
Inequality

The Right to Private Property

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (Chapter Five, *Of Property*)

25. God, who hath given the world to men in common, hath also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life and convenience. The earth and all that is therein is given to men for the support and comfort of their being. And though all the fruits it naturally produces, and beasts it feeds, belong to mankind in common, as they are produced by the spontaneous hand of Nature, and nobody has originally a private dominion exclusive of the rest of mankind in any of them, as they are thus in their natural state, yet being given for the use of men, there must of necessity be a means to appropriate them some way or other before they can be of any use, or at all beneficial, to any particular men. The fruit or venison which nourishes the wild Indian, who knows no enclosure, and is still a tenant in common, must be his, and so his- i.e., a part of him, that another can no longer have any right to it before it can do him any good for the support of his life.

26. Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a "property" in his own "person." This nobody has any right to but himself. The "labour" of his body and the "work" of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men. For this "labour" being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others.

27. He that is nourished by the acorns he picked up under an oak, or the apples he gathered from the trees in the wood, has certainly appropriated them to himself. Nobody can deny but the nourishment is his. I ask, then, when did they begin to be his? when he digested? or when he ate? or when he boiled? or when he brought them home? Or when he picked them up? And it is plain, if the first gathering made them not his, nothing else could. That labour put a distinction between them and common. That added something to them more than Nature, the common mother of all, had done, and so they became his private right. And will any one say he had no right to those acorns or apples he thus appropriated because he had not the consent of all mankind to make them his? Was it a robbery thus to assume to himself what belonged to all in common? If such a consent as that was necessary, man had starved, notwithstanding the plenty God had given him. We see in commons, which remain so by compact, that it is the taking any part of what is common, and removing it out of the state Nature leaves it in, which begins the property, without which the common is of no use. And the taking of this or that part does not depend on the express consent of all the commoners. Thus, the grass my horse has bit, the turfs my servant has cut, and the ore I have digged in any place, where I have a right to them in common with others, become my property without the assignation or consent of anybody. The labour that was mine, removing them out of that common state

they were in, hath fixed my property in them.

28. By making an explicit consent of every commoner necessary to any one's appropriating to himself any part of what is given in common. Children or servants could not cut the meat which their father or master had provided for them in common without assigning to every one his peculiar part. Though the water running in the fountain be every one's, yet who can doubt but that in the pitcher is his only who drew it out? His labour hath taken it out of the hands of Nature where it was common, and belonged equally to all her children, and hath thereby appropriated it to himself.

29. Thus this law of reason makes the deer that Indian's who hath killed it; it is allowed to be his goods who hath bestowed his labour upon it, though, before, it was the common right of every one. And amongst those who are counted the civilised part of mankind, who have made and multiplied positive laws to determine property, this original law of Nature for the beginning of property, in what was before common, still takes place, and by virtue thereof, what fish any one catches in the ocean, that great and still remaining common of mankind

30. It will, perhaps, be objected to this, that if gathering the acorns or other fruits of the earth, etc., makes a right to them, then any one may engross as much as he will. To which I answer, Not so. The same law of Nature that does by this means give us property, does also bound that property too. "God has given us all things richly." Is the voice of reason confirmed by inspiration? But how far has He given it us- "to enjoy"? As much as any one can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils, so much he may by his labour fix a property in. Whatever is beyond this is more than his share, and belongs to others. Nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy. And thus considering the plenty of natural provisions there was a long time in the world, and the few spenders, and to how small a part of that provision the industry of one man could extend itself and engross it to the prejudice of others, especially keeping within the bounds set by reason of what might serve for his use, there could be then little room for quarrels or contentions about property so established.

31. But the chief matter of property being now not the fruits of the earth and the beasts that subsist on it, but the earth itself, as that which takes in and carries with it all the rest, I think it is plain that property in that too is acquired as the former. As much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his property. He by his labour does, as it were, enclose it from the common. Nor will it invalidate his right to say everybody else has an equal title to it, and therefore he cannot appropriate, he cannot enclose, without the consent of all his fellow-commoners, all mankind. God, when He gave the world in common to all mankind, commanded man also to labour, and the penury of his condition required it of him. God and his reason commanded him to subdue the earth- i.e., improve it for the benefit of life and therein lay out something upon it that was his own, his labour. He that, in obedience to this command of God, subdued, tilled, and sowed any part of it, thereby annexed to it something that was his property, which another had no title to, nor could without injury take from him.

32. Nor was this appropriation of any parcel of land, by improving it, any prejudice to any other man, since there was still enough and as good left, and more than the yet unprovided could use. So that, in effect, there was never the less left for others because of his enclosure for himself. For he that leaves as much as another can make use of does as good as take nothing at all. Nobody

could think himself injured by the drinking of another man, though he took a good draught, who had a whole river of the same water left him to quench his thirst. And the case of land and water, where there is enough of both, is perfectly the same.

37. This is certain, that in the beginning, before the desire of having more than men needed had altered the intrinsic value of things, which depends only on their usefulness to the life of man, or had agreed that a little piece of yellow metal, which would keep without wasting or decay, should be worth a great piece of flesh or a whole heap of corn, though men had a right to appropriate by their labour, each one to himself, as much of the things of Nature as he could use, yet this could not be much, nor to the prejudice of others, where the same plenty was still left, to those who would use the same industry. Before the appropriation of land, he who gathered as much of the wild fruit, killed, caught, or tamed as many of the beasts as he could- he that so employed his pains about any of the spontaneous products of Nature as any way to alter them from the state Nature put them in, by placing any of his labour on them, did thereby acquire a propriety in them; but if they perished in his possession without their due use- if the fruits rotted or the venison putrefied before he could spend it, he offended against the common law of Nature, and was liable to be punished: he invaded his neighbour's share, for he had no right farther than his use called for any of them, and they might serve to afford him conveniencies of life.

