborious and more dangerous than that of feeding on vegetation, the assistance of the male is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of their common family, if one may use this term; the young will not be able to survive until they can seek out prey except with the care of the male and the female. We observe the same thing among the birds, with the exception of some domestic birds who find themselves in places where the continual abundance of nourishment exempts the male from the care of feeding the young. We see that while the young in their nest require nourishment, the male and the female bring it there, up to the point where these young can fly and provide their own sustenance."

And in that, I believe, lies the principal, if not the only, reason why the male and the female of the human race are committed to a social interaction longer than the one which other creatures maintain. The reason is that the female is capable of conceiving and is typically pregnant once again and producing a new child long before the earlier one is beyond the condition of relying on the help of its parents and can provide for its needs itself. Thus, since a father is obliged to take care of those whom he has engendered and to continue that care for a long time, he also has a responsibility for continuing to live in conjugal association with the same woman with whom he had them and to remain in this society much longer than other creatures, whose young can survive on their own before the time for a new procreation arrives, and thus the bond between male and female is broken on its own, and both father and mother find themselves completely free, until the season which customarily prompts animals to pair off obliges them to choose new mates. And here we cannot admire enough the wisdom of the Creator, who, having given man the qualities appropriate to providing for the future as well as for the present, wanted and saw to it that the society of man would last much longer than that of the male and the female among other creatures, in order that in this way the industry of man and woman would be more stimulated and their interests more unified, with a view to making provision for their children and to leaving them their goods, since nothing could be more prejudicial to children

than an uncertain and vague union or an easy and frequent dissolution of conjugal society."*

The same love of truth which has made me candidly set down this objection prompts me to accompany it with some remarks, if not to deal with it, at least to illuminate it.

A. I will first observe that moral proofs do not have great force in matters of physical science and that they serve to provide reasons for existing facts rather than to confirm the actual existence of these facts. Now, that is the kind of proof which Mr. Locke uses in the passage which I have just cited. For although it could be advantageous for the human species that the union of man and woman be permanent, it does not follow that things have been established in this way by nature; otherwise we would have to say that nature also instituted civil society, arts, commerce, and all the things which we claim are useful to men.

B. I do not know where Mr. Locke discovered that among animals of prey, the interaction between the male and female lasts longer than among those living on vegetation and that one helps the other to nourish the young. For we do not see the male dog, cat, bear, or wolf acknowledge their females any better than the horse, ram, bull, stag, or all the other quadrupeds acknowledge theirs. On the contrary, it seems that if the male's assistance was necessary to the female to preserve the young, that would be above all in the species which lived only on vegetation, because it requires a lot of time for the mother to graze and during this period she is forced to neglect her brood; whereas, the prey of a bear or wolf is devoured in an instant, and so she has more time to suckle her young, without suffering from hunger.

This reasoning is confirmed by an observation on the relative number of teats and young which distinguishes the carnivorous species from the frugivores, which I spoke about in Note 8. If this observation is accurate and generally valid, since the woman has only two teats and rarely has more than one child at a time, there is an additional powerful reason for doubting that the human species is naturally carnivorous. Hence, it seems that, in order to draw Locke's conclusion, one would have reverse his reasoning completely. The same distinction applied to birds is no more reliable. For who will be able to convince himself that the union of male and female is more durable among the vultures and ravens than among the turtle doves? We have two species of domestic birds, the duck and the pigeon, who provide us examples directly contrary to this author's system. The pigeon, which lives only on grain, remains united with his female, and they feed their young in common. The duck, whose voracity is well known, does not recognize either his female or his young and provides no help with their sustenance, and among chickens, a species which is hardly less carnivorous, we do not observe the cock making any effort at all for the brood. And if with other species, the male shares with the female the care of feeding the young, that is because birds who cannot fly at first and whom the mother cannot suckle are far less in a condition to do without the assistance of the father than are quadrupeds for whom the mother's teat is sufficient, at least for a while.

