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The first man who, having enclosed a piece of land, thought of saying 'This is mine' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders; how much misery and horror the human race would have been spared if someone had pulled up the stakes and filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: 'Beware of listening to this impostor. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to everyone and that the earth itself belongs to no one!' But it is highly probable that by this time things had reached a point beyond which they could not go on as they were; for the idea of property, depending on many prior ideas which could only have arisen in successive stages, was not formed all at once in the human mind.

It was necessary for men to make much progress, to acquire much industry and knowledge, to transmit and increase it from age to age, before arriving at this final stage of the state of nature. Let us therefore look farther back, and try to review from a single perspective the slow succession of events and discoveries in their most natural order.

Man's first feeling was that of his existence, his first concern was that of his preservation. The produce of the earth furnished all the necessary aids; instinct prompted him to make use of them. While hunger and other appetites made him experience in turn different modes of existence, there was one appetite which urged him to perpetuate his own species; and this blind impulse, devoid of any sentiment of the heart, produced only a purely animal act. The need satisfied, the two sexes recognized each other no longer, and even the child meant nothing to the mother, as soon as he could do without her.

Such was the condition of nascent man; such was the life of an animal limited at first to mere sensation; and scarcely profiting from the gifts bestowed on him by nature, let alone was he dreaming of wresting anything from her. But difficulties soon presented themselves and man had to learn to overcome them. The height of trees, which prevented him from reaching their fruits; the competition of animals seeking to nourish themselves on the same fruits; the ferocity of animals who threatened his life—all this obliged man to apply...
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himself to bodily exercises; he had to make himself agile, fleet of foot, and vigorous in combat. Natural weapons — branches of trees and stones — were soon found to be at hand. He learned to overcome the obstacles of nature, to fight when necessary against other animals, to struggle for his subsistence even against other men, or to indemnify himself for what he was forced to yield to the stronger.

To the extent that the human race spread, men's difficulties multiplied with their numbers. Differences between soils, climates, and seasons would have forced men to adopt different ways of life. Barren years, long hard winters, searching summers consuming everything, demanded new industry from men. Along the sea coast and river banks they invented the hook and line to become fishermen and fish eaters. In the forests they made bows and arrows, and became hunters and warriors. In cold countries they covered themselves with the skins of the beasts they killed. Lightning, a volcano, or some happy accident introduced them to fire — a fresh resource against the rigour of winter. They learned to conserve this element, then to reproduce it, and finally to use it to cook the meats they had previously eaten raw.

This repeated employment of entities distinct from himself and distinct from each other must naturally have engendered in men's minds the perception of certain relationships. Those relationships which we express by the words 'large', 'small', 'strong', 'weak', 'fast', 'slow', 'fearful', 'bold', and other similar ideas, compared when necessary and almost unthinkingly, finally produced in him some kind of reflection, or rather a mechanical prudence which would indicate to him the precautions most necessary for his safety.

The new knowledge which resulted from this development increased his superiority over other animals by making him conscious of it. He practised setting snares for them; he outwitted them in a thousand ways, and though many animals might surpass him in strength of combat or in speed of running, he became in time the master of those that might serve him and the scourge of those that might hurt him. Thus the first look he directed into himself provoked his first stirring of pride; and while hardly as yet knowing how to distinguish between ranks, he asserted the priority of his species, and so prepared himself from afar to claim priority for himself as an individual.

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Although his fellow men were not to him what they are to us, and although he had hardly any more dealings with them than he had with other animals, they were not forgotten in his observations. The resemblances which he learned with time to discern between them, his female and himself, led him to think of others which he did not actually perceive; and seeing that they all behaved as he himself would behave in similar circumstances, he concluded that their manner of thinking and feeling entirely matched his own; and this important truth, once well rooted in his mind, made him follow, by an intuition as sure as logic and more prompt, the best rules of conduct it was suitable to observe towards them for the sake of his own advantage and safety.

Instructed by experience that love of one's own wellbeing is the sole motive of human action, he found himself in a position to distinguish the rare occasions when common interest justified his relying on the aid of his fellows, and those even rarer occasions when competition should make him distrust them. In the first case, he united with them in a herd, or at most in a sort of free association that committed no one and which lasted only as long as the passing need which had brought it into being. In the second case, each sought to grasp his own advantage, either by sheer force, if he believed he had the strength, or by cunning and subtlety if he felt himself to be the weaker.

In this way men could have gradually acquired some crude idea of mutual commitments, and of the advantages of fulfilling them; but only so far as present and perceptible interests might demand, for men had no foresight whatever, and far from troubling about a distant future, they did not even think of the next day. If it was a matter of hunting a deer, everyone well realized that he must remain faithfully at his post; but if a hare happened to pass within the reach of one of them, we cannot doubt that he would have gone off in pursuit of it without scruple and, having caught his own prey, he would have cared very little about having caused his companions to lose theirs.

It is easy to understand that such intercourse between them would not demand a language much more sophisticated than that of crows or monkeys, which group together in much the same way. Inarticulate cries, many gestures and some imitative noises must have been for
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long the universal human language; the addition to this in each country of certain articulated and conventional sounds (the institution of which, I have already said, is none too easy to explain) produced particular languages, crude and imperfect, rather like those we find today among various savage nations. I pass in a flash over many centuries, pressed by the brevity of time, the abundance of the things I have to say, and by the almost imperceptible progress of the first stages — for the more slowly the events unfolded, the more speedily they can be described.

Those first slow developments finally enabled men to make more rapid ones. The more the mind became enlightened, the more industry improved. Soon, ceasing to live under the first tree, or to withdraw into caves, men discovered that various sorts of hard sharp stones could serve as hammers to cut wood, dig the soil, and make huts out of branches, which they learned to cover with clay and mud. This was the epoch of a first revolution, which established and differentiated families, and which introduced property of a sort from which perhaps even then many guards and fights were born. However, as the strongest men were probably the first to build themselves huts which they felt themselves able to defend, it is reasonable to believe that the weak found it quicker and safer to imitate them rather than try to dislodge them; and as for those who already possessed huts, no one would readily venture to appropriate his neighbour's, not so much because it did not belong to him as because it would be no use to him and because he could not seize it without exposing himself to a very lively fight with the family which occupied it.