39. ... without supposing any private dominion and property in Adam over all the world, exclusive of all other men, which can no way be proved, nor any one's property be made out from it, but supposing the world, given as it was to the children of men in common, we see how labour could make men distinct titles to several parcels of it for their private uses, wherein there could be no doubt of right, no room for quarrel.

40. Nor is it so strange as, perhaps, before consideration, it may appear, that the property of labour should be able to overbalance the community of land, for it is labour indeed that puts the difference of value on everything; and let any one consider what the difference is between an acre of land planted with tobacco or sugar, sown with wheat or barley, and an acre of the same land lying in common without any husbandry upon it, and he will find that the improvement of labour makes the far greater part of the value. I think it will be but a very modest computation to say, that of the products of the earth useful to the life of man, nine-tenths are the effects of labour. Nay, if we will rightly estimate things as they come to our use, and cast up the several expenses about them- what in them is purely owing to Nature and what to labour- we shall find that in most of them ninety-nine hundredths are wholly to be put on the account of labour.

41. There cannot be a clearer demonstration of anything than several nations of the Americans are of this, who are rich in land and poor in all the comforts of life; whom Nature, having furnished as liberally as any other people with the materials of plenty- i.e., a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance what might serve for food, raiment, and delight; yet, for want of improving it by labour, have not one hundredth part of the conveniencies we enjoy, and a king of a large and fruitful territory there feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day labourer in England.

42. To make this a little clearer, let us but trace some of the ordinary provisions of life, through their several progresses, before they come to our use, and see how much they receive of their value from human industry. Bread, wine, and cloth are things of daily use and great plenty; yet

notwithstanding acorns, water, and leaves, or skins must be our bread, drink and clothing, did not labour furnish us with these more useful commodities. For whatever bread is more worth than acorns, wine than water, and cloth or silk than leaves, skins or moss, that is wholly owing to labour and industry. The one of these being the food and raiment which unassisted Nature furnishes us with; the other provisions which our industry and pains prepare for us, which how much they exceed the other in value, when any one hath computed, he will then see how much labour makes the far greatest part of the value of things we enjoy in this world; and the ground which produces the materials is scarce to be reckoned in as any, or at most, but a very small part of it; so little, that even amongst us, land that is left wholly to nature, that hath no improvement of pasturage, tillage, or planting, is called, as indeed it is, waste; and we shall find the benefit of it amount to little more than nothing.

43. An acre of land that bears here twenty bushels of wheat, and another in America, which, with the same husbandry, would do the like, are, without doubt, of the same natural, intrinsic value. But yet the benefit mankind receives from one in a year is worth five pounds, and the other possibly not worth a penny; if all the profit an Indian received from it were to be valued and sold here, at least I may truly say, not one thousandth. It is labour, then, which puts the greatest part of value upon land, without which it would scarcely be worth anything; it is to that we owe the greatest part of all its useful products; for all that the straw, bran, bread, of that acre of wheat, is more worth than the product of an acre of as good land which lies waste is all the effect of labour. For it is not barely the ploughman's pains, the reaper's and thresher's toil, and the baker's sweat, is to be counted into the bread we eat; the labour of those who broke the oxen, who digged and wrought the iron and stones, who felled and framed the timber employed about the plough, mill, oven, or any other utensils, which are a vast number, requisite to this corn, from its sowing to its being made bread, must all be charged on the account of labour, and received as an effect of that; Nature and the earth furnished only the almost worthless materials as in themselves. It would be a strange catalogue of things that industry provided and made use of about every loaf of bread before it came to our use if we could trace them; iron, wood, leather, bark, timber, stone, bricks, coals, lime, cloth, dyeing-drugs, pitch, tar, masts, ropes, and all the materials made use of in the ship that brought any of the commodities made use of by any of the workmen, to any part of the work, all which it would be almost impossible, at least too long, to reckon up.

46. The greatest part of things really useful to the life of man, and such as the necessity of subsisting made the first commoners of the world look after- as it doth the Americans now- are generally things of short duration, such as -- if they are not consumed by use -- will decay and perish of themselves. Gold, silver, and diamonds are things that fancy or agreement hath put the value on, more than real use and the necessary support of life. Now of those good things which Nature hath provided in common, every one hath a right (as hath been said) to as much as he could use; and had a property in all he could effect with his labour; all that his industry could extend to, to alter from the state Nature had put it in, was his. He that gathered a hundred bushels of acorns or apples had thereby a property in them; they were his goods as soon as gathered. He was only to look that he used them before they spoiled, else he took more than his share, and robbed others. And, indeed, it was a foolish thing, as well as dishonest, to hoard up more than he could make use of. If he gave away a part to anybody else, so that it perished not uselessly in his possession, these he also made use of. And if he also bartered away plums that would have rotted in a week, for nuts that would last good for his eating a whole year, he did no injury; he wasted

not the common stock; destroyed no part of the portion of goods that belonged to others, so long as nothing perished uselessly in his hands. Again, if he would give his nuts for a piece of metal, pleased with its colour, or exchange his sheep for shells, or wool for a sparkling pebble or a diamond, and keep those by him all his life, he invaded not the right of others; he might heap up as much of these durable things as he pleased; the exceeding of the bounds of his just property not lying in the largeness of his possession, but the perishing of anything uselessly in it.

47. And thus came in the use of money; some lasting thing that men might keep without spoiling, and that, by mutual consent, men would take in exchange for the truly useful but perishable supports of life.

48. And as different degrees of industry were apt to give men possessions in different proportions, so this invention of money gave them the opportunity to continue and enlarge them. For supposing an island, separate from all possible commerce with the rest of the world, wherein there were but a hundred families, but there were sheep, horses, and cows, with other useful animals, wholesome fruits, and land enough for corn for a hundred thousand times as many, but nothing in the island, either because of its commonness or perishableness, fit to supply the place of money. What reason could any one have there to enlarge his possessions beyond the use of his family, and a plentiful supply to its consumption, either in what their own industry produced, or they could barter for like perishable, useful commodities with others? Where there is not something both lasting and scarce, and so valuable to be hoarded up, there men will not be apt to enlarge their possessions of land, were it never so rich, never so free for them to take. For I ask, what would a man value ten thousand or an hundred thousand acres of excellent land, ready cultivated and well stocked, too, with cattle, in the middle of the inland parts of America, where he had no hopes of commerce with other parts of the world, to draw money to him by the sale of the product? It would not be worth the enclosing, and we should see him give up again to the wild common of Nature whatever was more than would supply the conveniences of life, to be had there for him and his family.