C. There is considerable uncertainty about the main fact which serves as the basis for all of Mr. Locke's reasoning. For, in order to know if, as he claims, in a pure state of nature the woman is typically pregnant again and producing a new child long before the previous one can provide for his its needs by itself, we would require experiments which Locke certainly did not make and which no one is in a position to make. The continued cohabitation of husband and wife provides such an immediate opportunity for them to be exposed to a new pregnancy that it is very difficult to believe that the fortuitous meeting or the mere impulse of temperament produces these results as frequently in the pure state of nature as in conjugal society, a slowness which would perhaps contribute to making the children more robust and which, in addition, could be compensated for by an ability to conceive which is prolonged to an older age among women who have less abused it during their youth. As far as children are concerned, there are good reasons for believing that their strength and their organs develop later among us than they did in the primitive condition I am talking about. The original weakness which they derive from the constitution of their parents, the cares which are taken to wrap and constrain all their limbs, the tenderness with which they are raised, perhaps the use of a milk other than their mother's — all this works against and retards in them the first progress of nature. The care they are required to give to a thousand things on which their attention is constantly fixed, without being given any exercise for their bodily strength, could again considerably retard their growth, so that, if, instead of beginning by overloading and exhausting their minds in a thousand ways, we let them exercise their bodies with the continual movements which nature appears to demand of them, we can believe that they would be much sooner capable of walking, acting, and providing for their own needs themselves.

D. Finally, Mr. Locke proves at most that there could well be in man a motive for living attached to a woman when she has a child. But he in no way proves that he must have been attached to her before the delivery and during the nine months of the pregnancy. If a given woman is indifferent to the man during these nine months, if she has even become unknown to him, why will he help her after the delivery? Why will he help her raise a child which he does not know belongs to him alone and whose birth he did not decide or anticipate? Mr. Locke evidently assumes what is in question, for it is not a matter of knowing why the man will live attached to the woman after the delivery, but why he will attach himself to her after conception. His appetite satisfied, the man has no more need for that particular woman, nor the woman for that particular man. He has not the least concern for nor perhaps the least idea about the consequences of his action. One of them goes off in one direction, the other in another, and there is no likelihood that at the end of nine months they retain the memory of having known each other. For this sort of memory by which one individual gives preference to another individual for the act of procreation demands, as I demonstrate in the text, more progress or corruption in human understanding than one can assume in the condition of animality which we are talking about here. Thus, another woman can satisfy the man's new desires just as easily as the one which he has already known, and another man satisfy the same woman, assuming that she is

impelled by the same appetite during pregnancy, which is something one can reasonably doubt. If in the state of nature the woman no longer feels the passion of love after the conception of the child, the obstacles facing social intercourse with the man become much greater still, since she then has no further need either of the man who has impregnated her or of anyone else. There is thus in the man no reason to seek out the same woman, nor in the woman any reason to seek out the same man. Hence, Locke's reasoning tumbles in ruins, and all this philosopher's dialectic has not saved him from the mistake which Hobbes and others have committed. They had to explain a fact about the state of nature, that is, a state where men lived by themselves and where a given man had no motive to live near another given man, nor perhaps men to live near each other, which is much worse, and those philosophers did not think of taking themselves back before the centuries of society, in other words, before those time when men always have a reason to live close together and where a given man often has a reason to live near a given man or woman.

(13) I will take good care not to embark on philosophical reflections which one can make on the advantages and disadvantages of this institution of languages. It is not for me to be allowed to attack vulgar errors, and men of letters respect their prejudices too much to endure patiently my alleged paradoxes. So let us permit those people to speak for whom it has not been made a crime to dare to take the side of reason against the opinion of the multitude. And nothing of the happiness of the human race would go away, if, when the disaster and confusion of so many languages have been done away with, mortals should cultivate one art and it were permitted to explain anything by signs, motions, and actions. But now it has been so established that the condition of animals which are popularly believed to be brutes is far better than ours in this respect, since they signify their feeling and thoughts without an interpreter more readily and perhaps more happily than any mortals can, especially if they use a foreign language.*