The first movements of the heart were the effect of this new situation, which united in a common dwelling husbands and wives, fathers and children; the habit of living together generated the sweetest sentiments known to man, conjugal love and paternal love. Each family became a little society, all the better united because mutual affection and liberty were its only bonds; at this stage also the first differences were established in the ways of life of the two sexes which had hitherto been identical. Women became more sedentary and accustomed themselves to looking after the hut and the children while men went out to seek their common subsistence. The two sexes began, in living a rather softer life, to lose something of their ferocity and their strength; but if each individual became separately less able to fight wild beasts, all, on the other hand, found it easier to group together to resist them jointly.

This new condition, with its solitary and simple life, very limited in its needs, and very few instruments invented to supply them, left men to enjoy a great deal of leisure, which they used to procure many sorts of commodities unknown to their fathers; and this was the first yoke they imposed on themselves, without thinking about it, and the first source of the evils they prepared for their descendants. For not only did such commodities continue to soften both body and mind, they almost lost through habitual use their power to please, and as they had at the same time degenerated into actual needs, being deprived of them became much more cruel than the possession of them was sweet; and people were unhappy in losing them without being happy in possessing them.

Here one can see a little more clearly how the use of speech became established and improved imperceptibly in the bosom of each family, and one might again speculate as to how particular causes could have extended and accelerated the progress of language by making language more necessary. Great floods or earthquakes surrounded inhabited districts with seas or precipices; revolutions of the globe broke off portions of continents into islands. One imagines that among men thus brought together, and forced to live together, a common tongue must have developed sooner than it would among those who still wandered freely through the forests of the mainland. Thus it is very possible that islanders, after their first attempts at navigation, brought the use of speech to us; and it is at least very probable that society and languages were born on islands and perfected there before they came to the continent.

Everything begins to change its aspect. Men who had previously been wandering around the woods, having once adopted a fixed settlement, come gradually together, unite in different groups, and form in each country a particular nation, united by customs and character — not by rules and laws, but through having a common way of living and eating and through the common influence of the same climate. A permanent proximity cannot fail to engender in the end some relationships between different families. Young people of opposite sexes live in neighbouring huts; and the transient intercourse demanded by nature soon leads, through mutual frequentation, to
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another kind of relationship, no less sweet and more permanent. People become accustomed to judging different objects and to making comparisons; gradually they acquire ideas of merit and of beauty, which in turn produce feelings of preference. As a result of seeing each other, people cannot do without seeing more of each other. A tender and sweet sentiment insinuates itself into the soul, and at the least obstacle becomes an inflamed fury; jealousy awakens with love; discord triumphs, and the gentlest of passions receives the sacrifice of human blood.

To the extent that ideas and feelings succeeded one another, and the heart and mind were exercised, the human race became more sociable, relationships became more extensive and bonds tightened. People grew used to gathering together in front of their huts or around a large tree, singing and dancing, true progeny of love and leisure, became the amusement, or rather the occupation, of idle men and women thus assembled. Each began to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself; public esteem came to be prized. He who sang or danced the best; he who was the most handsome, the strongest, the most adroit or the most eloquent became the most highly regarded, and this was the first step towards inequality and at the same time towards vice. From those first preferences there arose, on the one side, vanity and scorn, on the other, shame and envy, and the fermentation produced by these new leavens finally produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.

As soon as men learned to value one another and the idea of consideration was formed in their minds, everyone claimed a right to it, and it was no longer possible for anyone to be refused consideration without affront. This gave rise to the first duties of civility, even among savages: henceforth every intentional wrong became an outrage, because together with the hurt which might result from the injury, the offended party saw an insult to his person which was often more unbearable than the hurt itself. Thus, as everyone punished the contempt shown him by another in a manner proportionate to the esteem he accorded himself, revenge became terrible, and men grew bloodthirsty and cruel. This is precisely the stage reached by most of the savage peoples known to us; and it is for lack of having sufficiently distinguished between different ideas and seen how far those peoples already are from the first state of nature that so many authors have hastened to conclude that man is naturally cruel and needs civil institutions to make him peaceable, whereas in truth nothing is more peaceable than man in his primitive state; placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civilized man, limited equally by reason and instinct to defending himself against evils which threaten him, he is restrained by natural pity from doing harm to anyone, even after receiving harm himself; according to the wise Locke: "Where there is no property, there is no injury."

But it must be noted that society's having come into existence and relations among individuals having been already established meant that men were required to have qualities different from those they possessed from their primitive constitution; morality began to be introduced into human actions, and each man, prior to laws, was the sole judge and avenger of the offenses he had received, so that the goodness suitable to the pure state of nature was no longer that which suited nascent society; it was necessary for punishments to be more severe to the extent that opportunities for offence became more frequent; and the terror of revenge had to serve in place of the restraint of laws. Thus although men had come to have less fortiude, and their natural pity had suffered some dilution, this period of the development of human faculties, the golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the pertinacity of our own pride, must have been the happiest epoch and the most lasting. The more we reflect on it, the more we realize that this state was the last subject to revolutions, and the best for man (P); and that man can have left it only as the result of some fatal accident, which, for the common good, ought never to have happened. The example of savages, who have almost always been found at this point of development, appears to confirm that the human race was made to remain there always; to confirm that this state was the true youth of the world, and that all subsequent progress has been so many steps in appearance towards the improvement of the individual, but so many steps in reality towards the decruetupi of the species.

As long as men were content with their rustic huts, as long as they confined themselves to sewing their garments of skin with thorns or fish-bones, and adorning themselves with feathers or shells, to painting their bodies with various colours, to improving or decorating
their bows and arrows; and to using sharp stones to make a few fishing canoes or crude musical instruments; in a word, so long as they applied themselves only to work that one person could accomplish alone and to arts that did not require the collaboration of several hands, they lived as free, healthy, good and happy men so far as they could be according to their nature and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse; but from the instant one man needed the help of another, and it was found to be useful for one man to have provisions enough for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, work became necessary, and vast forests were transformed into pleasant fields which had to be watered with the sweat of men, and where slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and flourish with the crops.