50. ... Since gold and silver, being little useful to the life of man, in proportion to food, raiment, and carriage, has its value only from the consent of men- whereof labour yet makes in great part the measure- it is plain that the consent of men have agreed to a disproportionate and unequal possession of the earth- I mean out of the bounds of society and compact; for in governments the laws regulate it; they having, by consent, found out and agreed in a way how a man may, rightfully and without injury, possess more than he himself can make use of by receiving gold and silver, which may continue long in a man's possession without decaying for the overplus, and agreeing those metals should have a value.

Chapter Eleven, Of The Extent Of Legislative Power

138. ... the supreme power cannot take from any man any part of his property without his own consent. For the preservation of property being the end of government, and that for which men enter into society, it necessarily supposes and requires that the people should have property, without which they must be supposed to lose that by entering into society which was the end for which they entered into it; too gross an absurdity for any man to own. Men, therefore, in society having property, they have such a right to the goods, which by the law of the community are theirs, that nobody hath a right to take them, or any part of them, from them without their own consent; without this they have no property at all. For I have truly no property in that which

another can by right take from me when he pleases against my consent. Hence it is a mistake to think that the supreme or legislative power of any commonwealth can do what it will, and dispose of the estates of the subject arbitrarily, or take any part of them at pleasure. This is not much to be feared in governments where the legislative consists wholly or in part in assemblies which are variable, whose members upon the dissolution of the assembly are subjects under the common laws of their country, equally with the rest. But in governments where the legislative is in one lasting assembly, always in being, or in one man as in absolute monarchies, there is danger still, that they will think themselves to have a distinct interest from the rest of the community, and so will be apt to increase their own riches and power by taking what they think fit from the people. For a man's property is not at all secure, though there be good and equitable laws to set the bounds of it between him and his fellow-subjects, if he who commands those subjects have power to take from any private man what part he pleases of his property, and use and dispose of it as he thinks good.

140. It is true governments cannot be supported without great charge, and it is fit every one who enjoys his share of the protection should pay out of his estate his proportion for the maintenance of it. But still it must be with his own consent- i.e., the consent of the majority, giving it either by themselves or their representatives chosen by them; for if any one shall claim a power to lay and levy taxes on the people by his own authority, and without such consent of the people, he thereby invades the fundamental law of property, and subverts the end of government. For what property have I in that which another may by right take when he pleases to himself?

Chapter Sixteen, *Of Conquest*

175. Though governments can originally have no other rise than that before mentioned, nor polities be founded on anything but the consent of the people, yet such have been the disorders ambition has filled the world with, that in the noise of war, which makes so great a part of the history of mankind, this consent is little taken notice of; and, therefore, many have mistaken the force of arms for the consent of the people, and reckon conquest as one of the originals of government. But conquest is as far from setting up any government as demolishing a house is from building a new one in the place. Indeed, it often makes way for a new frame of a commonwealth by destroying the former; but, without the consent of the people, can never erect a new one.

190. Every man is born with a double right. First, a right of freedom to his person, which no other man has a power over, but the free disposal of it lies in himself. Secondly, a right before any other man, to inherit, with his brethren, his father's goods.

192. By the second, the inhabitants of any country, who are descended and derive a title to their estates from those who are subdued, and had a government forced upon them, against their free consents, retain a right to the possession of their ancestors, though they consent not freely to the government, whose hard conditions were, by force, imposed on the possessors of that country. For the first conqueror never having had a title to the land of that country, the people, who are the descendants of, or claim under those who were forced to submit to the yoke of a government by constraint, have always a right to shake it off, and free themselves from the usurpation or tyranny the sword hath brought in upon them, till their rulers put them under such a frame of government as they willingly and of choice consent to (which they can never be supposed to do,

till either they are put in a full state of liberty to choose their government and governors, or at least till they have such standing laws to which they have, by themselves or their representatives, given their free consent, and also till they are allowed their due property, which is so to be proprietors of what they have that nobody can take away any part of it without their own consent, without which, men under any government are not in the state of free men, but are direct slaves under the force of war).

Natural Equality

In the *Discourse On Inequality*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau tries to provide an account of human nature that is radically different from that of John Locke (as well as the account given by Thomas Hobbes that we will discuss later in the course). His main concern is to explain the widespread existence of social inequality and injustice. Indeed, Rousseau is the first political theorist to write from the point of view of the poor and oppressed.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse On Inequality*

Preface -- The most useful and least advanced of all the branches of human knowledge seems to me to be that of man, and I dare say that only the inscription on the temple at Delphi [Know Thyself] contained a precept of greater importance and difficulty than all the great tomes of the moralists. Thus, I consider the subject of this discourse to be one of the most interesting that philosophy can propose, and, unhappily for us, one of the thorniest that philosophers can try to resolve, for how can the source of inequality among men be known, unless we begin by knowing men themselves? And how will man succeed in seeing himself as nature created him, through all the changes that the passing of time and events must have produced in his original constitution, and in separating what he owes to his own essence from what circumstances and his advances have added to or changed in his original state? Like the statue of Glaucus, which time, sea, and storms had so disfigured that it resembled less a god than a wild beast, the human soul, altered in the midst of society by a thousand constantly recurring causes, by the acquisition of a mass of knowledge and a multitude of errors, by the changes that came about in the constitution of the body, and by the continual impact of the passions, has, so to speak, changed in appearance to the point of being nearly unrecognizable ... Precisely what is at issue in this *Discourse*? To indicate in the progress of things the moment when, right taking the place of violence, nature was subjected to law; to explain by what sequence of marvels the strong could resolve to serve the weak, and the people to buy imaginary repose at the price of real happiness The researches which can be undertaken concerning this subject need not be taken as historical truth, but only as hypothetical and conditional arguments, better suited to explain the nature of things than to reveal their true origin ... But who forbids us to form conjectures drawn solely from man's nature and the beings which surround him about what might have become of the human race, if it had been left to itself From whatever country you come, whatever your opinions may be, listen: here is your history as I thought I read it, not in the books of your fellow men, which are deceptive, but in nature, which never lies. The times of which I am going to speak are very remote. How much you have changed from what you once were! It is, so to speak, the life of