(14) In demonstrating how ideas of discrete quantity and of its relationships are necessary in the least important arts, Plato with reason mocks the authors of his time who claimed that Palamedes invented numbers at the siege of Troy, as if, says this philosopher, Agamemnon could have been ignorant up to then of how many legs he had. In fact, we sense the impossibility of society and the arts reaching the stage where they were already at the time of the siege of Troy without men having the use of numbers and calculation. But the need to know numbers before acquiring other knowledge does not make their invention easier to imagine. Once the names of the numbers are known, one can easily explain what they mean and bring out the ideas which these names represent, but to invent them, one must, before conceiving these same ideas, be, as it were, familiar with philosophical meditations, trained in thinking about beings according to their essence alone and independent of all other perception, a very difficult and very metaphysical abstraction, scarcely natural, but without which these ideas could never have been carried from one species or genus to another, nor could numbers have become universal. A savage could consider his right leg and his left leg separately or looked at them together under the indivisible idea of a

couple, without ever thinking that he had two of them. For the representative idea which pictures an object for us is one thing, and the numerical idea which determines it is another. Even less could he have counted up to five, and although, by placing his hands one against the other, he was capable of noticing that the fingers corresponded exactly, he was still very far from thinking about their numerical equality. He did not know the sum of his digits any more than the sum of his hairs, and if, after he was made to understand what numbers are, someone had said to him that he had as many digits on his feet as on his hands, perhaps he would have been extremely surprised, when he compared them, to discover that that was true.

(15) We must not confuse self-love [amour propre] with love of oneself [amour de soi même], two very different passions in their natures and their effects. Love of oneself is a natural feeling which inclines every animal to watch out for its own preservation and which, directed in man by reason and modified by pity, produces humanity and virtue. Self-love [amour propre] is only a relative feeling, something artificial and born in society, which inclines each individual to think of himself as more important than all the others, which inspires in men all the evils they do to each other, and which is the true source of honour.

Once this is well understood, I say that in our primitive condition, in the true state of nature, self-love [amour propre] does not exist. For since each individual man looks at himself as the only spectator who observes him, as the only being in the universe who takes an interest in him, and as the only judge of his own merit, it is impossible that a feeling which derives its source from comparisons, which he has no inclination to make, could germinate in his soul. For the same reason, this man could have neither hate nor desire for vengeance, passions which can arise only from the opinion of some offence he has received. And since it is scorn or the intention of hurting and not the harm that constitutes the offence, men who do not know either how to assess themselves or how to compare can commit considerable violence against each other when there is some advantage to them in doing so without ever offending each other. In a word, since each man hardly looks upon his fellow creatures except in the way he views animals of a different species, he can carry off the prey of the weaker man or yield his to the strongest man, without envisaging these thefts as anything other than natural events, without the least impulse of insolence or chagrin, and without passion other than pain or joy at a good or a bad outcome.

(16) It is a very remarkable thing that during all those years that Europeans have been tormenting themselves to bring savages from various countries of the world to their way of life they have not been able to win over a single one, not even with the assistance of Christianity. For our missionaries have made some of them Christians but have never civilized men. Nothing can overcome the invincible repugnance which they have against our customs and living in our manner. If these poor savages are as miserable as people claim, by what inconceivable lack of judgment do they constantly refuse to civilize themselves by imitating us or to learn to live happily among us, whereas we read that in a

thousand places French and other Europeans have voluntarily taken refuge among these nations, spent their entire lives there, without being able to leave such a strange way of life, and one even sees sensible missionaries touchingly missing the calm and innocent days which they spent among such despised people?

If people reply that they do not have enough enlightenment to judge soundly of their own state and ours, I will answer that evaluating happiness is less a matter of reason than of feeling. In addition, this response could be turned against us with even more force. For there is a greater distance between our ideas and the mental disposition which one must have to conceive of the taste which the savages find for their way of life than between the savages' ideas and those which could make them conceive of our way of life. In fact, after a few observations it is easy for them to see that all our labours are directed at only two objectives, namely, at commodities of life for oneself and at respect from other people. But how are we to imagine the sort of pleasure which a savage takes at spending his life alone in the middle of the woods or fishing or blowing on a bad musical pipe, without ever knowing how to draw from it a single tone and without bothering to learn?