Metallurgy and agriculture were the two arts whose invention produced this great revolution. For the poet it is gold and silver, but for the philosopher it is iron and wheat which first civilized men and ruined the human race. Both metallurgy and agriculture were unknown to the savages of America, who have always therefore remained savages;10 other peoples seem to have remained barbarians, practising one of these arts and not the other; and one of the best reasons why Europe, if not the earliest to be civilized, has been at least more continuously and better civilized than other parts of the world, is perhaps that it is at once the richest in iron and the most fertile in wheat.11

It is very difficult to suggest how men came first to know and to use iron; for it is impossible to believe they would think on their own of drawing ore from the mine and undertaking the necessary preparations for smelting before they knew what the outcome would be. On the other hand, we can even less easily attribute this discovery to some accidental fire, since mines are formed only in barren places, denuded of trees and plants, so that one might say that nature had taken pains to hide this deadly secret from us.12 There remains, therefore, only the faint possibility of some volcano, by pouring out metallic substances in fusion giving those who witnessed it the idea of imitating this operation of nature. What is more, we would have to assume those men having enough courage to undertake such arduous labour and enough foresight to envisage from afar the advantages they might derive from it—a assumption hardly to be made even of minds more developed than theirs.

As for agriculture, the principle of it was known long before the practice of it was established, and it is indeed hardly conceivable that men who were ceaselessly occupied drawing their subsistence from trees and plants did not fairly promptly acquire an idea of the means used by nature to propagate plants. Even so men's industry probably turned in that direction only very late—and possibly because trees, which together with hunting and fishing provided their food, needed no husbandry, or because men had no knowledge of the use of wheats, or because they had no implements for cultivating it, or for lack of foresight into future needs, or, finally, for lack of the means of preventing others taking possession of the fruits of their labour. As soon as they became more skilled, we can believe that men began, with sharp stones and pointed sticks, to cultivate a few vegetables or roots around their huts;13 although it was long before they knew how to process wheat or had the implements necessary for large-scale cultivation; they had also to learn that in order to devote oneself to that activity and sow seeds in the soil, one must resign oneself to an immediate loss for the sake of a greater gain in the future—a forethought very alien to the turn of mind of the savage man, who, as I have said, is hard pressed to imagine in the morning the needs he will have in the evening.

The invention of other arts must therefore have been necessary to compel the human race to apply itself to agriculture. As soon as some men were needed to smelt and forge iron, other men were needed to supply them with food.14 The more the number of industrial workers multiplied, the fewer hands were engaged in providing the common subsistence, without there being any fewer mouths to consume it; and as some men needed commodities in exchange for their iron, others finally learned the secret of using iron for the multiplication of commodities. From this arose, on the one hand, ploughing and agriculture, and, on the other, the art of working metals and of multiplying their uses.

From the cultivation of the land, its division necessarily followed, and from property once recognized arose the first rules of justice; for in order to render each his own, each must be able to have something; moreover, as men began to direct their eyes towards the future and all saw that they had some goods to lose, there was no one who
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did not fear reprisals against himself for the injuries he might do to another. This origin is all the more natural, in that it is impossible to conceive of the idea of property arising from anything other than manual labour, for one cannot see what besides his own labour a man can add to things he has not actually made in order to appropriate them. It is his labour alone which, in giving the cultivator the right to the product of the land he has tilled, gives him in consequence the right to the land itself, at least until the harvest, which, being repeated from year to year, brings about a continued occupation, easily transformed into property. Grotius says that when the ancients gave Ceres the title of Legistatrix, and the festival celebrated in her honour the name of Thermophoria, they implied that the division of the earth had produced a new sort of right: that is to say, the right to property different from the one derived from natural law.

Things in this state might have remained equal if talents had been equal, and if, for example, the use of iron and the consumption of foodstuffs had always exactly balanced each other, but this equilibrium, which nothing maintained. was soon broken: the stronger did more productive work, the more adroit did better work, the more ingenious devised ways of abridging his labour: the farmer had greater need of iron or the smith greater need of wheat, and with both working equally, the one earned plenty while the other had hardly enough to live on. It is thus that natural inequality merges imperceptibly with inequality of ranks, and the differences between men, increased by differences of circumstance, make themselves more visible and more permanent in their effects, and begin to exercise a correspondingly large influence over the destiny of individuals.

Things having once arrived at this point, it is easy to imagine the rest. I shall not pause to describe the successive invention of the other arts, the progress of language, the testing and employment of talents, the inequality of fortunes, the use and abuse of riches, and all the details which follow from this and which anyone can easily supply. I shall simply limit myself to casting a glance over the human race as it is placed in this new order of things.

Behold, then, all our faculties developed, memory and imagination brought into play, pride stimulated, reason made active and the mind almost at the point of the perfection of which it is capable. Behold all the natural qualities called into action, the rank and destiny of each man established, not only as to the quantity of his possessions and his power to serve or to injure, but as to intelligence, beauty, strength, skill, merit or talents; and since these qualities were the only ones that could attract consideration it soon became necessary either to have them or to feign them. It was necessary in one’s own interest to seem to be other than was one was in reality. Being and appearance became two entirely different things, and from this distinction arose insolent ostentation, deceitful cunning and all the vices that follow in their train. From another point of view, behold man, who was formerly free and independent, diminished as a consequence of a multitude of new wants into subjection, one might say, to the whole of nature and especially to his fellow men, men of whom he has become the slave, in a sense, even in becoming their master; for if he is rich he needs their services, if he is poor he needs their aid; and even a middling condition does not enable him to do without them. He must therefore seek constantly to interest others in his lot and make them see an advantage, either real or apparent, for themselves in working for his benefit: all of which makes him, devious and artful with some, imperious and hard towards others, and compels him to treat badly the people he needs if he cannot make them fear him and does not judge it in his interest to be of service to them. Finally, a devouring ambition, the burning passion to enlarge one’s relative fortune, not so much from real need as to put oneself ahead of others, inspires in all men a dark propensity to injure one another, a secret jealousy which is all the more dangerous in that it often assumes the mask of benevolence in order to do its deeds in greater safety: in a word, there is competition and rivalry on the one hand, conflicts of interest on the other, and always the hidden desire to gain an advantage at the expense of other people. All these evils are the main effects of property and the inseparable consequences of nascent inequality.