your species that I am going to describe to you in accordance with the qualities which you received and which your education and habits could corrupt but not destroy.

Part One -- However important it may be, in order to judge the natural state of man accurately, to consider him from his origins and to examine him, as it were, in the embryo of the species, I shall not trace his structure through its physiological developments ... I shall suppose him always to have been formed as I see him today, walking on two feet, using his hands as we do ours, casting his glance over all of nature, and measuring the vast expanse of heaven with his eyes. By stripping this being of all the artificial faculties he could have acquired only by long progress, by considering him, in a word, as he must have come from the hands of nature, I see an animal less strong than some, less agile than others, but, on the whole, the most advantageously constituted of all; I see him eating his fill under an oak tree, quenching his thirst at the first stream, making his bed at the foot of the same tree which furnished his meal, with all his needs satisfied.

Left to its natural fertility and covered with immense forests that the axe has never mutilated, the earth offers at every step stores of food and shelter to animals of every species. The men dispersed among them observe and imitate their industry, and thus attain the instincts of the beasts, with the advantage that, unlike any other species which has only its own instincts, man, who has none which belongs to him alone, appropriates them all, lives equally well on most of the different foods that the other animals share among themselves, and, consequently, finds his subsistence more easily than any of them. Accustomed from infancy to bad weather and the harshness of the seasons, inured to fatigue, and forced, naked and unarmed, to defend their lives and their prey from other wild beasts, or to escape from them by running, men acquire a robust and almost unalterable constitution; the children, bringing into the world with them the excellent constitution of their parents fortifying it by the same exercises that produced it, thus acquire all the vigor of which the human species is capable. Nature treats them precisely as the law of Sparta treated the children of citizens; it makes strong and robust those with good constitutions and lets all the others perish.

Let us, therefore, guard against confusing savage man with the men we have before our eyes. Nature treats all the animals left to its care with a partiality that seems to show how jealous it is of this right. The horse, the cat, the bull, even the ass are generally taller, and all have a more robust constitution, more vigor, strength, and courage in the forests than in our homes; they lose half these advantages as they become domesticated, and it could be said that all our efforts to treat these animals well and to feed them seem only to debase them. It is thus with man himself. As he becomes sociable and a slave, he becomes weak, timid, and servile; his soft and effeminate manner of living completely exhausts both his strength and his courage. Let us add that between the savage and domestic conditions the differences from man to man must be ever greater than that from beast to beast, for although the animals and man have been treated alike by nature, man gives himself more conveniences than the animals he tames, and these conveniences become so many special causes which make his degeneration more perceptible ...

Savage man lacking every sort of ideas and 'enlightenment,' experiences only passions given to him directly from nature; his desires do not exceed his physical needs. The only goods he knows in the universe are food, a female, and sleep; the only evils he fears are pain and hunger; I say pain, 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 that man made in leaving the animal state ... His soul, which nothing can agitate, is wholly given over to the sentiment of its present existence, with no idea of the future, however near it may be, and his plans, as limited as his views, hardly extend to the end of the day. Such is the Caribbean's degree of foresight even today; he sells his cotton bed in the morning and comes weeping to buy it back in the evening, having failed to foresee that he would need it for the next night ...

It is easy to see from the lack of care nature has taken to bring men together through mutual needs or to facilitate their use of speech how little it has prepared them to be sociable, and how little it has contributed to all they have done to establish social bonds. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine why, in that primitive state, a man would sooner need another man than a monkey or a wolf its fellow creature, or, assuming he had this need, what motive could commit the other to provide for it, or even, in this last case, how they could agree among themselves on the conditions. I know that we are told over and over again that nothing could have been so miserable as man in the state of nature, and if it is true, as I believe I have proved, that he could have had the desire and the opportunity to leave that state Only after many centuries, this would be a complaint to lodge against nature and not against the one whom nature had thus constituted. But, if I really understand this term *miserable*, it is a word which has no meaning or which signifies only a painful privation and the suffering of body or soul. Now, I would like someone to explain to me what kind of misery there can be for a free being, whose heart is at peace and whose body is healthy. I ask which one, civil or natural life, is most subject to becoming unbearable for those who enjoy it? Around us, we see almost no one but people who complain of their existence, even some who deprive themselves of it insofar as it is in them, and divine and human laws together scarcely suffice to put a stop to this disorder. I ask if anyone has ever heard it said that a free savage has so much as dreamed of complaining about life and of killing himself? Let us therefore judge, with less pride, the side on which true misery lies. Nothing, on the contrary, would have been so miserable as savage man dazzled by knowledge, tormented by passions, and reasoning about a state different from his own. A very wise providence determined that his potential faculties were to develop only with the opportunities to exercise them, so that they might be neither superfluous and burdensome to him, before they were needed, nor overdue and useless when they were needed. He had in instinct alone all that he needed to live in the state of nature; he has in cultivated reason only what he needs to live in society.