On several occasions people have brought savages to Paris, London, and other cities. They have been quick to lay out our luxuries, our riches, and all our most useful and most interesting arts. All that has never excited from them anything other than a stupid admiration, without the least reaction of covetousness. I remember among others the history of a chief of some North Americans who was brought to the English court thirty years ago. They had a thousand items paraded before his eyes in an attempt to give him a present which would please him, without finding anything which he appeared to care about. Our weapons seemed heavy and inconvenient to him, our shoes injured his feet, our clothes restricted him — he refused everything. Finally it was observed that, having taken up a woolen blanket, he seemed to get pleasure from wrapping it around his shoulders. "You will at least concede," someone said to him immediately, "the usefulness of this furnishing?" "Yes," he replied, "that seems to me almost as good as an animal skin." And he would not have even said that if he had worn them both in the rain.

Perhaps someone will say to me that it is habit which, by attaching each man to his manner of life, prevents savages from feeling what there is good in ours. On that basis it must appear at least really extraordinary that habit has more power to maintain in savages the taste for their misery than in Europeans the enjoyment of their happiness. But to frame a response to this last objection to which one cannot offer a single word in reply, and without referring to all the young savages which people have tried hard but in vain to civilize, and without talking about the Greenlanders and the inhabitants of Iceland whom they tried to raise and nourish in Denmark, all of whom were killed off by sadness and despair, whether from torpor or in the sea when they attempted to regain their native

land by swimming, I will content myself with citing a single well-attested example, which I offer for admirers of European civilization to examine.

"All the efforts of the Dutch missionaries of the Cape of Good Hope have never been able to convert a single Hottentot. Van der Stel, governor of the Cape, took one of them from infancy and had him raised in the principles of the Christian religion and the practice of European habits. He was dressed richly, they had him learn several languages, and his progress responded extremely well to the cares people took for his education. The governor, having high hopes for his mind, sent him to the Indies with a commissioner general who employed him usefully in the affairs of the company. He came back to the Cape after the commissioner's death. A few days after his return, while visiting some Hottentot relatives, he took it upon himself to strip off his European finery in order to clothe himself again with sheepskin. He returned to the fort in this new outfit, carrying a package which contained his old clothes, and, while presenting them to the governor, said the following to him (see the frontispiece): Have the goodness, sir, to pay attention to the fact that I am renouncing for ever this apparel. I also renounce for all my life the Christian religion. My resolution is to live and die in the religion, manners, and customs of my ancestors. The only favor ask of you is to leave me the necklace and cutlass which I am wearing. I will keep them for love of you. Immediately, without waiting for Van der Stel's response, he ran off in flight and they never saw him again at the Cape." History of Voyages, Vol. 5, p. 175.

(17) One could make an objection against me that in such a chaos, instead of willfully murdering each other, men would have scattered, if there were no boundaries to their dispersion. But, first of all, these boundaries would have to have been at least the limits of the world, and if one thinks about the excessive population which results from the state of nature, one will judge that the earth in this condition would not have taken long to become covered with men compelled in this way to remain collected together. In addition, they would have dispersed if the evil had been quick and the change something which happened from one day to the next. But they were born under the yoke. They were habituated to bear it when they felt its weight, and they were content to wait for an opportunity to shake it off. Finally, since they were already accustomed to the thousands of goods which forced them to remain together, dispersion was not as easy as in the first days, when each man, having no need of anything except himself, decided what to do without waiting for another man's consent.

(18) Marshal de Villars used to tell the story that in one of his campaigns, when the excessively corrupt dealing of one of the food contractors made the army suffer and grumble, he scolded him sharply and threatened to have him hanged. "This threat does not concern me," the scoundrel brazenly answered him, "and I am very pleased to tell you that they don't hang a man who has at his disposal a hundred thousand crowns." "I don't know how that came about," the marshal added naively, "but in fact he was not hanged, although he deserved to be strung up a hundred times."