Before the invention of symbols to represent it, wealth could hardly consist of anything except land and livestock, the only real goods that men could possess. But when estates became so multiplied in number and extent as to cover the whole of the land and every estate to border on another one, no estate could be enlarged except at the expense of its neighbour; and the landless supernumeraries, whom weakness or indolence had prevented from acquiring an estate for
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themselves, became poor without having lost anything, because, while everything around them changed they alone remained unchanged, and so they were obliged to receive their subsistence — or to steal it — from the rich; and out of this situation there was born, according to the different characters of the rich and the poor, either dominion and servitude, or violence and robbery. The rich, for their part, had hardly learned the pleasure of dominating before they disdained all other pleasures, and using their old slaves to subdue new ones, they dreamed only of subjugating and enslaving their neighbours; like those ravenous wolves, which, having once tasted human flesh, refuse all other nourishment and desire henceforth only to devour men.

Hence, as the strongest regarded their might, and the most wretched regarded their need as giving them a kind of right to the possessions of others, equivalent, according to them, to the right of property, the elimination of equality was followed by the most terrible disorder. The usurpations of the rich, the brigandage of the poor, and the unbridled passions of everyone, stifling natural pity and the as yet feeble voice of justice, made men greedy, ambitious and bad. There arose between the right of the stronger and the right of the first occupant a perpetual conflict which ended only in fights and murders (Q). Nascent society gave place to the most horrible state of war; the human race, debased and desolate, could not now retrace its path, nor renounce the unfortunate acquisitions it had made, but labouring only towards its shame by misusing those faculties which should be its honour, brought itself to the brink of ruin.

Shocked at a new-found evil, at once rich and wretched,
He wants to flee from his wealth, and hate what he once prayed for.*

[Ovid, Metamorphoses. XI. 127]

It is impossible that men should not eventually have reflected on so melancholy a situation, and on the calamity which had overwhelmed them. The rich above all must have perceived how disadvantageous to them was a perpetual state of war in which they bore all the costs, and in which the risk of life was universal but the risk of property theirs alone. Furthermore, whatever disguises they might put upon their usurpations, they knew well enough that they

were founded on precarious and bogus rights and that force could take away from them what force alone had acquired without their having any reason for complaint. Even those who had been enriched by their own industry could not base their right to property on much better titles. In vain would one say: 'I built this wall; I earned the right to this field by my own labour.' For 'Who gave you its extent and boundaries?' might be the answer. 'And in virtue of what do you claim payment from us for work we never instructed you to do? Do you not know that a multitude of your brethren perish or suffer from need of what you have to excess, and that you required the express and unanimous consent of the whole human race in order to appropriate from the common subsistence anything beyond that required for your own subsistence?' Destitute of valid reasons to justify himself and of forces adequate to defend himself, easily crushing an individual but crushed himself by troops of bandits alone against all, and unable because of mutual jealousies to form alliances with his equals against enemies united by the common hope of plunder, the rich man under pressure of necessity conceived in the end the most cunning project that ever entered the human mind: to employ in his favour the very forces of those who attacked him, to make his adversaries his defenders, to inspire them with new maxims and give them new institutions as advantageous to him as natural right was disadvantageous.

To this end, having demonstrated to his neighbours the horror of a situation which set each against all, made men's possessions as burdensome to them as their needs, and afforded no security either in poverty or in riches, he invents *speciosae reginae* to lead his listeners to his goal.

'Let us unite', he says, 'to protect the weak from oppression, to restrain the ambitious, and ensure for each the possession of what belongs to him; let us institute rules of justice and peace to which all shall be obliged to conform, without exception, rules which compensate in a way for the caprice of fortune by subjecting equally the powerful and the weak to reciprocal duties. In a word, instead of directing our forces against each other, let us unite them together in one supreme power which shall govern us all according to wise laws, protect and defend all the members of the association, repulse common enemies, and maintain us in everlasting concord.'

* Attionis navitiae nulli, diviseque militeque,
Effigie apta opus, et quae modo versus, ed. It.
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It needed much less than the equivalent of this speech to win round men so uncultivated and so easily seduced, especially as they had too many disputes to settle among themselves to be able to do without umpires, and too much avarice and ambition to be able to do for long without masters. All ran towards their chains believing that they were securing their liberty; yet although they had reason enough to discern the advantages of a civil order, they did not have experience enough to foresee the dangers. Those most capable of predicting the abuses were precisely those who expected to profit from them; and even the wisest saw that men must resolve to sacrifice one part of their freedom in order to preserve the other, even 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 of laws, which put new fetters on the weak and gave new powers to the rich (R), which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, established for all time the law of property and inequality, transformed adroit usurpation into irrevocable right, and for the benefit of a few ambitious men subjected the human race thenceforth to labour, servitude and misery.  

It is easy to see how the foundation of one society made the establishment of all the rest unavoidable, and how, being faced with united forces, it was necessary for others to unite in turn. Societies, as they multiplied and spread, soon came to cover the whole surface of the earth, and it was no longer possible to find a single corner of the universe where one might free oneself from the yoke and withdraw one's head from beneath the sword, often precariously held, which every man saw perpetually hanging over him. Positive law having thus become the common rule over citizens, there was room for natural law only as between the various societies where, under the name of international law, it was moderated by certain tacit conventions designed to make intercourse possible and to supplement natural compassion, which having lost as between society and society nearly all the force it had as between man and man, no longer dwells in any but a few great cosmopolitan souls, who, breaking through the imaginary barriers that separate peoples, and following the example of the Sovereign Being who created them, include the whole human race in their benevolence.  

The bodies politic, thus remaining in the state of nature in their relationship to each other, soon experienced the same disadvantages that had forced individuals to quit it; the state of nature proved indeed even more harmful to these large bodies than it had previously been for the individuals of whom they were composed. From this there arose wars between nations, battles, murders, reprisals which make nature tremble and offend reason, and all those horrible prejudices which count the honour of shedding human blood a virtue. The most decent men learned to regard the killing of their fellows as one of their duties; and in time men came to massacre one another by thousands without knowing why, committing more murders in a single day's battle and more atrocities in the sack of a single city than were committed in the state of nature throughout entire centuries over the whole face of the earth. Such are the first effects we note of the division of the human race into different societies. But let us return to their foundation.