Above all, let us not conclude with Hobbes that for want of any idea of goodness, man is naturally evil; that he is vicious because he does not know virtue; that he always refuses his fellow creatures any services he does not believe he owes them; or that, by virtue of the right he properly claims to the things he needs, he foolishly imagines himself to be the sole owner of the entire universe. Hobbes very clearly saw the flaw in all modern definitions of natural right, but the inferences that he draws from his own demonstrate that he takes it in a sense which is no less false. Reasoning upon the principles that he established, this author ought to have said that the state of nature, being the one in which our concern for self-preservation is least prejudicial to that of others, was, consequently, the best suited to peace and the most fitting for the human race. He said exactly the opposite, as a result of having inappropriately included in savage man's concern for self-preservation the need to satisfy a multitude of passions which are the handiwork of society, and which have made laws necessary. An evil man, he said, is a robust child; it remains to be seen whether savage man is a robust child. Even if we were to grant this to him, what would he conclude from it? That if, when he is robust, this man was as dependent on others as

when he is weak, there is no sort of excess towards which he would not be inclined; that he would beat his mother when she was too slow in giving him her breast; that he would strangle one of his young brothers when he was inconvenienced by' him; that he would bite another's leg, when he was struck or disturbed by him. But being robust and being dependent are, in the state of nature, two contradictory suppositions; man is weak when he is dependent, and he is emancipated before he becomes robust. Hobbes did not see that the same cause that prevents savages from using their reason, as our jurists claim they do, also prevents them from abusing their faculties, as Hobbes himself claims they do, so that it could be said that savages are not wicked precisely because they do not know what it is to be good, for it is neither the development of knowledge nor the restraint of law, but the calm of the passions and ignorance of vice which prevent them from doing evil.

There is, moreover, another principle that Hobbes did not perceive and which, having been bestowed on man to moderate, under certain circumstances, the ferocity of his self-love, or before its birth, the desire for self-preservation, tempers the ardor he feels for his well-being with an innate repugnance toward seeing his fellow man suffer. I do not believe I have to fear any contradiction in granting to man the only' natural virtue which the most excessive detractor of human virtues has been forced to recognize. I am speaking of compassion, a disposition fitting for beings as weak and subject to as many ills as we are, a virtue all the more universal and all the more useful to man, since it precedes the use of any kind of reflection within him, and so natural that the beasts themselves sometimes give perceptible signs of it. Without speaking of the tenderness of mothers for their young and of the perils they brave to protect them, we observe everyday the repugnance of horses to trample a living body under foot; and an animal does not, without some uneasiness, pass close by a dead member of its species; there are even some which give them a kind of burial; and the sorrowful lowing of cattle entering a slaughterhouse bespeaks their impression of the horrible spectacle which confronts themSuch is the pure movement of nature, prior to all reflection; such is the force of natural compassion, which the most depraved moral habits can destroy. Only with difficulty, since we see everyday in our theaters the kind of man who is moved and cries over the misfortunes of an unfortunate, but who, if he were in the tyrant's place, would even increase his enemy's torments. It is reason that engenders self-love and turns man back on himself, and that separates him from all that annoys and afflicts him. It is philosophy that allows him to say privately, at the sight of a suffering man: "Perish if you will, I am safe." In riots, in street fights, the populace gathers and the prudent man withdraws; it is the rabble, the women of the marketplace, who separate the combatants and who prevent honest people from slitting each other's throats ...

Let us begin by distinguishing the moral from the physical in the sentiment of love. The physical is that general desire which leads one sex to unite with the other; the moral is what gives rise to this desire a fixes it exclusively upon a single object, or at least gives it a great degree of energy for this preferred object. Now, it is easy to see that the moral aspect of love is an artificial sentiment, born of social custom a celebrated by women with much care and cleverness to establish the ascendancy and to make dominant the sex that should obey. This sentiment, being founded on certain notions of merit or beauty that a savage is not in a position to have, and upon comparisons that he is not in a position to make, must mean almost nothing to him; any woman is good enough for him. Limited to what is physical in love, men must feel the ardors of their temperament less frequently and less sharply, and must, consequently, have fewer and less cruel disputes among themselves. Imagination, which wreaks so much havoc among us, does not

speak to savage hearts; each peacefully awaits the impulsion of nature, yields to it involuntarily, with more pleasure than fury, and, once the need is satisfied, all desire is extinguished. It is, therefore, incontestable that love itself, like all the other passions, has acquired only in society that impetuous ardor which often makes it fatal to men ...

Let us conclude that, wandering in the forests, without industry, without speech, without shelter, without war, and without ties, with no need of his fellow men, nor any desire to harm them, perhaps without ever even recognizing anyone individually, savage man ... felt only his true needs and looked only at what he believed he had an interest in seeing. Art perished with the inventor; there was neither education nor progress; the generations multiplied uselessly; and since each generation always started out from the same point; the species was already old, and man remained ever a child. If I have dwelled so long upon the supposition of this primitive condition, it is because, having ancient errors and prejudices to destroy, I thought that I ought to dig down to the roots and show in the picture of the true state of nature how far even natural inequality is from having as much reality and influence in this state as our writers claim ...

Now if the prodigious diversity of the kinds of education and the ways of living that prevails in the different orders of the civil state is compared with the simplicity; and uniformity of animal and savage life, in which all nourish themselves on the same foods, live in the same manner, and do exactly the same things, it will be understood how much less the difference from man to man must be in the state of nature than in society, and how much natural inequality must increase in the human species through the inequality; of social institutions: if nature shows as many preferences in the distribution of its gifts as is claimed, what advantage would the most favored gain from them to the detriment of others, in a state of things that would admit of almost no kind of relationship among men? What will wit mean to people who do not speak, and trickery to those who have no dealings with others? I constantly hear it repeated that the strongest will oppress the weak, but let someone explain to me what is meant by this word oppression. Some will dominate by violence, others will moan, being enslaved by all their own whims. That is precisely what I observe among us, but I do not see how it could be said of savage men, to whom one would have great difficulty even explaining what servitude and domination are. If someone chases me from one tree, I am free to go to another; if someone bothers me in one place, who will prevent me from going elsewhere? Is there a man with strength sufficiently superior to mine, and, in addition, depraved, lazy, and ferocious enough to force me to provide for his subsistence while he remains idle? He is obliged to expose himself voluntarily to a difficulty much greater than the one he wants to avoid and the one he causes for me. And after all this, what if he momentarily relaxes his vigilance? What if an unforeseen noise makes him turn his head? I take twenty steps into the forest, my chains are broken, and he never in his life sees me again. Without uselessly prolonging these details, I must make everyone see that since the bonds of servitude are formed merely from the mutual dependence of men and from the reciprocal needs that unite them, it is impossible to enslave a man without first having put him in the position of being unable to do without another person. Since this situation did not exist in the state of nature, it leaves everyone free of the yoke and makes the law of the strongest useless ...