(19) Distributive justice would still be against this rigorous equality in the state of nature, even if were practical in civil society. And as all the members of the state owe it their services in proportion to their talents and their strengths, the citizens, in their turn, should be distinguished and favoured in proportion to their services. A passage of Isocrates must be understood in this sense, the one in which he praises the first Athenians for having well understood how to distinguish which was the more advantageous of the two sorts of equality: one which consisted of dividing the same advantages equally among all the citizens, and the other of distributing them according to each man's merit. These skilful politicians, the orator adds, banned that unjust equality which establishes no difference between bad and good men and committed themselves inviolably to the one which rewards and punishes each man according to his merit. But, first of all, there has never existed a society, no matter what degree of corruption it could have reached, in which people make no distinction between good and bad men. And in the matter of morals, where the law cannot establish a measurement sufficiently precise to serve as a rule for the magistrate, the law very wisely, in order not to leave the fate or the rank of the citizens to the discretion of the magistrate, does not permit him to judge persons, allowing him to judge nothing other than actions. There are no morals so pure that they can endure censors, other than those of the ancient Romans, and similar tribunals would have soon wreaked havoc among us. It is up to public esteem to establish the difference between the evil and good men; the magistrate only judges matters of explicit rights. But the people are the true judge of morality, an honest and even enlightened judge on this point — one who is abused sometimes but never corrupted. The ranks of the citizens thus ought to be regulated, not on the basis of the personal merit, which would allow the magistrate the means to make an almost arbitrary application of the law, but on the basis of the actual services they have rendered the state, which are susceptible to a more exact assessment.

Translator's Notes

* The inscription (in Greek) read "Know thyself."

* Burlamaqui: Jean Jacques Burlamaqui (1694–1748), Swiss jurist and writer on natural law.

* A quotation from Persius, "Quem te Deus esse Jussit, et humana qua parte locatus es in re, Disce."

* Xenocrates: (396–314 BC) Greek philosopher, a student of Plato's, who became head of Plato's school, the Academy.

* Hobbes: Thomas Hobbes (1688–1679): English philospher, famous for his political theory and his bleak view of the state of nature. Cumberland: Richard Cumberland (1631–1718), English bishop and philosopher, who wrote against Hobbes' theories and proposed a utilitarian doctrine; Pufendorf: Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1674) German baron and historian, well known for his writings on international law.

* Coreal: Francisco Coreal (1648–1708), Spanish traveler who visited North and South America and wrote about his journeys.

* In Homer's Iliad, Podaleirus and Machaon are the healers in the Argive army fighting against Troy; Aulus Cornelius Celsus (fl. 14 AD), a Roman, wrote books on medicine; Hippocrates (460–370 BC) was the most famous Greek healer, the father of medicine (hence, the Hippocratic oath).

* Laët: Johannes de Laët, a Dutch traveler who published a book on his travels in the Americas in 1625.

* Eurotas: the river associated with Sparta, a much more fertile territory than Attica.

* Condillac: Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–1788), a French philosopher and cleric who wrote about the origins of human knowledge in sense perception.

* Rousseau quotes the Latin: tanto plus in illis proficit vitiorum ignoratio, quam in his cognitio virtutis . . . virtutis — a comment by the historian Justin comparing barbarians favorably to the Greeks.

* The Fable of the Bees is a famous satiric poem written in 1705 by the Dutch–Englishman Bernard Mandeville. It explores the connections between vice and social progress.

* Alexander of Pherae: (d. 358 BC) a tyrant in Thessaly, finally killed by members of his family. Rousseau then quotes the Latin from the satirist Juvenal: Mollissima corda Humano generi dare se natura fatetur Quae lacrimas dedit.

* Locke: John Locke (1632–1704), an enormously influential and important English philosopher. Rousseau quotes Locke from the French translation and substitutes injury for the word injustice.

* . . . has not made: The point here is that man did not make the productions of the earth; hence, his right to appropriate the crop must derive from the work he put in to help the earth produce it.