I know that many have suggested other origins for political societies, such as conquest by the most powerful or the union of the weak; and the choice between these causes makes no difference to what I wish to establish. However, the one I have just outlined seems to me the most natural for the following reasons:

(1) In the first place, the right of conquest, being no true right in itself, cannot be the basis of any other right; the victor and the vanquished always remain towards each in the state of war, unless the conquered nation, with its freedom fully restored, voluntarily chooses its conqueror as its chief. Up to that point, whatever capitulations may have been made, the fact that they have no basis but violence and are therefore ipso facto null and void means that there cannot be on this hypothesis any authentic society or true body politic, nor any law but the law of the strongest.

(2) The words 'strong' and 'weak' are, in the second case, ambiguous; for during the interval between the establishment of the right to property or the right of the first occupant and the establishment of political government, the sense of these terms is better expressed by the words 'poor' and 'rich', since before the institution of laws a man can have had in effect no means of subjecting his equals other than by attacking their goods or making them a part of his own.

(3) The poor, having nothing to lose but their freedom, it would have been the utmost folly on their part to strip themselves voluntarily
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of the only good they still possessed without gaining anything in exchange. The rich, on the contrary, being vulnerable, so to speak, in every part of their possessions, it was much easier to injure them; and it was necessary in consequence for them to take more precautions for their own protection; and finally it is reasonable to suppose a thing to have been invented by those to whom it was useful rather than by those to whom it was injurious.

Nascent government did not have a constant and regular form. The lack of wisdom and experience allowed only present inconveniences to be seen, and men thought of remedies for others only when they presented themselves. In spite of the endeavours of the wisest lawgivers, the political state always remained imperfect because it was almost entirely the product of chance; and since it began badly, time, while revealing the defects and suggesting remedies, could never repair the vices of the constitution. Constitutions were continually being patched up, when it was really necessary to begin by clearing the ground and removing the old materials, as Lycurgos did in Sparta in order to build a stable and lasting edifice. At first, society consisted only of a few general conventions which all the individuals committed themselves to observe, conventions of which the community made itself the guarantor towards each individual. Experience had to show how weak was such a constitution, how easy it was for law-breakers to avoid conviction or punishment for crimes of which the public alone was witness and judge. The laws had to be evaded in a thousand ways, inconveniences and disorders had to multiply constantly for men to be brought finally to think of entrusting the dangerous responsibility of public authority to certain individuals and committing to the magistrates the duty of securing obedience to the deliberations of the people. For to say that the chiefs were chosen before the union was instituted, and that ministers of laws existed before the laws themselves is to suggest something that does not deserve serious consideration.

It would be no more reasonable to believe that men threw themselves straightforward into the arms of an absolute master, unconditionally and irrevocably, and that the first idea which proud and unconquered men conceived for their common security was to rush headlong into slavery. Why, in fact, did they give themselves a superior

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if it was not for him to defend themselves against oppression, and to protect their possessions, their liberties and their lives, which are, so to speak, the constituent elements of their being? Now, since the worst thing that can happen is to one in the relations between man and man is to find oneself at the mercy of another, would it not be contrary to common sense for men to surrender into the hands of a chief the only things they needed his help in order to preserve? What equivalent benefit could he offer them in return for the concession of so great a right? And if he had dared to demand it on the pretext of defending them, would he not promptly have received the reply recorded in the fable: "What worse would the enemy do to us?" It is therefore incontestable — and indeed the fundamental principle of all political rights — that people have given themselves chiefs in order to defend their liberty and not to enslave them. "If we have a prince," said Plato to Trajan, "it is in order that he may preserve us from having a master." Politicians utter the same sophisms about love of liberty that philosophers utter about the state of nature; on the strength of things that they see, they make judgements about very different things that they have not seen, and they attribute to men a natural propensity to slavery because they witness the patience with which slaves bear their servitude, failing to remember that liberty is like innocence and virtue: the value of it is appreciated only so long as one possesses it oneself, and the taste for it is lost as soon as one loses it. '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 pleasures of mine.'

Even as an unbroken horse erects its mane, paws the ground with its hoof, and rears impetuously at the very approach of the bit, while a trained horse suffers patiently even the whip and spur, savage man will not bend his neck to the yoke which civilizes man wears without a murmur; he prefers the most turbulent freedom to the most tranquil subjection. We must not, therefore, look to the degradation of enslaved peoples as a basis for judging man's natural disposition for or against servitude, but look rather to the prodigious achievements of all free peoples who have striven to protect themselves from oppression. I know that enslaved peoples do nothing but boast of the peace and
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repose they enjoy in their chains, and miserrimam servitutem pacem appellant. But when I see free peoples sacrificing pleasure, repose, wealth, power, even life itself for the sake of preserving that one good which is so disdained by those who have lost it; when I see animals, born free and hating captivity, breaking their heads against the bars of their prison; when I see multitudes of naked savages scorn European pleasures and brave hunger, fire, the sword and death simply to preserve their independence, I feel that it is not for slaves to argue about liberty.

As for paternal authority, from which several writers have derived absolute government and all society, it is enough, without invoking the refutations of Locke and Sidney, to notice that nothing on earth can be farther from the ferocious spirit of despotism than the gentleness of that authority which looks more to the advantage of he who obeys than to the interest of he who commands; to notice that by the law of nature the father is the master of the child only for such time as his help is necessary to him and that beyond this stage the two are equals, the son, becoming perfectly independent of his father, owing him only respect and not obedience, for gratitude is manifestly a duty which ought to be observed and not a right which can be claimed. Instead of saying that civil society derives from paternal power, we ought to say, on the contrary, that the latter derives its main force from the former. No individual was recognized as the father of several children until such time as they lived in families together and settled around him. The goods of the father, of which he is truly the master, are the ties which keep his children dependent on him, and he may choose to give them a share of his estate only to the extent that they have deserved it from him by constant deference to his will. But subjects are far from having some similar favour to expect from their despot, for in belonging, with all they possess, to him as his personal property — or at least being claimed by him as such — they are reduced to receiving from him as a favour whatever he leaves them of their own goods. He bestows justice when he robs them; and grace when he lets them live.