The Evolution of Inequality

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse On Inequality*

Part two -- The first man who, having fenced off a plot of land, thought of saying "This is mine" and found people simple enough to believe him was the real founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, how many miseries and horrors might the human race have been spared by the one who, upon pulling up the stakes or filling in the ditch, had shouted to his fellow men, "Beware of listening to this imposter; you are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and that the earth belongs to no one." But by that time, things had very probably already come to the point where they could no longer go on as they were, for this idea of property, depending upon many prior ideas which could only have arisen successively, did not suddenly take shape in the human mind. It was necessary to make much progress, to acquire considerable ingenuity and knowledge, and to transmit and increase them from age to age, before arriving at this last stage of the state of nature. Let us, therefore, go further back into the matter, and let us endeavor to recount from a single point of view that slow succession of events and learning in the most natural order.

Man's first sentiment was that of his own existence, his first concern was for his own preservation. The products of the earth furnished him with all the help he needed; instinct led him to make use of them. Hunger and the other appetites made him experience, by turns, various ways of living, but there was one that invited him to perpetuate his species, and this blind inclination, devoid of any sentiment of the heart, produced only a purely animal act. Such was the condition of original man. But he had to learn to surmount the difficulties which soon arose -- the height of fruit-bearing trees, the competition with other species for food, the ferocity of those which saw him as food ... So he found himself in a position to distinguish the rare occasions when common interest could make him rely on the assistance of his fellow men. In the first case, he united with them in a herd or at the very most in some sort of free association, which did not obligate anyone and which lasted only as long as the passing need that had created it. In the second, each sought his own advantage, either by open force, if he believed he could, or by cleverness and cunning if he felt himself the weakest. In that way, men were able imperceptibly to acquire some crude idea of mutual commitments and of the advantage of fulfilling them, but only as far as present interest could demand, for foresight meant nothing to them, and far from being interested in a distant future, they hardly thought of the next day. If it was a matter of catching a deer, each certainly felt strongly that for this purpose he ought to remain faithfully at his post, but if a hare happened to pass within reach of one of them, it must not be doubted that he pursued it without scruple, and that, having caught his prey, he troubled himself very little about having caused his companions to miss theirs ...

... I am traveling across multitudes of centuries like a beam of light, forced on by time which is passing, by the abundance of things I have to say, and by the almost imperceptible progress at the beginnings of things, for the more slowly events followed one another, the more rapidly they can be described. These first improvements finally put men within reach of making more rapid ones. The more their minds were enlightened, the more industrious they became. Soon, ceasing to fall asleep under the first tree or to withdraw into caves, they discovered a kind of hatchet made of hard, sharp stones, which served for cutting wood, digging the earth, and making huts from branches, which they afterwards thought of coating with clay and mud. This was the epoch

of a first revolution, which brought about the establishment of the families, and the distinction between families, and which introduced a sort of property, which was perhaps the origin of many quarrels and fights. Nevertheless, since the stronger were probably the first to build themselves lodgings they felt capable of defending, it is to be presumed that the weak found it quicker and safer to imitate them than to attempt to dislodge them, and, as for those who already had huts, each must rarely have sought to appropriate that of his neighbor, less because it did not belong to him than because it was useless to him, and because he could not seize it without exposing himself to a very lively fight with the family who was occupying it.

The first developments of the heart were the effects of a new situation which united husbands and wives, fathers, and children in a common dwelling; the habit of living together gave rise to the sweetest sentiments known to men, conjugal love and paternal love. Each family became a small society all the more united because reciprocal affection and liberty were its only bonds, and, at that time, the first difference was established in the manner of living of the two sexes, who, until then, had had but one. Women became more accustomed themselves to tending the hut and the children, while the men went out to seek their common subsistence. Through living a slightly softer life, the two sexes also began to lose something of their ferocity and vigor, but if each one separately became less fit for combating wild animals, it was easier, on the other hand, to assemble together in order to resist them. In this new state, with a simple and solitary life, very limited needs, and the tools that they had invented to meet them, men, enjoying very great leisure, used it to procure for themselves various kinds of conveniences unknown to their forefathers, and this was the first yoke that they unwittingly imposed upon themselves and the first source of evil they prepared for their descendants. For, besides the fact that they thus continued to soften both body and mind, and that these conveniences lost almost all their pleasantness through habit and, at the same time, degenerated into real needs, being deprived of them became much more cruel than possessing them was sweet, and people were unhappy to lose them without being happy to possess them.

Everything begins to take on a new appearance. Roaming about the woods up to this time, men, having taken to a more settled way of life, slowly come together, unite in various bands, and, finally, in each region, form a particular nation, united by moral habits and character, not by regulations and laws but by the same kind of life and food and by the common influence of climate. In the end, permanent proximity cannot fail to engender some bond between different families. People become accustomed to considering different objects and to making comparisons; imperceptibly, they acquire ideas of merit and beauty which produce feelings of preference. By virtue of seeing each other, they can no longer do without seeing each other again. A sweet and tender sentiment steals into their souls and, with the least opposition, becomes an impetuous fury. Jealousy awakens with love, discord triumphs, and the gentlest of the passions receives sacrifices of human blood.