* Grotius: Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), a very famous Dutch jurist whose writings are considered the first definitive treatment in modern times of international law. Ceres is the Latin name for the Greek deity Demeter, goddess of the harvest. The Greek word thesmophoros means law-giving.

* Rousseau's Latin quotation reads: Attonitus novitate mali, divesque miserque,*Effugere optat opes, et quoe modo voverat, odit." Ovid, Metamorphosis XI.*

* Lycurgus: name given to the legendary founder of the Spartan constitution (probably in the 7th century BC).

* Pliny: Pliny the Younger (62–113 AD), well known Roman politician. Trajan: Roman emperor (53–117 AD).

* Brasidas: an important Spartan general in the 5th century BC. The satrap is a Persian official, Persepolis an important city in the Persian empire.

* Rousseau's text quotes the Latin miserrimam servitutem pacem appellant, from the Roman historian Tacitus.

* Locke and Sidney: Algernon Sidney (1622–1683) English statesman and writer on political subjects. John Locke (1632–1704) English philosopher and political theorist.

* Barbeyrac: Jean Barbeyrac (1674–1744), French jurist who wrote on international law.

* Pufendorf: Samuel von Pufendorf (1632–1694, German historian and writer on international law.

* Seigneur: derived from the Latin word for older. In Sparta the age of qualification for the senior council — the Gerontes — was sixty years.

* Rousseau quotes the Latin lines "Pectore si fratris gladium juguloque parentis Condere me jubeas, gravidae que in viscera a partu/Conjugis, invita peragam tamen omnia dextra," Lucan, Pharsalia.

* Rousseau quotes the Latin cui ex honesto nulla est spes, a reworking of a line from the Roman historian Tacitus.

* Diogenes: Greek Cynic philosopher (c. 412 — 323 BC), who is reported to have spent his life looking for an honest man. Cato the Younger (95–46 BC), Roman political figure, a staunch defender of the republic.

* A work by the celebrated French natural scientist Buffon, 1752.

* Kolben: Peter Kolben, a German astronomer who worked in the Cape of Good Hope from 1705 to 1713 and published a book in German in 1719 about the Hottentots. The book was translated into English in 1731.

* du Tertre: Pere du Tertre, a French priest who wrote a history of the Antilles in 1667 based on his experiences there.

* This "mutilation" is castration, used to produce male soprano singers and eunuchs for harems.

* First Father: This phrase refers to the descendants of Abraham — the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The passage seems to be referring to people who are critical of those who believe that religion is merely an attempt to defend conventional morality by claiming it comes directly from God.

* Herodotus and Ctesias: ancient Greek historians in the fifth century BC.

* Battel was an English sailor who spent time in West Africa c. 1590; Samuel Purchass published an account of West Africa in 1613.

* Dapper was a Dutch explorer in Africa in the 1640's. Father Jerom Merolla published his account of a voyage to West Africa c. 1682.

* La Condamine (1701–1774), French mathematician who traveled in Peru and was the first to write extensively about the Amazon River; Maupertuis (1698–1759), famous French mathematician who traveled in Peru; Jean Chardin or Sir John Chardin (1643–1714), French merchant who traveled extensively in Persia in 1673; Englebert Kempfer (1651–1716), a German who went with Dutch traders to Japan in the late 1600's. All of these wrote about their travels.

* Rousseau quotes from the French translation of Locke, and the above passage is a translation of that text, rather than a direct quotation from Locke.

* Rousseau quote the following Latin: Nec quidquam felicitati humani generis decederet, pulsa tot linguarum peste et confusione, unam artem callerent mortales, et signis, motibus, gestibusque licitum foret quidvis explicare. Nunc vero ita comparatum est, ut animalium quoe vulgo bruta creduntur, melior longe quam nostra hac in parte videatur conditio, ut pote quoe promptius et forsan felicius, sensus et cogitationes suas sine interprete significent, quam ulli queant mortales, proesertim si peregrino utantur sermone. Is. Vossius, de Poemat. Cant. et Viribus Rythmi, p.66.

* In the original edition the frontispiece depicted this scene.