If we go on thus to examine facts in the light of right, we shall find no more substance than truth in the so-called 'voluntary establish-

mens' of tyranny, and it would be difficult to prove the validity of any contract which bound only one of the parties, which gave everything to one and nothing to the other, and which could only be prejudicial to one contractant. This odious system is very far from being, even today, that of wise and good monarchs, especially of the kings of France, as we may see from several statements in their edicts, and particularly in the following passage from a celebrated statement published in 1687 in the name, and by order, of Louis XIV:

Let it not therefore be said 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 denied but which true princes have defended as divine protectors of their states. How much more legitimate is it to say with the wise Plato that the perfect felicity of a kingdom consists in a prince being obeyed by his subjects, the prince obeying the law, and the law being just and always directed to the public good.

I shall not pause to consider whether since freedom is the noblest of man's faculties, it is not to degrade our nature, to put ourselves on the level of beasts enslaved by instinct, even to offend the Author of our being, to renounce without reserve the most precious of all His gifts and subject ourselves to committing all the crimes He has forbidden in order to please a cruel or impassioned master, nor whether that sublime Aristian would be more angered at seeing His finest work destroyed than at seeing it dishonoured.* I shall only ask by that right those who do not fear debasing themselves in this way have been able to subject succeeding generations to the same ignominy, and to renounce on behalf of their posterity things which were not derived from their generosity and without which life itself is a burden to all who are worthy of life?

Pufendorf? says that just as one transfers property to another by agreements and contracts, one can divest oneself of one's freedom in favour of another. This, it seems to me, is a very bad argument, for, first of all, the goods I alienate become something wholly foreign to me, and any abuse of them is a matter of indifference to me; while

* They call a state of wretched servitude a state of peace. Tacitus, Histories, IV. xvii.²

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it is very important to me that my freedom is not abused, and I cannot lay myself open to becoming an instrument of crime without incurring the guilt for whatever crime I am forced to commit. 26 Besides, since the right to property is only conventional and of human institution, everyone may dispose at will of what he possesses; but this is not the case with the essential gifts of nature, such as life and liberty, which everyone is allowed to enjoy and of which it is at least doubtful whether anyone has the right to divest himself. By giving up liberty, a man degrades his being: by giving up life, he does his best to annihilate it, and since no temporal goods could compensate for the loss of either life or liberty, it would be an offence against both nature and reason to renounce them at any price whatever. But even if one could alienate one's liberty like one's goods, the difference would be very great in the case of one's children, who enjoy their father's goods only by transmission of his right to them, whereas their freedom is a gift they receive from nature, so that their parents had never had a right to divest them of it. Thus, just as it was necessary to do violence to nature to establish slavery, nature had to be altered to perpetuate that right, and jurists who have solemnly affirmed that the child of a slave will be born a slave have decided, in other words, that a man will not be born a man.

It therefore seems to me certain that governments did not originate in arbitrary power, which is only the final stage of the corruption of governments, and which brings them back in the end to that very law of the strongest which they were first introduced to remedy; even if they had begun in this way, such power, being in its nature illegitimate, could not serve as the basis for rights in society, nor consequently for the inequality instituted in society.

Without entering here into the research that needs yet to be undertaken into the nature of the fundamental pact of all government, I shall limit myself, following common opinion, to considering here the establishment of the body politic as a true contract between a people and the chief that people chooses, a contract whereby both parties commit themselves to observe the laws which are stipulated in its articles and which form the bonds of their union. The people having, on the subject of social relations, united all their wills into a single will, all the articles on which that pronounces become so many fundamental laws obligatory on every member of the state without exception; and one of these laws regulates the choice and powers of the magistrates charged to watch over the execution of the other laws. This power extends to everything that can maintain the constitution without going so far as to change it. Added to this are honours, which make the laws and their ministers command respect, and prerogatives, which compensate the ministers personally for the hard work which good administration entails. The magistrate, on one side, binds himself to use the power entrusted to him only in accordance with the intentions of the constituents, to maintain each in the peaceful enjoyment of what belongs to him and at all times to prefer the public interest to his own advantage.

Before experience had demonstrated, or knowledge of the human heart had made men foresee the inevitable abuses of such a constitution, it must have appeared all the better insofar as those charged with watching over its preservation were those who had the greatest stake in it. For the magistrature and its rights being established solely upon the fundamental laws, the magistrates would cease to be legitimate as soon as the laws were destroyed; the people would no longer owe them obedience; and because it is not the magistrate but the law which constitutes the essence of the state, each individual would return by right to his natural liberty.

Given the least careful thought, one could find new reasons to confirm this point and to see from the very nature of the contract that it cannot be irrevocable, for if there were no superior power to secure the fidelity of the contracting parties, nor compel them to fulfill their reciprocal engagements, each party would remain sole judge of his own case, and each would always have the right to renounce the contract as soon as he considered that the other had violated its conditions, or as soon as those conditions ceased to suit his pleasure. It would seem that the right of abdication can be founded on this principle. Now to consider only, as we do here, what is of human institution, if the magistrate, who has all the power in his hands and who appropriates all the advantages of the contract, enjoys nonetheless the right to renounce his authority, all the more reason is there for the people, who pay for all the faults of their chiefs, to have the right to renounce their dependence. However, the frightful dissections and infinite disorders that this dangerous power would necessarily bring about show us better than anything else how much human
 governments needed a basis more solid than reason alone, and how necessary it was to the public repose that divine will should intervene to give the sovereign authority a sacred and inviolable character which stripped subjects of the fatal right of disposing of it. If religion had done men only this service it would be enough to impose on them the duty of adopting and cherishing religion, despite its abuses, since it saves men from even more bloodshed than fanaticism causes. But let us follow the thread of our hypothesis.

The different forms of government owe their origin to the greater or lesser differences which exist between individuals at the moment a government is instituted. Was one man eminent in power, virtue, riches, or influence? Then he alone was elected magistrate, and the state became monarchic. If several men, more or less equal among themselves, were superior to all the others, they were elected jointly, and formed an aristocracy. Where those whose fortunes and talents were less disproportionate, and who were less far removed from the state of nature, kept the supreme administration in common they formed a democracy. Time showed which of these forms was the most advantageous for men. Some remained subject to laws alone; others were soon obeying masters. Citizens wished to keep their liberty; subjects thought only of taking it away from their neighbours, unable to endure the prospect of others enjoying a thing they had ceased to enjoy themselves. In a word, on one side were riches and conquests; on the other, happiness and virtue.