As ideas and feelings succeed one another, and as the mind and heart are trained, the human species continues to be domesticated, contacts increase, and bonds are tightened. People became used to assembling in front of their huts or around a large tree. Song and dance, true children of love and leisure, became the amusement, or rather the occupation of idle men and women gathered together. Each one began to consider the others and to want to be considered in return, and public esteem came to have a value. Anyone who sang or danced the best, who was the most handsome, the strongest, the most skillful, or the most eloquent became the most highly

regarded, and this was the first step toward inequality and, at the same time, toward vice. From these first preferences vanity and contempt were born on the one hand, and shame and envy on the other; and the fermentation caused by these new leavens finally produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.

As soon as men had begun to evaluate each other and the idea of esteem was formulated in their minds, each claimed a right to it, and it was no longer possible to deny it to anyone with impunity. In that way, the first duties of civility arose, even among savages, and in that way, every intentional wrong became an open insult, because along with the injury which resulted from it, the offended party saw in it a contempt for his person, which was often more unbearable than the injury itself. Thus, as each person punished the contempt shown him by others in proportion to the degree to which he valued himself, vengeance became terrible, and men bloodthirsty and cruel. This is precisely the stage most of the savage peoples known to us have reached, and without having sufficiently distinguished between ideas and having observed how far these peoples already were from the first state of nature, some have hastened to conclude that man is naturally cruel and that he needs civil regulations to make him gentler, although nothing is so gentle as man in his primitive state, where, placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man, and limited equally by instinct and reason to protecting himself from whatever threatens him, he is restrained by natural compassion from harming anyone himself, and nothing leads him to do so, even after he himself has been harmed. For, according to the axiom of the wise Locke, *there can be no injury, where there is no property.*

But it must be noted that, once society had been established and relations had already developed among men, they needed qualities different from the ones they owed to their primitive constitution; that since morality was beginning to be introduced into human actions, and since each man, prior to the existence of laws, was the sole judge and avenger of the offenses committed against him, the goodness suitable to the pure state of nature was no longer suitable to nascent society; that punishments had to become more severe as the opportunities to offend became more frequent; and that the terror of revenge had to replace the restraint of laws. Thus, although men had become less patient, and natural compassion had already undergone some deterioration, this period of the development of human faculties, maintaining a happy medium between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our selflove, must have been the happiest and most enduring epoch. The more we reflect upon it, the more we realize that this state was the least subject to revolutions, the best for man, and that he must have left it only by some fatal accident which for the common good should never have happened. The example of savages, most of whom have been found at this stage, seems to confirm that the human race was made to remain there always; that this state is the true youth of the world; and that all the subsequent advances have apparently been so many steps towards the perfection of the individual, and, in fact, towards the decrepitude of the species.

As long as men remained content with their rustic huts, as long as they applied themselves only to tasks that a single man could accomplish and only to arts and crafts that did not need the cooperation of several hands, they lived free, healthy, good, and happy lives, insofar as their nature permitted, and continued to enjoy among themselves the pleasures of independent intercourse. But from the moment any one man needed help from another, and as soon as they perceived that it was useful for one man to have provisions for two, equality disappeared,

property was introduced, work became necessary, and vast forests were changed into fields, which had to be watered with human sweat and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to spring up and grow with the crops ...

From the cultivation of lands necessarily followed their division, and from property, once recognized, the first rules of justice, for, in order to render to each his own, each must be able to possess something. Moreover, as men began to project their plans into the future, and as all saw themselves with some property to lose, there was not one of them who did not have to fear reprisals against himself for the wrongs he might do to others. This origin is all the more natural as it is impossible to conceive of the idea of property arising from any source other than manual labor, for it is not apparent what else a man can give, besides his own labor, to appropriate things that he has not made. Labor alone gives the farmer a right to the produce of the ground he has tilled and, consequently, a right to the land, at least until the harvest, and thus from year to year, that which constitutes continuous possession is easily transformed into property ... 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 food stuffs had always been in exact balance, but since there was nothing to maintain this balance, it was soon broken; the strongest did more work; the most skillful turned his to better advantage; the most ingenious found ways to curtail his work; the farmer needed more iron, or the blacksmith more wheat; and, by working equally, one earned a great deal, while the other had barely enough to live on. Thus, natural inequality spreads imperceptibly along with contrived inequality, and the differences among men, developed by differences in circumstances, make themselves more obvious, more permanent in their effects, and begin, in the same proportion, to influence the fate of individuals.

Things having reached this point, it is easy to imagine the rest. I shall not stop to describe the successive invention of the other arts, the progress of languages, the testing and use of talents, the inequality of fortunes, the use or abuse of wealth, or all of the details that follow upon these and that everyone can easily supply for himself. I shall limit myself only to taking a look at the human species placed in this new order of things. Behold, then, all our faculties developed, memory and imagination in play, self-love aroused, reason made active, and the mind having almost reached the limit of the perfection to which it is susceptible. Behold all the natural qualities put into action, the rank and fate of each man established, not only upon the amount of his property and his power to serve or to harm, but also upon mind, beauty, strength, or skill, upon merit or talents, and since these qualities were the only ones capable of attracting consideration, it soon became necessary to possess them or to affect them; it was necessarily to one's advantage to seem to be other than what one was in fact. To be and to appear became two completely different things, and from this distinction sprang imposing ostentation, deceptive cunning, and all the vices which follow in their train. From yet another perspective, behold man as free and independent as he formerly was, subjugated, so to speak, by a multitude of new needs to all of nature, and especially to his fellowmen, whose slave he becomes, in a sense, even in becoming their master; rich, he needs their services; poor, he needs their help, and even being of average wealth does not enable him to do without them. He must, therefore, constantly seek to interest them in his fate, and make them find it profitable, either actually or apparently, to work for it. This makes him deceitful and crafty with some, imperious and harsh with the others, and makes it necessary for him to abuse all those whom he needs, when he cannot make himself feared by them, and when he does not find it in his interest to serve them in a useful way. Finally, consuming ambition, the zeal to elevate their relative fortune, less out of true need than

to set themselves above others, inspires in all men a base inclination to harm each other, a secret jealousy. Before signs to represent wealth had been invented land and livestock were the only real goods men can possess. Now, when inheritances had increased in number and extent to the point that they covered the entire earth and were all contiguous to one another, none could be enlarged any longer except at the expense of others, and some, whom weakness or indolence had prevented from acquiring anything in their turn, became poor without having lost anything, because, although everything was changing around them; and from that point the different characters of the rich and the poor, began to arise. In this way, the imperialism of the rich, the banditry of the poor, the unbridled passions of all, stifling natural compassion and the still feeble voice of justice, made men avaricious, ambitious, and wicked. Nascent society made way for the most horrible state of war.

It is impossible that men did not at last reflect upon such a miserable situation and upon the calamities that overwhelmed them. The rich, above all, must soon have felt how disadvantageous for themselves was a state of perpetual war, in which they alone bore all the costs and in which, although all risked their lives, they alone risked their property. Furthermore, however they might disguise their usurpations, the rich were well aware that they were established only upon a precarious and irregular right, and that, having been acquired only by force, they could be taken away from them by force without their having any grounds for complaint Lacking reasons valid enough to justify himself and strength sufficient to defend himself, easily able to overwhelm an individual but overwhelmed himself by bandits, alone against all, the rich finally conceived the most carefully thought out plan that ever entered the human mind; this was to use in his favor the very forces of those who were attacking him, to make his adversaries into his defenders, to inspire them with other maxims and to give them other institutions, which were as favorable to him as natural law was opposed.

To this end, after having shown his neighbors the horror of a situation which armed them against each other, which made their possessions as burdensome as their needs, and in which no one found safety either in poverty' or in wealth, he easily invented plausible 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 each person of the possession of what belongs to him; let us institute rules of justice and peace to which all are obligated to conform, that favor no one in particular, and that in some way make amends for the caprices of fortune by subjecting equally the powerful and the weak to mutual duties. In a word, instead of turning our forces against ourselves, let us assemble them into a supreme power which governs us according to wise laws, protects and defends all the members of the association, repulses common enemies, and maintains us in an eternal concord." Far fewer words than these were needed to win over crude, easily seduced men who ran headlong into their chains, hoping to ensure their liberty, for, along with enough reason to be conscious of the advantages of political institutions, they did not have enough experience to foresee their dangers.

Such was, or must have been, the origin of society and laws, which gave new fetters to the weak and new powers to the rich, irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, established forever the law of property and inequality, made clever usurpation into an irrevocable right, and, for the benefit of a few ambitious individuals, henceforth subjected the whole human race to labor, servitude, and misery. Multiplying or spreading rapidly societies soon covered the entire surface of the earth, and it was no longer possible to find a single corner in the universe where a person could throw

off the yoke and pull his head out from under the often ill-guided sword of civil law that he saw hanging perpetually over it ... If this were the place to go into detail, I would easily explain how, even without the involvement of government, inequality of influence and authority becomes inevitable among private individuals as soon as, united in the same society, they are forced to compare themselves to each other, and to take into account the differences that they find in their habitual dealings with each other. These differences are of several kinds, but I would point out how the universal desire for reputation, honors, and preference, which consumes us all, exercises and holds up our talents and strengths to comparison; how it excites and multiplies our passions; and how, by making all men competitors, rivals, or, rather, enemies, it daily causes defeats, successes, and disasters of all kinds, by making so many aspirants take part in the same contest. I would show that to this eagerness to be talked about, to this craze to distinguish ourselves, which almost always keeps us in turmoil Finally, I would prove that if we see a handful of rich and powerful men at the pinnacle of greatness and fortune, while the crowd grovels in obscurity and misery, it is because the former esteem the things they possess only insofar as others are deprived of them, and because, without any change in their condition, they' would cease being happy if the people ceased being miserable.

Here is the final stage of inequality and the extreme point that closes the circle and touches the point from which we set out. Here, all private individuals become equals once again, because they are nothing, and once subjects have no law other than the will of the master and the master no other guide than his passions, notions of good and principles of justice vanish once more. Everything here is reduced to the law of the strongest alone, and, consequently, to a new state of nature that differs from the one with which we began in the sense that the former was the pure state of nature and this last is the fruit of excessive corruption. There is, nevertheless, very little difference between these two states, and the despot is master only as long as he is the strongest, and, as soon as he can be driven out, he has no cause to protest against the violence. The riot which ends with the strangling or dethroning of a sultan is as legal an act as those by which, the day before, he disposed of the lives and property of his subjects. Force alone maintained him, and force alone overthrows him.

Thus, all things happen in accordance with the natural order, and whatever the outcome of these short and frequent revolutions may be, no one can complain of the injustice of others, but only of his own imprudence or misfortune hundreds of years earlier. In short, society offers nothing more to wise eyes than an assemblage of unnatural men and artificial passions which are the handiwork of all these new relations and have no real foundation in nature. What reflection teaches us about that, observation confirms perfectly: savage man and civilized man differ so much in the depths of their hearts and in their inclinations that what constitutes the supreme happiness of one would reduce the other to despair. The former breathes only peace and liberty; he wants only to live and to remain at leisure. The always active citizen on the contrary, sweats, struggles, torments himself constantly to seek out still more laborious occupations. He toils until death; he even hurries toward it to enable himself to live, or he renounces life to acquire immortality. He pays court to the great whom he hates and to the wealthy whom he holds in contempt; he spares nothing to gain the honor of serving them; he proudly boasts of his own baseness and of their protection, and, proud of his slavery, he speaks with disdain of those who do not have the honor of sharing in it: savage man lives within himself; social man knows only how to live beyond himself in the opinion of others, and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he derives the sentiment of his own existence ...