In these various governments, all magistrates were originally elective; and where wealth did not concur, preference was accorded to merit, which gives a natural authority, and to age, which gives experience in business and gravity in deliberations. The elders of the Hebrews, the Cenontes of Sparta, the Senate of Rome, and the very etymology of our word seigneur, show how old age was respected in the past. But the more often the choice fell on men advanced in age, the more often elections had to take place and the more the troublesome aspects of election made themselves felt; intrigues began, factions were formed, parties became embittered, civil wars broke out; in the end the blood of citizens was sacrificed for what was claimed to be the happiness of the state, and men were on the verge of relapsing into the anarchy of earlier times. Ambitious leaders took advantage of this situation to perpetuate their offices in their own

families; at the same time, the people, accustomed to dependence, to repose and to the conveniences of life, and already incapable of breaking the chains it bore, agreed to allow its servitude to be increased for the sake of assuring its tranquillity. Thus, the chiefs in becoming hereditary accustomed themselves to thinking of their magistrates as a family possession, and to regarding themselves as proprietors of the state of which they were originally only the officers, to calling their co-citizens their slaves, and numbering them, like cattle, among their belongings, and to calling themselves the equals of the gods and the king of kings.

If we follow the progress of inequality in these different revolutions, we shall find that the establishment of law and the right of property was the first stage, the institution of magistrates the second, and the transformation of legitimate into arbitrary power the third and last stage. Thus, the status of rich and poor was authorized by the first epoch, that of strong and weak by the second, and by the third that of master and slave, which is the last degree of inequality, and the stage to which all the others finally lead until new revolutions dissolve the government altogether or bring it back to legitimacy.

To understand the necessity of this progress, we must consider less the motives for the establishment of the body politic than the way in which that body performs in action and the disadvantages it introduces, for the vices which make social institutions necessary are the same vices which make the abuse of those institutions inevitable. Leaving aside the unique case of Sparta, where the laws concerned mainly the education of children and where Lycurgus established morals so well that it was almost unnecessary to add laws, laws, being in general less strong than passions, restrain men without changing them; so that it would be easy to prove that any government which, without being corrupted or degenerate, worked perfectly according to the ends of its institution, would have been instituted unnecessarily, and that a country where nobody evaded the laws or exploited the magistracy would need neither laws nor magistrates.

Political distinctions necessarily introduce civil distinctions. The growing inequality between the people and its chiefs is soon reproduced between individuals, and is modified there in a thousand ways according to passions, talents and circumstances. The magistrate cannot usurp illegitimate power without enrolling clowns to whom he is
forced to yield some part of it. Besides, citizens allow themselves to be oppressed only so far as they are impelled by a blind ambition; and fixing their eyes below rather than above themselves, come to love domination more than independence, and agree to wear chains for the sake of imposing chains on others in turn. It is difficult to reduce to obedience a man who has no wish to command, and the most adroit politician could not enslave men whose only wish was to be free; on the other hand, inequality extends easily among ambitious and cowardly souls, who are always ready to run the risks of fortune and almost indifferent as to whether they command or obey, according to fortune’s favour. Thus there must have come a time when the eyes of the people were so dazzled that their leaders had only to say to the least of men: ‘Be great, with all your posterity’, and at once that man appeared great in the eyes of all the world as well as in his own eyes and his descendants excited themselves all the more in proportion to their distance from him; the more remote and uncertain the cause, the greater the effect; the more idiots who could be counted in a family, the more illustrious it became.

If this were the place to go into details, I would explain how inequality of influence and authority becomes inevitable among individuals ($) as soon as, being united in the same society, they are forced to compare themselves with one another and to take into account the differences they discover in the continual dealings they have with one another. These differences are of several kinds, but since wealth, nobility or rank, power and personal merit are generally the four principal qualities by which one is measured in society, I would prove that harmony or conflict between these several sorts of distinction is the surest indication of the good or bad constitution of a state. I would show that as between these four kinds of inequality, personal qualities are the origin of all the others, and wealth is the last to which they are all reduced because wealth, being the most immediately useful to wellbeing and the easiest to communicate, can be readily used to buy all the rest — an observation which enables us to judge fairly exactly how far each people has distanced itself from its primitive institution, and the progress it has made towards the extreme stage of corruption. I would observe to

*even without the intervention of government [Edition of 1781].

what extent this universal desire for reputation, honours and promotion, which devours us all, exercises and compares talents and strengths; I would show how it excites and multiplies passions, and how, in turning all men into competitors, rivals or rather enemies, it causes every day failures and successes and catastrophes of every sort by making so many contenders run the same course; I would show that this burning desire to be talked about, this yearning for distinction which keeps us almost always in a restless state is responsible for what is best and what is worst among men, for our virtues and our vices, for our sciences and our mistakes, for our conquerors and our philosophers — that is to say, for a multitude of bad things and very few good things. Finally, I would prove that if one sees a handful of powerful and rich men on the pinnacle of grandeur and fortune, while the crowd grovels below in obscurity and wretchedness, it is because the former value the things they enjoy only to the extent that the others are deprived of them and because, even without changing their condition, they would cease to be happy if the people ceased to be miserable.

However, these details alone would provide the material for a substantial work, in which the advantages and disadvantages of any government would be weighed in relation to the rights of the state of nature, and where one would strip all the different masks behind which inequality has hidden itself up to the present time and may do so in centuries to come, according to the nature of governments and the revolutions which time will necessarily produce in them. One would see the multitude oppressed inside society as a consequence of the very precautions taken against threats from outside; one would see oppression increase continually without the oppressed ever being able to know where it would end, nor what legitimate means remained for them to halt it. One would see the rights of citizens and the freedom of nations extinguished little by little, and the protests of the weak treated as seditious noises. One would see politics confer on a mercenary section of the people the honour of defending the common cause; one would see arising from this the necessity of taxation, and the disheartened farmer quitting his fields even in peacetime, abandoning his plough to buckle on the sword. One would see the birth of fatal and bizarre codes of honour. One would see the defenders of the fatherland become sooner or later its enemies,
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holding for ever a drawn dagger over their fellow citizens, soldiers who in time would be heard to say to the oppressor of their country:

If you command me to sink my sword into my brother's breast, or in my father's throat, or even into the womb of my pregnant wife, I shall do it all, despite my repugnance, with my own right hand.

Lucan, Pharsalia, 128

From the extreme inequality of conditions and fortunes, from the diversity of passions and talents, from useless arts, pernicious arts and foolish sciences would arise a mass of prejudices, equally contrary to reason, happiness and virtue; one would see chiefs fomenting everything that might weaken assemblies of men by disuniting them, stirring up everything that might give society an appearance of concord while sowing the seeds of real dissension, everything that might inspire defiance and mutual hatred in different social orders through conflict between their rights and their interests, and by these means strengthen the power which subdues them all. 34

It is from the bottom of this disorder and these revolts that despotism, by degrees raising up its hideous head and devouring everything that it had seen to be good and sound in any part of the state, would finally succeed in trampling on both the laws and the people and establish itself on the ruins of the republic. The times leading up to these final changes would be times of troubles and calamities, but in the end all would be consumed by the monster, and the people would no longer have chiefs and laws, but only tyrants. After this moment also there would be no morals or virtue, for despotism, 'in which there is no hope to be derived from an honourable deed', 35 admits, wherever it prevails, no other master; and as soon as it speaks, there is neither prohibitory nor duty to consult, and the blindest obedience is the solitary virtue which remains for slaves.

This is the last stage of inequality, and the extreme term which closes the circle and meets the point from which we started. It is here that all individuals become equal again because they are nothing, here where subjects have no longer any law but the will of the master, nor the master any other rule but that of his passions, here that notions of the good and principles of justice vanish once more. Here everything is restored to the sole law of the strongest, and consequently to a new state of nature different from the one with which we began only that that one was the state of nature in its pure form and this one is the fruit of an excess of corruption. There is so little difference, moreover, between the two states, and the contract of government is so fully dissolved by despotism that the despot is only master for as long as he is the strongest; as soon as he can be expelled, he has no right to protest against violence. The insurrection which ends with the strangling or dehronement of a sultan is just as lawful an act as those by which he disposed the day before of the lives and property of his subjects. Force alone maintained him; force alone overthrows him; all things happen according to the natural order; and whatever the result of these short and frequent revolutions, no man can complain of the injustice of another, but only of his own imprudence or his misfortune.

In thus discovering and tracing the lost and forgotten paths which must have led men from the natural state to the civil state, in reconstructing together with the intermediate situations which I have just noted, those which lack of time has made me omit or which imagination has not suggested to me, no attentive reader can fail to be impressed by the immense space which separates these two states. It is in this slow succession of things that he will see the solution to an infinity of moral and political problems which philosophers cannot solve. He will understand that since the human race of one age is not the human race of another age, the reason why Dionysius could not find a man is that he searched among his contemporaries for a man of a time that no longer existed; Cato, he will say, perished with Rome and liberty because he was out of place in his century, and the greatest of men could only abound the world that he would have ruled five centuries earlier. In a word, the attentive reader will explain how the soul and the human passions through imperceptible degeneration change, so to speak, their nature; explain why our needs and our pleasures change their objects in the long run; and why since original man has disappeared by degrees, society no longer offers to the eyes of philosophers anything more than an assemblage of artificial men and factitious passions which are the product of all men's new relations and which have no true foundation in nature. What reflection teaches on this subject is perfectly confirmed by observation; savage man and civilized man differ so much in the bottom of their hearts and inclinations that that which constitutes the supreme
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happiness of the one would reduce the other to despair. The savage man
breathes only peace and freedom; he desires only to live and stay idle,
and even the ataraxia of the Stoic does not approach his profound
indifference towards every other object. Civil man, on the contrary,
being always active, sweating and restless, torments himself endlessly
in search of ever more laborious occupations; he works himself to
death, he even runs towards the grave to put himself into shape to live,
or renounces life in order to acquire immortality. He pays court to great
men he loathes and to rich men he despises; he spares nothing to
secure the honour of serving them; he boasts vaingloriously of his
own baseness and of their patronage, and being proud of his slavery
he speaks with disdain of those who have not the honour of sharing
it. What a spectacle for a Carib would be the arduous and envied
labours of a European minister! How many cruel deaths would not
that indolent savage prefer to the horrors of such a life, which often
is not even sweetened by the satisfaction of doing good? In order
for him to understand the motives of anyone assuming so many
cares, it would be necessary for the words 'power' and 'reputation'
to have a meaning for his mind; he would have to know that there
is a class of men who attach importance to the fate of the rest of
the world, and who know how to be happy and satisfied with them-
人家 on the testimony of others rather than on their own. Such is,
in fact, the true cause of all these differences: the savage lives within
himself; social man lives always outside himself; he knows how to
live only in the opinion of others, it is, so to speak, from their judg-
ment alone that he derives the sense of his own existence. It is not
my subject here to show how such a disposition gives birth to so much
indifference to good and evil coupled with such beautiful talk about
morality; or how, as everything is reduced to appearances, everything
comes to be false and warped, honour, friendship, virtue, and often
even vices themselves, since in the end men discover the secret of
boasting about vices, or show how, as a result of always asking others
what we are and never daring to put the question to ourselves in
the midst of so much philosophy, humanity, civility and so many
sublime maxims, we have only façades, deceptive and frivolous,
honour without virtue, reason without wisdom, and pleasure without
happiness. It is enough for me to have proved that this is not at all
the original state of men, and that it is only the spirit of society

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together with the inequality that society engenders which changes
and corrupts in this way all our natural inclinations.

I have tried to set out the origin and progress of inequality, the
establishment and the abuse of political societies, to the extent that
these things can be deduced from the nature of man by the light
of reason alone, independently of the sacred dogmas which give to
sovereign authority the sanction of divine right. It follows from this
exposition that inequality, being almost non-existent in the state of
nature, derives its force and its growth from the development of our
faculties and the progress of the human mind, and finally becomes
fixed and legitimate through the institution of property and laws.
It follows furthermore that that moral inequality, authorized by
positive law alone, is contrary to natural right, whenever it is not
matched in exact proportion with physical inequality — a distinction
which sufficiently determines what we ought to think of that form
of inequality which prevails among all civilized peoples; for it is
manifestly contrary to the law of nature, however defined, that a child
should govern an old man, that an imbecile should lead a wise man,
and that a handful of people should gorge themselves with superfluities
while the hungry multitude goes in want of necessities.24